



ROLL DOWN, JUSTICE: THE SEASON OF LENT



Lent is a season to reflect on our true calling in the world. This year, our Lenten journey draws inspiration from the prophet Amos, who calls us to let “justice roll down like waters.” God desires not worship without justice, but action that uplifts the oppressed. Through the stirring music of Mark Miller and a return to the rituals of baptism—the foundation of Lent—this season invites us to thoughtful reflection and fresh inspiration to align our voices with the heart of the Gospel: proclaiming God’s love for all. What biases are we called to “give up” as an act of Lenten abstinence, and how might we “give” of ourselves for the sake of others?

LENT WORSHIP EVENTS

February 18 - Ash Wednesday – 7pm

“Make Me an Instrument of Peace: Re-Cognition”

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, a season of reflection and penitence leading up to the celebration of Christ’s resurrection at Easter. We mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross as an outward and visible sign of our repentance.

February 22nd - First Sunday of Lent

“Child of God: Naming Each One”

March 1st - Second Sunday of Lent

“How Long: Renouncing Evil” (Communion Sunday)

March 8th, 2026 - Third Sunday of Lent

I Dream of a Church: Christ’s Representatives

March 15th – Fourth Sunday of Lent

“I Choose Love: Communities of Forgiveness”

Special offering: UMCOR

March 22nd - Fifth Sunday of Lent

“God Has Work For Us to Do: Faithful Disciples”

March 29th – Palm Sunday

“The Day is Coming: We are One”

Brunch following with youth selling cookies for ASP and blessing of the palms in Bronson Park

HOLY WEEK

April 2 - Holy Thursday – 7 pm

Holy Thursday, also known as Maundy Thursday, is the remembrance of Jesus celebrating the Passover with his disciples and the washing of their feet. It is also a remembrance of his betrayal and arrest. Holy Thursday is the entrance point for the commemoration of Holy Week.

Friday, April 3 - Good Friday – 7 pm

Good Friday is a solemn day that commemorates the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. We sing, lament, and give thanks for the wondrous love of Christ.

April 5th - Easter Sunday

“Welcome the New Jerusalem” (Communion Sunday)

Special Offering: SEITA



Easter is the joyful end of the season of Lent as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a joy-filled celebration resounding with “alleluias” and the trumpet-filled pronunciation, “He has risen.”

Children and Family Ministries News

Julia Librizzi

First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo Invited to the Making Meaning Together Initiative!

We are delighted to share exciting news with you: Our church has been selected to participate in the 2026 Making Meaning Together (MMT) Initiative—a grant-funded project designed to support congregations to reimagine and incorporate worship and prayer practices so that children are fully included, engaged, and spiritually nurtured.



Making Meaning Together exists to guide and support churches as they design and implement creative, intergenerational, and child-friendly worship experiences that reflect the gifts and needs of children ages 0–12. Through learning, listening practices with children, grant funding,

resourcing, and ongoing support, MMT accompanies congregations as they cultivate worship that helps all ages encounter God together.

Our project focuses on inviting professional storytellers familiar with scripture to teach children and our worship team how to engage with scripture in a way that adds depth and drama to the listening experience.

We would also like to invite guest artists to create graphics for the scripture to make the scripture more meaningful and engaging for children. We would like to learn how to engage with our own congregation to use their artistic abilities to help make more meaning from scripture.

We are grateful for this opportunity and excited for the ways God will work through this season of learning, listening, and growing. Please join us in praying for our leadership team, our children and families, our congregation, and the many partners across the MMT network as we begin this journey.

More information about Making Meaning Together can be found at: <https://makingmeaningtogether.org>.

We look forward to sharing updates with you along the way!

FUMC’s Making Meaning Together team members: Julia Librizzi, Rev. Matt Weiler, Jacqueline Stilger, Cassie English, and Kari Parthasarathy.



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO - FINANCIAL UPDATE						
	2023	2024	Month Ending 12/31/25	Year to Date 12/31/25	2025 Annual Budget	% of Annual Budget
Total income (\$)	1,155,208	1,053,747	138,900	1,200,362	1,152,334	104.17%
Total expense (\$)	1,118,942	1,166,950	123,591	1,095,072	1,202,200	91.09%
Excess/ (deficit) (\$)	36,266	(113,203)	15,309	105,290	(49,866)	

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’s family
- Anna Rasmussen
- Lois & Jim Richmond
- Hank Rohs
- Marcia Royer
- Mary Lou Sanderson
- Gerry & Tom Schaberg
- Michael Seals
- Barb Skuza
- 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/ 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 to be added to our list.

Submissions for March 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, by **March 5**. Articles may be edited for space and content.

Mosaics of Words and Glass Mobile

Mary Whittaker Duncan and Vickee Seals

Since they're hard to miss, you may have already noticed the grouping of mobiles outside the sanctuary doors! This project was part of the "Our Story is Never Over" series. These mobiles began as circles of colored glass,



representing the different stages of a dandelion's life cycle and symbolizing resilience, transformation, and the hope in possibility. Made one evening by 30 individuals, they

Bryan Heany – Our AV Maestro!



If you've ever wondered who keeps our sound crisp and our screens going on Sundays and special events, look no further than Bryan Heany! Bryan has been the brains (and sometimes the brawn) behind our audiovisual department for over three years.

When he's not making tech magic happen, Bryan is a true "jack of all trades." He's been running his own small

business for 25 years, holds an MA in Communications, and somehow still finds time for his favorite hobbies—playing drums, gaming, and creating cool things. Outdoors? He's all in: sledding, canoeing, camping—you name it.

Bryan shares life with his partner Heather, three cats (Lionel, Thea, and Elsie), and has a great sense of humor. His quick wit and ingenuity make him an indispensable member of our church family.

are as unique as snowflakes—and as each one of us! In a subsequent session, a group composed of the original participants (along with some new ones) gathered to assemble the resulting pieces into a new whole, bringing their imagined possibilities to life!

As part of the final "Pivot" in this series, the mobiles will be featured—along with other stories, poems, and written reflections that have been created during this project—in a dramatic production to be written by local playwright Buddy Hannah and our own Jennifer Clark. Watch the bulletin board and easel for more information!

You Are Invited! Congregational Celebration

Sunday, February 22

Beloved Community of FUMC,

You are warmly invited to join us for a special Congregational Celebration of Our Shared Life on Sunday, February 22, following worship. This gathering is an opportunity for us to come together as a church family to reflect on, celebrate, and look forward to all that God is doing in and through our ministries.

During this Celebration, we will share highlights and reports from our 2025 Church Conference, as well as stories of how our mission, vision, and values have come to life in the past year. We will also look ahead to the ways we hope to continue living out our calling in 2026.

A booklet entitled "Our Shared Life: 2025-26 Ministry Reports & Celebrations" will be available, featuring reports and reflections from our various ministries. Your presence and participation are important as we celebrate our shared journey and discern the road ahead together.

We look forward to seeing you there and sharing in this meaningful time as a congregation!

~ Reverend Julie Kline

Planning for the Future - Part 2*

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.

5. **Gather financial papers.** Store deeds, passports, insurance policies, estate documents, marriage license, divorce papers, and latest bank statements in a fireproof box at home, where survivors can easily find them.
6. **Prepare a “must call” list.** Compile contact info for friends, family, lawyer, and others who need to be contacted in case of death.
7. **Share passwords.** Keep a master list of all usernames and passwords so family can still have access after death.
8. **Credit card names.** Make sure your name is on the credit card; if not, you may have to reapply for credit in your own name.

*Part 3 will appear in the next issue of *First Word*.



Naturalization/Refugee Adjustment of Status/I-90 Green Card Renewal

When: March 19, 2026

Where: First United Methodist Church
212 S. Park St. Kalamazoo

APPOINTMENT REQUIRED: DEADLINE FEB. 26

Please contact Central Intake at 616-320-2734
Or email cwise@iljmi.org

To volunteer, contact Ann Sweany:
rasweany@charter.net

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!

BERNIE FOULK MEMORIAL LENTEN ORGAN RECITAL SERIES

THURSDAYS AT 12:00 NOON

FEBRUARY 26

Omar Padilla

Director of Music at St. Philip Catholic Church, Battle Creek, MI

MARCH 5

Dr. Peter Kurdziel

Director of Music at Saint John’s Episcopal Church, Grand Haven, MI

MARCH 12

Marilyn Ossentjuk

Music Minister at St. Lukes Episcopal Church, Kalamazoo MI

MARCH 19

Gail Jennings, organist & Andrew Jennings, violinist

- *Retired Organist from Bethlehem United Church of Christ in Ann Arbor*
- *Prof. Emeritus Professor in Violin at the University of Michigan*

MARCH 26

Robert S. Ragoonanan

Minister of Music at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Grand Rapids, MI