



## FUMC Volunteers Win Women of Achievement Award

Since 2019, a devoted group of volunteers from First United Methodist Church has been a powerful force behind YWCA Kalamazoo's In-Kind Giving Program. Donna Dunyak,



The 2026 Genevieve U. Gilmore Volunteer Award winners from FUMC

Pat Elzerman, Christina Stamper, and Sally Stevens, before her passing, gathered week after week, contributing an extraordinary 1,680 hours of service. Their commitment was instrumental in organizing and maintaining a

comprehensive donation system rooted in dignity and intention, ensuring that every item given by our community is thoughtfully received and placed into the hands of those who need it most. FUMC also partnered with YWCA Kalamazoo to bring to life a nature-based playground for children and contributed resources to help expand our transitional housing program. In challenging times of increasing need and limited capacity, they continue to show up with consistency and compassion, and YWCA Kalamazoo is profoundly grateful for all they have done for the people we serve. - Story and group photo by YWCA of Kalamazoo



Sally Stevens helping to build the playground at the YWCA Dream Center, 2022

### What is Pentecost?

On Pentecost Sunday, we remember the day the disciples received the Holy Spirit in a special way. The story in Acts 2 describes a powerful wind and tongues of fire as the Holy Spirit was poured out on people from all over the world who came to Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast. At the first Pentecost over 3,000 people were baptized, creating the first church. This is why Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Christian church.

The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning *fiftieth*. The Jewish Festival of Pentecost (called Shavuot, meaning "weeks" in Hebrew) falls on the fiftieth day after

the original Passover. On that day, God gave the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Christian festival of Pentecost falls on the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus.

Certain colors are historically associated with Pentecost. Red is a visual reminder of the "tongues of fire" that empowered the apostles and others to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection in many languages to the crowds of pilgrims from many lands (Acts 2:3).

The Season after Pentecost is the time of the church year to support new disciples and the whole congregation in living out the gifts we have been given in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. - Ask The UMC

*Pentecost is Sunday, May 24. You are invited to wear Pentecost colors to worship: red, orange, and yellow.*

# First Beats Musical Coming June 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>

by Jacqueline Stilger

First Beats will present their annual musical in worship on Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup> and on the preceding Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 with desserts to follow. This year’s musical is entitled *Storms* and was written by composer Mark Burrows. It features the Bible passage of Jesus calming the storm. It also explores the idea that we all go through storms in our lives. Some storms are physical: like floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. Others are more figurative, but no less real: fear of illness and loss, insecurity of being ‘good enough’, fear of being bullied, and other anxieties. *Storms* features a group of children who wonder if they have what it takes to overcome storms of their own. Through heartfelt songs, authentic dialogue and a healthy dose of humor, the children discover that they can, with God’s help, weather the storms of life. They even grow empowered to follow Jesus’ example by being there for others going through times of storm. During the show, we will take up a collection for flood and tornado relief. This is in support of our church’s Mission of the Month for June.



## New Online Giving Option Now Available

We’re pleased to introduce our new giving format, designed to make donating easier, more secure, and more reliable. One key feature is recurring giving, a great option — especially for pledge givers — that helps ensure your commitment is met consistently throughout the year and gives you peace of mind when schedules change.

For the church, recurring gifts allow for better planning and more faithful stewardship. For you, it offers flexibility and convenience with the ability to manage your gifts anytime.

By creating a Giving Account, you can securely give online and now easily view when and how you’ve given all in one place. That’s right, our new system gives you a way to log in and track your giving online!

Get started today: <https://kalamazoo-first-united-methodist-church-525937.churchcenter.com/giving>

Thank you for your continued generosity and support of our ministries at Kalamazoo FUMC.

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF KALAMAZOO - FINANCIAL UPDATE						
	2024	2025	Month Ending 4/30/26	Year to Date 2026	2026 Annual Budget	% of Annual Budget
Total income (\$)	1,053,747	1,200,362	99,929	468,587	1,116,200	41.98%
Total expense (\$)	1,166,950	1,095,394	92,804	387,615	1,162,100	33.35%
Excess/ (deficit) (\$)	(113,203)	104,968	7,125	80,973	(45,900)	

### Please keep these friends in your prayers:

- Sharon Bunker
- Wayne Conner
- Bill Dimond & family
- Robin Entenman
- Janet Hanson
- Carol Hurley & family
- Nancy Hyde
- Jan Kayser & family
- Rev. Gene & Marilyn Lewis
- Judy McClelland
- Mumma family
- Sue Paul’s family
- Anna Rasmussen
- 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/](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 June 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 **June 2**. Articles may be edited for space and content.

## FUMC Staff Introduction: Ruth Butters

### Youth & Young Adults Resident (Math-Wizard, Plant Whisperer, and Faith Builder!)

by Linda Hamill

If you've been around our youth group, confirmation, or Manna (young adult ministries) gatherings this past year, you have likely been met with the thoughtful presence of Ruth Butters. Ruth joined the FUMC staff in September of 2024 as our Youth & Young Adult Resident, and we are so grateful for the dedication and creativity that they bring to this community.



Ruth works alongside Pastor Matt, bringing their gifts to the youth and young adult ministries. Their favorite part of the role is working with

the youth — seeing them have fun and grow in their faith. She also truly enjoys the fellowship and joy of Manna.

A few fun facts about Ruth:

- By day they work as a Population Health Research Coordinator at WMed putting their Kalamazoo College degree in Mathematics to good use.
- World Traveler: They studied abroad in Costa Rica and speak Spanish.

- Creative Spirit: In their free time, Ruth loves to paint, draw, write, watch movies and belt out a tune at karaoke.
- Plant Parent: Their current “pets” are a beloved collection of greenery, including a cactus and an aloe plant.
- Home Team: They are partnered with David Whitcomb, and their parents and two sisters live on the east side of the state.

Ruth uses they/she pronouns. Please join us in thanking Ruth for their incredible heart for young people and their presence in our church family! We are blessed to have Ruth assisting our youth and young adults connect, have fun, and deepen their faith journey!



~ Save the Date ~

## FREE STORE

June 17, 2026

9am - 3pm

## Update on the Simplified Accountable Structure

After prayerful conversation and careful review, a discernment team of the Church Council has decided that First United Methodist Church will not adopt the Simplified Accountable Structure at this time.

The Simplified Accountable Structure would have shifted the governance of the church from the Church Council and three Administrative Committees: Trustees, Finance, and Staff Parish Relations Committee, to become one Leadership Board.

We recognize that this model has helped some congregations streamline decision-making. However, after evaluating our current ministries, staffing, and leadership responsibilities, we believe our existing structure is the best fit for supporting our mission, maintaining appropriate oversight, and encouraging broad participation in the life of the church.

This decision does not change our commitment to being transparent, accountable, and responsive. We will continue working to improve communication, clarify roles, and remove unnecessary complexity as we live our mission to Celebrate, Experience, and Share God's Love. Our governance will continue through these administrative committees: Church Council; Trustees & Finance; Staff-Parish Relations Committee; and Nominations Committee.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about our process and the factors we considered, please reach out to one of the leaders listed below. Thank you for your continued prayers, support, and engagement in our shared ministry.

—Rev. Julie Kline and Rev. Matt Weiler

Church Council Co-Chairs: Deb Search-Willoughby and Christine Charles

## Special Service Sunday May 31: “Making a Pivot in the Midst of Life’s Whirlwind”

Our May 31st service will feature a dramatic staged reading by Buddy Hannah, Laurie Nelson, Len Schoenherr, Jonathan Richardson, Jai Tiark, Daniel Whitcomb, and Cheryl Almeda. Written and directed by Buddy Hannah.

### Immigration Law & Justice News

by Ann Sweany

At the last ILJ-MI board meeting, we learned about upcoming immigration court appearances. ILJ, including Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids, has long worked with unaccompanied minors—children and youth immigrants in this country without their parents. A number of these children will soon be facing hearings in Detroit, represented by ILJ staff. The youngest of the children is one year old.

### May Mission of the Month:



It’s spring and the Growing Community Garden (2800 Gull Road) is getting ready for the new growing season! The garden is a wonderful free resource for fresh produce and is available to everyone. Like all gardens, a lot of effort and financial support is needed to ensure a successful season.

Items needed are:

- toilet roll cores
- paper towel cores
- cardboard egg cartons to use for seed starts
- gardening gloves
- packaged snacks (protein bars, granola bars, etc.)
- lemonade mix
- paper grocery bags for produce harvests
- 5-gallon buckets
- basic tools (pruning shears, trowels, spring tooth rakes, etc.)

Cash donations are also greatly appreciated as their funding is almost depleted. You can write a check with GCG in the memo line (please leave at Welcome Desk or in offering plate) or donate online at the church [website](#), designating the GCG garden: Please place donations in the Mission of the Month collection box by the Food Pantry.

There will be a Spring Planting Festival Saturday, May 16, 9 am - 4 pm. Participate in garden prep, exhibits and fun activities for all! Please come and join in the fun!

### Poetry Corner

#### Weedy Eschatology

by Mark D. Stucky

The aging street mourns its faded splendor. It remembers having red tulips and roses in manicured, fertilized, emerald lawns in community yards lining its borders. But neighborhoods gradually decayed, and nobody’s planted flowers in years. The asphalt’s once-black fresh-tar patina is now gray and chockfull of countless cracks.

In those rifts grow rows of feral weeds that no person planted or wanted. Rooted in forgotten fissures of the world, weeds lift their hearts and heads toward the sky. Survivors of severe environments, baked by blazing sun, infrequently watered, deprived of easy access to nourishing soil, and squashed by droves of mutilating tires. Yet, still the stalwart weeds survive, paragons of beautiful resilience.

Glamorous, fragile flowers are transient. Plain, ordinary weeds are forever. For humans who feel our messy lives are more like run-over weeds than roses, weeds’ wild fortitude foreshadows an unexpected, untamed eternity.



Do you write poetry? We’d love to feature your work! Email poetry corner submissions to [ejones@umc-kzo.org](mailto:ejones@umc-kzo.org).

