

“The CHIMES” – December

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2020

Continuing the Conversation...

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds...” (Hebrews 10:23-24)



What a year 2020 has been so far! But, I don't have to tell any of you that, this has been a highly unusual and challenging year for everybody. January started out fairly normal but by March our collective worlds were turned upside down because of COVID 19. It put a real cramp in our style and our

plans. After the initial shock of closing our doors began to wear off, I was reminded of a plaque I was given years ago that has a prominent place in my home office. It reads: We plan, God laughs.

Not that I think God is laughing about our current world situation, but all of my best laid plans for Lent and many other things were brought to a sudden halt in March; and yet here I am in November still worshipping God, still moving forward, still doing my best to lead Christ's church. I have been reminded daily throughout this time that no matter what any given day brings, God is still in control, still loves me (and you), still holds me (and you) in the palm of his hand. I have witnessed God working throughout this time for us and through us as we keep our trust in him.

As I prepared to look back on what I set for goals in 2020 I was happy to see that even though my initial best laid plans did not come to fruition, I can say that I still made some progress on my goals.

The first goal was to *“work diligently with the church leadership in setting up an Accountable Leadership structure that works for this congregation and continues to improve communication as we continually update and live into a ministry plan that guides us to be a vital and growing church that loves God and our neighbors.”* Although we had to be more

creative in our methods of communication, thanks to the help of Ad Council chair, Toni Burrows, we were able to continue the conversation around Accountable Leadership through Ad Council meetings, newsletter articles, and a Town Hall video created by Toni and emailed to all we have email addresses for.

My second goal was to *“continue working with a Stewardship Task Force to educate the congregation and brainstorm new fund raising initiatives to strengthen our financial future so we will be a positive force for continued ministry into the future.”* Again, this didn't pan out quite as I had imagined, but the lines of communication around finances and stewardship were kept open through letters, worship announcements, and *The Chimes*. I also have joined the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board serving on the Education and Development Committee. Part of my work with the committee was to participate in the online stewardship retreat—speaking on the stewardship challenge grant. Our stewardship task force was invited to take part in the online retreat and then gather to plan for the future.

My final goal was to *“make honoring my Sabbath and vacation/family time a priority in the coming year in order to take better care of myself and to model good self-care to those I lead. I will also continue in a healthier lifestyle for the same reason.”* I have maintained some healthier habits when it comes to diet and exercise and found the proof of success in my latest annual wellness check up. All of the numbers I have been working to change (weight, blood sugar, cholesterol) have gone down to healthier levels. Hurray!

Where I failed miserably with this goal was honoring my Sabbath; the unusual circumstances of this year found me learning new ways to offer worship (so thankful for those who walk alongside me in this continuing “adventure”). I also took on more work with the everyday running of the church office as the sole employee working in the office and sometimes cleaning and disinfecting in the church when custodial help wasn't available; it is amazing what it takes to keep a church this size running smoothly. Long story short, one day seemed to blend into the next so that the last few months became a blur of activity. I feel the need to apologize to you all for not being a good role model and not practicing what I preach about making intentional

time to spend with God. I felt the pain of not heeding my own words as I believe I came close to burning out by the end of summer. I have since repented and have begun once again making that intentional, prayerful time with God. Hiring Michele as our administrative assistant has made a huge difference in keeping me on track there. She has taken a huge weight off my shoulders even as she continues to learn the ins and outs of church office work.

None of us knows what the next year will hold for us, but I do want to set some goals (having learned beyond a shadow of a doubt this year the importance of flexibility). My goals are:

- 1) **Leadership:** As I anticipate the church moving to the Accountable Leadership model, or what we will call a Servant Leadership Board, I will continue to work diligently with the church leaders to form a creative, God-centered team to love and lead this congregation in doing the ministry Jesus Christ calls us to within our community and world.
- 2) **Communication:** With the new Servant Leadership structure in place communication will become more important than ever. I will strive to keep the lines of communication open and transparent, using every means possible to share information and receive input and feedback without being needlessly redundant. I will also use the means we have at hand to tell “our story” and “our vision for ministry” to the community, hoping to make fruitful connections with like-minded individuals and institutions.
- 3) **Sabbath:** I will continue, with the help of my family and others around me, to make honoring my Sabbath and vacation/family time a priority in the coming year in order to take better care of myself and to model good self-care to those I lead. I will also continue in a healthier lifestyle for the same reason. Hold me to this folks!

Through all of this I challenge the congregation to struggle with me in answering the following three questions as we minister together: 1) Does our congregational life keep God as the center, the focus, our source for truth and life? 2) Do our church activities and services form members with the character of God’s people? 3) Do our church events and worship services create us to be a community of faith according to the biblical descriptions?

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



A Note from the Financial Secretary

The deadline for all donations and contributions to Sparta United Methodist Church for deposit in 2020 is Monday morning, December 28. That is the final day that Heidi Sullivan, our financial secretary, will be making a deposit to the bank for 2020.



Nurture news

Submitted by Cyndi Wise

Love came down at Christmas, and Advent prepares us to celebrate Christ’s birth. “For unto us a child is born...”.

Sunday, November 29-The first Sunday in Advent brings a special “Hanging of the Greens” worship service at 9:00 a.m. Thanks to all who helped decorate the sanctuary, entryways, and front of the church. Even virtually, the sanctuary reflects the beauty of Christmas.

Hopefully many of you have kept the *Advent Devotional* booklets from the past 8 years so you can enjoy reading all the shared devotions. Christmas is timeless!

During the unusual times, it is important to remember:

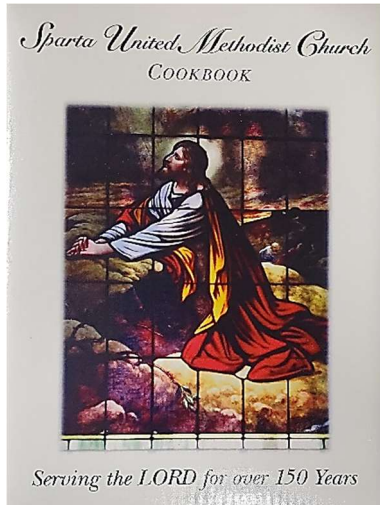
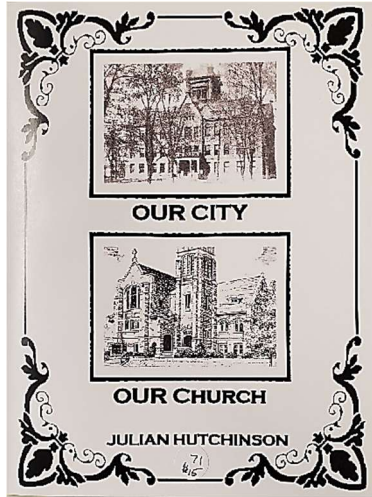
*“Never a Christmas morning,
Never the old year ends.
But someone thinks of someone,
Old days, old times, old friends.”*

May we all recall the memories of past celebrations, traditions and gatherings of thank God for those – and then, with hope in our hearts, look forward to those times again!

“May you have the gladness of Christmas which is HOPE; the spirit of Christmas which is PEACE; and the heart of Christmas which is LOVE!”

Looking for a Unique Gift?

Do you know what the first business was in this city we now call Sparta? Do you know what year the Methodist Church was first established in Sparta? We have a limited number of Julian Hutchinson's book "Our City Our Church" that has the answers to these questions and so many more. There is so much interesting information about the beginnings of Sparta and our United Methodist Church that it is a steal at \$15 or two books for \$28. We could possibly even get the author to sign your books.



Maybe you know someone who is just beginning the adventure of learning to cook or is setting up a household for the first time. A copy of the Sparta UMC Cookbook might be just the ticket. It is full of famously delicious recipes from our very favorite cooks in the

church. This is a beautiful cookbook that comes in a small three-ring binder so favorite family recipes can easily be added to the collection. The cookbooks are a real bargain at \$5 each.

Call the church office if you are interested in either of these books and we will work out the details on payment and getting your book(s) to you.

Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Ellen Stark who passed away on November 1.

The family and friends of Ralph R. Jandt, father of Deb and Pete Foss, who passed away on November 16.

Giving Wholeheartedly

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

(Matthew 6:19-21)

Is Giving Wholeheartedly a minor stewardship theme OR, is it the whole point of being a follower of Christ? Is giving wholeheartedly the essential to having a relationship with the Creator? Is presenting our gifts to God not just an important part of Sabbath worship, but is it the central and most important part and the true reason for our worship?

"Giving Wholeheartedly means committing ourselves entirely to the mission and ministry exemplified by the life of Jesus Christ. This means that every bit of time, every bit talent and every bit of treasure, even that which we spend on ourselves and our families, is for God's purpose.

"Giving Wholeheartedly means that when our hearts are open, our arms are open as well. When we are practicing our discipleship, we are sharing the love and grace with our neighbors near and far. We live out our love by reaching out to those in need, for example, Ruby's Pantry food distribution that served 380 families and individuals this week.

"Finally, Giving Wholeheartedly means a willingness to give to the church so that whatever ministry unfolds, it is funded. Giving wholeheartedly provides opportunities for our local churches to be ready, willing and available to serve in whatever manner Christ calls us to serve." [Source: Think Greater, Wisconsin Conference UMC]

What we can conclude from this is that you need to give for your own spiritual benefit. Not selfishly because it makes you feel good, but because it fulfills your need to be a faithful follower of Christ.

Jim Wells, 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



Shop with scrip...support your church

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. As the holiday season approaches don't miss your opportunity to purchase scrip cards. You can use the cards for your holiday shopping, or they make nice gifts for the hard to shop for on your list.



The next scrip order (and last one before Christmas) will be going in on **December 13**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



**Do your holiday shopping at
smile.amazon.com**

AmazonSmile donates to your charity of choice.

amazonsmile

Put Your Money to Work for the Church

Did you know that when you shop for the holidays (or any time) at smile.amazon.com/ch/39-6026139, AmazonSmile donates to our United Methodist Church?

When you shop on smile.amazon.com the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers. To take advantage of this opportunity just go to the smile.amazon.com site and put Sparta United Methodist Church into the search area. Several choices will come up (be sure to select the Sparta, WI option). You can go directly to our support page by entering the link:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/39-6026139>

You may not think 0.5% sounds like much, but if you combine that amount with the 2.25% earned through Amazon scrip cards it adds up. If enough people take advantage of this opportunity it adds up even faster. What an awesome way to donate free dollars to the church.



Food Pantry Update

Submitted by Lori Ascher

At the start of the Covid-19 outbreak in late March, the Ecumenical Food Pantry began serving guests by pre-packing non-perishable foods and having a daily form indicating choices for fresh produce, dairy, and meat. Only volunteers were allowed to enter the pantry. Although not ideal, this worked well throughout the summer months and early fall.

With the cold weather approaching, the pantry board decided to once again allow guests to enter the pantry and select their items. Safety precautions include a maximum of 2 shoppers at a time and 2 waiting. Hand sanitizer must be used when entering the pantry. Masks must be worn and will be provided if needed. Social distancing will be possible due to the restricted numbers. Carts will be wiped down after each use.

With the reopening and needing to limit numbers inside the pantry, the board also made the decision to change the days of the week the pantry serves guests. Monday mornings are delivery days for the Hunger Task Force truck and the larger number of volunteers working would make social distancing and serving guests impossible.

Therefore, the pantry is now closed on Mondays and instead open on Fridays. The other days remain the same. Hours currently are Tuesday thru Friday 10 a.m. until noon and Tuesday evening 5 p.m. until 7 p.m.

With senior citizens making up the majority of our volunteers and concerns about how the virus affects that age group, it has been a struggle to find volunteers for the open hours. The Methodist Church is in charge of staffing on Tuesdays. If anyone would like to volunteer or would like more information concerning the pantry call Lori Ascher at 343-4068. The pantry thanks the Methodist congregation for everything they do to support our efforts.

As a side note: The Holiday Train will be a virtual event on Saturday, December 12 starting at 7 p.m. and lasting an hour and 15 minutes. It will be live streamed via Facebook at facebook.com/canadian.pacific The event will remain on the site until the end of the year.

Report of Annual Conference 2020

Submitted by Donna Burnham

I was honored to be the laity delegate for a second year at Wisconsin UMC Annual Conference, October 24. Pastor and I did not physically attend; however, it was conducted only one day through Zoom and voting online.

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung's greeting to laity session 2020 is the event I enjoyed the most during annual conference. Bishop states that 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us and what does our future hold. The Wisconsin Conference's pursuit of advancing radical inclusion and racial justice for our world, requires us to learn the systems and processes that dismantles what excludes us from being one body and one spirit in God. We must have commitment for unity and love.

As Christian disciples we must prayerfully respect and model justice stability for our broken world as we build the bridge of equity while walking across. The presentation can be found on WI UMC website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLAsuKTPtcA>

The Service of Licensing, Commissioning and Ordination was Saturday evening for three clergy licensed as local pastors, four commissioned for the work of elder and one commissioned for the work of deacon.

Numerous action items were voted on and passed, some topics included: conference treasurer and secretary, clergy rental/housing allowance, past service annuity rates, clergy compensation, 2021 budget, covenants of affiliation with Christian Community Homes, Sheboygan Senior, UMC Children's Services and Evergreen Retirement, disaffiliation agreement pursuant to para 2553. Sadly, the UMC discontinuance of Alma and Brandon churches, as well as closing of Emerald UMC in St Croix. The conference workbook and additional action items can be found at:

<https://www.wisconsinumc.org/Resources/Conference-Secretary>

Staying Connected...

For folks who are not connected to the internet: since you don't have a way to see the recorded worship services, would you be interested in receiving a printed copy of the weekly sermon and prayers to read? If this is something you would find helpful please call the church office at 269-6949 and let Michele know.

THANK YOU to those who have given in-kind gifts of stamps, and cleaning and disinfecting products to the church. They are very appreciated as it can be difficult to find those items in bulk these days, but when you are shopping and pick up one or two items at a time they certainly add up and are put to good use in keeping the church clean and disinfected. Thanks again!

Items still in short supply:

- Spray disinfectant (like Microban 24 or Lysol)
- Disinfectant wipes
- Forever stamps



Looking For A Way to Help in the Community this Christmas?

The lobby of the Sparta 1st Community Credit Union is one place in town that has a Giving Tree set up that provides gifts to local children in need (there are also Giving Trees at Shades Body Studio and State Bank). If you wish to contribute to a worthy cause you can select an ornament from the tree and purchase a gift for the child from the wish list printed on the ornament. Then return the ornament and the gift(s) to the credit union by Tuesday, December 8. Suggested spending limit per child is approximately \$35. In Sparta the Giving Tree benefits the Christmas for Kids program.

They also offer curbside pickup. If you would like an ornament from the Giving Tree but you don't want to come inside the branch office, call the branch office to schedule a curbside pickup and they will bring the ornament(s) out to you!

Or take advantage of their Elf Assistance. You have the option of letting the 1st CCU staff do the shopping for you. Stop by the 1st CCU branch and drop off \$35. Their volunteer staff will select an ornament and use your \$35 donation to fulfill one or more of the items on the child's wish list. The phone number for Sparta 1st CCU is 269-8121



From the Parish Nurse...

In recent days, as COVID-19 has been declared a global pandemic and countries have taken urgent measures to stem the spread of infection, I ask God to use me and help me to pray.

This crisis is urgent, and at times I feel, as I am sure some of you feel, powerless. But perhaps feeling small is the best reminder to pray. Prayer is how we actively practice believing, so simply, so confidently, that God has the whole world in his hands. It's where we "let petitions and praises shape our worries into prayers, letting God know our concerns" (Phil. 4:6-7, The Message). Prayer is never the last resort of God's people. It is our first point of action.

With that in mind, here is a list of 20 prayers to pray during this pandemic. Each one addresses the specific needs of a specific community. I'm fortunate to be a part of medical professionals, some of whom gave me advice on how best to pray for them at this time. I've included their responses here. I've also tried to think broadly about how the rest of us are impacted by the current crisis.

This list isn't comprehensive, of course, but it's a good place to start. My hope is that it can provide words for us as we pray individually or (if also virtually!) as a church body. so As COVID-19 sends the globe into crisis, hopefully it also sends us to our knees. For our prayer...

1. For the sick and infected: God, heal and help sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.

2. For our vulnerable populations: God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, alleviate added stress for the uninsured.

3. For the young and the strong: God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.

4. For our local, state, and federal governments: God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources and restrictions for combating this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests and equipment needed.

5. For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.

6. For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.



7. For consumers of media, looking to be well-informed: God, help us find the most helpful local information to equip us to be good neighbors. Keep us from anxiety and panic, and enable us to implement the recommended strategies, even at a cost to ourselves.

8. For those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless: God, provide them every necessary support.

9. For the homeless, unable to practice the protocols of social distancing in the shelter system: Protect them from disease, and provide isolation shelters in every city.

10. For international travelers stuck in foreign countries: God, help them return home safely and quickly.

11. For Christian missionaries throughout the world, especially in areas with high rates of infection: God, provide them with words of hope, and equip them to love and serve those around them.

12. For workers in a variety of industries facing layoffs and financial hardship: God, keep them from panic, and inspire your church to generously support them.

13. For families with young children at home for the foreseeable future: God, help mothers and fathers to partner together creatively for the care and flourishing of their children. For single mothers and fathers, grow their networks of support.

14. For parents who cannot stay home from work but must find care for their children: God, present them with creative solutions.

15. For those in need of regular therapies and treatments that must now be postponed: God, help them to stay patient and positive.

16. For business leaders making difficult decisions that affect the lives of their employees: God, give these women and men wisdom, and help them to lead self-sacrificially.

17. For pastors and church leaders faced with the challenges of how to pastor their congregants.

18. For college and university students, whose courses of study are changing, whose placements are canceled, whose graduation is uncertain: God, show them that while life is uncertain, their trust is in you.

19. For Christians in every neighborhood, community, and city: May your Holy Spirit inspire us to pray, to give, to love, to serve, and to proclaim the gospel, that the name of Jesus Christ might be glorified around the world.

20. For frontline health care workers, we thank you for their vocational call to serve us. We also pray:

God, keep them safe and healthy. Keep their families safe and healthy.

God, help them to be knowledgeable about the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, as well as the changing protocols.

God, help them to stay clear-minded in the midst of the surrounding panic.

God, deliver them from anxiety for their own loved ones (aging parents, children, spouses, roommates).

God, give them compassion for every patient in their care.

God, provide for them financially, especially if they fall ill and are unable to work.

God, help Christians in health care to exhibit extraordinary peace, so that many would ask about the reason for their hope. Give them opportunities to proclaim the gospel.

God, we know and trust that you are good and do good. Teach us to be your faithful people in this time of global crisis. Help us to follow in the footsteps of our faithful shepherd, Jesus, who laid down his life for the sake of love. Glorify his name as you equip us with everything needed for doing your will. Amen.

With Love and Prayers,
Priscilla



Holiday Thoughts from our Parish Nurse

The holidays often mean special events and gatherings with friends and family. But because of the COVID-19 pandemic, those traditions will look and feel different this year.

Each November, as the air turns from crisp to chill and pumpkins on front porches are replaced with evergreen wreaths, the excitement of the season starts to settle in. Just before the hustle and bustle takes over, there is a small window where we can simply soak in the anticipation of all that is to come and relish in the nostalgia of holidays past. It is a season of gathering: heads bowed in unison as prayers of thanks are offered over turkey dinners and extra slices of pumpkin pie, familiar carols sung a bit off-key with those you love most, and the hope and peace that come from setting aside differences and distractions to worship together in honor of the Christ child.

But this holiday season, the feeling is more unsettling than sentimental as the time to deck the halls approaches. We are collectively facing a holiday season that will look quite different from years past, and many are left wondering, *“Can we still experience the joy of gathering in 2020?”*

It’s clear that we all desperately need something to look forward to, but it seems like a near impossibility in the year that normalized the terms “social distancing,” “quarantine,” and “isolation” and restrictions from Government. But with a few shifts in perspective, we are confident that the coming weeks can truly be the most wonderful time of the year.

It is human nature to seek comfort in consistency and the holiday season is often the source of our fondest memories and time-honored traditions. But in 2020, the first step to finding joy in the holidays is to let go of expectations.

It may be difficult to accept that this isn’t the year of multi-generational Christmas parties, but if we stubbornly try to recreate something that simply cannot be, we are sure to be disappointed and will likely miss out on seeing the beauty right in front of us. In fact, there is something exciting about considering what could be possible if we take all of the time and effort that is usually rationed among a large circle of people and funnel all of that energy towards serving, loving, and ministering to the people under our own roof.

Coming from a very large, boisterous extended family has always made holidays feel larger than life. For me, Thanksgiving just doesn’t feel like Thanksgiving without brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, sons and grandchildren and friends filling every seat and corner of the house. But this year, we’ll be trading a Thanksgiving table set for 40+ people, two days of cooking, and hours of doing dishes for an intimate family dinner. While it certainly won’t be the same, I’m looking forward to having more time for meaningful conversation, a thoughtfully planned, pared-down menu, and the ability to create an artfully set table. And all of the time usually spent cleaning up can be used instead for, a Christmas movie, phone calls/zoom and maybe a nap, or hey maybe even time to really focus on, oh let’s say The Christ Child!

Once you have let go of unrealistic expectations, finding an alternative can be as simple as asking yourself, *“What is this all about?”* While it may be tempting to completely give up on your plans when the limitations of the pandemic get in the way, it’s important to keep in mind that an imperfectly executed tradition is better than nothing at all. You can move forward with an adjusted plan, so Merry Christmas/ Happy Holidays to each and everyone of you...may you find peace and joy in knowing that our Lord cares for us and is with us in this strange, confusing time.

God Bless You, Priscilla



Administrative Council 2020 in Review

Submitted by Toni Burrows

The Administrative Council has been looking at a new direction in how to serve the church. Last October 2019, we invited Dick Jones to speak to us about Accountable Leadership and give us insights on what it is. In November, the Ad Council voted to move forward with the Accountable Leadership model and an article appeared in *The Chimes* newsletter to recap the highlights of the October training.



In January 2020, Pastor Loretta and I came up with a draft of Guiding Principles for the Accountable Leadership board. We used models from several other churches who have already adopted the Accountable Leadership model to develop our own draft version. We presented our draft at the training event held in January for the current leaders. Suggestions and corrections were made to the draft. At the January Administrative Council meeting, the final draft was presented and a motion carried to accept the Sparta UMC Guiding Principles for the Servant Leadership board. Note that we replaced the word Accountable with Servant because we felt it better captures the spirit of what this board will be about – Servant Leadership.

In March, Pastor talked about moving forward with authenticity and intentionality at Ad Council. She presented a book she had read entitled *“How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You are Going: Leading in a Liminal Season.”* In other words, we need to know who we are as a congregation so that we can move forward intentionally in everything that we do. Also in March, as you are painfully aware, COVID-19 changed our way of life. With the church shut down, Pastor Loretta learned how to function as a pastor would under the accountable leadership model. Even though she was operating that way, she did not make decisions outside her jurisdiction. She worked closely with the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee when staffing changes occurred and Trustees when building issues needed to be addressed. Pastor also was in communication with Dick Jones whenever she had any questions around the Accountable Leadership model. In August, myself and Pastor Loretta uploaded “Sparta UMC Town Hall Communication” video on Youtube and sent out the link to the congregation so they could keep abreast of what we had been doing so far. In November, at the Church Conference, we will vote to officially adopt the Servant Leadership board.

In April, since we had no in-person worship due to COVID-19, Pastor Loretta, Cyndi Wise, and Lynn and Larry Humphrey began recording the worship service and sending out the link for Youtube so we could all stay connected. That was truly a blessing and has become a weekly occurrence. The Administrative Council began meeting via Zoom, which was new for many, but we were up to the challenge. In May, we arranged for those who might not be able to connect with technology to meet in the Chapel (socially distanced with masks) while Pastor displayed the Zoom Ad Council meeting on the big screen. Even though there wasn’t much church business to discuss at our Ad Council meeting, it was very apparent that our servant hearts were alive and beating because we organized a Food Pantry Drive to help those in need especially with the Governor’s stay-at-home orders. We invited Lori Ascher to join us and we were able to execute a successful drive in the AMKM Gymnastics parking lot (formerly Colonial Bowling Center). The Sparta Police even joined us and brought in folks curious as to why a Police Car was parked there with its lights on!

In June, Pastor was very careful to follow WI Conference and CDC (Center for Disease Control) Guidelines on re-opening the church for worship. Every other pew was sectioned off. Masks and hand sanitizer were available at all entrances. Offering plates were not passed but placed strategically by the exits. Online giving increased and even during the pandemic, the congregation was faithful in its giving. Hallelujah! As a bonus, we were able to get the big screen televisions (part of the anonymous donation for audio visual upgrade received at the end of 2019) installed in the sanctuary by the first in-person worship service. A few weeks later our audio visual upgrade was complete when the streaming camera was installed. Now we can broadcast the service live on Facebook as well as send out the YouTube recording link.

Even with In-person worship starting, attendance was small due to many vulnerable to COVID-19 from our congregation who were being cautious and staying at home. We sensed those shut-in at home were needing a reminder of our love and God’s presence. The Ad Council went into action to write note cards of encouragement and create “goody bags” with small tokens of love to be delivered to several members shut-in at home. Deliveries were made with masks on and social distancing, of course. We delivered goody bags once in the summer and once in the fall.

It seems that even a pandemic cannot stop the love of God or the ministry of this awesome congregation. Take that COVID-19! It is a blessing to be part of this wonderful group of Christian believers and I look forward to seeing what the future holds in 2021.



December Anniversaries

- 3 Pastor Loretta & Tim
- 9 Pete & Beth Jerman
- 24 Tom & Laurie Graber
- 27 Tim & Judy Fuhrmann
- 27 Russ & Dana Tock

December Birthdays

- 1 Mandy Moore
- 2 Jack Buswell
- 2 Priscilla Hemmersbach
- 3 K'maya Richards
- 4 Mary Axelsen
- 4 Joyce Graewin
- 5 Hayden White
- 6 Craig Goodenough
- 7 Ann Borreson
- 10 Kay Foulke
- 10 Eileen Roller
- 11 Nicole DeSmidt
- 14 Deb Thurston
- 15 Diane Noonan
- 15 Madeline Tadisch
- 16 Donald Knoll
- 16 Kayla Schulz
- 17 Jeffrey Ascher
- 17 Dave Kemp III
- 19 Mark Christiano
- 19 Carson Wiedemann
- 21 Gary Ascher
- 22 Tim Fuhrmann
- 23 Olivia Cole
- 23 Chase Lakowske
- 26 Andy Stenslien
- 29 Amarra Davis
- 30 Matthew Foss
- 31 Mitchel Lakowske
- 29 Phyllis Christiano



A Christmas Prayer

*Lord,
You came upon
A Midnight Clear
to bring
Joy to the World
and draw us near.
It was a Holy Night,
when you came from above,
to fill our hearts with hope and love.
Thank you,
Sweet Jesus Boy,
for clothing us with
Comfort and Joy.*



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.

Thank You!

Dear Pastor Loretta and friends of the United Methodist Church,

I want to thank all of you for the “Perk Me Up Bag.” I appreciate your thinking of me and am finding solace in reading the material you sent. The hot cocoa mix and tea will really hit the spot on these cooler days.

Thank you to Margie Lakowske for being the deliverer. Thank you to Pastor Loretta, and many others who called and sent cards.

Roger became a resident of Haven House at Rolling Hills in August. It’s been very hard not to have any personal contact due to COVID 19.

Again thanks to Everyone,
Roger & Ruthie Jerome

Dear Sparta Methodist Church,

Thank you and bless you for the Halloween package delivered to my door Sunday. It was a pleasant surprise. It’s nice to be remembered.

Thank you all,
Clarice Button

Dear Sparta Methodist Church,

Thank you for thinking about me with the Pack of items that Margie delivered last Sunday.

God bless you all,
Dave Hendricks

Dear UMC family,

Thank you for thinking of me with the gift package. The goodies are great but the scriptural passages are even better. We know these are difficult times and there are many who need our prayers and hope in Christ. We also know that he sits on his throne and is in control.

Thanks again for your love and care
and God bless,
Bob Steinhoff

Dear friends at UMC,

Thank you so much for the COVID 19 survival present. We really appreciate it and thank you to Margie for delivering!

Sincerely,
Dot & Dave Hering



Community Blessing Bags

Are you interested in helping out homeless in our community receive some basic necessities? You can put a “Blessing Bag” together and drop it off at the church to be handed out when needed. Here is what we are looking for: in a one-gallon zip lock bag put a pair of warm socks, gloves, chapstick, packet of Kleenex, granola bar or other non-perishable snack, \$5 gift card for one of our local fast food restaurants.

You can drop your bag off at the church for safe storage. Priscilla Hemmersbach, parish nurse, will deliver the bags as needed. If you know of someone in need let Priscilla know she can help connect people with local resources.

Dear members of ad council,

Thank you for the wonderful gift of goodys. There was so many thoughtful items in that bag. I had just read a devotion on passing along good deeds, you sure know how to make a person feel good.

Love,
Dean & Ann Olson

Servant Leadership Board for 2021

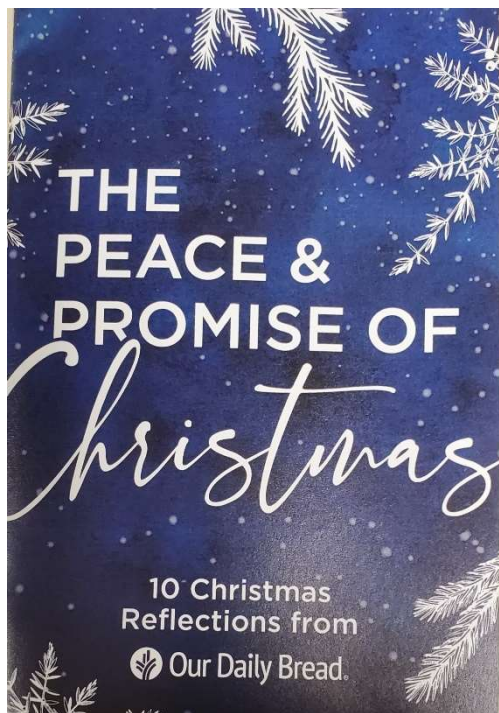
At our charge conference on Sunday, November 22 a vote was taken to move our church to an accountable leadership model. We are calling our new board a Servant Leadership Board and will begin meeting in place of the ad council beginning in January. Those serving on our first Servant Leadership Board are:

Servant Leadership Board (Accountable Leadership)

Pastor	Rev. Loretta Waughtal
Finance	Paul Foulke '22
Finance	Julie Hanson '24
Trustees Representative.....	Dave Kemp '23
Trustees Representative.....	Peggy Wright '24
Staff/Pastor Parish Representative	John Lodico '24
Staff/Pastor Parish Representative/Lay Leader.....	Priscilla Hemmersbach '23
At Large.....	Toni Burrows '24
At Large.....	Cheryl Isensee '23
At Large.....	Ron Phillilps '24

Thank you to all who have agreed to serve on the new Servant Leadership Board. It will be a good move for us as a church as we learn together this new way of being leaders for Sparta UMC and bring more leaders alongside us as we minister into the future.

A full list of those serving on ministry teams is available in our charge conference book, which was emailed out with the link for our charge conference. If you would like to receive a paper copy of the charge conference book please call the church office at 269-6949.



We received a nice little devotional booklet from Our Daily Bread. If you would like to receive one (or the most recent edition of Our Daily Bread) contact the church office and we will figure out a way to get one to



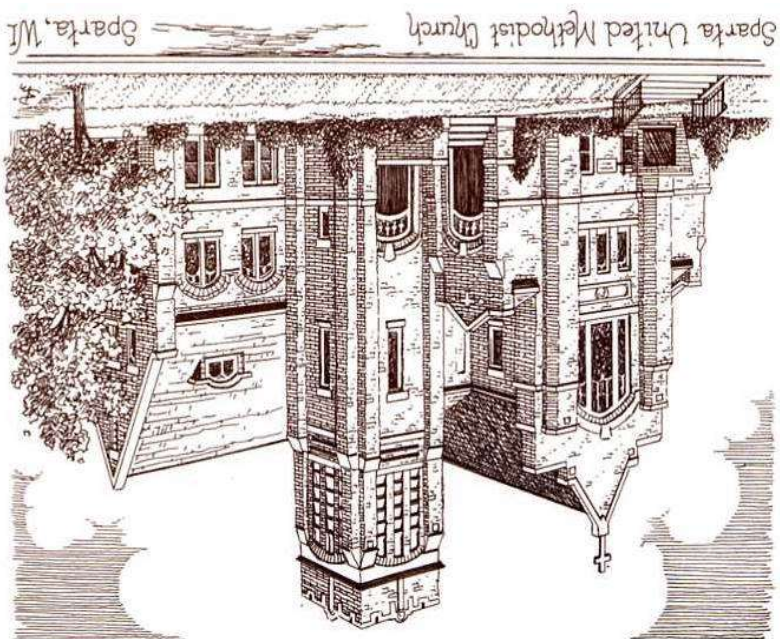
On Saturday, November 21, Amara Echeverria was baptized. She is only the second baby ever to sleep through a baptism for Pastor Loretta. Amara is pictured here with dad and mom, Alex and Natalie. Welcome Amara!

The Chimes

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Prepared Especially For:



Pastor: Rev. Loretta Waughtal
Pastor's Cell Phone: (608) 386-1862

Phone: (608)269-6949

Fax: (608)269-6940

Email: office@spartamethodist.com

Website: lewaughtal.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