



OUR STORY IS NEVER OVER

From Lens to Mirror

2025 Lent Worship Series

From Lens to Mirror

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:5

Sunday, March 16 @ 10am

Theme: Covenant with Abraham

Led by Rev. Julie Kline

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 / Psalm 27

Sunday, March 23 @ 10am

Theme: The barren fig tree

Led by Rev. Matt Weiler

Luke 13:1-9 / Psalm 63:1-8

Sunday, March 30 @ 10am

Theme: Forgiveness and the prodigal son

Led by Rev. Julie Kline

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 / Psalm 32:1-11

Sunday, April 6 @ 10am

Theme: Newness: I'm about to do a new thing

Led by Rev. Julie Kline

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Isaiah 43:16-21 / Psalm 126:1-6

Palm Sunday Events

April 13

Palm Sunday is a time when we remember Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. And so we, like those who hailed Jesus on that day, wave our palm branches, shouting "Hosanna – blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Blessing of the Palms in the Park

Our Palm Sunday celebration begins in Bronson Park at 9:45am as we gather with our neighbor park churches and clergy to bless the palms. Meet at 9:30am with the clergy at the welcome desk by the church office. We will hand out palm branches and bulletins and then walk to Bronson Park together. At 9:45am we will share a collective liturgy and bless our palm branches. Each faith community will then return to their church for worship service.

Palm Procession and Worship

We continue worship back in our sanctuary after blessing the palm branches in Bronson Park. The children's procession of the palms follows our call to worship. All are invited to join the procession as the parade passes you!

Theme: Hosanna

Led by Rev. Matt Weiler

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 / Luke 19:28-40

Palm Sunday Brunch

Please join us in Wesley Hall for a Palm Sunday brunch immediately following worship. There will be baskets by the doors of Wesley Hall to take a goodwill offering to cover the cost of brunch. We hope you will join us! Many thanks to Donna Dunyak for organizing the brunch again this year.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MINISTRIES *by Julia Librizzi*

Upcoming Family Fun Events - Mark Your Calendars!

Friday, May 9 – Oshtemo Park & Potluck, 6 - 7:30pm
 Fri-Sun, July 11-13 – Family Camp in Pentwater, MI
 Sunday, August 24 – River Oaks Splash Pad/Potluck, 1 - 3pm

Faith Milestones (Grades 3-5) Events

Sunday, March 16 from 6 - 7:30pm – Baptism & Confirmation, Dinner
 Sunday, April 13 from 6 - 7:30pm – Lent, Games, Dinner
 Friday, May 16 from 6 - 8pm – Scavenger Hunt Downtown Kalamazoo, Dinner

Bay Shore Day Camp on the Road is coming back this summer August 11-14 (Monday-Thursday). Sign ups and more details about this incredibly fun day camp experience located at our church for children entering kindergarten through 5th grade will be coming soon!

Mom's Retreat in Ludington Beach. We still have openings for this fun weekend planned for April 25-27 at Ludington Beach House that includes yoga, prayer, devotional time, free time, and meals (dinner at restaurant, cost on your own). Cost is \$200. Please contact Julia Librizzi at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org if you have questions or need the registration and payment links sent to you. You can also access the two links directly from our Around the Corner E-news.

YOUTH MINISTRIES *by Rev. Matt Weiler*

Sunday, March 16

6-7:30pm It's a-Mario, the return of the St. Patrick's Day Shamrock Shake, and Mario Cart tournament!

Sunday, March 23

ASP cookie fundraiser prep with Portage Chapel Hill UMC

Sundays, March 30 and April 6

Spring break, no Youth Group

Refugee Family Needs Clothing. Due to recent executive orders, federal funding to support newly arrived refugees has been suspended leaving several families in Kalamazoo with minimal support. We are helping to support a family of six from Central African Republic. They have been in a refugee settlement in the Cameroons for the last ten years and are in need of clothing. Please place your donations on the **altar of the chapel** (not the sanctuary) and we will deliver them to the family. Items that cannot be used will be donated to other refugees who have also arrived in the area or to Goodwill. If you are interested in helping with other hosting duties, communicate with Ray or Ann Sweany, rasweany@charter.net, Mary Duncan, or Susan Brown.

Partners In Housing Transition at St. Luke's is looking for donations of lamps, plates, bowls, glasses, silverware and bath towels; and furniture is always needed. Partners In Housing Transitions receives referrals from over 20 agencies, so when they receive word that a client has new housing, furnishings are needed within a brief period of time. Items can be dropped off at St. Luke's (247 Lovell) on the second Saturday of the month from 9:30 to 11 a.m., or call 269-385-2466 to schedule pick up of larger items you wish to donate.

OUR SYMPATHY AND PRAYERS TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF:

Barbara Hughey, who died on Nov. 20, 2024
 Doris Haynes, who died on Feb. 16, 2025

IT'S A GIRL!

Congratulations to Jennifer and Bo Klauth, and big sisters Iris and Felicity, on the birth of Jasmine Chanmony on Feb. 6, 2025. All are doing well!

PLEASE KEEP THESE FRIENDS IN YOUR PRAYERS

Wayne Conner
 Nancy Douglas
 Robin Entenman
 Lenora Holiday
 Rev. Gene & Marilyn Lewis
 Judy McClelland
 Ellie Miller
 Mumma Family
 Susan Noble
 Lois & Jim Richmond
 Hank Rohs
 Mary Lou Sanderson
 Gerry & Tom Schaberg
 Michael Seals
 Barb Skuza
 Sally Stevens
 Tom and Marcia Stobie
 Lori Valkema
 Warzybok Family
 Deb Search Willoughby & Family

PRAYER REQUESTS

If you would like to share a prayer request with our clergy and prayer ministry team, please visit www.umc-kzo.org/contact-us/prayer-request/ or call the church at (269) 381-6340 and leave a message.

E-MAIL LIST

We also have a weekly E-Newsletter called "Around the Corner." If you would like to be on the church's email list to receive important church news electronically, please contact Jennifer Stupica, jstupica@umc-kzo.org.

FIRST WORD FOR APRIL

Articles for the next issue of the newsletter are due on Friday, April 4, 2025. Submissions should be emailed to Jennifer Stupica, at jstupica@umc-kzo.org. Articles may be edited for space and content.

FAITHFUL WITNESS WEDNESDAYS

Please join Pastors Julie and Matt (in the spirit of a faithful witness unfolding every Wednesday in Washington D.C.) on the steps of **Kalamazoo City Hall on Wednesdays @ noon throughout March**. Pastors Julie and Matt, along with multiple interfaith clergy colleagues, invite the community to join them in a time of prayer, reflection, and call for action. This nonpartisan vigil focuses on the unique opportunity of faith communities to raise a prophetic and pastoral call, urging congressional leaders to act for the common good and protect their role as a check and balance to the executive branch.

CUPPA IN MARCH

Pastor Julie’s weekly **CUPPA time of inspiration** at noon on Wednesdays will move to 2pm during March, as she will be a part of Faithful Witness Wednesdays at noon. Cuppa will return to its regular time on our Facebook page at noon in April. (Pastor Julie’s last Cuppa before her renewal leave is April 16.)

GRIEF GROUP

The Grief Group will meet again on four Sundays after worship, March 16 through April 6 in the chapel. Working through times of grief in our lives can be an ongoing process. Losses can be due to a death or a major life change. But no matter where you are in your grief process, you are invited to become part of a group in our church who understand and can walk with you. Class facilitators are Deb Search Willoughby, Jan Schoenherr, and Ann Kneas.

LENT DEVOTIONALS AVAILABLE

Copies of “Coming Back to Life: Devotions and Activities for Lent” are available at the Welcome Center. The booklet is full of ideas and activities that can help you prepare your heart and mind for Easter’s great celebration. Grab your Bible and with the help of this devotional, spend the days of Lent exploring “wake up” activities and scripture. Please let the office know if you’d like an electronic copy of the devotional emailed to you instead of a paper copy.

EASTER MEMORIAL TULIPS

Members and friends of First United Methodist Church have an opportunity to remember loved ones by providing Easter tulips for the floral decoration on Easter Sunday, or by giving a monetary gift to the church Memorial Fund. **Easter Flower forms** will be available as a bulletin insert on March 23, 30 and April 6, and need to be **returned to the church office by Sunday, April 6**.

To order tulips, please return the form filled out with your memorial information and include a check made out to the church. Please write “Easter Memorial” in the memo. The cost is \$8 per plant. You may take your plant(s) home after the 10am worship service on Easter Sunday.

Monetary memorial gifts may be made for any amount. Please designate “Easter Memorial” in the memo of your check and include your check with the Easter Flower form. Living persons may also be honored with tulips or a Memorial Fund contribution.

Whether you order tulips or give a monetary memorial gift, your memorial information will be published in an “Easter Memorial” bulletin insert on Easter.

LENTEN ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

This year during Lent, our worship will challenge us to deepen our awareness of self and to pivot from looking through a lens into a mirror. Each week, aligned with the scripture reading of the day, storytellers will tell of the moments of *Holy Shift* they’ve encountered during worship. We will all have a chance to wander more deeply into these stories and consider our own moments of *Holy Shift* during the Sunday School hour following worship. The class is in the parlor and is led by Pastor Matt, Mandakini Brophy, and our Lay Leaders.

SANCTUARY CLEANING

Help us clean our beautiful sanctuary for Easter! On Saturday, April 12, from 9am—noon, you are invited to help sweep pew pads, wash woodwork, vacuum banners, and more! This is a wonderful opportunity for all ages to participate and build community together. Families welcome! Contact Dawn Wheaton with questions. Her email is dawheaton53@gmail.com.

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO FINANCIAL UPDATE						
	2023	2024	Month Ending 1/31/25	Year to Date 1/31/25	2025 Budget	% of Annual Budget
TOTAL INCOME	1,155,208	1,053,747	136,509	136,509	1,152,334	11.85%
TOTAL EXPENSE	1,118,942	1,166,950	87,465	87,465	1,202,200	7.28%
EXCESS/(DEFICIT)	36,266	(113,203)	49,044	49,044	(49,866)	

IMPACTING LITERACY FROM BIRTH

In 2013, Dolores Heidanus and First UMC's Outreach Team approved the distribution of new books to the children who visit the food pantry. Since then, over 5,000 books have been given to children who otherwise may not have a book of their own through our food pantry or from the outdoor Little Free Library (2021-2024).

The American Academy of Pediatrics is a powerful advocate for reading aloud to children from birth, since an important part of brain development occurs within the first three years of a child's life. In Kalamazoo County, 13% of residents over 18 read at the lowest literacy rate and there are 25,000 struggling adult readers.

To bring change to those statistics, we are committed to giving books that have engaging illustrations and stories, or are interesting non-fiction. The majority of the books we give are purchased through Scholastic Literacy Partners. In addition, Ladies Library Association gives to our distribution two or three times annually, thanks to a connection established by Cindy Charnley.

Together we are continuing to work toward the goal of building lifelong readers from birth and a literate Kalamazoo. Any questions can be directed to Donna Oudersluys, donnaoudersluys@gmail.com.

MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Outreach Team is sponsoring a diaper drive for St. Luke's Diaper Bank as the March Mission of the month. Most needed diaper sizes are 5 and 6, but all sizes are welcome. There is a collection box by the food pantry for your diaper donations. Thank you for supporting this important community program!

The Outreach Team would like to thank the congregation for their generous support of the **February Mission of the Month**, the YWCA domestic assault and human trafficking program. A total of 276 items were donated that included towels, sheets, toothbrushes, toothpaste and dental floss, shampoo, conditioner, body wash/soap, lotion, sanitary products, deodorant, razors, shaving cream, acetaminophen, socks, briefs, a coat, and kid's gloves. Having personal care items available for these women and children meets every day needs and is greatly appreciated!

CROP WALK

Save the date of Sunday, April 27 beginning at 2pm for the Kalamazoo Valley Crop Hunger Walk! The walk will begin and end at Trinity Lutheran Church located at 504 S. Westnedge Ave. Additional information will be provided in the coming weeks.

Lenten Organ Series

All are invited to enjoy these 45-minute organ recitals at noon on Thursdays during Lent

First United Methodist Church Sanctuary

MARCH 13 @ NOON

Rhonda Sider Edgington & Carolyn Koebel

Thunder & Wind - Music for organ and percussion

MARCH 20 @ NOON

Calista Brunett

Music Director

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church

MARCH 27 @ NOON

Dr. Naki Sung Kripfgans

Director of Music Ministries & Organist

Ann Arbor Bethlehem United Church of Christ

APRIL 3 @ NOON

Michael Montgomery & Autumn

Director of Music Ministries & Organist

Kalamazoo First Presbyterian Church

APRIL 10 @ NOON

Bernie Foulk

Organist

Kalamazoo First United Methodist Church

LENT LABYRINTH

There is a long history of the use of labyrinths in Christian worship. The purpose of the labyrinth is to slow us down to explore and think about the spiritual path of Lent. Labyrinth prayer walking can prepare our spirits to be part of God's Kingdom. **The labyrinth will be set up in Wesley Hall from Sunday, April 6 through Good Friday, April 18.** You are invited to walk the labyrinth after worship on Sundays or Monday - Thursday between 9am-4 pm.

Several people can walk the labyrinth at the same time, but please allow participants to walk slowly. This labyrinth requires the removal of your shoes to preserve the cloth of the labyrinth. There will be information about the history of the labyrinth and the rhythm of walking it. If you have never walked a labyrinth, I encourage you to try this ancient prayer practice to quiet your mind, center yourself, and allow your spirit to be in prayer, curiosity, and expectation. Peace be with you, *Pastor Julie*