

# The First Word

January 2026



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First United Methodist Church • 212 S. Park Street • Kalamazoo, MI 49007 • (269) 381-6340 • [www.umc-kzo.org](http://www.umc-kzo.org)

## Celebrating the Musicians of First United Methodist

Chancel Singers • Handbell Ensemble • First Beats • Youth Orchestra • First Strings

Thank you to all our FUMC musicians in Chancel Singers, Handbell Ensemble, First Beats, Youth Orchestra, and First Strings for the dedication, time, and care you poured into our Christmas and Advent services. Your hard work in rehearsals and your beautiful singing/ringing/playing during worship lifted hearts, deepened our connection



with one another and the Divine, and helped tell the story of Christ's birth in a powerful way. Through your music, you offer a true gift to the church. Your work helps to enrich our celebrations and draws the congregation together in joy and reverence. We are so deeply grateful for



The First Beats cast of our Christmas Pageant, "Calling All Angels"



your commitment and the spirit of generosity you share through your music making. Thank you!

We also feel immense gratitude for the hard work and talented leadership of Jacqueline Stilger, our Director of Music and Organist, and our Associate Director of Music, Cari Beth Croak. They are essential to what makes our musical ministry so special!



Photos by Keith Mumma

# Children and Family Ministries News

Julia Librizzi

## CFM Coming Events

**Parents' Night Out:** All parents with children at home are invited to join us for a euchre tournament Friday, February 20, 2026 in the church from 6-9pm. Please email Julia Librizzi, [jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org), if you would like to attend.

### Family Fun Nights:

- ★ **Super Bowl Party:** Join us for a Superbowl watch party on Sunday, February 8th - whether you're here for the game or the ads! Bring a dish to pass and any special drinks you want. The game starts at 6:30pm, but feel free to start arriving as early as 6:00. We have cats and dogs, and you're welcome to bring dogs who are friendly with other pets. Location: Kari Parthasarathy's home, 845 Westmoreland Ave., Kalamazoo.
- ★ **Bowling:** Please join us at Airway Lanes for an evening of bowling on Friday, March 13th, from 6:30 to 8:00pm! Food is available to order on your own, and we ask that if possible you give \$10/bowler to help cover the cost of this fun family event. Please RSVP to Julia Librizzi at [jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org](mailto:jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org) by Sunday, March 8th, so we know how many to expect.

### Faith Milestones: Next Meeting January 18

Faith Milestones are the firsts as we grow in our faith. This is a youth-group-style meeting for our 3rd - 5th grade children. We meet once-a-month on Sunday evenings from 6-7:30pm. Our next meeting is January 18, when we will get a behind-the-scenes tour of the sanctuary and learn about being a Lay Liturgist.

## January Mission of the Month

For those who are homeless, this is a very difficult time of the year. We are hoping to provide warmth and also meet other needs by collecting the following items for Ministry with Community:

- Deodorant (travel and full size)
- Shampoo (travel and full size)
- Conditioner (travel and full size)
- Lotion (travel and full size)
- Lip balm (travel and full size)
- Washcloths
- Hand warmers
- T-shirts (new, adult size M-4XL)
- Underwear (new, adult size)

There will be a collection box outside of the food pantry near the back entrance. Thank you for helping our unhoused neighbors!

### Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Wayne Conner  
 Robin Entenman  
 Janet Hanson  
 Carol Hurley & family  
 Nancy Hyde  
 Jan Kayser & family  
 Rev. Gene & Marilyn Lewis  
 Judy McClelland  
 Ellie Miller  
 Mumma Family  
 Sue Paul  
 Peavler Family  
 Anna Rasmussen  
 Lois & Jim Richmond  
 Hank Rohs  
 Marcia Royer  
 Mary Lou Sanderson  
 Gerry & Tom Schaberg  
 Michael Seals  
 Carol Shilts  
 Barb Skuza  
 Sally Stevens Family  
 Jacqueline Stilger and family  
 Marcia Stobie and family  
 Lori Valkema  
 Christine VanOstran

### New 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/](http://www.umc-kzo.org/contact-us/prayer-request/) or call the church at (269) 381-6340.

### Email List

Would you like to stay up-to-date on our latest news and events? Sign up to receive *Around the Corner*, FUMC's weekly email newsletter. Contact Erika Jones at [ejones@umc-kzo.org](mailto:ejones@umc-kzo.org) to be added to our list.

### Submissions for February 2026 issue of *First Word*

Do you have news items or photos to contribute to the next issue of *First Word*? We'd love to include them! Email submissions to our Communications Coordinator, Erika Jones, at [ejones@umc-kzo.org](mailto:ejones@umc-kzo.org), by **February 5**. Articles may be edited for space and content.

#### FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO - FINANCIAL UPDATE

	2023	2024	Month ending 11/30/25	Year-to-date 11/30/25	2025 Annual budget	% of Annual budget
Total income (\$)	1,155,208	1,053,747	69,932	1,061,608	1,152,334	92.13%
Total expense (\$)	1,118,942	1,166,950	84,179	971,481	1,202,200	80.81%
Excess/ (deficit) (\$)	36,266	(113,203)	(14,247)	90,127	(49,866)	—

# Youth Ministry News

Rev. Matt Weiler

Our Annual Youth Mission Trip with Appalachia Service Project will happen again this summer in partnership with

our friends from Portage Chapel Hill Church. This year's dates are July 19-25. We will have an informational meeting on zoom, Monday, January 26, at 7pm, with information for ASP veterans and newbies. If you wish to attend ASP this summer, please

attend this important meeting. We'll cover expectations, fundraisers, and a general overview of the ASP experience. Contact Pastor Matt for the meeting link.

We want to extend a big thank you to all who donated food for our Thanksgiving baskets in November. Youth sorted an abundance of food and delivered meals and frozen turkeys to 12 families!

## Youth Group Coming Events

### Sunday January 18

11:15-1pm Confirmation Class in Rm 305 (lunch provided)  
6-7:30pm Youth Group in the Youth Lounge

### Sunday January 25

6-7:30pm Youth Group in the Youth Lounge  
"Fruit of the Spirit" Small Groups



So much food! Our youth sorted and delivered Thanksgiving food donations to twelve families in November. Thanks to everyone for your generosity!

### Monday January 26

7-7:45pm ASP Info Meeting (online)

### Sunday February 1

6-7:30 Youth Group in the Youth Lounge  
"Fruit of the Spirit" Small Groups

### Sunday February 8

Superbowl Party! 6pm - Half time in the Youth Lounge



Arya and Sydney playing a game called "Goat Yoga" at our end-of-Christmas-break youth group meeting.

## Thank You, Reception Committee!



The reception committee for the Advent concerts worked very hard every week to provide delicious fresh-baked cookies and coffee and a time to meet the artists. Thanks to all of them for the hard work. We miss our Music and Arts former chair, Carol Hodges, and send her love in North Carolina. -Jacqueline Stilger

## FUMC Staff Introductions

### Cody Collmenter - Bookkeeper



Our bookkeeper, Cody, started here in the spring of 2025. He keeps track of our budget, HR, payroll, and miscellaneous finances, working in his church office on Mondays and Wednesdays. He enjoys making things efficient and providing a clear financial picture for all our ministry leaders.

At home he's a DIY-type guy who is always working on

projects and helping friends with home improvement. He and his wife Stephanie have four children; Clay, Viviana, Arjay, and baby daughter Traeh. They also have a five-year old boxer named Belle.

Outside of ministry he enjoys memorable family experiences and going on adventures with his wife and kids. They love to serve together, whether helping family and friends or their local church. He also loves trying new foods! Help us welcome Cody to our staff - we are glad to have him!

## Planning for the Future - Part 1\*

FUMC Endowment Committee

Planning for the future is an essential step in ensuring that your loved ones are taken care of, even in the most challenging times. By addressing key financial and legal matters now, you can significantly reduce the stress and uncertainty that survivors may face. Here are some practical steps to help you get your affairs in order and provide peace of mind for yourself and your family.

- Establish a contact team.** Find an estate planning attorney, a tax accountant, and a financial advisor firm.
- Review wills and trusts.** Do this every few years or when there's a significant change in your life. If you do not have a will, get one!
- Set up advance directives and Power of Attorney.** Designate the person you want to make medical and financial decisions on your behalf in a will and/or trust, especially if you have young children.
- Update beneficiaries.** Ensure that any pension, 401(k), IRA, brokerage accounts, life insurance proceeds, etc., still reflect your wishes.

\*Parts 2 and 3 will appear in the next two issues of *First Word*.

## Coming up: February Mission of the Month

### YWCA Domestic Assault and Trafficking

One of our Community Ministry Partners, the Kalamazoo YWCA, provides shelter and assistance to women and children in a crisis situation, victimized by domestic assault or trafficking. Please consider donating the following:

- Towels (bath, hand, washcloths)
- Toothpaste
- Kids waterproof gloves/mittens
- Soap/bath gel
- Sanitary products
- Lotion
- Deodorant
- Women's socks and underwear

Donations can be placed in the box by the food pantry. Thank you!