

“The CHIMES” – July

Volume 56, No. 7

2021

Continuing the Conversation...

“See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.” (Isaiah 42:9)

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:19)

“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God. I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel...”

(Philippians 1:9-12)

As Methodists we are naturally people of tension...this is not a bad thing. We hold in tension a life of holiness that is lived in very practical ways—what John Wesley referred to as practical divinity. We hold in tension the life of unity Jesus calls us to while discerning and using our individual God-given gifts for the good of all. And we hold in tension the old things and activities that we love deeply with the new things and activities God offers and desires us to receive.



That last pair of tensions is where I want to focus this month. When life is going well it can be easy to overlook this tension; we are comfortable where we are. There doesn't seem to be any tension. However, when life starts throwing curve balls into our simple game of life we are forced to pay attention to this tension between old and new.

How do we hold on to both without giving too much latitude to one or the other so that we maintain a healthy equilibrium? Is that even possible or desirable? I would answer yes to both of those questions.

After all as Christians we follow a tradition of statements, beliefs, customs, rituals, and practices that have been handed down over the generations. These traditions started with the stories from the first people God called into relationship. New stories and traditions began through the first followers of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Savior and Lord.

As this new “covenant through Jesus” group of believers went forth into the world to make new disciples of Jesus Christ they discovered that they had to come together and make some important decisions about just what it meant to be faithful followers of Jesus. They began as a group of Jewish men and women who believed in and worshiped one God. They still believed that, but had to reconcile with that old belief the person of Jesus who claimed the title Son of God. I won't attempt to give you the whole history of the Christian church, I just want to make the point that out of something old (the Jewish faith and understanding of God) came something new (the Christian faith).

As you read the Bible it can seem like this was an easy and quick transition. However, it was a transition that took hundreds of years and many generations for us to get our “old, old story, how a Savior came from glory...” (Victory in Jesus). As the new faith tradition was formed important “old” things were held on to (Scripture, worship, One God, etc.) but new things were added (One Triune God, baptism in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit, Holy Communion, inclusion of gentiles, etc.). It was challenging work holding the old and new in holy tension, but it was—and still is—important work we are called to do for God's glory.

This is an ongoing work that trickles down to our local congregations. It is important work that must be done continually because just like people grow up, mature, change, and decline so do churches. Unlike individual people who only grow older and are daily dying until we reach glory and fullness of life in

eternity, churches are made up of many people of varying ages and backgrounds. So, churches have the opportunity to be revitalized with new life in the here and now. That will only happen as we do the important and holy work of balancing the tension between old and new.

Part of this work involves us asking questions like where did we come from? You have an important legacy set down by those first Methodists who saw a need for a church here. The Methodist Church has been in Sparta for well over 100 years—the old. But you are not that first Methodist Church. You are not even the same church you were three years ago when I first came to Sparta. Many changes have taken place in the world, in the community of Sparta and in this church. Decisions were made—some with joy others with much difficult discussion. If we try to go through life ignoring the difficult decisions and change that comes with them—well change will happen anyway, forcing us to address it.

It is important to look at the old (where did we come from), but we also have to ask who are we now? What new things do we bring to life together? Who are the people we are reaching out to bring into Christ's fellowship of believers? What are the best ways to faithfully reach out to make new and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ? What new things are we not able to live with because they seem to be in too much conflict with the old? What does that mean for our life together?

These are the sort of questions I have begun asking our Servant Leadership Board. Along with the questions I have provided the team members with demographic information of our neighborhood to be studying over the summer. As we work to discern who we are today as a congregation and how God is calling us to faithfully minister in this community we need to hear from you. We also need everyone to continue praying—asking God for guidance and then listening and sharing what you sense God is calling us to.

We are living in a challenging time in the world and the church, between denominational dissension and working to come out of this past year of COVID 19 disruptions to life together. The details may be new to us but the challenges to life together are old. What will

get us through all of this together will be how we answer all of the questions facing us and how we decide to hold in holy tension the old and new in our life together.

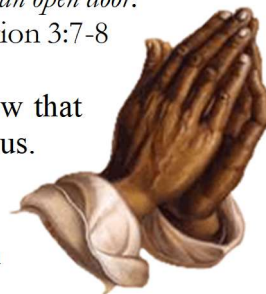
Serving and leading in Christ's love!
Pastor L



Breakthrough Prayer

"What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open... See, I have placed before you an open door."
—Revelation 3:7-8

God of love and power, we know that you are with us and you are for us. Breakthrough into our lives and into your church that our relationship may flourish with you and each other.



Fill us with the grace, mercy, and power of Jesus. Help us discern where your Spirit is leading. Open doors that lead us into a new season of faithfulness and fruitfulness; of growth and service for your Kingdom; exceeding our dreams and expectations. Give us faith and courage to step through the doors that you open as we faithfully follow you, in Jesus name and for your glory. Amen.



Church Facebook Page

Have you checked out the church's Facebook page? It's a good place to keep up with what is going on in the church and easily access the online worship services.

You can find that site at:
www.facebook.com/UMCsparta/. Once you are there just "like" the site and you will receive updates when new information is posted.

Report of Annual Conference 2021



I was honored to be the laity delegate for a third year at Wisconsin UMC Annual Conference, June 18 and 19. Pastor and I did not physically attend; however, it was conducted only through Zoom and voting online.

Bishop Hee Soo Jung's greeting for laity session 2021 is the event I enjoyed the most during annual conference. Bishop states that 2020-21 Covid pandemic restrictions has been a challenging time for all of us and asked, "now what does our future hold?"

It is a time for celebration and not for holding resentment. We are not going back to normal, but together will create a future making basic and profound commitments. We must unite with an inclusive and engaging spirit celebrating the rich diversity of an accepting and joyful church. We are coming back new as witnesses of God's love and grace for the whole world. The Wisconsin UMC family are back from exile, as a new church that is radically inclusive and racially just for our world.

The Service of Licensing, Commissioning and Ordination was Saturday for eleven clergy licensed as local pastors, seven commissioned for the work of elders, three for the work of deacons and one order of transfer to serve among UMC.

Numerous action items were voted on and passed, some topics included: online annual conference, conference treasurer and secretary, clergy rental/housing allowance, past service annuity rates, clergy compensation, 2022 budget, Marshall Schmitt as chancellor of annual conference, resolution for anti-racism and anti-hate crimes against Asian and Asian Pacific Islander Americans. Consent agendas voted on and passed included: camp promotion, youth ministries and United Methodist Women's Sunday, resolutions remaining 2021-2022 for facilitating nominations committee and housing allowances for retired or disabled clergypersons. Sadly, the UMC discontinuance of Colby and LaValle churches, as well as postponing disaffiliation of the Trinity United Methodist Church of Waldo over issues related to human sexuality.

The conference workbook and additional action plans can be found at:

<https://na.eventscloud.com/ehome/vwac2021/1110368>

In God's Love,
Donna Burnham

Summer Music Fun



The Mauston United Methodist Church is bringing The Ball Brothers, a Christian Quartet from Chattanooga, Georgia to Mauston UMC (420 Suszycki Drive) on Sunday, August 8.

The Community Outreach Concert will take place at 2 p.m. There are no tickets to purchase just a free will offering. Come join in praising God with some creative musical talent. Invite your family & friends. For more information you can call the church office at 608-847-5964, Monday through Friday and speak with Debby Bollig, Church Administrator; or call Pastor Anita Genrich on her cell phone at 608-393-0856.

Altar Plants



UMW would like to thank all those who signed up for one or more plants on one or multiple dates for 2021. Each date has two lines for one plant per line. Plants are \$4.75 each or two for \$9.50. Plant money goes to Eileen Gajewsky, UMW treasurer, who pays the invoice from Sparta Floral quarterly.

These dates are still open to honor, remember or celebrate: August 1 (2 spaces), and October 3 (2 spaces). Call the church office if you would like one or more of these dates/spaces and Michele will add to the Altar Plant calendar in hallway.

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

Thank you for your continued support of UMW,
Cathy Nichols

Storytime: Your ministry story

“Now to God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to God’s power that is at work within us.” (Ephesians 3:20)

I took my kids fishing for the first-time last month. You can imagine the excitement of 5-year-olds with a fishing rod! Besides fishing, they had fun throwing things into the lake. They enjoyed seeing how far they could throw sticks and rocks and see the ripples they create. That was a great teaching moment. “Do you know your words and actions are like these sticks? You do one thing, but it has a reaction much larger.”

There is a church in our conference that received an estate gift in the mid-1990s for youth. The gift was \$5,000 and was invested here at the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation. That gift has grown and continued to be used for ministry. In the last 25 years, over \$6,500 has been used for youth ministry! There is still almost \$7,000 in that fund today!

Isn’t it wonderful what a modest gift can do for the ministry of a church even after we have died! Isn’t it wonderful how one gift can affect youth for years! Isn’t it wonderful that one gift is a much larger action than the original giver could have ever known?

How are you giving to the church with your time, talents, and treasures? What ripple effect will it have now and in the future?

Rev. Krystal Goodger,
Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
www.wumf.org or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)
or call 1-888-903-9863

Stewardship Retreat is Back!

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation is once again offering an in-person stewardship retreat at Pine Lake Camp. The retreat will take place Friday, August 13 and Saturday, August 14. The full retreat will go from 10 a.m. Friday until 1:30 p.m. on Saturday. They also offer a “Drive-in Session” 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Friday if you can’t stay for the entire retreat.

The retreat offers a variety of interesting topics around stewardship for the church. Our very own Pastor Loretta will be leading a session on Friday afternoon entitled “Celebrate What You Have and Tell the Story.” There will also be books for sale on a variety of stewardship topics.

Please consider attending all or part of this interesting and fun retreat. You will enjoy the bonus of spending time at beautiful Pine Lake Camp. Watch for more details or feel free to ask Pastor L questions about the retreat.



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 **July 11**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl Isensee at: 9262 Festival Avenue, Sparta, WI 54656. If you have questions or need an order form contact Pastor Loretta at the church (269-6949) or on her cell phone at (608-386-1862).

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



From the Parish Nurse...

Everybody Pray...As we continue on our journey through life and with the never-ending problems it can offer us, we can become so overwhelmed and sometimes we just seem lost and wonder what we can do to feel better. We may end up feeling uncomfortable, sad, frustrated, and confused.

Yet, it is in our weakness that God's strength shines through. Those who place their faith in Christ will embrace life with a humble strength. Rather than disengaging from the world around us, "when our disposition is one of humble strength, we recognize that the problems of the world are not ours to solve, but to navigate faithfully."

Our role as members of Christ's body is to face life's challenges in God's strength. We are fighting to show the world the difference Christ's resurrection makes to the way we live our lives. That fight is won by those who put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

One of the things we should do when we're in trouble is pray as well as we can and even when we can't pray very well, God understands that and will answer our prayers a lot better than we can pray them.

If we cannot express clearly our prayer requests to God, when all we can do is groan about our circumstances, the Holy Spirit *understands* our groaning and translates them into intelligible prayers that God the Father can understand and will answer in the name of God the Son.

I believe it is so important when we feel alone and in trouble is ask other people to pray for us. It's such a blessing to just share the burdens and troubles that you have and then have a thoughtful, wise, mature, caring friend turn those into the prayers that seem wise to them. I absolutely trust the promise of God that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful as it is working, and I've experienced that in my own life.

When it comes to a relationship with God through Christ, prayer is probably the most important component, as it is our way of talking to Him, which is what we do most of when spending time in any relationship...and if we listen real close, He will talk back. 😊

In Christ's Love, Priscilla



An Opportunity to Share Warm Fuzzies

Brighter Tomorrows serves survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Monroe County. All services are free, confidential, voluntary and accessible. No documentation is necessary to receive their services; everyone can receive their services regardless of income.

Due to Covid 19, the need for their services increased dramatically. They discovered an entirely new level of abuse and forced disconnect causing many victims of abuse to miss out on much needed assistance. They are hoping now that businesses are opening back up full time, that they will be able to get back into the school and community to identify needs.

Brighter Tomorrows is happy to share news of an exciting new program they will be offering. One of the goals for 2021-22 is to obtain a trained therapy dog to use with their clientele and within their educational programs in



the school districts they serve. The therapy dog would attend client appointments within the office, court proceedings in which children and adults testify against their abuser, and work as a "Canine Advocate" when they present to local community groups.

Staff of Brighter Tomorrows are currently on a waiting list with a breeder in Wisconsin that specializes in breeding Golden Retrievers used for service and therapy dogs. It is expected that the initial startup cost of the program will be between \$5,000 and 7,000. It is expected that the breeder will have a puppy available in December 2021.

Brighter Tomorrows is very excited about this amazing opportunity for outreach in the community and they want to share the excitement with you. If you can help them with the needed financial cost your donation is completely tax deductible and a receipt will be provided. Please do not hesitate to contact them with any questions about this new endeavor or how to donate. Brighter Tomorrows local phone number is 608-269-7853. Jan Bruder is the program coordinator.

July Anniversaries

- 06 Alex & Jackie Vaver
- 16 Abby & Mac Smith
- 23 Paul & Kay Foulke
- 25 Barb & Hank McGreevy
- 29 Ron & Kandy Ebert
- 31 Julie Adams-Rodgers & Chuck Adams



July Birthdays

- 04 Clarence Brooks
- 04 Helen Radcliffe
- 06 Kevin Moore
- 08 Deb Dishinger
- 09 Eileen Gajewsky
- 09 Andrew Ochoa
- 09 Winnifred Smith
- 10 Merlin Ebert
- 10 Ginnie Jones
- 13 Beth Anderson
- 13 Sarlyn Ziegler
- 20 Avis Quackenbush
- 23 Joe Tadisch
- 24 Darlene Guinn
- 25 Brittany Burnham
- 25 Matt Glut
- 25 Courtney Goodenough
- 25 Bob Wise
- 26 Paul Foulke
- 28 Morgan Culpitt
- 29 Clarice Button
- 29 Marvin Fokema
- 29 Natalie Tadisch
- 30 Tom Graber



Sparta UMC Web Page Update

Our church Web site is updated with a new page that has direct links to our worship services starting with 2020 through current services. You will also find our Chimes archived there starting with 2020. You can find it at:

lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc

Once you are at our Web site, click on the "Stay Connected" link and it will give you options to go the worship or Chimes newsletter sites.

We hope you find this new feature helpful.

July Schedules

Bakery pick-up

- 4 Margie Lakowske
- 11 Kurt & Amy Kiefer
- 18 Dave & Sara Kemp
- 25 Priscilla & Jeff Hemmersbach

Tech Team

- 4 Ben & Hailee
- 11 Ron & Kristine
- 18 Cindy & Cheryl
- 25 Toni & Amy

Liturgist

- 4 Judy Fuhrmann
- 11 Martha Walley
- 18 Beth Nowak
- 25 Priscilla Hemmersbach

Ushers

- 4 Bob & Cathy Nichols
- 11 Kurt & Amy Kiefer
- 18 Peggy Wright
- 25 Dick & Eileen Gajewsky



CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME

Thank you to all who have donated to Soles4Souls!

We have collected 989 pair of shoes through June!

"The Joy of Annual Conference"

"Am I hearing you right, Bishop Jung? The *joy* of Annual Conference?"

Yes, my beloved siblings in Christ, Annual Conference is a time for joy. Certainly, we must deal with the business of the Conference, and there are various limitations and concessions we make in the virtual format, but at the deepest level, Annual Conference is the gathering of a beloved covenant community of laity and clergy who love God, love the church, and work together to honor and glorify God through vital mission and ministry. We do not always agree on everything, and we may have conflicted feelings about the future of the church, but we are a body of baptized Christian stewards who are excited about "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

For decades, Annual Conference began with the singing of "And Are We Yet Alive," and the response on the part of all the leaders of our church was a resounding "yes." By God's grace, we are the witness to the world of God's unconditional love and enduring hope. Annual Conference has always been intended as prayerful and worshipful work, holy Christian Conference, and celebration of the manifold blessings of God. This is still the joy of Annual Conference I wish to lift up.

Our worship is the centerpiece of our time together. From opening worship through our Memorial Service – honoring the laity and clergy who have passed away since our last time together – to our Service of Ordination and Commissioning – which confers God's blessing on the specialized ministries of those responding to God's call, we are raising our hearts and voices in praise and thanksgiving. We recognize our retirees and the incredible service they have given to keep our churches strong and our witness great. We recognize and celebrate with various awards, those who make special contributions to ministry in and through our Wisconsin Conference. We have preachers, teachers, and Bible study leaders who shift our focus to the future and to improving our ministry in significant ways.

And we have fellowship. Perhaps the greatest challenge and the most significant sense of loss is that we cannot gather in person, greeting one another face-to-face and sit around tables catching up and sharing our



stories. We miss the laughter and the joy that comes when old and new friends spend time in the hallways and at mealtimes and in the free time each evening. But the fact that we cannot have this level of engagement this year simply makes us more aware how precious our covenant community really is. We are a source of joy for one another.

We have a special opportunity and celebration this year. Due to difficult scheduling, we are meeting together on Juneteenth. This is a significant historic memorial for the ending of slavery in the United States, and it stands symbolically for the sacred worth of each person. From our national shame comes resurrection and a deep commitment to radical inclusion and racial justice. For all who are not attending Annual Conference, I heartily recommend attending a Juneteenth celebration. For those of us leading our Wisconsin Conference, our day together of worshipful work is dedicated to the meaning and spirit of Juneteenth. Another reason for joy and celebration.

Meetings are meetings. They can be good and productive, they can be long and waste time, they can be confusing and complex, but they can also be a party. I am inviting you all to a party, celebrating the church of Jesus Christ called United Methodist. I am inviting you to enter into delight and thanksgiving for all the blessings of our ministry and mission together. I invite you to worship and singing, learning and listening, recognitions and remembrance, I am inviting you to the joy of Annual Conference, reminded of the words from scripture:

*Praise the Lord!
Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel be glad in its Maker;
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.
Let them praise his name with dancing,
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.
For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;
he adorns the humble with victory.
Let the faithful exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their couches.
(Psalm 149:1-5)*

Bishop Hee Soo Jung's recent "Soul Food" letter from the Conference web site.

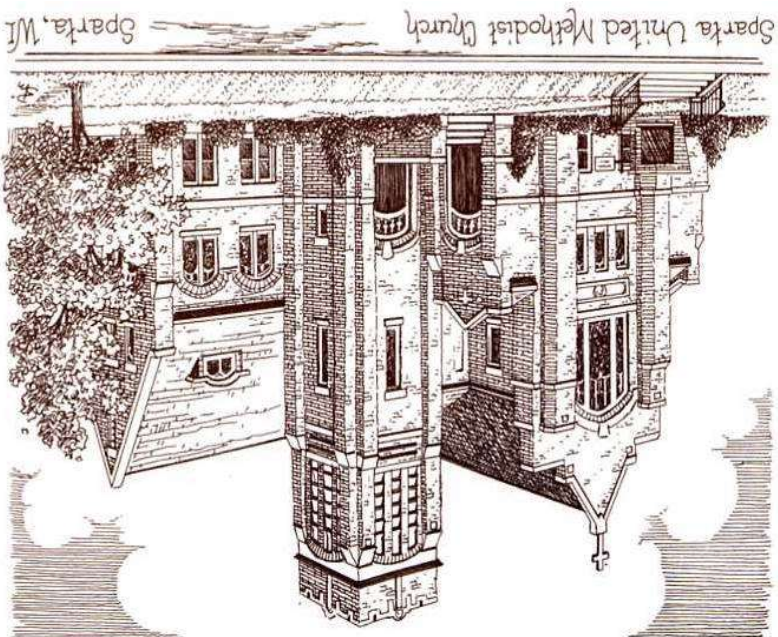
The Chimes

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



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Website: lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc

SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year