

“The CHIMES” – January

Volume 57, No. 1

2022

Continuing the Conversation...

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:3, 13-16)

“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)



With this letter comes the turning of our calendars to a new year. We know there will continue to be ups and downs and things we cannot control (as much as we might like to). We also know it will be another year of God’s mercies, faithfulness, and grace as we move forward trusting God is with us always and through everything.

This is also the time of year that we, as Methodists, traditionally renew our commitment to and covenant with God as Christ’s servants. We will have an opportunity to do this as a congregation on January 9 as we focus on the baptism of Jesus and celebrate the baptisms of four young ladies in our worship service. You will be asked to remember your baptism (and all it means) and be thankful.

In that same service you will be invited to pray “A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition” from the UM Hymnal, as a way to guide you into this New Year. It is a prayer that demands deep commitment from us, so I want to spend a little time here giving you an opportunity to really take it in and consider it carefully before we pray it together. Below is the prayer followed by instruction on it from “The United Methodist Book of Worship.”

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
Exalted for thee or brought low by thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Invitation from our Book of Worship: “Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants. Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him. Christ has many services to be done. Some are more easy and honorable, others are difficult and disgraceful...Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work...”

“To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once, to be spent alone before the Lord; in seeking earnestly God’s special assistance and gracious acceptance of you; in carefully thinking through all the conditions of the covenant; in searching your hearts whether you have already freely given your life to Christ. Consider what your sins are. Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are, and whether you, after having carefully considered them, are willing to choose them all. Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God’s covenant, rely upon God’s promise of giving grace and strength, so you can keep your promise. Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful. You have given to the Lord your hearts, you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and you have dedicated yourself to God. With God’s power, never go back.

Continued..

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord. Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven, open your hearts to the Lord.”

As followers of Christ, there is much work to be done and as you can see from our Covenant Prayer and from 1 Peter 1 there are expectations for Christ followers. 1 Peter 1 reads in part: “*prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct...*”

The good news for us is that Christ does the hard work of transformation in us... if we will only cooperate, for in Christ we are *new creations!* What will a renewal and recommitment to God look like in your life? I leave you for now with all these thoughts to ponder as we move into 2022.

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

Pastor L



Blessed to be a blessing...



Thanks to our mission committee, we were blessed as a church to “adopt” a family through our partnership with Soaring Skills.

With the timing being what it was, the mission committee and Pastor Loretta made sure that a child and grandma would have some fun items under their Christmas tree this year. The gifts were picked up from Pastor’s office on December 18 and delivered to the family.



Welcome to the Family

On Sunday, December 5, Haakon Obert Allen Kozelka was baptized. Haakon is pictured with mom and dad, Gabrielle and Brady Kozelka and big sister Tennyson. Welcome Haakon!



Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Kenneth Axelson who passed away on November 24, 2021.

The family and friends of Norman Warthan who passed away on November 30, 2021.



Giving until it feels good



Within each of us is an enormous capacity for generosity. We love to give. We like to make people feel good. We love the warm feeling we get when we do something kind or helpful. There is something to the act of giving! Our generosity can change the world!

The size of the gift really doesn't matter. When we live with a heart of generosity we never ask: "do we have enough to give." Instead we give from everything we have, remembering God loves a cheerful giver.

As we begin a New Year, let's trust that God is working through our hearts and minds, which will allow us to continue the important ministry in which we are called here at Sparta UMC.

We won't worry about having enough. We are people who love God, who love the church, who love one another, and who wish to make the world a better place.

Let's work together giving thanks for our giving, being excited about the possibilities and opportunities that generous giving from the heart allows.

We are Christian disciples and members of the body of Christ. Every gift we give makes a difference. May the Holy Spirit flow through our congregation as we continue the important ministry to which we are called.

Finally, thank you for your generosity in 2021 that allowed ministry to thrive at Sparta UMC. God continues to use us to bring joy and hope to the world.

Paul Foulke
Finance committee Chair.



SUMC Leadership Workshop

On January 22 the Servant Leadership Board will have its annual leadership workshop. We will meet from 9 a.m. until noon in the fellowship hall to brainstorm and put together an initial 2-5 year ministry plan. This workshop is specifically for the Servant Leadership Board, but is also open to anyone in the congregation who is interested in the future of Sparta United Methodist Church.

As with any serious business for the church, coffee is a must and other refreshments will be available. We hope to see many of you there with excitement for the future and your best ideas.

Scarcity or Abundance? What are you looking for?

A few years ago, I read a fun book by A.J. Jacobs called *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. It's important to note that Jacobs, a journalist and author, is Jewish and agnostic. For one year, he tried to follow every biblical "rule" as literally as possible. This includes well-known rules like "Love your neighbor" and the Ten Commandments, as well as lesser-known commands to stone adulterers (which he does by throwing little pebbles at a rather cranky man he meets in a park who brags to Jacobs about an affair he is involved in). Jacobs also decided to follow the biblical instruction to tithe, deciding to give away 10 percent of his income.

After convincing his wife to join him, Jacobs gave the donations away to several charities electronically. He describes his experience this way, "The giving was painful. I mean, 10 percent? That would have an impact on our lives. Vacations would need to be scaled back; new furniture would have to wait. It was huge. When I pressed 'send' on the donations, my palms got wet, my heart rate spiked."

In giving, Jacobs felt the fear that is common to all of us. The fear of not having enough. However, that wasn't all he experienced. He continues:

"It was a pain mixed with pleasure. When the confirmation email pinged in, I felt good. There's a haunting line from the movie *Chariots of Fire*. It's spoken by Ian Charleson, who plays a deeply religious sprinter in the 1924 Olympics. He says: 'When I run, I feel his pleasure.' And as I gave away money, I think I might have felt God's pleasure. Which is odd. Because I'm agnostic. I don't know if there's a God or not, but still I've felt some high sense of purpose. It was like a cozy ember that started at the back of my neck and slowly spread its warmth through my skull. I felt like I was doing something I should have done all my life."

Ultimately, Jacobs' generosity changed him. I wonder, how our relationship with God and our lives might be vivified because of our giving.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist
Foundation

Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at
www.wumf.org or Facebook/wumf.org

Or call 1-888-903-9863



Superbowl of Stewardship

What is your stewardship game plan? Attend this seminar to make the right calls!

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation presents the Superbowl of Stewardship on Saturday, February 12 at Algoma Boulevard United Methodist Church in Oshkosh.

Workshops include: The Purpose of a Stewardship Plan; We Aren't Broke—Uncovering Hidden Resources for Mission and Ministry (register by January 31 to receive a copy of the new book by Rev. Mark Elsdon); The Importance of Planned Giving; Year-round Stewardship Planning; How to Thank and Recognize Your Donors; and Celebrating What You Have and Telling the Story. This seminar will benefit pastors, finance teams, stewardship teams, lay leaders, council members, and accountable leadership boards.

The cost to attend is \$20 per person or \$50 for three or more attendees from the same church. Get your team together and save some money while planning for the church's future! The cost includes lunch and materials.

Register online at wumf.org by February 5 (or by January 31 to receive a copy of Rev. Elsdon's new book). The full agenda for the seminar is posted on the church bulletin boards or you can see it at wumf.org.



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 **January 9**. 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 has a few extra scrip cards for local businesses on hand.



From the Parish Nurse...



A new year is here—2022. This is a time when many people make resolutions to do things differently in the coming year. Some people resolve to get healthier or develop better habits. We see the New Year as a new beginning, a chance to start over. But, many of us will soon fall back into our old patterns of living. Change is hard. So, each year we once again make New Year's resolutions in a never-ending cycle.

Here are Time Magazine's Top Ten Resolutions:

- Lose Weight and Get Fit
- Quit Smoking
- Learn Something New
- Eat Healthier and Diet
- Get Out of Debt and Save Money
- Spend More Time with Family
- Travel to New Places
- Be Less Stressed
- Volunteer
- Drink Less

These are good things to do or change in our lives. But, most are broken within the first quarter of the New Year. Our ideas are lofty but lack measurable results or detailed plans to succeed. We dream and hope for a better year with a better us.

What if we could resolve to become more Christ-like for the New Year? Not only would we become a better person, but we could also make the world around us a better place by our example. When we seek Christ first in all we do, our lives will fall into place. Psalm 51:10-11 is a great place to begin as we seek God with a pure heart.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Here is a list for setting some resolutions for 2022 and the Biblical references to help us all grow more Christ-like.

Read the Bible. *Psalm 119:11, "I have treasured Your Word in my heart so that I may not sin against you."* Many people set a goal to read the entire Bible in a year. If you set this goal, there are many great plans available to help you track your progress and succeed.

But we must be realistic and set an attainable goal like reading several verses each day or even just one verse a day. The idea is to develop a new habit of seeking God in His word.

Attend Church. *Hebrews 10:25, "not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."* Spending time with fellow Christians helps strengthen our faith. .

Pray daily. *Ephesians 6:18, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."* Spend time in prayer each day, even if only for a few minutes. Try to start and end your day with a prayer of thankfulness for all God has given us. Reciting the Lord's Prayer is also an excellent place to begin to get into the habit of praying.

Love others. *Mark 12:31, "The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.* Love conquers so many problems in our world and in our daily lives. When we love others, we find true peace in our hearts.

Help others. *Proverbs 19:17, "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed."* Imagine our world if everyone helped their neighbors in need.

Here are a few more verses to guide you in preparing your New Year resolutions:

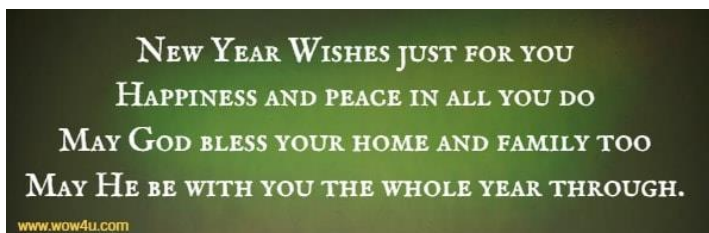
Colossians 3:14-15, *"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."*

Ephesians 6:18, *"Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,"*

Luke 6:31, *"And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."*

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

With love and prayers, Priscilla



Records and History Committee



We will be meeting on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. in the Church Library. If you are unable to attend, please let me know. Thank you!

Margie Lakowske



Nurture Ministry Team Update



"Love came down at Christmas"—and we celebrated Jesus' birth with scriptures; Advent readings; nativities; music; poinsettias; beautifully decorated trees; lights; a star; candles; luminaries; fellowship with friends online and in the sanctuary.

Special Thank You to:

Ron and Donna Burnham for setting up the outdoor nativity

Kevin and Carolyn Lieder for setting up and decorating the tree in the Gathering Place

Ken Shaw for setting up and arranging the lights on the tree in the sanctuary

John Lodico and sons for placing the large outdoor star and making sure it came on daily

Ellen Hemstock for the nativity on the altar in memory of her mother Caroline Storck

Toni Burrows, Laurie Bartholomew, Jessica and Nathan Janzen, and Karen Joos for sharing the gift of music during worship services

"Joy to the World, the Lord has come!"

The nurture ministry team will meet Thursday, January 6 at 6 p.m. and will un-decorate the church.

Submitted by Cyndi Wise



**A
NEW YEAR'S
PRAYER**

Dear Lord, please give me....

A few friends who understand me

And yet remain my friends;

A work to do which has real value,

Without which the world

Would feel the poorer...

A mind unafraid to travel,

Even though the trail be not blazed;

An understanding heart....

A sense of humor.

Time for quiet, silent meditation.

A feeling of the presence of God,

And the patience to wait

For the coming of these things,

With the wisdom to know them

When they come.

W.R. Hunt

A Christmas greeting from the Guideposts



heart and I thank you—with love and prayers. Priscilla

Thank you Sara Kemp, Mary Morrow's Attic and Jeanine Houtevelde for your generous donations of books to our Little Free Library. We are so fortunate to have you looking out for us by providing us with books. We really appreciate your help. Margie Lakowske – Little Free Library Steward

Thank you United Methodist Church and Women for the beautiful Poinsettia plant and birthday card, and special thanks to Cathy Nichols for dropping off the plant. Many blessings to you all!

With love, Diane Noonan

Trustees Update



A New Year is upon us and the church is working to maintain our buildings for years to come. We have several large projects along with many smaller fixes to make this happen. Our larger projects include:

1. New concrete sidewalk to North Court St. Entrance to the church.
2. New concrete sidewalk on southeast side of church.
3. Repairing all the failing plaster in the church.
4. Building /converting the bathroom behind the Choir loft to a Unisex restroom with changing table.
5. Converting the church lighting to LED

We also have many smaller projects listed below. Each can be accomplished in a few hours by two or three people. If you are interested in helping with any of the projects, please contact the church office. *Many hands make light work.*

We are also looking to hire a custodial person or a custodial services company to clean the church. If you are interested or know someone who is, please contact the church office.

Small Projects List:

1. Dispose of refrigerator, old copier and computer tower.
2. Organs resale or disposal (Garden Room and chapel).
3. Need (3) plexi-glass pieces 10 x 75, 10.25 x 75 and 10.5 x 75. For confirmation picture display.
4. Repair cracked pews.
5. Weather strip Parsonage door.
6. Install pantry in Butler stairwell in parsonage.
7. Fix kitchen/dining room door in parsonage.
8. Replace missing window screens (4-5) in parsonage.
9. Install handrail to attic in parsonage.
10. Install base shoe in kitchen at parsonage.
11. Fix closet door bathroom (accordion style) in parsonage.
12. Weeding/perimeter cleanup at Parsonage.

Submitted by Scott Naeseth, Trustee chair



Summit Spirits Update



SUMMIT Spirits: Sparta United Methodist Ministry In Theatre. Spirits—based on the Holy Spirit.

This theatrical ministry was first proposed in January of 1999 and formally adopted and organized through the Nurture committee in February of 1999. For over 20 years we have been able to open the doors to our well-equipped Fellowship Hall and welcome others from all denominations, races

and ages throughout the community into this ministry.

What brings us all together is our love of theatre; the camaraderie, and the ability to bring the written word to life for the enjoyment of others. Everything we do: musicals, dramas, comedies, short plays or original ideas brought forth for a cause (Red, White & Blue Remembered benefited the USO and we did Sparta Sings for Kosovo) was carefully considered for its moral content. We always know we are doing it for God's glory and under his guidance.

I first became involved with Summit Spirits in October of 2000 when I was asked to help run the lights and sound for *Fiddler on the Roof*. Our daughter, Katie, was 4 years old at the time and I needed to bring her to the rehearsals and the shows. I remember ONLY accepting the challenge if I could balance her needs with the needs of the show. God saw my struggle and answered my prayers; Katie was mesmerized by it all and over time became an active member of Summit Spirits.

I have been so proud and honored to be part of this ministry. Through 20 years I have met many wonderful people - most I consider dear, dear friends. Summit Spirits has brought many good things to my life and I would love to see this ministry continue.

Unfortunately time has taken its toll on many of those who have been a key part of this ministry since early on. And while COVID made us put a "temporary pause" on our plans in 2020, we are realizing in 2021 that our ministerial needs have changed and we are struggling to meet those needs at the present time.

In order to continue to bring others together and have future enjoyment for those in the community, we need your help. If you know anyone who would like to be part of this ministry, we could use actors, directors, prop/stage managers, make-up and hair artists and people who like to paint, design and build. Please call the Office at (608) 269-6949 or call Karen Joos at (608)

498-3588 or Beth Jerman at (608) 343-6914. Summit Spirits will have their next meeting on Tuesday, January 4 at 6:30pm. Our meetings are open to the public and all are welcome.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Jerman



Thank You SUMC...

We received a nice thank you letter for our support of **The Ecumenical Food Pantry**. The letter reads:

"To the members of United Methodist, We recently received your donation to the Ecumenical Food Pantry. We thank you for your gift and are so grateful for your continued support. Many blessings to you during this Holiday Season and always."

Sincerely Anne Kugle, Treasurer



Thank you to all who have donated to Soles4Souls!

We have collected 2314 pair of shoes through December!

CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME



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.





January Anniversaries

- 3 Larry & Lynn Humphrey
- 8 Eloda & Jerry Miller
- 12 Andrea & Eric Cole
- 27 Bob & Cyndi Wise

January Birthdays

- 1 Aylah Hanson
- 7 Evan Wiedemann
- 8 Shirley Fokema
- 9 Barb Zucco
- 11 Todd Loeffelholz
- 11 Roy Peterson
- 14 Lauren Zucco
- 15 Dennis Hanson
- 18 Mary Talsky
- 19 Dani Glut
- 20 Sara Angle
- 21 Emily Axelsen
- 21 Jackie Vaver
- 23 Pete Foss
- 24 Austin Goodenough
- 25 Mark Halverson
- 26 Rose White
- 28 Kurt Kiefer



January Schedules

Bakery pick-up

- 2 Cyndi Wise
- 9 Margie Lakowske
- 16 Amy & Kurt
- 23 Dave & Sara
- 30 Priscilla & Jeff

Tech Team

- 2 Cheryl & Cindy
- 9 Ben & Hailee
- 16 Ron & Kristine
- 23 Toni & Amy
- 30 Ben & Hailee

Liturgist

- 2 Judy Fuhrmann
- 9 Paul Foulke
- 16 Marty Walley
- 23 Cheryl Isensee
- 30 Toni Burrows

Ushers

- 2 Bob & Cathy
- 9 Kurt & Amy
- 16 Peggy Wright
- 23 Dick & Eileen
- 30 Dick Gajewsky



Soul Food for Christmas

By Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

“...the glory of the Lord shone around them” (Luke 2:9b).



I have heard it said that the rabbis say, ‘God created the human because God loves stories.’ We are a people formed by stories, and the best of it is, that our story is big enough to save, heal, renew, and transform.

This time of year, our services of worship often feature the second chapter of Luke and our Christmas story finds the shepherds, working at night. The way Luke tells it, “the glory of the Lord shone around them” (Luke 2:9b). The word we render, ‘glory,’ comes from the Greek word, ‘doxa.’ ‘Doxa’ is used to describe dignity, honor, that which is worthy of devotion, glory. ‘Doxa’ comes from the root, ‘doma,’ which means, ‘an apparent gift.’ Our story says we are able to glimpse the dignity of God—and the giftedness of that dignity in a baby like us.

When we teach children the story, we often bring out a crèche and situate each character in a way that shows Jesus in the center. We try to teach children that this Jesus is born ‘one of us.’ I so appreciate Rev. Jorge Mayorga’s recent devotion lifting a theme in Central American theologies that we have a Christ born as one of us. Yet there was no room for a poor Christ when they needed shelter to give birth to Jesus. Jesus at the center of the crèche forces us to meditate on a Christ of the poor sent to transform the whole creation.

We have a choice: we could make no room for the dignity of God or receive each other in ways that each act of love increases the glory of God. We don’t have to go far to see the need for hospitality for Afghan refugees or for economic refugees. We will have red and blue at our Christmas tables, but if we live by our story, each act of love increases the glory of God in our midst. Please make time for the story in your Christmas festivities. In doing so, we put Jesus in the center again.

In Christmastide, we have the fullness of twelve days to reflect on our reception of the poor Christ, born one of us. Acts of love also consider dismantling systems that get in the way of racial justice and radical

inclusion because we are here to receive each other in ways that increase dignity, the glory of God.

I would ask you to pray and consider the UMCOR disaster relief response for those in Kentucky and Middle America who suffered the extraordinary losses of recent tornadoes. **UMCOR number 901670 will route your gift to its proper impact.** Acts of love increase the glory of the Lord. Our story is big enough to save, heal, renew, and transform! Thank you for your faithful ministry. Know that I am praying for you.

In the peace of Christ,
Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

Dear Lord, please give me...
A few friends who understand me
And yet remain my friends
A work to do which has real value,
Without which the world
Would feel the poorer...
A mind unafraid to travel,
Even though the trail is no blazed
An understanding heart...
A sense of humor.
Time for quiet, silent meditation.
A feeling of the presence of God.
And the patience to wait
For the coming of these things,
With the wisdom to know them
When they come.

—W.R.HUNT

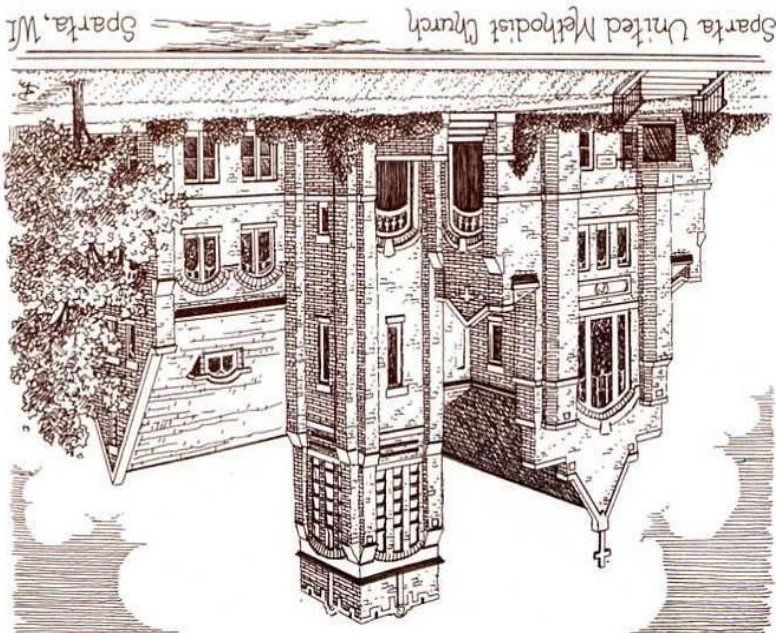
The Chimes

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/spartamc

SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year