



New Worship Series to Begin in September

Feast of Creation + Creation in Christ

Salt+Soil+Seawater

Creation in Christ Sunday/the Feast of Creation

A brand-new Christian feast day, the Feast of Creation, comes to the worldwide church this year on September 1st. This new holy day is not only new for United Methodists, but it is a new holy observance for the worldwide church—the first in over a hundred years! The last new holy day was Christ the King Sunday, established in 1925.

Praise of the Creator is right for its own sake! But for current and future generations, when the harms to the planet from human activities are threatening so many and so much, it is urgent and imperative to return to the core teachings of faith and remember that in the beginning was the Word, and all things are created through God.

A “feast day” is a special day on the yearly church worship calendar. For Christians, feast days are holy days. These are days to praise God with special emphasis on events of the scriptures and the life of the church. There are special hymns, songs, stories, and prayers that accompany these celebrations. Across traditions there are holy days to celebrate the Saints (such as Saint Francis), or an event in the life of the church (such as Pentecost), or an event that marks the life of Jesus (such as Christmas Day). While all Christians raise up joy for Christmas and Easter, there

is some variation among Christian traditions as to which holy days / feast days are included in official denominational calendars, and what these holy days are called. For United Methodists, this new “Feast of Creation” will be called Creation in Christ Sunday.

The idea of a feast day is ancient. Many religious people of all faiths celebrate special occasions that can be one day or a series of days, such as the Festival of Lights, or Kwanzaa, or Ramadan, or Passover. The word “feast” comes from the word festival. A feast day doesn’t need to include food, though many feast days do include fasts and/or festive foods as part of the traditional observance. For Christians, feast days can also include a celebration of Holy Communion.

Most Christians share a core set of holy days or feast days. But there are differences. When the Methodists and other Protestant groups split from the Anglican and Catholic churches a few hundred years ago, they selected only a few days to continue to include in their observance practices. In choosing which to keep and celebrate, Methodists prioritized holy days that rose from Scripture, recognizing the Bible as a central authority for understanding God, Jesus, the Trinity, and Christian life together. - *umcjnews*

Sunday, September 6 - “Look to Jesus”

Sunday, September 13 - Rejoice Sunday! with Communion - “God’s Breath”

Sunday, September 20 - ASP Sunday - “The Cosmic Dance of Creation and Our Place within It”

Sunday, September 27 - “The One in Whom We Live, and Move, and Have Our Being”

Children & Family Ministries

Children's Sunday School: begins after the 10am service on September 13. The class meets in Room 206 and is for preschool through fifth grade children.

Faith Milestones: Our group for 3rd through 5th graders begins September 20 from 6-7:30pm. We meet once a month during the school year.

Godly Play: Children will leave sanctuary worship after "The Child Within Us All" for Godly Play in Room 200, returning to their families before the end of worship.

Nursery Care for infants through 4-year-olds is always available in Room 208 during the 10am Sunday worship. Beginning on September 13, Nursery Care will also be available until the end of the Sunday School hour after worship.

Youth Group Resumes September 13

At First United Methodist Church, youth ministry is about creating space for young people to discover who they are, to find belonging, and to be the hands and feet of Christ through service. Youth Group is open to all 6th-12th grade students. We meet every Sunday evening during the school year from 6:00 to 7:30pm in the Youth Lounge. This is a space for young people to play and learn and feast and serve and love and laugh and grow in grace during their teenage years. The first meeting of the season will be Sunday, Sept. 13th. To learn more, contact Pastor Matt Weiler at mweiler@umc-kzo.org.

New Confirmation Class to Begin 9/20

Confirmation is a time when young people learn about who they are in Jesus Christ, how they belong to the church, and how their lives are a part of God's story. At FUMC this is a two-year process for students in the 7th grade and older. We spend two years in confirmation because the learning takes place during a critical time of adolescent development and invites young people to make a big decision about their commitment to God and to the church. Our next round of confirmation class begins Sunday, September 20th and will meet every 3rd Sunday during the school year. To register, please contact Pastor Matt Weiler at mweiler@umc-kzo.org.

First UMC Book Club: Fall Book Study

This fall the First UMC Book Club will be studying *For Such a Time as This: An Emergency Devotional* by Hanna Reichel. Led by Miriam Downey and Jan Schoenherr, the study will last for four weeks; beginning on Tuesday, September 15 and meeting every Tuesday at 10:00 am through October 6.

From the Introduction: "This, then, is the task this little book sets for itself. It is meant for regular people who—regardless of our position on this or that policy that a current government may be advancing, and regardless of our vocation and standing in life—feel uneasy about the rising authoritarian tendencies. People who are looking for some insight as to how to live as Christians in such a time as this. The lessons are particularly for those among us who are not necessarily looking to die a hero, but who are concerned about how to keep on living as followers of Christ."

Please let Jan Schoenherr know if you would like to attend by August 31 so that we can order you a book. Books are \$20. Email: schoenherrjan@gmail.com.

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Jan Baker
Wanda Boekhout's family
The Bultema family
Wayne Conner
Bill Dimond & family
Robin Entenman
Janet Hanson
Carol Hurley & family
Nancy Hyde
Rev. Gene & Marilyn Lewis
Judy McClelland
Mumma family
Anna Rasmussen
Hank Rohs' family
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 September issue:

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, by **September 1** (ejones@umc-kzo.org). Articles may be edited for space and content.

Don't forget to submit your poems for Poetry Corner!

Relationships with Construction on the Side – ASP 2026

by Rev. Dr. Matt Weiler

This July the youth of First United Methodist returned to the Appalachian Mountains to work with Appalachia Service Project (ASP) once again to make homes safer, warmer, and dryer. ASP continues to be a vital part of our youth ministry where



young people grow deeper in relationship with God, with one another, and with themselves. Eight teams worked on eight different homes doing

a myriad of projects that included accessibility ramps, installing new windows and doors, siding installation, floor joist repair, and new flooring, among other projects.

The founder of ASP, Tex Evans, would say that ASP is a RELATIONSHIP ministry with construction on the side. This emphasis on relationship is what makes the ASP week so transformative. Those who go are impacted by the lives and the stories of homeowners while living together in Christian community for one week.

This year our group gained new understanding of the root

Beginning in September: Fill Your Soul with Music!

Our church offers a broad array of musical ensembles. Participation will feed your soul and help build joyful relationships in the church. Contact our Director of Music, Jacqueline Stilger at jstilger@umc-kzo.org for more information on all of our musical opportunities.

Chancel Singers is open to all, and music reading abilities are not required. All you need is a love of singing and a willingness to share that love with others in the choir and the congregation. Rehearsals are Thursday evenings from 7:15 - 9:00pm, beginning September 10.

Handbell Ensemble: Handbell ringing experience is not a requirement - we look forward to teaching people how to ring. *Music reading ability is required.* We are always in need of substitutes, and this can lead to a permanent position if desired. Rehearsals are Thursday evenings at 5:45pm beginning September 17.

causes of the poverty in Southeastern Kentucky as we heard the story of one man who worked in the coal mines for 47 years. We heard homeowners describe how government responses to the devastating floods have pressed them deeper into poverty. Our own faith lives were also challenged as we heard the testimony of homeowners.

ASP creates a balance of hard work, play, worship, discipleship, and freedom. This year our group swam in a beautiful reservoir surrounded by the mountains, we played Euchre and pool and foosball in our living center. And we ate LOTS of ice-cream. A total of 49 participated in the trip (32 youth and 17 adults). 33 participants were from First United Methodist while the other 17 came from Portage Chapel Hill UMC.

The total cost for ASP is approximately \$27,000; this includes ASP fees, along with van rental, fuel, and meals while traveling. Thank you, First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo for your generous support. Be sure to join us for worship on September 20th as we tell the story of this year's trip in story and photos. We'll also be taking an offering to begin our fundraising efforts for ASP 2027. If you would like to give to youth missions, you may do so on our [website](#) or by check at any time!



First Beats is our children's musical ensemble. Children in grades 3 - 8 can learn to sing, ring, play percussion instruments, and perform in church musicals. Rehearsals are Tuesday afternoons from 4:15 - 5:30pm beginning September 15.

First Bells is open to all children ages 3 and up. They play in worship about every 6 weeks. They rehearse during the Sunday School hour and only need to be able to recognize colors to participate. Our worship is enlivened and enriched by our youngest members!

First Strings and Friends is an ensemble that plays during worship about 4 times a year. We welcome players high school age through adult. If you play violin, viola, cello, string bass, or flute, then this group is for you. Please contact First Strings and Friends director Anne Sherfield at arscello@aol.com if you are interested.

FUMC Staff Introductions

Christiane (Chris) Stakely - Office Assistant

by Linda Hamill

In our church office there is a queen of everything. That's Chris Stakely, our Office Assistant. You've likely heard her laugh echoing down the hall and seen the focused look in her eye as she sets off on a mission to find... well, anything. She knows where everything is, or at least where it should be.



Chris joined FUMC in November 2021 and continues to roll in here every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Her specialty is reports—she creates them, runs them, forgets them, checks them,

loses them, finds them, and champions them. If reports had a guardian angel, it would have Chris's phone number.

But what truly makes this job special to her? "The people, absolutely," Chris says. It's the coworkers, the diverse faces she meets, and the unpredictability of each day. "There's always something new to do." Though we suspect she secretly thinks, "There's always a new *report* to do," with giddiness.

Her superpower? Laughter! Chris believes the best part of her day is cracking someone up, which guarantees a hearty laugh in return. (Consider this your official invitation to stop by her desk with a good joke).

Off the clock, Chris is a dedicated family navigator and travel enthusiast. Her crew is vast: two brothers in France, a sister, her three children (all boys—so you know she's a veteran of chaos), their families, and what she fondly calls "a ton of in-laws." Her household includes her husband, Bob, who she nominates as her "biggest pet," the furry pets - Watson (dog) and two cats, and a collection of "pet peeves" (which we won't name to protect the guilty).

Chris's career path is a fascinating tour of industries: fast food, credit collections, network surveillance, banking, and health care. She declares that working here is the most fun she's had in her career. We're thrilled to be the recipients of that fun, her expertise, and her legendary laughter. So, next time you're searching for a form, an answer, or just a moment to laugh, you know who to see - the report wizard herself, Chris Stakely!

CFM Family Fun Event Aug. 23!

Children and Family Ministries will have an end of summer Family Fun Event on Sunday, August 23rd at 3pm, Oshtemo Township Park. We will make goop (all supplies necessary will be provided). We will have a potluck, so please bring a dish to pass. Table settings and drinks will be provided.

Youth and Young Adult Residency

This summer, Ruth Butters brought her time as our Youth and Young Adult Resident to a close after serving in the position for two years. Ruth has assisted Pastor Matt in developing and leading youth group and confirmation. She attended youth retreats and ASP for two summers, and guided our young adult ministry, Manna. On July 12 in worship Ruth gave a wonderful testimony to her time with us; you can review her words on our church YouTube page. We are so grateful, Ruth, for your service with us. We look forward to your continued role with our youth group and pray for you as you begin grad school this fall!

The youth and young adult residency is now entering its 6th year. This is a one-year program (renewable for a 2nd year) for young adults who desire to have hands-on ministry experience with youth and young adults. The cost for this program is approximately \$13,000 per year and has been funded through private donations and a Ministry Intern Restricted Fund. Our first two Residents are now full-time seminary students, Ruth is beginning full-time graduate school in sociology, and each of our residents are continuing to serve the church empowered by your nurturing care! If you would like to contribute financially to help the Youth and Young Adult Residency to continue, please contact Pastor Matt Weiler at mweiler@umc-kzo.org.

Join the CARES Team!

- C** - calling and cards
- A** - acts of kindness
- R** - reaching out
- E** - engaged with one another
- S** - Spirit-led



This ministry team connects and cares for members and friends of Kalamazoo First United Methodist Church, especially our elders and those with ongoing health concerns or significant life events. Contact Judy Kingsley at judykings@charter.net to learn more and join our efforts to share God's love or receive CARE from a team member.