The First Word
October 2026
Vol. 41, No. 10
First United Methodist Church • 212 S. Park Street • Kalamazoo, MI 49007 • (269) 381-6340 • www.umc-kzo.org

Our Fall 2026 Generosity Campaign

by Rev. Julie Kline

OUR HEARTS OUR HOME
A GENEROSITY CAMPAIGN

During the month of October 2026, First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo is participating in *Our Hearts, Our Home: A Generosity Campaign*, an invitation to reflect on how our giving helps us practice mutual love, extend hospitality, do good, and share what we have. Rooted in Hebrews 13, the campaign calls us to tend both our spiritual home and our ministry home: a place of worship, music, children and youth, care, outreach, advocacy, welcome, inclusion, and justice.



Throughout the campaign, we will be invited to prayerfully consider how our generosity sustains the ministries we share and helps others find belonging here. A pledge helps us to create the spiritual discipline of generous giving and is one way we make visible our shared commitment to what God is doing through this congregation. It helps church leaders plan responsibly for worship, music, pastoral care, outreach, faith formation, and the everyday work of keeping our church strong. It is also a spiritual practice that helps us align our resources with our values and grow in generosity. These are the remaining weeks of the campaign:

Sunday, October 18

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 and Luke 18:1-8.
Theme: *Persisting in faith, practicing justice.*

Sunday, October 25 - Consecration Sunday

Scripture: Joel 2:23-32 and Luke 18:9-14.
Theme: *Sharing what we have as God's Spirit is poured out on all.*

On Consecration Sunday, we bring forward our pledge cards and dedicate our gifts as a faithful response to God's generosity and as a shared commitment to the ministries that experience, celebrate, and share God's love.

Each week of worship in October will include stories from members of the congregation who will share how they have experienced FUMC as a spiritual home of mutual love, hospitality, and shared ministry. Four weekly devotionals



throughout October are being emailed and will help us reflect on FUMC as a place to worship, a place to belong, a place to grow, and a place to serve. Please be on the lookout for a pledge card that will be mailed with a Consecration Sunday reminder from the Generosity Team.

As autumn reminds us of the abundance around us, may this season also help us notice the abundance of love, service, faith, and generosity within our congregation.

Prayerfully consider how your giving helps tend this home of mutual love, hospitality, inclusion, and justice for the year ahead.

Children's Sunday School: Clay Nativities



As part of our Making Meaning Together project, the children will have an opportunity to create nativities out of clay with potter Karen French. The first three Sundays in November, November 1, 8, and 15, we will create these nativities during the Sunday School hour following worship. We plan to feature these nativities during worship in Advent! To make sure we have enough supplies, please RSVP by October 18th to Ms. Julia at jlibrizzi@umc-kzo.org.



First Stitchers - New Opportunity!

by Linda Lueth

When one door closes another one opens….

Over the years, First Stitchers has made receiving blankets for a UMW Uganda Midwife program, small quilts for distribution through-out Kalamazoo County by the local chapter of Binky Patrol, and colorful pillowcases filled with a new pillow for clients at the YWCA. Late this summer, we learned that the local chapter of Binky Patrol will be ceasing operations soon. That same week, we became aware (through FUMC member and Bronson volunteer, Nancy Hilliard) that the NICU and Pediatric floor at Bronson Hospital could use some handmade receiving blankets, hats, burp cloths and fun/colorful pillowcases. So 1st Stitchers decided it's time to pivot and to learn more about this new opportunity. And we want to invite you to learn right along with us!

Kandi Torres, the Volunteer Services Manager at Bronson Hospital, will be coming to a 1st Stitchers gathering on **Thursday morning, October 29th at 10am in the Fellowship Room**. She will be sharing their needs and possibly even bringing some samples and patterns. First Stitchers is excited about this new opportunity. We hope you can join us to learn more about how we can share God's love with these little ones!

ILJ (Immigration Law and Justice) Update

by Ann Sweany

On September 17, 2026, ILJ attorneys filed a number of adjustment of status (green card) applications. What makes this date important is a change in how USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) handles these applications with regard to what is known as "public charge" or the likelihood immigrants will use public benefits, such as food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance. Beginning September 18, use of these benefits will legally receive much greater scrutiny, threatening the applications of immigrants who had previously been able to make use of them without fear of being denied legal residency. This is a big change from 2022 government guidance. It is not difficult to imagine how immigrants from, say, Ukraine, who likely arrived in this country with few assets, might need this type of assistance in their early years here as they settle in.

This Public Charge Guidance is one of the latest in a long list of measures this administration has taken to drastically limit and discourage immigration. Your vote this fall can make a difference in how our country welcomes immigrants.

Please keep these friends in your prayers:

Jan Baker's family
Wanda Boekhout's family
The Bultema family
Wayne Conner
Bill Dimond & family
Robin Entenman
Janet Hanson
Mary Ellen Fredenburg & family
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
Jan Schoenherr
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 November 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 **November 1** (ejones@umc-kzo.org). Articles may be edited for space and content.

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

FUMC Members Participate in the Kalamazoo United Day of Service

On Friday, October 2, four members of our church joined with other volunteers in the community to help weatherize houses on the north side of Kalamazoo in what is called the Kalamazoo United Day of Service. We thank Andrew Lehman, Dan Heaton, Ed, Ross, and Dan Duncan for joining in on this worthy neighborhood improvement project.





October Mission of the Month



SALVATION ARMY 'SHARE THE WARMTH' COAT DRIVE

We are participating in the Salvation Army coat drive again this year. New and gently used coats, hats, gloves, mittens, scarves and boots are greatly appreciated and will help keep those in need warmer this winter! Donation boxes are located outside the Sanctuary and at the Welcome Desk.



One-Day Academy Class on Artificial Intelligence - Oct. 25

On Oct. 25 in the Parlor after the worship service, Mark Stucky will lead the one-session class "Theologies of AI: the Good, the Bad, and the Apocalyptic." As AI (Artificial Intelligence) increasingly consumes more of society's energy (literally and metaphorically), how should we think about AI and its disruptive, transformative impact on humanity? What are AI's promises and perils? Is AI another double-edged tool like many technologies before this…or is it something fundamentally different…and dangerous? The class will explore mind-bending questions about our present reality, future fears, and technological implications of consciousness and the soul.



FUMC Staff Introductions

Rev. Julie Kline - Lead Pastor

by Linda Hamill

Pastor Julie - Powered by faith, family, dark chocolate and (in all weather) a good bike ride.

When asked about her role here, Pastor Julie shares a favorite quote from Ram Dass: "We're all just walking each other home." In her own words: "We're on this spiritual journey together, held in God's love." And she's been walking alongside this congregation for… well, let's just say she's "working on being here longer than Pastor Sandy Elfring." (That's church code for: a long, wonderful time.)



She books her Fridays for sacred rest and tries to keep Saturdays clear, but in truth, she's always on call for the Spirit and this community. What keeps her going? Creating—and being present for—those holy, Spirit-filled moments and relationships.

When she's not pastoring, you'll find her gardening, reading, biking in any weather, camping, doing yoga, or savoring life with her wonderful family: husband Drew (our building superintendent!), their two sons Jonah and Lukas, and her mom Jan—also a proud FUMC member.

The Kline-Bolton household also includes their dog, Suki the Beloved, Ziggy, the cat who adopted them, and, in her words, "some worthless chickens."

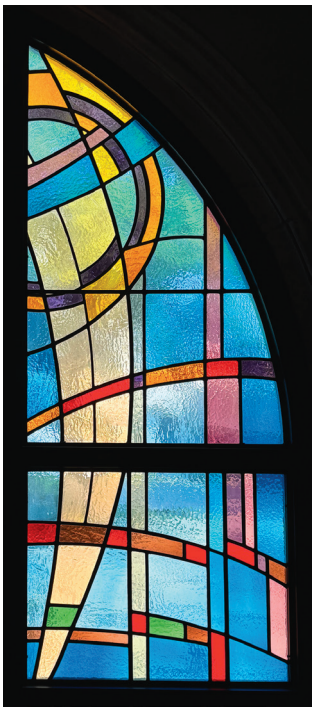
She loves historical fiction, dark chocolate, fresh veggies, and anything Donna Dunyak wants to feed her. Her favorite ride? The Kal Haven Trail to South Haven. Oh, and all her bikes have names—inspired by the horses that once helped her in animal therapy with children in residential care.

We're so grateful for her constant presence. Help us celebrate Rev. Julie by offering your thanks and, if you're curious, inquiring about the secret life of backyard chickens.

Poetry Corner

Shining Shards of Splendor

by Mark D. Stucky



Silent sunlit quilt
composed of daylight,
a multicolored mosaic
of immaculate radiance

Its razor-sharp fragments
of juxtaposed hues
joined and channeled
into a designed whole,
fashioned by many hands
in a hazardous occupation
making the complex window
greater than its sum of shards.

But deep within me too,
lie broken pieces of soul,
assembled loosely together
over a precarious lifetime
of striving toward wholeness,
guided by a divine hand.

And now all can be beautiful fragments,
bringing into darkness divine glimmers,
together, as an assembled whole,
greater than the sum of the people.
We can tell complex, multi-colored stories
of a diverse church as one body of Christ.

Starting November 1st: 4-Week Lord's Prayer Academy Class

As we look at the very familiar Lord's Prayer, we will pay attention to language options and zoom out for a broader perspective. To approach it with curiosity and wonder and allow ourselves to be enriched by the experience of others is also a goal of this four-week class. The hope is that we will all deepen our connection to God and our commitment to further God's vision for creation. The class will meet the first four Sundays in November, led by Len Schoenherr.





Save the Date! November 5th
Fourscore and More Luncheon

12 noon to 2pm, Wesley Hall



