

“The CHIMES” – February

Volume 56, No. 2

2021

Continuing the Conversation...

“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action...And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.”

(1 John 3:18, 23-24)

*“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for **God is love**. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.”* (1 John 4:7-9)



February is once again upon us. The month that famously turns many minds to thoughts of love, because right smack in the middle of February we have Valentine’s Day. The day known for flowers, chocolates, chubby little cupids aiming their arrows at unsuspecting hearts, and cards asking the question:

“Will you be mine?” while professing love. A day for people who enjoy the idea of romance and love.

I have a confession: I am not one of them. I am cynical and for the longest time I was not even able to say those three little words, “I love you.” They would get stuck in my throat and not make it past my lips. Even with people I truly love, the words would not come out.

The problem for me is those three little words have been so over-used and so misused that they lost any sense of value or meaning. Or, have they?

When I thought hard about that question I realized the value and meaning are still there when I consider what and who real love is. I just need to reclaim that value and meaning from a culture that desires to sell us on a cheap and artificial version of love and humanity.

What first helped me sort through this was remembering “God is love” as chapter four of 1 John tells us. Chapter three of 1 John then took hold of my heart and mind informing me that love is not a syrupy sweet and fickle emotion. Love is an action that comes from God and is meant to move me and heal my cynical attitude. As I have noted many times, when we come into a saving relationship with God through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus plans to do a work of transformation in us. Jesus desires to build a godly character in us so that we have the same mind in us that is in Christ. You can read all about that in Philippians 2:2-8.

A godly character that reflects the likeness of Christ is one that loves others as Christ loved us. The love about which the Bible speaks is different from every other type of human love, and is uniquely imparted to the child of God, from the indwelling Spirit of truth and love.

The Lord Jesus laid down his life for his friends, and for his enemies. Jesus sacrificed his life for us, and we are instructed to do the same for others. For example in Matthew 5 we are instructed, “love your enemies and pray for them”—not call them names and demean them. We are directed to lay down our lives (probably starting with our attitudes), in sacrificial love for our fellow women and men (friend and enemy alike).

It is comparatively easy to love in word or speech. It is reasonably simple to say I love you to other people, but the test of genuine love is expressed in truth and action.

It is not simply expressing affection through what we say, but through the giving up of ourselves for the service of others, no matter what the cost, in time, money, even at times reputation.

It is a “dying to self” and a “living for Christ,” which is visible in works of righteousness for the benefit of others—and to the greater glory of God. It is dying to our own self-interest and letting the beauty and love of the Lord Jesus be seen in us so that it flows out to others, in our actions and attitudes.

To love in words is contrasted with loving in truth and action. It is translating one’s words into meaningful, practical deeds, through the sufficient grace of God. The former is to talk about caring, while the latter is to

express unconditional love, in action that is demonstrated in a life that cares for the concerns of others before one's own needs or wishes.

Make no mistake – to love in action and in truth is not something that we can do for ourselves, however hard we try! We cannot love in action and in truth through a training program, mental exertion, or our best efforts of any kind. To love in action and in truth is a supernatural love that comes directly from God, and can only be demonstrated as we allow Jesus to do his transforming work in us.

Loving in spirit, in word, in action and in truth is evidenced in the life of one who has died to self-centeredness, abides in Christ, and is able to say with the apostle Paul, “and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Have I got this all perfectly figured out? No. Is Jesus done working with and in me? No. That's the thing about God who is Love...Love will continue that refining, transforming work in me (and you) until we meet our Lord in glory. That work just goes smoother when we cooperate with God. Am I now able to say those three little words—“I love you”? Yes, but I still don't banter them about carelessly; they truly mean something important to me.

As we cooperate with God in this transforming relationship, this is my prayer and I hope you will make it yours: *Heavenly Father, thank you that I am your child, and that Christ died to pay the price for my sin. Thank you that he rose again so that I have been made a new creation in Christ and received new life in him. May the Love of the Lord Jesus so flood and fill my being that it not only flows out to others in thought and word, but in spirit, in truth, and in my every action and attitude through the power of the Holy Spirit. This I ask in Jesus' name and for your glory. Amen.*

Serving and leading in Christ's love!
Pastor L

Thank You!



I would like to extend my very heart felt thank you for the kind words, sympathies, and cards that were given to me after the passing of my father. Once again, I am truly overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of you all. After checking with my mom, we have decided to make a donation to Joliet Area Community Hospice with the monies given. Without them there is no doubt that my father would have ended up in a nursing home without his family near him. This is also where he spent his last week where they helped him feel safe and comfortable and his family was able to be there 24/7. Without your generosity, we wouldn't be able to make this donation in my father's name. Words cannot express my and my family's gratitude but thank you, so much.

Thank you!!
Michele Thornton, SUMC Administrative Assistant

Family Promise Update

We currently do not have a family enrolled in Family Promise as of January 17. Our last family has continued to be very grateful for everything.



The church has committed to the following dates in 2021:

- January 24- 31
- January 31- February 6
- 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.

A few things to remember, until the churches reopen; everything must be in disposable containers or containers they can keep and re-heat in a microwave. They do not have a lot of refrigerator room so limit size of containers. If anyone would like to donate gift cards for fast food restaurants those are also very handy and are great for weekend meals.

Thanks again for all your support.
Peace and Blessings,
Lynn Humphrey

Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Charles Shaw, who passed away on December 30, 2020. Charles was the brother of Ken Shaw.



The Season of Lent is Upon Us

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time for penance by all Christians. Because Sundays are always little Easters, the penitential spirit of Lent should be tempered with joyful expectation of the Resurrection on those days.

The Great Three Days—sometimes called the Triduum or Pasch—from sunset Holy Thursday through sunset Easter Day are the climax of Lent (and the whole Christian year) and bridge into the Easter Season. These days proclaim the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. During these days, the community journeys with Jesus from the upper room, to the cross, to the tomb, and to the garden. These Holy days are typically commemorated with a Maundy Thursday service and a Prayer vigil. After last spring’s great interruption caused by COVID I hope to get back to some semblance of worship for the Great Three Days. Stay tuned for details.

This year as our time of preparation for the Easter celebration, I will be doing a sermon series on the Ten Commandments using Adam Hamilton’s book, “Words of Life,” as the foundation for our weekly messages. The sermon series will begin on Sunday, February 14 so that we can cover all Ten Commandments before Palm/Passion Sunday.

In his book, Hamilton “attempts to bring modern eyes to the most important set of ethics in history. He considers the commandments in their historical context, considering the meaning of each commandment in Hebrew, unpacking how Jesus reinterpreted them, and showing how every “thou shalt not” was intended to



point to a life-giving “thou shalt.” He also explores how the latest research in science and psychology illuminates these commandments, rightly understood, as a way of ordering one’s life beautifully in the present day. In a culture marked by workaholicism, materialism, and social media-driven envy, God has given us a time-tested path that leads to gratitude, confidence, and peace.”

The sermon series will not be able to go as in-depth as Hamilton’s study does but will hopefully give you much to consider about our walk with God and each other as we journey through this Lenten season together. If you would be interested in participating in the more in-depth study, please let me know and I will be happy to set up some small group study opportunities of this material.



Ash Wednesday Observance

Ash Wednesday emphasizes a dual encounter: we confront our own mortality and confess our sin before God with the community of faith. This year, as the imposition of ashes is not recommended, we won’t have a traditional Ash Wednesday service; instead **you are invited to come to church on Ash Wednesday (February 17) for a time of personal confession and prayer in the sanctuary.**



The K Street doors will be open from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. for you to come and pray as a way begin your Lenten observance. You are asked to sign in when you come as a way to ensure that we have no more than 10 people in the sanctuary at a time. You are asked to socially distance if you find yourself in the sanctuary with others. Remember, this is a time of sober remembrance of our mortality and confession of our sin before God.

When you come you will receive a Lenten devotional booklet, an Ash Wednesday commemorative (in place of receiving the ashes), and a Ten Commandments card for your use as we go through the Lenten sermon series. Please call the church office if you have any questions.

Welcome to the Family



On Saturday, January 23, Luke Bennett Wiedemann was baptized. Luke is pictured with mom and dad, Jessica and Evan Wiedemann and big sister Emma. He is the grandson of Patty and Dave Wiedemann. Welcome into this family of God Luke!

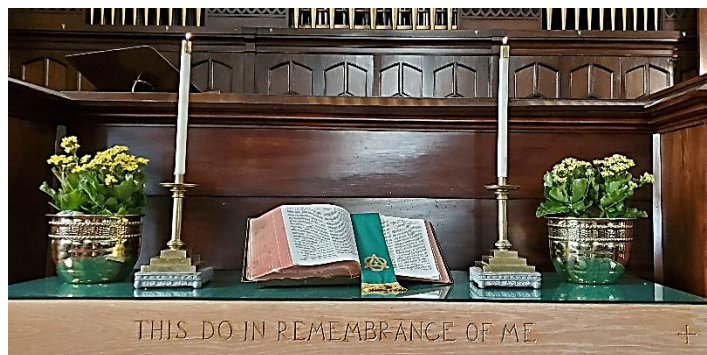
Shop with scrip...support your church



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 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).

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.



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: Feb. 7 (1 space), Feb. 28 (2 spaces), Mar. 7 (2 spaces), Mar. 14 (1 space), Mar. 28 (1 space), April 18 (1 space), April 25 (2 spaces) and June 20 (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 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

No Regrets Men's Conference

On Saturday, February 6, Faith Evangelical Free Church in Sparta is hosting a virtual experience of the No Regrets Men's Conference. Men will gather at the church from 8:15a.m. to 1 p.m. (lunch included).

We will be joining with thousands of men across the state and country for this powerful conference experience, and many wonderful speakers about unique issues for men. We will be taking precautions, with distancing, catered food, and masks are recommended. Men can sign up on-line through Faith E-Free Church website www.spartafaithfree.com or through calling their church office at 269-5469. Cost is \$25 per ticket.

Financial Focus

Here are a few things that the Bible says about giving:

1 Timothy 6:10

For the Love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

Luke 16:10

Whoever is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty we become rich.

Acts 20:35

Jesus says "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given back to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will the measure you get back.

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, is where your heart will be also.

2 Corinthians 9:11

You will be blessed in every way for your great generosity; which will produce thanksgiving to God through us.

Luke 3:11

Jesus said, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise."

Matthew 6:3

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. (Give in private)

Submitted by Paul Foulke, Finance chair

"Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of."

—Benjamin Franklin



Because our Giving Is Worship

"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

"God loves a cheerful giver." Why do you give? Why do you put money in the plate? Why did you sign up for EFT? Is it to keep the lights on? Is it out of obligation? Is it because "it is just the thing you do"?

In this month of February, when consumer products turn red, chocolate, and velvety, society asks us to think about love. We give gifts to others because we love them. Could it be that we give in church (online) because of Love?

We are called to give to God because God loves us. We are called to give to God because we love God. We are called to give, not begrudgingly, but cheerfully! When we give, we are saying, "I love you God!" We are not saying, "Fine, here you go God."

Why do you give? Look inside of yourself right now. Be honest. Why do you give? When the plate passes you, what goes through your mind? In this time of online giving, has your giving changed? Have you been giving more or less? More or less often? Why? Always remember, you cannot out give God!

God loves us and has, does, and will do so much for us. So, in response, we give back to the Lord. We give out of LOVE.

Rev. Krystal Goodger,

Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at

www.wumf.org or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)

Or call 1-888-903-9863



Thank you...

Thank you so very much for the beautiful mum plant that Cathy delivered. It cheers things up and brings a little sunshine into the house!

Sincerely, Barb Zucco

From the Parish Nurse...

Happy New Year!

February is Heart Healthy Month or as some say it is “The Heart Month.”

A healthy lifestyle is the key to maintaining a healthy heart. The heart is a vital muscle that delivers nutrients throughout the body, and—just like any muscle—it needs to be maintained with proper exercise.

Therefore, recognize that maintaining a healthy heart means cutting out as many of the high-risk habits in your life as possible. For some people, that could mean making huge changes in all aspects of their daily life. Even eliminating a few risk factors to improve your heart health can reap many benefits:

1. Stop all forms of tobacco use. Using tobacco increases your risk of heart damage.
2. Incorporate exercise into your daily routine. One way to make any muscle stronger is to exercise it. The same is true for your heart. Here is what the American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes a day of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise to get your blood pumping and dramatically improve your heart’s health. Ideally, you should do this five days a week for a total of 150 minutes of aerobic exercise.
3. Maintain a Healthy weight. Increased weight causes your body to require more effort from your heart to maintain a baseline resting level. This continual strain on your heart can tax it and result in further issues in the future. Exercise and a healthy diet will help you lose the weight that is putting a strain on your heart.

And then we have Valentine’s Day, a day of romance:

Valentine’s Day also called St. Valentine’s Day, (February 14) is when lovers express their affection to another with greetings and gifts, trying to win hearts.

So with all this “heart talk”... what about **a heart for Jesus?**

What the world needs more than anything is true love, and the love of God can be extended to others through us, and if not us, through whom? We must be the hands and feet of Jesus, but also have His heart for the lost. When Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, He wept over the thousands of lost souls.



Let’s take a look at our God. He has big numbers, he has lots of followers, he has the bestselling book in the world, he has churches all over the world, and he’s the greatest speaker. He wants us to get this notion out of our head and put this in our hearts, “The one is more important.” The Bible says our God LEAVES the 99 for the one:

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.” (Matthew 18:12-14)

We want to leave the one for the 99. And our God leaves the 99 searching for the one. We have our mind on numbers. Our God has his heart for the one. We say we want to strive after the masses.

Because our God has a “for the one heart” as I like to call it, he always goes for the one. He always speaks to the one, he always reaches out to the one. We have a one-track-minded God.

Think about that. Think about how God has impacted you in your own personal life, how personal and intimate he is when he moves and speaks. He’s filled with so much love for you, he treats you like your the only one.

Our job is to not be concerned about the numbers, our job is to let him work through us. Our job is to strive to be more like him.

In Christ’s Love, Priscilla



Records and History Committee Update

We would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy, healthy 2021. We look forward to the time when we can meet again in person and start making NEW history?!

We hope to be able to present “Our Community in Concert” again and have tentatively scheduled it for October 16, 2021. Of course it is all dependent on how we navigate through the year with COVID 19. We will keep you posted.



We are ~ Keeping the Eternal Flame Glowing

February Anniversaries

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

February Birthdays

- 2 Tom Houtevelde
- 2 Stephanie Ochoa
- 3 Peggy Wright
- 6 Angelyna Talsky
- 8 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 Rodriguez
- 22 Russ Tock
- 25 Mara Culpitt
- 25 Brian Hemstock
- 25 Jane Hobson
- 27 Peyton Hale



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.



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.

Thank You!

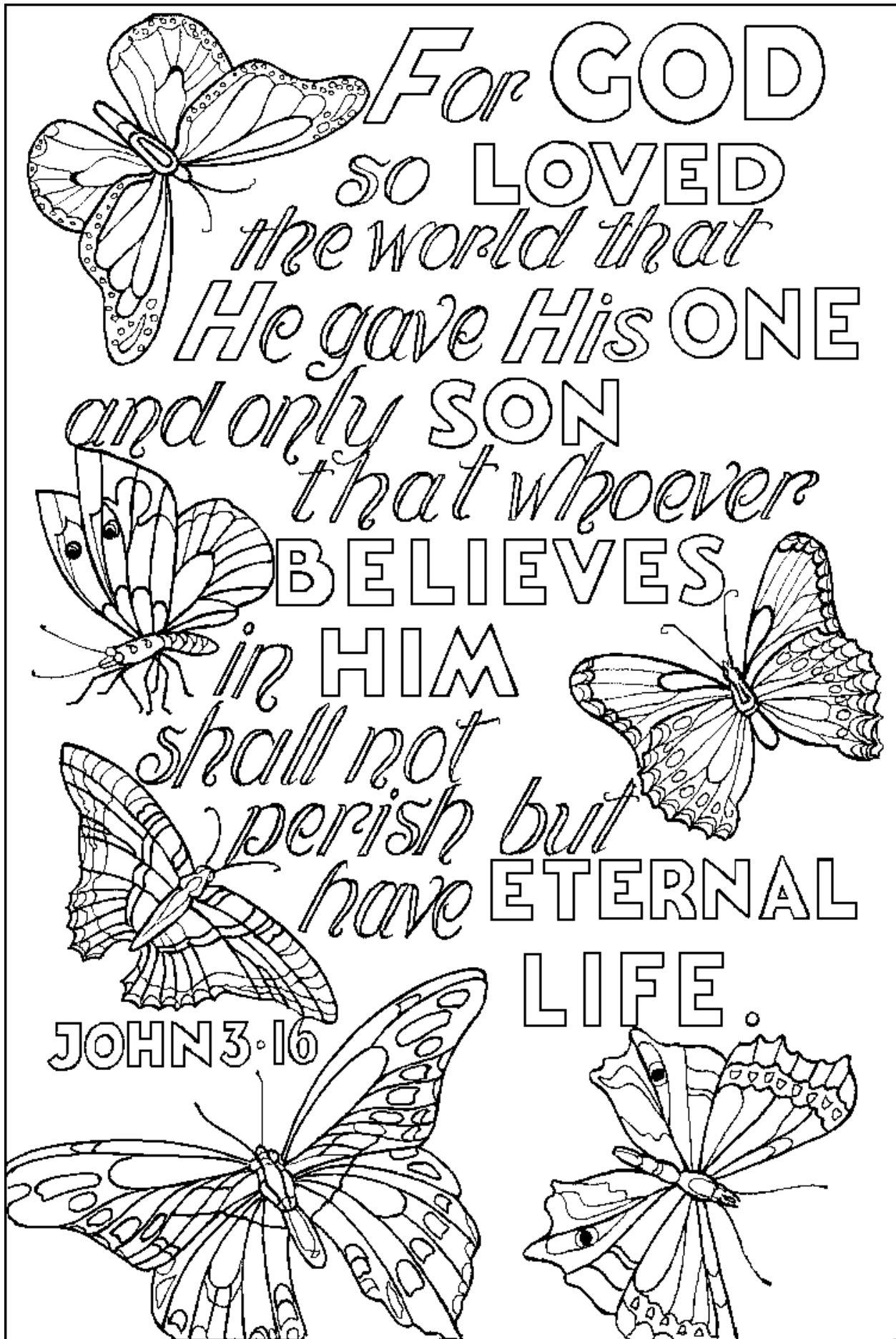
I would like to thank everyone that is stocking our **Little Free Library** with books, magazines, puzzle books and mittens! How very thoughtful of you to keep little hands warm so they can turn pages in the books you leave. I am so thankful for your generous giving of books. I am always in need of children's and young adult books, so if you have some, and need more space at home, feel free to drop them off at church or call me and we can make an arrangement for pick up. Books are such a comfort on these long, dreary days, thanks for sharing your extras with others. If you would like to read the Bible this year, let me know, we have several copies that will get you through the Bible in 365 days! Stay Well!



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

The **Sparta Ministerial Association** extends a big thank you for your financial support to the Community Thanksgiving Dinner and the Ministerial Association Benevolence Fund through your special holiday offerings. Because of people like you we will start with a solid financial foundation to build on for next year's Community Thanksgiving Dinner; we are looking forward to having it again next November. With your support of our benevolence fund we will be able to help local families and individuals who find themselves struggling through shortfalls on important things like rent or utilities. In past years we have been able to supply this fund through the offerings received at the Ecumenical Lenten Lunches. As we all know too well, those lunches were cut short last spring because of the pandemic. Thank you again! Your generosity touches the lives of many people and makes a big difference for them.





For **GOD**
so **LOVED**
the world that
He gave His **ONE**
and only **SON**
that whoever
BELIEVES
in **HIM**
shall not
perish but
have **ETERNAL**
LIFE.

JOHN 3:16

Morrow Home Community and the United Methodist Church

If you are looking for a meaningful way to help in the local community, Morrow Home Community has opportunities available.

The United Methodist Church has a unique relationship with the Morrow Home Community through an affiliation agreement between the two entities. The Morrow Home Community has a long Christian tradition of caring that began in 1917 when Mary Morrow's dream of caring for the elderly came to fruition with establishment of the Morrow Memorial Home in memory of her parents. The Morrow Home Community has grown considerably since that first framed home that served 12 individuals. The Morrow Home Community is still growing and relies on the help of volunteers working alongside staff to carry forth Mary Morrow's dream of service.

The mission of Morrow Home Community is to serve *"as a tangible expression of God's love through a continuum of services to all who entrust us with their care. We strive to enhance quality of life by preserving the dignity, independence, and uniqueness of each individual while meeting their physical, social, and spiritual needs. We endeavor to be a faithful steward of obtainable resources recognizing both the needs of those we serve and those who serve."*

According to their mission and philosophy, "The purpose of the Morrow Home Community is providing a Christian Home for the elderly—a Home where dignity, the independence, and the uniqueness of each individual is preserved while his/her physical, spiritual and social needs are continually met.

In our nursing area, assisted living, advanced assisted living, memory care, and independent living with services, we offer a continuum of care in a Christian Community...To live at Morrow Home is to live where a person's individual worth is given due respect and recognition for the years of service they have given to our great nation.

We reach out to the community with our Meals in Motion program that serves seniors delicious home-delivered weekday noon meals."

Does any of this resonate with you? Then you might **consider volunteering with Morrow Home Community**. At this time there are a couple of areas open.

First, Morrow Home Community **Meals in Motion** is looking for volunteer drivers. Here are some of the perks of the position:

- Pick your day or be on call
- Earn mileage
- Get a free meal
- Help someone in need

If you would like to learn more about this opportunity, contact Lindsay or Kelsey at 269-3168. They can answer questions or get you set up to deliver meals.

Morrow Home Community is also looking for people who would be interested in **servicing on the Board of Directors**. They have five positions coming open on three committees (Development, Property, and Foundation). This is important work that would not take a huge time commitment on your part. If you are interested you would be asked to fill out a short application that would be considered by the board's nomination committee. If you have questions or would like an application you should contact Dan Meyer at 269-3168.



Thank You!

Dear church family,

I say it often—Thank you for the many altar plants I've received over the years. But I need to put it in writing.

I also need to thank all of you for support and love I have been given on many occasions when I have needed you.

We don't get to be together right now—but some day we'll be able to greet and hug each other! I miss you!

Em Axelsen

Sparta UMC Web Page Update

Our church Web site is updated with a new page that has direct links to our 2020 worship services and our 2020 newsletters. 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.

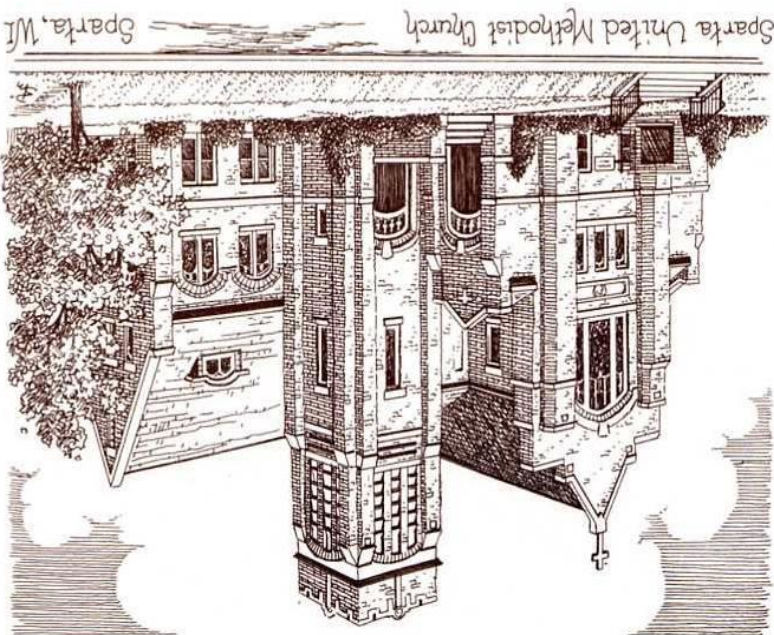
We hope you find this new feature helpful.

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