

“The CHIMES” – February

Volume 58, No. 2

2023

Continuing the Conversation...

“Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.” The second is equally important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” No other commandment is greater than these.” (Mark 12:30)



What does it mean to love God with, “all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength?” I can be quick to say “I love God!” But explaining what that means is hard sometimes, especially when I realize how far I fall short of loving Him with all I’ve got, all the time ... with all

my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

So, in this month with it’s focus on love, I’m asking ... what *does* it mean to **love God heart, soul, mind and strength** when I can’t see Him or touch Him? How do I love God completely when I question His voice and doubt my circumstances? How does an imperfect person love a perfect God well?

Because Jesus said, loving God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength is the most important commandment — I want to take a closer look. So, I did some digging into the Word to learn more about this all-consuming, life-changing love God calls the greatest commandment.

Loving God with All Your Heart To love God with all my heart means to make Him my greatest treasure and gives me the desire to value my relationship with Him, with Jesus, over anything and everything else in my life. “*Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*” Matthew 6:21

Loving God with All Your Soul How would you define your soul? Dictionary definitions left me cold,

but I came across a helpful description of a soul, from *Soul Keeping* by John Ortberg:

“Your soul is what integrates your will (your intentions), your mind (your thoughts and feelings, your values and conscience), and your body (your face, body language, and actions) into a single life. A soul is healthy — well-ordered — when there is harmony between these three entities and God’s intent for all creation. When you are connected with God and other people in life, you have a healthy soul.”

Loving God with All Your Mind To love God with all my mind, means I love Him with my reason and intellect. Having faith does not mean giving up knowledge and understanding. Mind-loving includes Bible study, prayer, thoughts, and conversations that help my faith grow in ways that make me less easily distracted by a world that is constantly trying to tempt, defeat, and discourage me.

Loving God with All Your Strength Strength is putting my love into action. It is loving God through what I do and say ... honoring God with my abilities, my resources, my service, and the way I love others for His glory.

That’s what heart, soul, mind, and strength love looks like. Maybe like me, you’re squirming at the thought of how far you fall short ... especially when it comes to the “all” part of God’s command. But, beyond squirming, I’m thankful for God’s grace and mercy. What an amazing blessing to know He forgives each repentant soul.

But, I don’t want to leave it there. I want to do better...

So, I’ve made a list of things I want to do to help me stay mindful of the “all” part of loving God heart, soul, mind, and strength. You might want to create your own top 10 list.

continued

10 Ways to Love God Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength

- 1. Read and study His Word.**
- 2. Write your prayers and God's answers.**
- 3. Memorize His promises.**
- 4. Be still in God's presence.**
- 5. Spend time with God's people.**
- 6. Seek to know God's will in every part of life.**
- 7. Trust God's will comes from God's love.**
- 8. Obey God's will to glorify Him.**
- 9. Praise and thank God for who God is and all He does.**
- 10. Keep a record of God's love and faithfulness and tell others about Him.**

I am confident that when you and I make loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, our heart's desire Jesus will give us His strength through the power of the Holy Spirit to move closer to God's all-encompassing love.

He showers our lives with all we need — forgiveness, comfort, joy, peace, patience, kindness, hope, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, family, and love—God's love.

God bless you as you seek to know and love God fully!
Pastor L



A Lenten Journey through the Gospel of Luke

This year I will again offer a Wednesday evening Lenten DVD study opportunity. I invite you to a viewing and discussion of Pastor Adam Hamilton's DVD series, *Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws*. We will meet in the chapel on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. throughout Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 22.

Each week we will explore the story of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Luke by highlighting some of Jesus' "friends in low places." The hope is you will come to see just how important this theme is to Luke.

You are encouraged to purchase Adam Hamilton's book *Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws*. Even if you don't, the weekly DVD group discussion will be beneficial in itself. You are highly encouraged to read through the Gospel of Luke with a 40-day reading plan that will be available starting on Ash Wednesday. Each daily reading will take less than

15 minutes. Here is how we will progress through Lent with Luke:

February 22 (Ash Wednesday): *Lifting up the Lowly*, we'll turn to the Gospel's opening to see how God chose and used the elderly and infertile, as well as the young, the poor, and the powerless, as we turn to the stories surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and his cousin, Jesus.

March 1: *Simon, Do You See this Woman?* we'll turn to Luke's emphasis on Jesus' ministry with and for women including the demon-possessed Mary of Magdala with the voices in her head, the sinful woman who wept at Jesus' feet...trying to understand how Jesus saw a woman's role in his ministry.

March 8: *Parables From the Underside*, we'll consider Jesus' parables and how often in Luke Jesus makes the sinners, the sickly, the tax collectors, and the Samaritans the heroes of his stories, and the religious hypocrites the villains.

March 15: *On the Journey to Jerusalem*, we'll turn to Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, a journey that takes up nearly half of the Gospel. On this journey, Jesus ministered to Samaritan lepers, a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus, and others who were outcasts, outsider, and outlaws to their people, climaxing with his dramatic statement, "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

March 22: *The Final Week*, we'll turn to the events of Holy Week as Jesus entered Jerusalem "humble and riding on a donkey" (Matthew 21:5). There he overturns the tables of the wealthy and powerful merchants in the Temple, praises a poor widow who gave her last "mite" in her offering to God. At the Last Supper, Jesus addresses a debate among his disciples about which one of them was the "greatest."

March 29: *Crucified with the Outlaws*, we'll turn to the crucifixion of Jesus, and the words Luke records Jesus saying from the cross—words that only appear in Luke's Gospel: from the cross, Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of his abusers, offered salvation to an outlaw, and then entrusted his life into his Father's hands.

I look forward to the discussion we will have as we participate in this overview of Luke's Gospel for Lent.

Save the Dates

This year the Ministerial Association Lenten lunches are returning beginning Wednesday, March 1. Our church is hosting the first lunch with Pastor Brian Young giving the first devotion. Stay tuned for the full list of lunches coming in the March *Chimes*.

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 **February 12**. If you have questions or need an order form contact Michele at the church office 608-269-

If you find yourself in need of a card before the next order goes in give Cheryl a call and ask if she has the card you need. She sometimes has a few extra scrip cards for local businesses on hand.



Sasha's Generosity

Scott tells a story about when a story about when his church group visited Russia and he met a ten-year-old Russian orphan named Sasha who, for some reason, latched on to him. Sasha took Scott by the arm and led him through the orphanage, showing off his room and the place he ate meals.

All the while Sasha's eyes were filled with joy and laughter. In spite of the fact that Scott spoke little Russian, and Sasha spoke no English, they connected. As the church group prepared to depart, Sasha sat beside Scott, pulled a silver ring from his finger, and held it out for Scott to take. His eyes filled with tears and Scott spoke the only Russian word I knew — "Nyet, nyet." (No, no.)

This child, who had nothing in the world to call his own except this ring, desperately wanted to give this ring to him. When asked why Sasha wanted to give his only possession away, Sasha responded through an interpreter, "Because I am so thankful Scott came." For Sasha, abundant joy, extreme poverty, and a heart filled with gratitude overflowed in a wealth of generosity.

For many of us who have so much, we want more. We are not thankful for what we have and always look for the "something more." And truth be told, it's never enough. What would happen if, by God's grace, our desire to gain more and have more could be transformed by gratitude into a heartfelt desire to give more? What would happen if in a spirit of gratitude, we spent as much time figuring out ways to give as we spend figuring out how to earn, have, and keep?

Can you recall a time when you were truly thankful despite negative circumstances? Can you recall a time when someone who could least afford it gave you a generous gift? What was it like? How did you respond?

Rev. Jason Mahnke,
Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation



Altar Plants

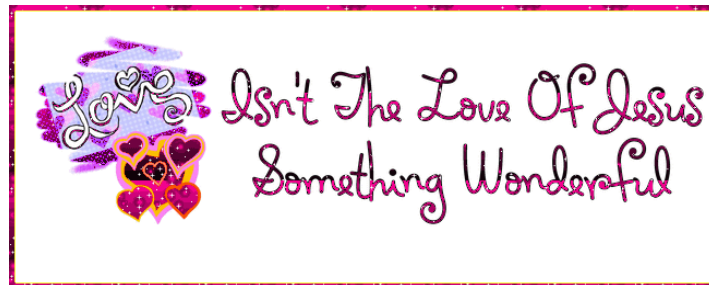


UWIF would like to thank all those who signed up for one or more plants on one or multiple dates for 2021. Each date has two lines for one plant per line. Plants are \$5.50 each or two for \$11.00. Plant money goes to Eileen Gajewsky, UMW treasurer, who pays the invoice from Sparta Floral quarterly.

Call the church office if you would like one or more dates(s) and Michele will add to the Altar Plant calendar in hallway.

Thank you to the volunteers who deliver plants to church and to designated recipients after a service. Plants and volunteers brighten our days.

Thank you for your continued support of UMW,
Cathy Nichols





Nurture Update

Thank you friends, for all the lovely Christmas decoration, as well as, the music, flowers, the trees, Pastor Loretta’s messages, luminaries, bell ringing, and most of all the warmth and love shown for each other! Also, your generous Advent and Christmas offerings were sincerely appreciated.

Upcoming events:

- **February 19 – Shrove Pancake Breakfast** served by the men following worship service.
- **February 22 – Ash Wednesday** evening service in the chapel at 6 p.m.
- **March 1 – Ecumenical Lenten Luncheon** at noon HERE in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Brian Young will give the devotion.

Volunteers needed:

Would like someone to ring our church bell each Sunday to begin our service, which invites all those who hear it in the community to join us.

Coffee Fellowship hosts – make coffee and furnish light snacks.

Stay connected to God ~
Stay connected to others.



Church Facebook Page

Have you checked out the church’s Facebook site? 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: <https://www.facebook.com/UMCsparta/>. Once you are there just “like” the site and you will receive updates when new information is posted.



Members and Leaders Save the Date

April 22, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. “Taking the church to the Next Level” via zoom in the chapel

As a church that has moved to the accountable leadership model (what we call our Servant Leadership Board) we are invited/highly encouraged to participate in this interactive workshop to intentionally take the church to the next level of effectiveness. Members of the Servant Leadership Board who are available that day are already planning to take part in the workshop. Anyone interested in how the Servant Leadership Board functions or how we can move to the next level of effectiveness is encouraged to join us that day. It will be helpful in understanding how the Servant Leadership Board functions differently than the old model of church administration.

The workshop will cover: partnering with the Holy Spirit, preparing the congregation for personal and community decisions, creating generous givers, reaching new persons, developing small groups, and worship in the third quarter of the year.

The workshop leader is Rev. Dr. Joseph Bishman from the W. Ohio Conference. Dr. Bishman, former pastor and District Superintendent, was instrumental in taking the “Simple Church Model” and adapting it to the UM Discipline. He now serves as a consultant, in partnership with Rev. Sue Kibby and other coaches assisting congregations of all sizes transition from a business structure to a discipleship model to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Registration is \$25 per person to participate via zoom here at the church. Registration will be online on the conference ENews in the near future.



Thank you to all who have donated to Soles4Souls! We have collected 95 pair of shoes through January!

CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME





Time to Learn

Diabetes Workshop

This workshop is designed to help adults with type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes learn self-management skills and increase their confidence in managing their diabetes.

The workshop meets virtually once a week for six weeks—2-1/2 hours each session.

Where: Virtually

When: Mondays, Feb. 8 – March 15, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Cost: \$30

Pre-register by calling 608-775-6870 or visit gundersenhealth.org/living-well.

Chronic Pain Workshop

Healthy Living with Chronic Pain is a six-week workshop for adults who have – or are living with someone who has – on-going pain.

Led by trained leaders in a small group setting, the program focuses on helping you feel better, have more control and do the things you want to do.

This program does not replace existing treatments but serves to complement your medical treatment plan. It is not intended to be a solution for addiction to pain medication

Where: Virtually

When: Mondays, Feb 6-March 13, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Cost: \$30, includes textbook.

Pre-register by calling 608-775-6870 or visit gundersenhealth.org/livingwell



Church Website



We have a new web site domain so it is easier to find our site.

It is: spartaumc.net. Check it out if you haven't lately.

Thank you

Thank You: Sunday school kids for the Backpack Program food items you brought in over the Christmas holiday. Your willingness to help others less fortunate was very heartwarming.

Thank You: This is a very generic thank you as so many people give so freely of their time to keep the church looking "spiffy". Scott Naeseth, Russ Janzen, Cyndi Wise, Michele Thornton and any other of the many people who lend a hand to keep the church looking its best. ♥

Sparta United Methodist Church,

Thank you so, so much for the \$248.50 donation to Brighter Tomorrows. We are so thankful for your continued support and encouragement.

We truly appreciate everything you do!

With gratitude,

Jan & Lynn

Brighter Tomorrows

United Methodist Women,

Thank you so much for the generous \$100 donation to Brighter Tomorrows. We truly appreciate your generosity and continued support and assistance!

With Appreciation

Jan & Lynn

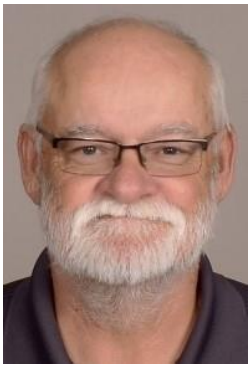
Brighter Tomorrows

Thank you so much for the beautiful blessed plant. It certainly helps brighten up these dreary days.

Thank you!

Barb Zucco





Missions Update...

Missions was made aware of parishioner that attends the Hispanic Worship that recently lost her husband in a car crash. She has two young girls ages 2 years and 18 days. Missions is graciously donating \$200 to help this family.

Another donation Missions have made is to the organization "Sleep in Heavenly Peace," that makes beds for those children who are sleeping on the floor or other inappropriate venues. They are doing a "Bed Build" in Tomah again this year. They then place beds and bedding in homes upon request and complete vetting of the home. This organization is in need of bedding for twin sized beds (new sheets/pillowcases and/or mattress covers. Missions is making a cash donation of \$200. If you wish to donate you can contact Diane Huber at 608-487-4094 or diane.huber@gmail.com



Pizza and a movie night this month is **February 18** Pizza will be served in the small kitchen at 6 p.m. with the movie to follow in the Chapel. Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend! Please contact Toni

Burrows at 608-343-3029 before noon on February 18 if you will be attending so we know how much pizza to order.



February's movie is "God's not Dead: A Light in the Darkness"

One church is unexpectedly thrown into an epic legal battle by a state-run university that believes the congregation has outlived its usefulness and needs to go.

Rated PG



COMING SOON

The Sparta Ministerial Association are meeting in the small kitchen on Wednesday, February 1 at noon.

Nurture will meet Thursday, February 2 at 6 p.m. in the library.

SUMMIT Spirits will be meet on Tuesday, February 7 at 6:30 in the library.

Records & History will meet Wednesday, February 8 at 9 a.m.

On Tuesday, February 14 Lois circle will be in the small kitchen at 1 p.m.

Wesleyan Circle will meet in the Gathering Place on Tuesday, February 14 at 6:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Service, February 22 at 6 p.m. in chapel.

Soaring Skills meet every Tuesday evening and every Saturday from 9-3 p.m.

The Study of The Acts continues on Mondays at 1 p.m. with Pastor Loretta in the library.

The video series "Shiny Gods" a study that explores finding freedom from things that distract us continues with Paul Thursdays at 6 p.m.



"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

—1 Corinthians 13:4-5

From the Parish Nurse...

You may be aware of the AED device in the lower hallway near the elevator—but I bet it seems foreign and a bit scary to you. That is very normal especially when we (THANK YOU FATHER) rarely use it.

I do have a call in to the EMTs and I am awaiting scheduling an In-service for us. Unfortunately, I do not have any dates yet but I will keep you informed of this.

If you're wondering what an AED is and why they seem to be located in most offices and public buildings, you're not alone. In fact, because these devices are now commonly available, more people than ever before are curious about them. So—just what is an AED?

An AED, or automated external defibrillator, is used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. It's a sophisticated, yet easy-to-use, medical device that can analyze the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, deliver an electrical shock, or defibrillation, to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm.

Sudden cardiac arrest is among the leading causes of death in the United States and has recently come to the forefront of the news when a young Buffalo Bills player suffered cardiac arrest on the football field. In fact, more than 350,000 people will suffer a cardiac arrest this year. Currently, the only way to restore a regular heart rhythm during cardiac arrest is to use an AED.

Because the average response time for first responders once 911 is called is 8-12 minutes, and for each minute defibrillation is delayed, the odds of survival are reduced by approximately 10%, having access to and AED and knowing how to use one, is so important.

So hopefully we will be hearing soon when we will be able to review and become somewhat familiar with the AED and many of you will attend the training. Who knows—you may need to help save a life sometime.

Thank you
In Christ's Love,
Priscilla



Recycling Guidelines

We recently received our new recycling cart. Here are the rules you should follow when recycling.

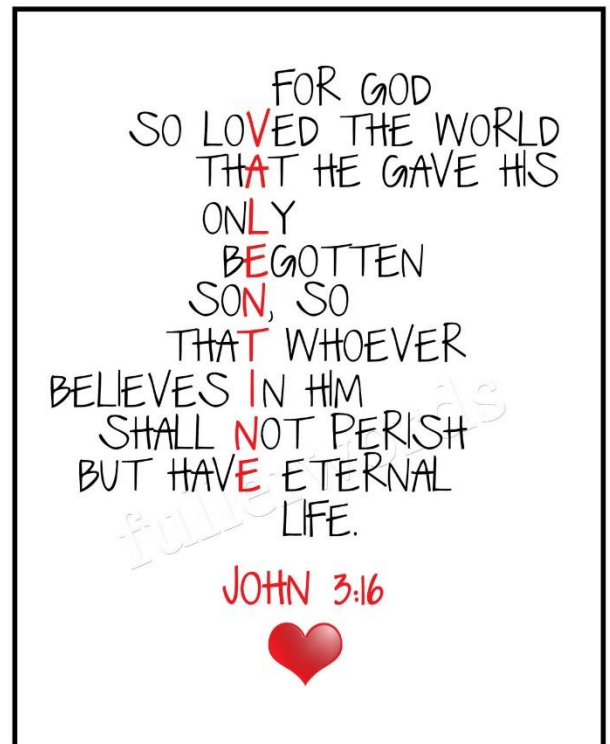
Do not place these items in the cart:

- Trash and plastic bags
- Hazardous wastes
- Electronic wastes
- Bulbs
- Yard waste

These are acceptable items to place in the cart:

- Paper and cardboard (no loose shredded paper—it must be sealed in a cardboard box or paper bag.)
- Plastic bottles and food containers
- Glass bottles and jars (do not forget to empty and rinse all containers.)
- Metal cans, including all EMPTY non-hazardous aerosols.

Carts need to be set out the night before collection with the metal bar & lid opening facing the street and handles facing the house. There must be 5 feet between any mailbox, trash cart and vehicles.



With God
All things are Possible

Seven Ways to Support Your Pastor on Sunday

By Ron Edmondson, excerpted from MinistryMatters.com

This article is a repeat, but bears repeating. All of these are important points, but numbers 1, 2, and 7 are especially important.

Sunday mornings are a stressful time for pastors. My ministry includes interacting with dozens of pastors each week. It appears to me that there are some common experiences on Sunday morning for many of us.

I also know most people who love their church...and love their pastor...want to help any way they can to make the Sunday morning experience the best it can be. That's what this post is about.

Here are 7 ways you can help your pastor on Sunday:

1. Pray. – Pray for your pastor. Ask God to open the ears of the people, to guide your pastor's heart and to bless the services with His Spirit.

2. Don't critique. – Sunday morning is not the best time to bring complaints. It is very distracting when the pastor is about to speak to hear criticism that will have to be dealt with later. It weighs very heavy on the mind and gets in the way of focusing on the message. Hold those until Monday, but even then, ask yourself if sharing it is personal to you or genuinely helpful to the entire body.

3. Don't share something you want us to remember. – Most likely we will forget what you told us by the time Sunday is done. Send us an email later or call us Monday morning. If it must be shared on Sunday, please write it down for us so we can remember the details. Our minds are so clouded on Sunday thinking about a million different things. And, we try hard to make our focus about a message we hope God will use.

4. Be Kingdom-minded. – Think of others interests even ahead of your own. Keep in mind the temperature in the room may not be your ideal temperature, but it may be exactly the right temperature for someone else. Your song may not be sung today, but it could be the song that leads another to the throne of grace. The message may not address what you're dealing with right now, but for someone else, it might be life-changing. Be

a part of the crowd that says, "I love what helps another" and you'll help your pastor and the church greatly on Sunday mornings.

5. Volunteer. – The work of the church can't function with only a few people. I've never met the church that had too many people volunteering in preschool ministry, too many greeters, or too many people willing to do whatever it takes. Think of this work your ministry for the kingdom of God.

6. Introduce us to visitors. – We love to meet visitors, especially those seeking a church home. It is comforting when the church is bringing people with them or meeting new visitors as they arrive.

7. Pray. – It really does begin and end with prayer. More than anything, we want your prayer support. The Spirit of God seems to respond when you do.

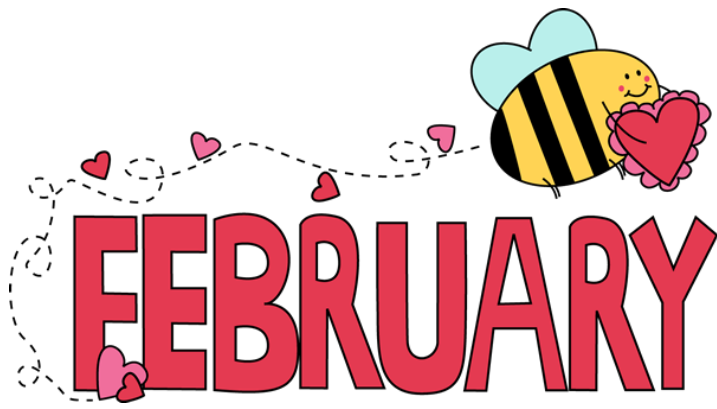


This is My Church

This is my church.
It is composed of people like me.
We make it what it is.
It will be friendly, if I am friendly.
Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.
It will do great works, if I work.
It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I'm a generous giver.
It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship, if I bring them.
It will be a church of loyalty and love,
of fearlessness and faith, and a church of noble spirit—
If I, who make it what it is, am filled with these.
Therefore, with the help of God, I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all the things I want my church to be. —author unknown

This poem has some important truth, it takes all members of the body functioning for the church to be healthy and vital. A small percentage of body parts working at full throttle cannot keep the whole body alive and working the way it is intended. There is a place for everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, to serve and make a difference.





February Anniversaries

- 04 Penny & Kevin Eddy
- 09 Wayne & Amy Johnson
- 17 Russell & Melissa Culpitt
- 25 Grenda & Gale Rugg
- 25 John & Diane Noonan

February Birthdays

- 02 Tom Houtevelde
- 02 Stephanie Ochoa
- 03 Peggy Wright
- 06 Angelyna Talsky
- 08 Toni Burrows
- 10 Emily Ascher
- 10 Dean Olson
- 11 Laurie Graber
- 11 Sara Kemp
- 12 Klynn Friemoth
- 13 Jeff Hemmersbach
- 13 Liam Huntington
- 15 Lorie Dale
- 15 Brady Kozelka
- 20 Rose Starkey
- 22 Melissa Goodenough
- 22 Sarah Rodriquez
- 22 Russ Tock
- 25 Mara Culpitt
- 25 Brian Hemstock
- 25 Jane Hobson
- 27 Peyton Hale



Bakery pick-up

- 5 Donna Burnham
- 12 Judy Fuhrmann
- 19 Ron & Denise Ebert
- 26 Cyndi Wise

Tech Team

- 5 Cheryl & Cindy
- 12 Ron & Kristine
- 19 Toni & Amy
- 26 Ben & Hailee

Liturgist

- 5 Ellen Hemstock
- 12 Marty Walley
- 19 Cheryl Isensee
- 26 Eileen Gajewsky

Ushers

- 5 Bob & Cathy
- 12 Kurt & Amy
- 19 Peggy, Donna & Ron
- 26 John & Karen



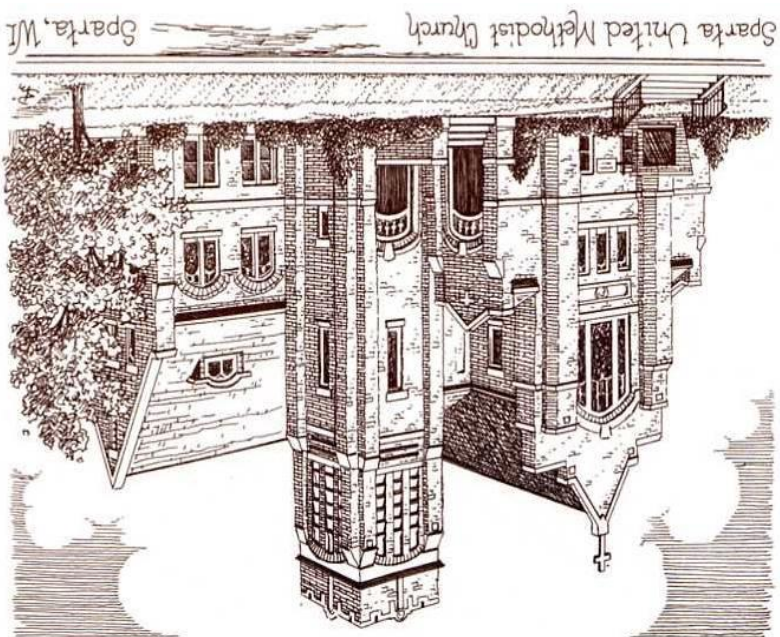
The Chimes

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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

Phone: (608)269-6949

Fax: (608)269-6940

Email: office@spartamethodist.com

Website: spartaumc.net

SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings

Livestream Service

9:00 a.m. on Facebook

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year