

“The CHIMES” – March

Volume 56, No. 3

2021

Continuing the Conversation...

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

(Isaiah 55:8-9)

“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
(Ephesians 3:20-21)



We are now well into the season of Lent, a time in the church year when we intentionally prepare our hearts and minds for the great celebration of Easter—the pinnacle of God’s redeeming work through Jesus Christ. We began this important season on Ash Wednesday with prayer, repentance, and remembering our mortality and God’s steadfast love. This is to be our focus as we continue our 40-day Lenten journey of preparation.

Lent gives Christians the opportunity to prepare for the gifts and glory of Easter by reflecting on our need for God’s salvation and restoration. As humans created by God, we are finite and fallible; yet God loves, saves, and restores us. Recognizing the limitations of human existence alongside the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ enhances the meaning and significance of Easter as the day we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

In talking recently with some of my colleagues, they expressed they were going into Lent with a feeling of being in the wilderness. Some compared this wilderness feeling to Jesus’ 40-day wilderness temptation as he prepared to begin his ministry. Others seemed to feel more like they were experiencing a 40-year wilderness journey like that of the Hebrew children Moses liberated.

These colleagues shared feeling things like depression, discouragement, exhaustion, etc. Feelings they have not experienced before in ministry, at least not in such epic levels. Some of my colleagues have or are retiring early; others are hunkering down, taking one step at a time, seeking God’s direction more than ever to get through their wilderness journey.

To be honest, in this past year, I have been where my colleagues are. I have walked through some dark days, as I’m sure you also have. But, deep in my being, I am sensing a beacon light of hope at the end of this deep wilderness I have been stumbling through. I believe what has helped me sense that light is beginning a 40-day prayer challenge with our Servant Leadership Board.

As I am intentionally joining with others on this prayer journey the Scriptures I am reading along the way are coming to life for me and enlivening my spirit. As I pray and dream with this group of leaders I am excited to see what big things God will do through us, not only as a Servant Leadership Board, but as a church.

Too often as people and as Christ’s church we get stuck in wilderness wandering, weighed down in life with an attitude of scarcity. We are focused on what we can’t do or what we don’t have or what might happen to take away the little that we do have. We worry instead of praying (and yes, I have been guilty of this myself so I’m not trying to shame anyone here).

When we keep our eyes on the storms going on around us, worrying is a natural and easy human inclination. The Isaiah passage above reminds me that a BIG and merciful God loves and cares for us and invites us to think, dream, and pray BIG. I encourage you to read all of Isaiah 55.

Do we dare to believe that the God who created and sustains everything that is can’t handle our biggest God-honoring desires? I feel like the Ephesians passage above is an invitation to pray big, God-glorifying prayers, trusting that God can do more than we could ever imagine. But, I also need to remember, God answers prayers on God’s time not ours.

Prayer, after all, is about relationship, God’s people relating to God. It isn’t about magic formulas we murmur to get our desired response from God.

Our BIG God can do anything God wants without us, or our words. But, God desires participation from us as we grow in our relationship with God and each other.

God wants to get us working together, dreaming BIG dreams together as we seek God's will and show God's love to those who have yet to meet this BIG God. As we dream and pray big, God-glorifying prayers together I picture God delighting in this as a parent does in watching their children grow, learn, and work in cooperation with each other.

Nothing that happens in this life is a surprise to God, nothing is too big (or too small) for our BIG God to handle. What God wants most from and for us is a growing, maturing, God-honoring relationship that delights in God. Which reminds me of another Scripture I will leave you to consider:

*"Take **delight** in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart"* (Psalm 37:4)

Serving and leading in Christ's love!
Pastor L

"Show me the size of your dream and I'll show you the size of your God."—Pastor Mark Batterson

Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Betty Jones, who passed away on February 15. Betty was a long time member of the church and wife of Spike Jones.

Family Promise Update

We currently do not have a family enrolled in Family Promise as of February 20, but a family is being interviewed.



The church has committed to the following dates in 2021:

March 14- March 21

November 28 – December 4

If you are interested in volunteering for evening meals, *if a family should enter the program*, please let me know and I will add you to the list of meal volunteers. Thanks again for all your support.

Peace and Blessings,
Lynn Humphrey



Thank you, UMW friends, for the lovely lavender mum plant for our anniversary in January—what a bright spot on a cold, winder day!

Thanks, Cathy for dropping by with your best wishes too. Our hearts were warmed to be remembered by friends.

Bob and Cyndi Wise

Let's Get Our Worship On!



If you have been missing in-person worship, you will be happy to hear we will be open for worship again on Sunday, March 7. We have four teams trained for recording and livestreaming and are ready to welcome you back into the sanctuary for "social distanced" worship. (We could still use one more team if you are interested let Pastor know.)

If you are not yet ready to take the step of coming back to worship, we will continue to record the services and if the internet cooperates, we will also livestream them. When you join us on Facebook, let us know you are there by commenting; it could be something as simple as "good morning."

However it works best for you at this time, make the commitment to prioritize worship as part of your Sabbath rest. It is important for you and important to God. (It's one of those commandments we've been hearing about on Sunday mornings during Lent.) Starting March 7 I look forward to seeing you in worship at 9 a.m.



Ash Wednesday Prayer

The Ash Wednesday prayer vigil was a success.

Several members stopped in throughout the day to pray and pick up their Lenten devotionals. Some even stopped in the office before leaving to let pastor know how meaningful the time was for them. If you were not able to come in on Ash Wednesday we are hoping to make arrangements to get your Lenten devotional to you.



Ecumenical Lenten Devotions

The Sparta Ministerial Association members decided to forego the Wednesday Lenten lunches and devotions this year as we don't feel it would be safe to have groups gathering in our fellowship spaces for a meal. We will still offer weekly devotions that will be posted on our church Facebook pages. Beginning the Wednesday after Ash Wednesday the schedule is:

February 23 – Pastor Mark

March 2 – Pastor Brian

March 9 – Pastor Loretta

March 17 – Pastor Steve

March 24 – Deacon Bill

We hope to continue the full schedule of lunches and devotions next year.

Looking Ahead

April 1 – Maundy Thursday: The 24 Hour Prayer Vigil will begin at noon. The church will be open starting at 9 a.m. for anyone who wants to pray in the sanctuary. Please just sign in at the office and pick up your prayer vigil brochure. Starting at 6:30 p.m. a Service of Tenebrae will take place in the sanctuary.

“Tenebrae” is the Latin word meaning “darkness.” It is a moving service that involves segmented reading of John’s story of the trial, sentencing, execution, death, and burial of Jesus. After each segment of the story is read, a candle is extinguished. The final story of the burial is read in near darkness, with the only light being used by the reader.

Worshippers leave in silence to ponder the impact of Christ’s death and await the celebration of the coming Resurrection.

April 2 – Good Friday: This is not confirmed yet, but the Ministerial Association is hoping weather is good and COVID numbers are low so we can do the “Prayer Walk” through downtown Sparta again this year. Keep this in your prayers and stay tuned for details.

April 4 – Easter Sunday: We will once again participate in “Blossoming of the Cross” to symbolize the new life believers have because of Christ’s death and resurrection.



Nurture Update

Easter, with its voice of spring and rebirth, will dawn on April 4, and once again, you will find the “Blossoming of the Cross” on the front steps of our church—a symbol of awakening, renewal, hope, and resurrection.

With our hearts filled with love and joyful praises, we will behold our risen King!

A blessed Easter to all!



Sparta UMC Web Page Update

Our church Web site is updated with a new page that has direct links to our worship services and our newsletters. You will find the most recent services and newsletters going back through 2020. You can find it at: lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc

Once you are at our Web site, click on the “Stay Connected” link and it will give you options to go the worship or Chimes newsletter sites.

We hope you find this new feature helpful.

Welcome to the Family



On Saturday, January 30, Brynlee Rose Huntington was baptized. Brynlee is pictured with mom and dad, Jennifer Thurston and Dustin Huntington. Welcome into this family of God Brynlee!



The worship team is still in need of a couple of more people willing to learn how to record and livestream our worship services. You would need to be able to commit to one Sunday a month. Contact Toni Burrows or the church office if you are interested in this important ministry.

Is It Time for Change?

“‘Even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing — grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.” ~Joel 2:12-14

With February comes the cold dark days of Lent. Are you ready? Are you ready to seriously look inside yourself? Are you ready to be honest about what is godly and what is not? Are you ready to change?

Change is a great theme word for Lent (and all of 2020). Many things changed health, wealth, and politics. It changed without us trying and definitely without us wanting it to change. But in Lent, things change because we make them change. It is our time to change our habits, minds, action, and internal/external words to become more like Christ.

Do you need to change your change? Think about how much you give to the church.

Should/can you give more? Maybe your answer is “I don’t know.” Think about this: How much do you spend each month going out to eat. How much money do you spend on coffee? How much money do you spend on fun items, hobbies, and events? Now compare those numbers to the amount you give to God each month.

Do you need to make a change?

Rev. Krystal Goodger,

Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
at www.wumf.org or Facebook/wumf.org
Or call 1-888-903-9863

Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program.

The next scrip order will be going in on **March 14**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl Isensee at: 9262 Festival Avenue, Sparta, WI 54656. If you have questions or need an order form contact Pastor Loretta at the church (269-6949) or on her cell phone at (608-386-1862).

Altar Plants

We can't meet in person for Sunday services but we can still appreciate seeing altar plants for the taped services. UMW would like to thank all those who signed up for one or more plants on one or multiple dates for 2021. Each date has two lines for one plant per line. Plants are \$4.75 each or two for \$9.50. Plant money goes to Eileen Gajewsky, UMW treasurer, who pays the invoice from Sparta Floral quarterly.



These dates are still open to honor, remember or celebrate: Mar. 14 (1 space), Mar. 28 (1 space), April 18 (1 space), April 25 (2 spaces) June 20 (2 spaces) July 4 (1 space) August 1 (2 spaces) October 3 (2 spaces.) Call the church office if you would like one or more of these dates/spaces and Michele will add to the Altar Plant calendar in hallway.

Thank you to the volunteers who deliver plants. Plants and volunteers brighten our days.

Thank you for your continued support of UMW,
Cathy Nichols

“I know that my Redeemer liveth,”
They asked me how I know it's true,
That the Savior lived and died
And if I believe the story, that the Lord was crucified?

And I have so many answers
To prove his Holy being,
Answers that are everywhere
Within the realm of seeing.

The leaves that fall at autumn
And were buried in the sod.
New budding on the tree boughs,
To lift their arms to God.

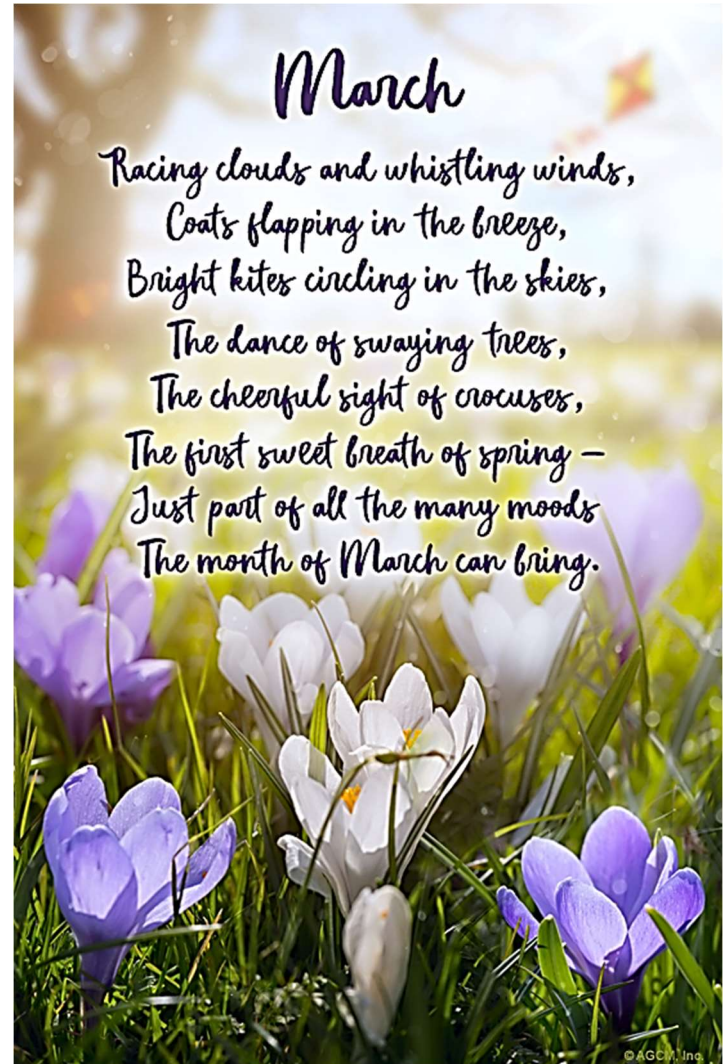
The flowers that were covered
And entombed beneath the snow,
Pushing through the “darkness”
To bid the Spring “hello.”

On every side, great nature
Retells the Easter story.
So who am I to question
“The Resurrection Glory!”



Time to Change Your Clocks

Daylight saving time begins on **March 14**. Don't forget to “spring” ahead one hour before you go to bed Saturday night.



And ... May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Romans 15:13)

From the Parish Nurse...

The Lenten journey, which of course begins with Ash Wednesday, is one of my most favorite times of the year. The ashes are a sign that symbolizes repentance and a reminder of our mortality. Ultimately, it is a reminder of how Christ dies for us.



During these forty days, let us each take the time to reflect, renew, and then rejoice as we prepare our way to journey to the cross with Christ where we find our salvation. Let this time be our covenant with God that confirms His victory over our life and the world. The Good News of Salvation and victory has no limits. God is speaking to the world continuously; each time Christ is victoriously preached. As each witness for Him shows His power, control, and transcendence over all creation. God saves and He puts forth Himself to rescue all those who desire Him.

There are many signs and symbols that remind us of God's love. Such as the sign of the rainbow that shows His promise of love and protection for His people. Christ's followers are called to be signs and symbols of His love and protection for the world through serving others.

I challenge you to see the signs before you during your Lenten journey and renew your covenant before the cross. Allow your convictions to be deeply rooted in the love shown to you at the cross, finding your motivation to share the Good News with others. Lastly, seek your comfort in knowing that God's love and promises transcend through all times.

Take the time during the next 40 days to follow your Lenten journey refocusing, renewing, and preparing for Resurrection Sunday by finding a place away from the noise of the world to draw to God in a variety of ways.

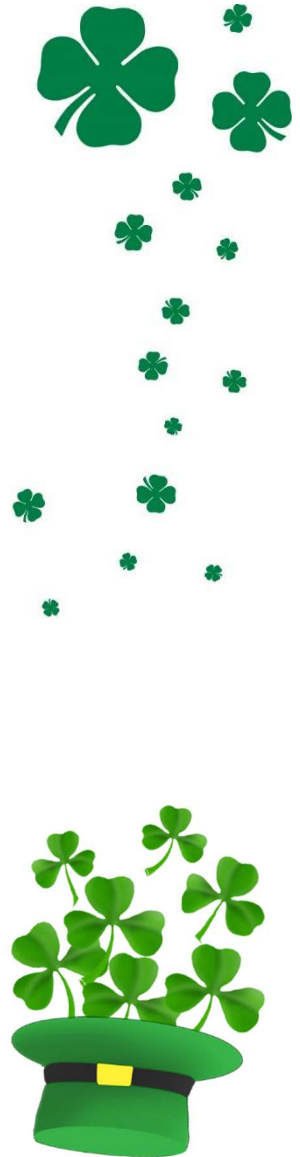
Love in Christ,
Priscilla.

March Anniversaries

Ramiro & Sarah Rodriguez
14 Pat & Gail Clark
17 Maxine & Curly Holz

March Birthdays

02 Andrea Cole
03 Lillian Ebert
03 Larry Walley
05 Adeline Simplot
06 Mac Smith
07 Derek McDonald
07 Kristine Phillips
08 Katherine Abbott
08 Quentin Dale
09 Lori Ascher
14 Pastor Loretta
16 Phyllis Aney
18 Tristan Blackdeer
19 Barb McGreevy
19 Elijah Peth-Schaffer
22 Arvilla Crocker
24 Joel Tock
25 Bob Nichols Jr.
26 Melissa Culpitt
28 James Davis
28 Julie Hanson
28 Jennifer Johnson
30 Grenda Rugg
31 Brenda Herrman
31 Dana Tock



Church Facebook Page

Have you checked out the church's Facebook page? It's a good place to keep up with what is going on in the church and easily access the online worship services.

You can find that site at:
www.facebook.com/UMCsparta/. Once you are there just "like" the site and you will receive updates when new information is posted.

Special Lent/Easter Offering

One of the first orders of business for the new Servant Leadership Board was to prayerfully decide where our special Lent and Easter offerings would go. After thoughtful discussion two local charities were chosen: St. Claire Health Mission of Monroe County and Families First of Monroe County. Here is some background on both of these worthy causes so you know what your gift is supporting.

The St. Clare Health Mission of Monroe County opened in 1996 with the support of Mayo Clinic Health System- Franciscan Healthcare in La Crosse, Sparta, and Tomah; Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, Sparta, and Tomah; Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center in Cashton and Norwalk; and the Monroe County Department of Health and Human Services.

The St. Clare Health Mission is staffed entirely by volunteers: physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurses, certified medical assistants, pharmacists, social workers, and clerical personnel. Spanish speaking interpreters are available when the Health Mission is open. Monroe County churches and service organizations provide lunches for the volunteers, many of whom arrive after working at their regular jobs.

The St. Clare Health Mission of Monroe County is located in the Specialty Services area of Mayo Clinic Health System in Sparta at 310 West Main Street, (parking lot entrance off "L" Street). The phone number is 608-366-5343. The free, twice monthly, walk-in medical clinics are scheduled for the first and third Tuesday evenings of each month.

Every gift given to the St. Clare Health Mission is vital for the health of the communities in Monroe County. Through generous sharing of time, talents, and financial support, the St. Clare Health Mission provides life-saving care for Monroe County residents 18 years of age and older who have no health insurance and whose financial status prevents them from otherwise seeking medical treatment. Tax deductible contributions to the St. Clare Health Mission of Monroe County go directly to provide health care in our community.

Families First of Monroe County, Inc. was created in 1994 by the Monroe County Planning Council to address the burgeoning unmet needs of individuals and families in crisis living in Monroe County. The goal of Families First is to align efforts under one roof that eliminates the duplication of services while streamlining resources to better help stabilize households that reduces the likelihood of further crisis from occurring.

For over 20 years, Families First worked hard to bring about positive change and is a proud member of a collaborative network of individuals, agencies, groups and partnerships helping those living with the conditions of poverty have a better existence while helping them find opportunities to improve their lives for the futures of themselves, their families, and their communities.

Through the years, Families First has been governed by a 12-member Board of Directors which included current and retired professionals, members of the community and individuals who represent the interest of those living in poverty. In addition to the board, a professional leadership team manages our agency, a highly motivated, deeply committed set of individuals who work every day to help those who need it most.

From the beginning, Families First has committed to improving the health and welfare of Monroe County through increasing long-term self-sufficiency skills and abilities with residents struggling to pay their bills, find employment, at-risk of losing their homes or experience homelessness, maintain heat or electricity, fix a vehicle or provide medication to their children because of the cost.

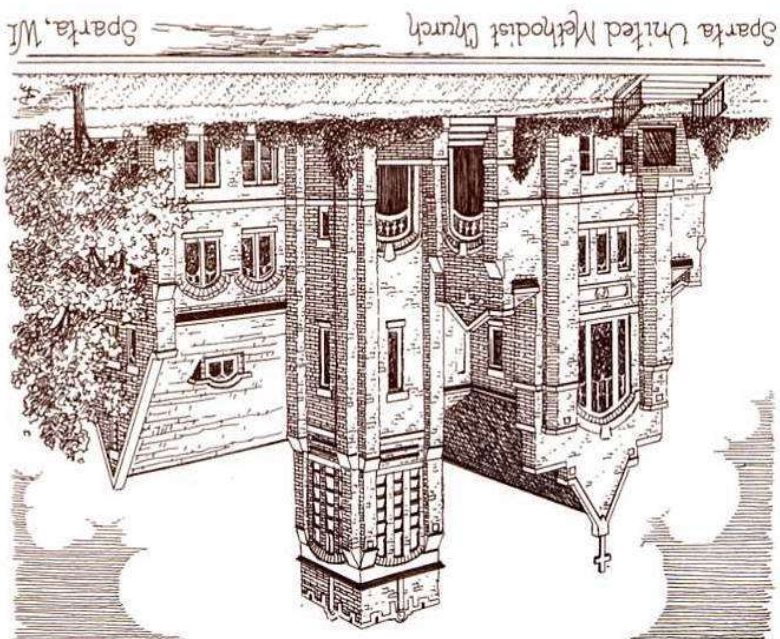
Strengthening individuals and families provides a foundation for success. Family First solves the root of those problems by building on individuals and family's assets and creating lasting impact. Our services and programming are prevention-focused, strengths-based, culturally informed, and outcomes driven. We provide these services within the community to teach, nurture, and support individuals and families in impactful and lasting way

The Chimes

Sparta United Methodist Church
210 N Court Street
Sparta, WI 54656

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Prepared Especially For:



Pastor: Rev. Loretta Waughal

Pastor's Cell Phone: (608) 386-1862

Phone: (608)269-6949

Fax: (608)269-6940

Email: office@spartamethodist.com

Website: lewaughal.wixsite.com/spartaumc

SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

In sanctuary worship services are on hiatus until further notice because of COVID 19

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year