

UPCOMING SUNDAY WORSHIP

December 28 @ 10:00 a.m.
Sunday after Christmas
Rev. Julie Kline
"Lessons and Laughter"
Psalm 148

January 4 @ 10:00 a.m.
Epiphany
Rev. Matt Weiler
"Fear Doesn't Stop Us"
Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

We are a Reconciling Congregation, Welcoming ALL.



Worship Leaders: Rev. Julie Kline, Rev. Matt Weiler
Director of Music/Organist: Jacqueline Stilger
Associate Director of Music: Cari Miller
Musicians: Larry and Carla Sue, handbells
Audiovisual Team: Bryan Heany, Lucas McGinnis, Kennedy Hayes

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In our worship we strive to witness to the wholeness of God, embracing the diversity of images of God that are found within scripture. We will seek to include male, female, and gender-neutral language that helps to avoid binary terms in pronouns and images of people. In our hymns and liturgy, we invite you to use pronouns that best express your practice and affirm your faith.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome! If you are visiting First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo for the first time or are visiting us for the holidays, we bid you welcome! If you are seeking a church home, please consider worshiping with us again and discovering more about the journey of faith offered to all by our loving and seeking God. We worship on Sundays at 10am. Christian education classes for all ages follows worship.

Labyrinth Walk. A Chartres labyrinth is set-up in Wesley Hall located in the lower level. We invite you to try this ancient prayer practice this evening after worship to quiet your mind, center yourself, and allow your spirit to be in prayer, curiosity, and expectation. Prayer stations are also set-up around the labyrinth to enhance your time of prayer and contemplation.

Christmas Special Offering. This year's Christmas offering is designated to four ministries we partner with: The Wesley Foundation (student Christian programming), Growing Hope Globally (supports agricultural programs that enable families to grow nutritious food and improve income), Immigration Law & Justice (legal assistance and hospitality to low-income immigrants), and Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes. Envelopes for your gift are available in the pew pockets. Please designate your check in the memo and the outside of the pew envelope with "Christmas offering."

CUPPA. On Wednesdays at noon, Pastor Julie shares a time of reflection and spiritual rejuvenation live on our Facebook page. We welcome you to view these uplifting messages at any time on our Facebook page or join her live.

Church Staff

Rev. Julie Kline Lead Pastor
Rev. Matt Weiler Community Formation
Jacqueline Stilger Organist/Dir. of Music
Cari Beth Croak Associate Dir. of Music
Julia Librizzi Children & Families
Drew Bolton Bldg. Superintendent
Linda Hamill Office Manager
Christiane Stakely Office Assistant
Erika Jones Communications
Cody Collmenter Bookkeeper
Bryan Heany AV Team Leader
Eamon Bronson Building Host
Alison Ericson Building Host
Samantha Lee Building Host
Jim Tiffany Custodian
Ruth Butters Young Adult Resident

Join Us for Worship

- **Sunday, December 28.** We'd love to see you at 10:00am for a joyful time of worship! Godly Play and Sunday School will take a holiday break, but our nursery will be open for infants through age four so families can relax and enjoy the service.
- **Sunday, January 4.** Christian education classes for all ages, Godly Play, and Youth Group will resume Sunday, January 4.

Children's Sunday School for preschool through 5th graders meets September through May in room 206 (second floor) following worship until 12:30pm. A safe and secure nursery is available each Sunday during worship. Sunday School for infants through 4 year olds meets from 9:45am to 12:30pm in room 208 (second floor).

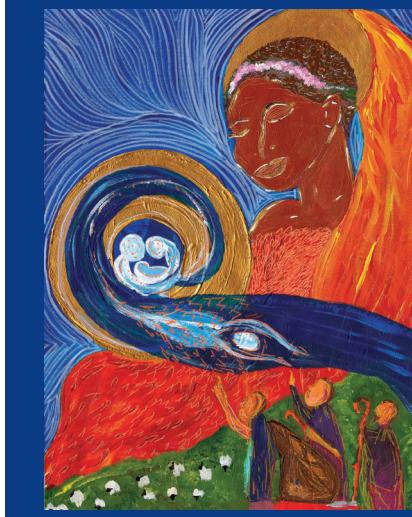
We have a multi-sensory, imaginative worship experience for children during most worship services called Godly Play. Children will leave sanctuary worship after "The Child Within Us All" for Godly Play. Children will return to their families before the end of worship, usually during the offertory. Please contact Director of Children and Family Ministries, Julia Librizzi, at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org to find out more about Children's Ministry at FUMC of Kalamazoo!

Youth Group is open to all 6th-12th grade students and meets every Sunday evening during the school year from 6pm-7:30pm in a dedicated space called "The Youth Lounge." If you wish to join or know more about our youth ministry at Kalamazoo FIRST UMC please contact Pastor Matt Weiler at mweiler@umc-kzo.org.

We would love to have new youth join us in the New Year! On the 11th we'll share a meal together and the next two weeks we'll begin a small group series exploring the Fruit of the Spirit.

Young Adults. Manna is a weekly gathering for young adults every Tuesday evening in the Youth Lounge from 6:30-8pm. If you are a young adult looking for deeper connection, contact our Youth and Young Adult Resident Ruth Butters at RuthTButters@gmail.com.

New Year's Fest Call for Volunteers. Help celebrate the 40th anniversary of New Year's Fest in Kalamazoo! We are looking for volunteers to welcome guests to First Church and direct them to the shows. Shifts are only 2 hours, and everyone who volunteers will receive a free badge to attend the other shows around the park. Sign-up sheets are in the Perks area on Sundays, or contact Dan Bunker at (269) 217-8780 (djbunker@charter.net).



First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo

Christmas Eve The Nativity of Our Savior

11:00 pm

212 S. Park St. | Kalamazoo, MI | 269.381.6340 | umc-kzo.org

Good News Is Louder Than Fear

In a quiet spirit, we sing carols, listen to beautiful handbell music, and gather at the communion table to receive the bread of life and the cup of blessing. If weather permits, we will take our candles to the front steps and sing "Silent Night" as a call for peace and goodwill for all.

Welcome to First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo

Welcome to our Christmas Eve time of worship! We would like to connect with you. Please fill out the attendance pad located at the end of the pews and introduce yourself as you pass it to your neighbor.

**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

Carla and Larry Sue, handbells

PRELUDE
In the Bleak Midwinter (Gustav Holst, arr. Larry Sue)
'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime (traditional Canadian, arr. Larry Sue)
O Holy Night (Adophe Adam, arr. Larry Sue)
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (Richard S. Willis, arr. Larry Sue)
Still, Still, Still (Felix Mendelssohn, arr. Larry Sue)

Rev. Julie Kline

(UMH - red hymnal)

CALL TO CHRISTMAS "The One Star Night" by Ann Weems

***OPENING HYMN #234** *O Come, All Ye Faithful* - verses 1,3,4 and 6

(UMH - red hymnal)

***WELCOME AND PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

We invite you to turn to those nearby and offer a greeting. You may use a simple gesture such as a nod of the head, a wave, a smile, handshake, or a verbal greeting with the words, "Peace of Christ be with you."

LIGHTING THE PEACE CANDLE AND THE FIRST LESSON - Micah 5:2-5a

CAROL #230 *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

(UMH - red hymnal)

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES AND CHRIST CANDLE

Derek and Dawn Wheaton

The Advent wreath holds five candles: four for the Sundays leading to Christmas and a center candle for Christmas. One new candle is lit each week, symbolizing the growing light of Christ approaching. The four outer candles traditionally signify hope, peace, joy, and love, marking our journey of anticipation and preparation. The center candle, called the Christ Candle, represents the light of Christ coming into the world and is lit during our Christmas Eve worship.

In a fearful world, where do you see the presence of God?

We see God's fingerprints all around us.

We see God in the beauty of the stars.

We see God in the love of this community.

We see God in the dreams we hold for a better world.

You are right. Even in a fearful world, God is here. God is all around us.

On this holy night, in addition to the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, we light the Christ Candle as a reminder of this good news. May this flicker of light help us remember that even in a fearful world, God's love is all around us.

Thanks be to God for a love like that!

Amen.

***CAROL #238** *Angels We Have Heard on High*

(UMH - red hymnal)

***GOSPEL LESSON** The Birth of Jesus Luke 2:1-20

Rev. Matt Weiler

***CAROL #219** *What Child Is This*

(UMH - red hymnal)

MESSAGE "The Time Is Now"

Rev. Julie Kline

***CAROL #224** *Good Christian Friends Rejoice*

(UMH - red hymnal)

HOLY COMMUNION

All are welcome to the meal Jesus hosts. There is no one here who is ineligible or unwelcome; no one too old or too young; no one who has too many doubts or too few beliefs. You, who are part of God's creation, are welcome to receive Holy Communion this morning. Come forward by the center aisle, take a piece of bread, dip it in the cup of juice and eat it. Servers will offer the bread by saying, "the bread of life," and "the cup of love." You may respond with "Amen." Gluten-free bread is available at the station closest to the communion table.

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

HYMN #221 *In the Bleak Midwinter* (UMH - red hymnal)
will be interspersed throughout the communion liturgy.

Hear our prayers, O God,
and in your mercy, answer.

We pray these things, trusting in God's faithfulness revealed:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP *What Child Is This* (traditional English, arr. Larry Sue)
The First Nowell (John Stainer, arr. Larry Sue)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

CALL TO OFFERING

This evening's offering is designated to four ministries we partner with: The Wesley Foundation (student Christian programming), Growing Hope Globally (supports agricultural programs that enable families to

grow nutritious food and improve income), Immigration Law & Justice (legal assistance and hospitality to low-income immigrants), and Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes. Envelopes for your gift are available in the pew pockets. Please designate your check in the memo and the outside of the pew envelope with "Christmas offering." You may also give online at our website: umc-kzo.org.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *Creator of the Stars of Night* (9th-century Latin, arr. Larry Sue)

***DOXOLOGY #240** *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing* (vs. 1) (UMH - red hymnal)

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Radiant God of holy interruptions, in the stillness of night and the chaos of our days, you slip into our world with glory wrapped in swaddling cloth. Like the shepherds, we come breathless, humbled, and hoping—to offer what we have. Receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude and trust. May they help announce your peace on earth, not with trumpets and headlines, but with justice, compassion, and shared burdens. Let the offering we place here be the beginning of the offering we make with our lives in response to the child who changes everything. In Jesus' name, Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

SERVICE OF LIGHT

Jesus said, "I have come as a light into the world. Whoever believes in me will not remain in darkness."
In Christ's name, I will light my candle.
With Christ's strength, I will take it into the world.

If the weather permits, we will sing "Silent Night" on our front steps to proclaim the Good News that Christ the Savior is born. Please follow the Clergy down the center aisle to receive the light for your candle. As you light your candle, please tilt the UNLIT candle into the flame. If necessary, we will re-light our candles on the front steps, receiving the light from one another. Please bring your bulletins for the singing of "Silent Night."

***CAROL #239** *Silent Night, Holy Night* (UMH - red hymnal)

**Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar.
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!**

**Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light.
Radiant beams from thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace.
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.**

(You are invited to carefully raise your candle during this last verse)

**Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing,
"Alleluia" to our King;
Christ the Savior is born; Christ the Savior is born!**

*CHRISTMAS BLESSING

(Please extinguish your candle after the blessing)

MISSION

We are called to:
• Experience God's love
• Celebrate God's love
• Share God's love

VISION

We are a Christ-centered community where our stories are woven with God's story.

CORE VALUES

 **Love:** God is Love and all creation is made in love, by love, and for love.

 **Community:** Sacred relationship with God and one another

 **Inclusion:** All identities belong and are love in Christ.

 **Justice:** Restoration of equity and wholeness.

Our cover art: "Good, New"

by Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell

Reflection

We often link fear and anxiety to bad news. But what about the moments when the news is good - almost too good to believe? The dream job offer arrives. The long-hoped-for pregnancy test is finally positive. The illness goes into sudden remission.

Euphoria, the fear of good news, often stems from past losses, fear of change, or the pressure of new expectations. Joy and relief may come first, but they're often followed by a quiet dread. What now? What could this mean?

In Luke's Nativity story, even angelic news stirs overwhelm. The shepherds tremble. Mary ponders. As she wraps her newborn in cloth, what thoughts rise in her heart?

The word "new" is nestled in "good news" - a reminder that even the best gifts lie beyond our control. In the birth of Jesus, we witness the mystery of it all: the terrifying, the unexpected, the good, and the new that hope often brings.