

“The CHIMES” – November

Volume 57, No. 11

2022

Continuing the Conversation...

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness, gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

—Ephesians 4:1-3



Since September we have been in a time of discernment over the possibility of disaffiliating from the United Methodist denomination over issues related to human sexuality. After the “Town Hall” meeting in August that led us into this time of discernment, the Servant Leadership Board (SLB) met

with our District Superintendent and his disaffiliation discernment team to hear the multi-step process and the “financial cost” for disaffiliation. We also had the opportunity to ask questions on behalf of the congregation and voice concerns. It was a good meeting with more than one member telling me afterward that they were much clearer on what this process is all about. The ironic thing is that this process for disaffiliation was provided as a way to allow liberal congregations to leave the denomination because our *Book of Discipline* remains very conservative in its wording around human sexuality, but it is the conservative members who are seeking disaffiliation.

In last month’s *Chimes* I tried to spell things out very plainly regarding what was at stake as far as the “human cost” of disaffiliation considering the wide range of theological and practical opinions around human sexuality (and other things) within this congregation.

My intention was for you to prayerfully consider if you could remain a United Methodist denomination that respectfully allows for a wide range of belief trusting in God to work in all people in the way God deems best? Or, do you truly feel that as a congregation you need to disaffiliate and narrow your shared beliefs down to

either end of the spectrum of beliefs. A narrowing that would leave some believers out on the fringes unless they could adapt to your beliefs around human sexuality—whether it be on the ultra-liberal end or the ultra-conservative end?

In that *Chimes* I also offered some of the questions and answers from the *Ask UMC* web site around disaffiliation, as well as the link to more questions and answers on that same web site. Throughout October you were invited and encouraged to ask your questions, whether in person or on one of the cards provided in the sanctuary. I appreciated that some of you did come and talk to me seeking clarification on disaffiliation discernment. I have remained in prayer for you as a congregation, for God’s will to be done among you.

On Sunday, October 23 we held a well-attended Disaffiliation Discernment Q & A session after worship. I reviewed what the discernment process is about and answered several good questions. I also shared some specific information regarding the potential cost (both human and financial) if disaffiliation was fully pursued. Toni Burrows, our Servant Leadership Board chair, shared her thoughtful and prayerful stance on disaffiliation. After some good conversation a straw poll vote of members was taken; there were two options to choose from: “I want this church to remain United Methodist,” or “I want this church to disaffiliate from the United Methodist denomination, continuing the discernment process.”

After the straw poll vote was taken it was determined by an overwhelming majority of members that you will remain a United Methodist congregation. Although it hasn’t necessarily been easy this has been an important time of clarifying your identity as a church.

My prayer is that you will continue to have respectful, heartfelt discussions going forward. There are always going to be issues coming up that have the potential to cause division. If you don’t have healthy discussions you are then left guessing what others are thinking or even what might be going on in their lives that might influence their thoughts or actions. Healthy, respectful discussions can actually help you become more clear and confident in your beliefs or may even change your perspectives on some things.

Your self-knowing also makes it easier for the bishop to discern who you are as a church and will give him more complete information that he needs to best match you with a pastor when the time comes. That is always the bishop's intention when appointing pastors, but he needs to know who you are as a congregation. Who you are could change over time because people change.

I was appreciative and encouraged to see all of you who came to the Q & A session. It was one of the best interactions I have witnessed here. I heard from members that I rarely hear from and all of the questions and comments were helpful and respectful. Thank you again and keep up the good work, walking "*worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness, gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

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

Taking a Step in Service for Your Church

It is that time of year that we are preparing for our annual church conference. Part of that work is seeking members to step up as part of the Servant Leadership Board (SLB) to serve a three-year term. At this point we have three to four positions that remain open going into 2023. It has not been for lack of asking. SLB members have been prayerfully asking, but for one reason or another, these positions remain open.

If you have not been asked and are interested in serving on the SLB or if you have questions please let Pastor L know as soon as possible. We would really like to go into the New Year with a full slate of servant leaders.

Feeling the Love

Thank you SUMC for the cards with words of appreciation and encouragement. I also very much appreciate the gift cards for Barnes and Noble; a shopping trip is in my future. The hard part will be deciding which book(s) will find a new home with me. What a wonderful problem to have. —Pastor L

2022 Charge/Church Conference

This year's charge conference will take place Monday, November 14 starting at 6 p.m. beginning with a potluck supper and then move into the business portion of the evening at about 6:30. This is an important meeting, as members present will vote on things like church leadership and the 2023 budget; as well as celebrating all we have accomplished in the past year. Retired pastor, Rev. Bruce Bartel, from Onalaska UMC will lead our conference this year.

What could be better—food, fellowship, and having a say in the work of this church. Hope to see you there!

Trustees Update for 2022



This year we have been doing some much needed repairs around the church. We have had major repairs and painting of plaster in the vestibule and the balcony areas along with the Court Street entrance, fellowship hall, and the Garden Room. (\$31,212) We had the sidewalk replaced on the north side of the Court Street entrance. (\$2,300) We had the boiler system tuned up. (\$1,398)

We have also been doing some minor less expensive upgrades:

- **Parsonage:**
 - Bannister to the attic
 - New storm door
 - New screens
 - Dining room wooden door repair
 - Base trim in kitchen
- **Church:**
 - Repaired dishwasher
 - Repaired water heater in kitchen
 - Repaired roof drainage

We have also been replacing incandescent lights with LED lights as they fail to help reduce electrical costs.

We have obtained custodial services from Spartan Outdoor Services to vacuum and clean specific, high-traffic areas of the church only (to stay within our budget constraints).

We are in the process of decluttering the basement of the church which is an ongoing project.

Respectfully Submitted, Scott Naeseth

Be Born In Us Today Advent Focus



The first Sunday of Advent falls on November 27 this year. The season of Advent is characterized by waiting—waiting upon the presence of the Lord to be revealed to us at Christmas. As we make our way through the season of Advent we are reminded that Christ is born in us spiritually today and every day. He enters into us daily to strengthen and support us, save us and renew us. We are changed by this presence within us as we become more and more like him in the living of our lives.

Week 1 ♦ Be Born in Us Today Bringing Blessing (Genesis 12:2): God promises Abraham that an offspring from his line would bring blessing to all. When Jesus is born, that promise came true with abundance.

Week 2 ♦ Be Born in Us Today Bringing Renewal (Isaiah 40:31): The prophet Isaiah declared that a Holy One from God would be born into this world to bring renewal to all the faint and weary. Christ's birth restores our strength that we might serve him.

Week 3 ♦ Be Born in Us Today Bringing Guidance (Psalm 31:3): The children of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years, often doubting God's plan for them. With the arrival of Jesus on the scene, we have a clear path to the promised land of heaven through him who is the Way.

Week 4 ♦ Be Born in Us Today Bringing Power (Exodus 15:6): John the Baptist pointed to the power of God present in Jesus Christ. As we prepare for the birth of baby Jesus, we point others to the power at work in our lives through our Emmanuel, God with us.

Advent devotional books entitled, *"This Will Be a Sign For You"* will be available for you at the church beginning the first Sunday of Advent courtesy of the nurture ministry team. Be sure to pick up your copy!

Pastor L is also looking for **people to light the Advent candles weekly**, as well as **Scripture readers for the Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols**. If you are interested in either of those opportunities let her know right away; she already has signup sheets ready to be filled.

Second Mile Giving for Restoration and Healing for the Boy Scouts of America

As you may be aware, the Boy Scouts of America filed for bankruptcy relief in 2020, overwhelmed by a lawsuit that grew to involve more than 84,000 allegations of child sexual abuse related to the Boy Scout program as far back as the 1960s. The United Methodist Church became involved because of our long-standing relationship with scouting troops in our churches. Our denomination committed support to the Survivor Trust Fund with \$30 million. The amount allocated to Wisconsin Conference is \$208,096.

The Conference welcomes individuals and churches to contribute to this second-mile appeal. As a conference we have committed to:

- Be in prayer for healing and wholeness for the survivor of child sexual abuse, their families, and for their daily struggles.
- Raise \$208,096 to fulfill the Wisconsin Conference commitment to the Survivor Trust.
- Encourage all churches to review their Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Please pray and consider your response. At the heart of the Sermon on the Mount is the moral action that is restorative to God's vision for Peace.

Jesus calls us to compassion when he says in Matthew 5:41 *"if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile."* We are called to resist injustice with nonviolent compassion, to demonstrate trust in the abundant grace of God, and to be generous so that our witness is restorative. If you have questions about this initiative, Pastor L has informational resources she is more than happy to share with you; just ask. In the meantime we pray...

"God, we pray for survivors of sexual abuse. We pray for healing. We pray for deep comfort. We pray that you will restore what has been stolen and broken. While you do not alter history, you reveal your love in the present and the future. What seems hopelessly shattered, in you can be redeemed. We turn to you and cry out for help and healing.

(Moment of Silence)

For those who have suffered, come to them tenderly and with overwhelming and powerful love. We join Jesus and borrow his words, 'Be freed from your suffering...' God, heal the survivors of sexual abuse, in Jesus name. Amen."



The Christmas Eve service will be at 4 p.m. this year.

Accomplish the Impossible

“God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible – what a pity that we plan only the things we can do by ourselves.”—A.W. Tozer

I recently ran across a story that highlights the power of partnership. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the Methodist church was holding its denominational convention, one leader stood up and shared his vision both for the church and society at large. He told the ministers and evangelists how he believed someday men would fly from place to place instead of merely traveling on horseback. But it was a concept too outlandish for many members of his audience to handle.

One minister, Bishop Wright, stood up and angrily protested, “Heresy!” he shouted. “Flight is reserved for the angels!” He went on to elaborate that if God had intended for man to fly, God would have given him wings. Clearly the bishop was unable to envision what the speaker was predicting.

When Bishop Wright finished his brief protest, he gathered up his two sons, Orville and Wilbur, and left the auditorium.

That’s right. His sons were Orville and Wilbur Wright. And several years later, on December 17, 1903, those two sons did what their father called impossible. They made four flights that day. The first lasted only 12 seconds, but the fourth lasted 59 seconds and took them 852 feet.

Soon the Wright brothers had built the first practical airplane, the Flyer III, and by 1908, the brothers had demonstrated an improved model in France that flew 60 miles in less than two hours.

The brothers partnered together to accomplish the impossible – and in the process, they changed the world.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

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](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/39-6026139) 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.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.

Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. You are truly making a positive difference in our church finances. Thank you Cheryl for continuing to coordinate the scrip program for our church.

The next scrip order will be going in on **November 6**. With the holidays coming soon, you will have three more opportunities to order scrip cards to use as **stocking stuffers**, **Christmas gifts**, or just to do your own shopping. The extra dates will be **November 20**, **December 4**, and **December 18**. You will also have a limited-time opportunity to purchase \$10 cards until December 4 from Amazon, Olive Garden, Outback Steakhouse, Target, and Walmart.

You can get your orders to Cheryl after worship on Sunday mornings or mail your order directly to Cheryl Isensee at: 9262 Festival Avenue, Sparta, WI 54656. If you have questions or need an order form contact Cheryl.

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.



What it means to be A United Methodist

Christians are called to go into the world making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

A United Methodist is a Christian who professes faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, puts his/her whole trust in Christ's grace and promises to serve Jesus as Lord as a member of the United Methodist Church (a worldwide church that welcomes people of all ages, nations, and races.)

United Methodists affirm the historic Christian faith as summarized in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

We believe, in the Triune God, the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...

God the Father, who brings creation into existence, upholds and reveals the ways of life that make for peace and wholeness, and ever works to heal and transform life through the power of love.

God the Son, Jesus Christ, the firstborn of a new creation who through his life, death, and resurrection saves us and all creation from the power of sin and death.

God the Holy Spirit, who comforts, sustains, guides, and empowers us to participate in God's life and mission in the world.

We believe, every person is a beloved child of God...

Whom God created in God's divine image, with inherent worth and dignity.

Who confronts and suffers the distorting and destructive effects of sin in this life.

Whom God has reconciled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, defeating the powers of sin and death.

Whom God seeks to make holy and whole, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, transforming us into Christlikeness.

We believe, in the church as the community called to be instruments of God's presence and coming reign in Jesus Christ...

Where all people are welcomed and nurtured as God's sons and daughters.

Where the light of God's love, justice, and peace exposes and overrules evil, injustice, and sin.

We believe, the Bible reveals the Word of God...



Where we find the story of God's mighty acts of salvation in creation, in faithful engagement with people through the ages and supremely in Jesus Christ.

Where interpretation occurs in the power of the Holy Spirit present in the community of faith.

—Bishop Kenneth L. Carder, submitted by Paul Foulke



Thank You to All Who Serve

Thank you to all of you who work to keep the ministries of this church going. Some of you are named in lists and seen weekly as you use your gifts for various works in this church; others work quietly (but just as importantly) behind the scenes. Every one of you is so appreciated and necessary, so I offer this prayer for you:

Gracious Lord of Love, it's so easy to think "The Church" is a building or a pastor or even a denomination. But, it's not. It's the people. Your people. Ordinary, everyday, people who are sometimes saints and sometimes sinners. I give You profound thanks for them.

They are the ones who form children, youth, and those new to the faith as Jesus' disciples. They are the ones who sacrifice financially to support the work of your church. They are the ones who remain the church as pastors come and go. They are the ones who take the church out into the world every single day as they live their lives. They are the ones who share the love of Jesus with so many different people in so many different ways, every single day.

But sometimes they forget who they are because they forget whose they are. When they do, help them remember they are part of the Body of Christ and that Jesus is their head. Fill them with Your love so they become more compassionate. Place Your vision in their hearts so they strive to be the Body of Christ to more and more people.

Lord, I pray that all lay persons will use their skills, experiences, and the gifts the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon them to do best what You are calling them to do. I pray this in the strong name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME

Thank you to all who have donated to Soles4Souls!

We have collected 1646 pair of shoes through October!

Records and History Committee

On October 22 we hosted the fourth *Our Community in Concert*. Thank you to Cheryl Isensee, Amy Kiefer, Ron Phillips, and Toni Burrows for your technical support, Cyndi Wise for accompanying guest performers, Cathy Nichols for her Master of Ceremony duties, and Aubrey Ebert for ushering, Michele Thornton for her help with the programs and flyers. We would like to give a huge thank you to the musicians who took time out of their busy lives to share their talents with all of us. BRAVO!



We are – Keeping the Eternal Flame Glowing



Picture courtesy of Teresa Brown

Nurture Committee

November 14 – Charge Conference, 6 p.m. potluck, 6:30 meeting.

November 20 – Decorating the church for Advent and Christmas. All are welcome to stay after church to help decorate the Sanctuary and gathering place, and fellowship hall.

November 24 – “Give thanks with a grateful heart,” and have a Blessed Thanksgiving!



November 27 – Advent begins. Devotionals for Advent will be available, “This Will Be a Sign For You.”

*Christmas flowers from Sparta Floral will be offered to purchase.

* Salvation Army Bell Ringing. Please check on line to volunteer.

* Next Nurture meeting, Thursday, November 10 (note date change.)

“The Season of Thankfulness”

Dear volunteers,

For 23 years of serving a weekly **Soup Supper** and 10 years of delivering **free bakery** items from Festival Foods to our church, many have answered the call to **volunteer** by cooking, serving, donating, driving, etc., these caring and generous volunteers are a blessing and are blessed by following Jesus’ example. Our prayer is to be good stewards of all that God has promised, so that others will know what the words, “God is love,” mean when they see it in our lives.

Please know **how much** you are appreciated! You faithfully serve, even though it might not be convenient—but it comes from the heart!

With many thanks,
Cyndi Wise



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

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

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: To Lynn Humphrey and Sara Kemp for the donations of books for the Little Free Library.

THANK YOU: To Laurie Bartholomew for defrosting the freezer in the kitchen.

THANK YOU: To Scott Naeseth for mowing the church and parsonage lawns and for picking the apples off Pastor's tree. The apples were very good and many people enjoyed the "fruits of your labor" if you'll excuse the pun. Thank you Scott for all you do that often goes unseen.

THANK YOU: Cindy Isensee, Amy Kiefer, Cathy Nichols and Cyndi Wise for cleaning the Sanctuary, Narthex, Family Room, Gathering Place, Choir Loft and Choir rooms on October 12th in preparation for *Our Community In Concert*. Your hard work was very much appreciated.

THANK YOU very much for the bread items and apples. They are much appreciated.
A friend

THANK YOU to all who sent cards and prayers before, during and after my surgery. I'm on the road to recovery and will start therapy soon.
Love, Dana Kemp

The Angel Fund Lunch Program sends a huge **thank you** for helping to support this important program. Your very generous donation of \$200 really does make an impact in helping our families who need a little extra help. We are so appreciative of your support for this program. Your spirit of giving is making the lives of our food insecure families a bit brighter. Your generosity makes a difference for hungry families in the Sparta Area School District.



Sincerely,
Cindy Thesing
Nutrition Services Supervisor
Sparta Area School District.



Pizza and a movie night this month is **November 19**. Pizza will be served in the small kitchen at 6 p.m. with the movie to follow in the Chapel. Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend! Please contact Toni Burrows at 608-343-

3029 before 12 noon on Nov 19 if you will be attending so we know how much pizza to order.

October's movie is "To Dance With the White Dog"



An unusual love story in which a strange white dog appears and helps Sam Peek, a Georgia tree farmer, cope with the loss of his wife, Cora. Stars Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy. From the Hallmark Hall of Fame Collection. Rated PG.

HARVEST SUPPER is Thursday, **November 3 from 4:30-6:30 p.m.** The UWIF will be offering Turkey and all the trimmings! Dine-in costs are \$12/adults, \$5/Youth (4-12), under 4 are free. Carry-outs are available for \$12 ea. These can be ordered by calling the office by 4:00 p.m. November 3.



Time to Learn



Diabetes Workshop

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

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

Where: Virtually

When: **Wednesdays, November 2-December 14 (No classes November 23), 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

Cost: \$30 to participate. Pre-register by calling 608-775-6870 or visit gundersenhealth.org/living-well.

Welcome

November 1 **Pastor will be out of town** for a District Committee on Ministry meeting

Summit Spirits will be meeting on Tuesday, November 1 at 6:30 p.m. in the library.

Harvest Supper is Thursday, November 3 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Lois Circle will meet on Tuesday, November 8 at 1 p.m. in the small kitchen

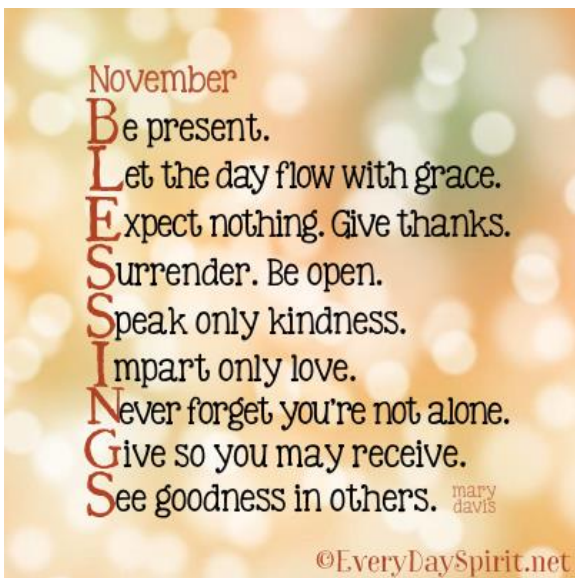
Wesleyan Circle will meet on Tuesday, November 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the library.

The **Nurture Committee** will meet in the library, Thursday, November 10 at 6 p.m.

Charge Conference will be held Monday, November 14 starting with a pot luck at 6 p.m. and the meeting to follow.

Pizza and a movie continues on Saturday, November 19 at 6 p.m.

Advent begins Sunday, November 27



Confirming Our Faith



The current confirmation class is off to a good start. Each of the confirmands has invited a mentor to go along on this journey with them and have made plans to begin meeting outside of class time with their mentor.

So far their time with Pastor L on Wednesdays has been strictly class discussions covering the topic of our “journey” together which covered things like how the confirmands may be feeling about this next step in their faith walk and what the confirmation/membership vows are and just what they mean.

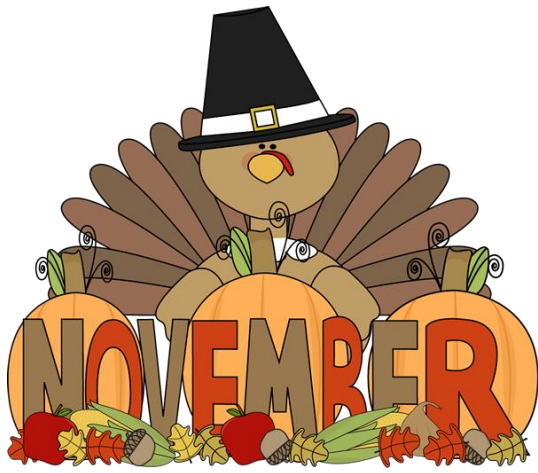
Most recently we have been looking at the faith of Jesus, the early church, and the reformation. They are beginning to understand some of the history of Christianity and how the church has changed over the last two centuries. They are (I hope) beginning to see their important part as the church and their influence to help shape meaningful ministries for younger generations. They will also be receiving a copy of Julian Hutchinson’s book “*Our City, Our Church*” so they are aware of some of Sparta UMC’s history. We have had some really good discussions.

Going forward I am planning to go beyond the classroom time and enjoy some other activities together. So far I have planned a movie night in December to watch “*The Nativity Story*” and enjoy a hot meal together. One of the mentors (who also happens to be the trustee chair) is planning for some work around the church that the confirmands and mentors can do together. You will also see the confirmands helping in some of the ministries around the church as they put in required community service time.

Please keep the confirmation process, the confirmands, mentors, and myself in your prayers. It is my hope that this is truly a meaningful time of spiritual growth for all of us.

—Pastor L





November Birthdays

- 03 Donna Burnham
- 05 Kevin Lakowski
- 06 Morgan Rodgers
- 08 Ken Shaw
- 09 Jacqueline Davis
- 09 Cheryl Isensee
- 09 Aaron Lieder
- 11 Emma Blackdeer
- 12 Dean Benedict
- 12 Jeanne Davis
- 12 Jerry Miller
- 12 Scarlett Simplot
- 13 Denise Ebert
- 13 Harrison Flury
- 13 LeRoy Jackson
- 14 Jessica Janzen
- 14 Nathan Janzen
- 14 Betsy Tadisch
- 15 Roger Jerome
- 16 Julie Jones-Conte
- 18 Penny Eddy
- 18 Julian Hutchinson
- 18 Elizabeth Jerman
- 18 Ron Phillips
- 18 Marti Walley
- 21 Richard Wright
- 24 Brandon Burnham
- 25 Henry McGreevy
- 28 Alix Herrman
- 29 Phyllis Christiano



November Schedules

Bakery pick-up

- 6 Priscilla & Jeff
- 13 Paul Foulke
- 20 Pat & Gail
- 27 Donna Burnham

Tech Team

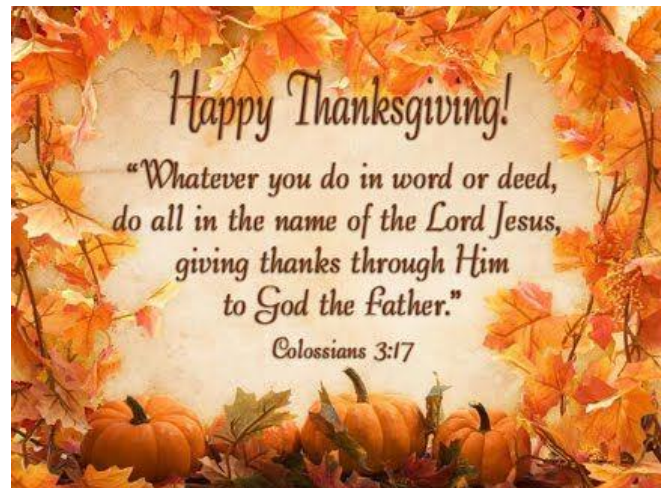
- 6 Cheryl & Cindy
- 13 Ron & Kristine
- 20 Toni & Amy
- 27 Ben & Hailee

Liturgist

- 6 TBA
- 13 Ellen Hemstock
- 20 Judy Fuhrmann
- 27 Marty Wally

Ushers

- 6 Bob & Cathy
- 13 Kurt & Amy
- 20 Peggy, Donna & Ron
- 27 John & Karen



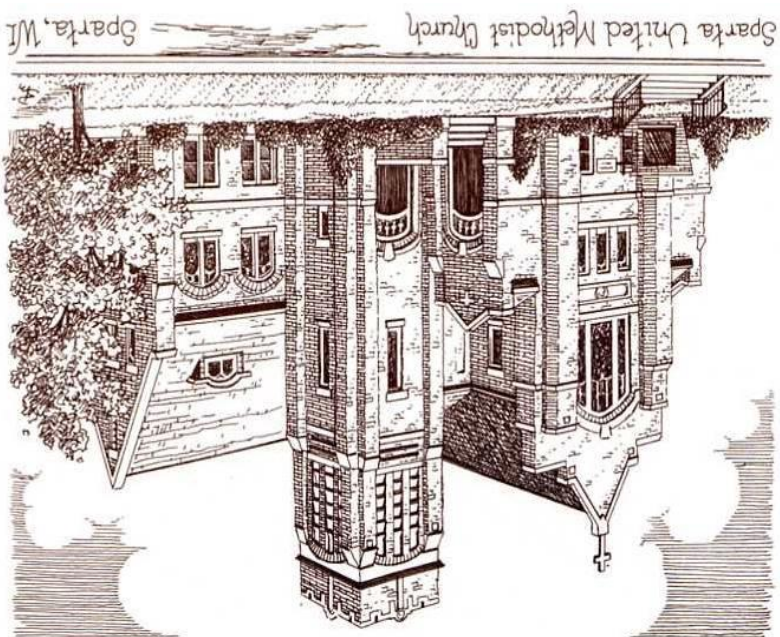
The Chimes

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



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Prepared Especially For:



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Phone: (608)269-6949

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Email: office@spartamethodist.com

Website: spartaumc.net

SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year