

“The CHIMES” – March

Volume 58, No. 3

2023

Continuing the Conversation...

“Consider then the parable of the farmer... As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one.” (Matthew 13:18...23)



We are in the season of Lent; a season that calls us to reflect on transformational change as we move toward Easter. Springtime is lush with rebirth, new beginnings, and new growth. Too often, however, in our hurry up world, we want to race to the Easter Resurrection without fully embracing the Lenten

journey that leads there.

Lent reflects the forty days that Jesus wandered in the wilderness — tempted by Satan — in readiness for a ministry destined to end, by human standards, in tragedy. Few of us can relate to the level of sacrifice and commitment that Jesus displayed in his forty days, yet Lent provides us with an opportunity to deepen our spirituality by engaging in regular spiritual disciplines from Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday. The wilderness — the desert days of Lent — is the sure path toward spiritual transformation.

As I read a reflection on Lent and Easter by Rev. Dan Dick, I thought about the transformation that is ongoing in my life as well as the life of the church. Dick shared that the metaphor of the seed helps us “embrace the wilderness and prevents us from racing to Easter.”

Jesus began his teaching ministry with the parable of the sower (you can read the entire parable in Matthew 13). He referred to seeds and trees, fruit and branches, throughout his ministry. To receive the metaphor of Christian growth and spiritual development contained in a seed is to learn valuable lessons about change and transformation for our personal lives as well as for our life together as Christ’s church. I found these six lessons

from the seed helpful as I contemplate the transformation I am undergoing. I invite you to prayerfully consider these lessons so that they might grow to full bloom in your heart.

Lesson One: Seeds Need a Rich Environment

Seeds require a rich, healthy environment in which to grow. The same is true for the environment in which we grow as Christian disciples. There must be an ongoing flow of comfort and security, challenge and inspiration, learning and service. Without such an environment, discipleship growth is stunted, stagnant, or worse, dead. We create an environment for our spiritual formation through prayer, study, worship, fellowship, and service.

Lesson Two: Seeds Can't Be Rushed

You cannot rush the normal growing process. Seeds require the amount of time that they require. In God's plan, the time things take is the right time. People, however, get impatient. Our culture puts pressure on us to rush through everything. We live in an age of instant gratification. Seeds teach us that we need to learn to wait, to develop patience. Christian formation is a process of seed-like growth. Patience is the key ingredient to transformational growth.

Lesson Three: All Seeds Grow at Different Rates

Plant a package of seeds, and immediately you see diversity in the rate of growth. Some sprout almost immediately and begin a steady rate of growth. Late sprouters often become early bloomers. And some normal beginners end up stunted and sickly. Growth is rarely even, and it is often chaotic. The seed teaches us that to mature in different ways at different times is the only true normal.

Lesson Four: Change Happens in Stages

Examine any plant as it grows from seed to maturity, and you will find that it is hard to believe you are looking at the same plant. While the growth follows a smooth process, it proceeds through distinct stages. These stages are marked by unique characteristics and are a measure for the relative health and well-being of the plant at any given time. Our spiritual development progresses through stages as well. Belief and inquiry deepen to devotion and discipleship. Learning and following evolve into teaching and leading. Growth within the community of faith matures to a life of

service in the world. We move through ages and stages of faith development as we grow from seed to sapling to fruit-bearing tree.

Lesson Five: Seeds Contain the Past and the Future

Each seed is the product of previous generations and contains within it all the genetic code for the future. Seeds are filled with the information that yields transformation. Each generation builds upon the last and lays the foundation for the next generation. The Word of God is the information we contain — passed down throughout the ages and preserved in us for the future — that holds the power to transform us. When we give ourselves time to grow, we unleash the God-given power to become mature Christian disciples.

Lesson Six: Seeds Have a Purpose Larger Than Themselves

Growth is not the purpose of a seed, but a means to an end. Unless seeds give rise to new seeds, they fail to fulfill their purpose. Transformation never happens for its own sake. Change happens to lead us to a new place. Growth occurs that we might not only know more, but that we might do more. Seeds are judged, ultimately, on the fruit that they bear.

Christians may never content themselves with growing in their knowledge and love of God just for the sake of knowledge. Growth that fails to lead to a change in behavior is not healthy. We grow for a reason, and that reason is something much larger than any individual's needs.

The lessons of the seed help us see Lent, not as a time of sacrifice and denial, but as a time of preparation and anticipation—preparation for the work to which God calls us and anticipation of the fullness of life that God promises. Let's continue growing in God's time.

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

A Lenten Journey through the Gospel of Luke

Our Wednesday evening Lenten discussion continues with Pastor Adam Hamilton's study, *Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws*. We are meeting in the chapel on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. throughout Lent as we explore the story of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Luke. Hamilton highlights some of Jesus' "friends in low places." The hope is you will come to see just how important this theme is to Luke.

You are encouraged to read through the Gospel of Luke with a 40-day reading plan that is available at the church. Each daily reading will take less than 15 minutes. Here is how we will progress through Lent with Luke:

March 1: *Simon, Do You See this Woman?* we'll turn to Luke's emphasis on Jesus' ministry with and for women including the demon-possessed Mary of Magdala with the voices in her head, the sinful woman who wept at Jesus' feet...trying to understand how Jesus saw a woman's role in his ministry.

March 8: *Parables From the Underside*, we'll consider Jesus' parables and how often in Luke Jesus makes the sinners, the sickly, the tax collectors, and the Samaritans the heroes of his stories, and the religious hypocrites the villains.

March 15: *On the Journey to Jerusalem*, we'll turn to Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, a journey that takes up nearly half of the Gospel. On this journey, Jesus ministered to Samaritan lepers, a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus, and others who were outcasts, outsider, and outlaws to their people, climaxing with his dramatic statement, "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

March 22: *The Final Week*, we'll turn to the events of Holy Week as Jesus entered Jerusalem "humble and riding on a donkey" (Matthew 21:5). There he overturns the tables of the wealthy and powerful merchants in the Temple, praises a poor widow who gave her last "mite" in her offering to God. At the Last Supper, Jesus addresses a debate among his disciples about which one of them was the "greatest."

March 29: *Crucified with the Outlaws*, we'll turn to the crucifixion of Jesus, and the words Luke records Jesus saying from the cross—words that only appear in Luke's Gospel: from the cross, Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of his abusers, offered salvation to an outlaw, and then entrusted his life into his Father's hands.

I look forward to the discussion we will have as we participate in this overview of Luke's Gospel for Lent.



Ecumenical Lenten Lunch Schedule

March 1: United Methodist Church

March 8: Faith Evangelical Free Church

March 15: St. Patrick's Catholic Church

March 22: St. John's Episcopal Church

March 29: Congregational UCC

You will hear Lenten devotions from: Pastor Brian Young, Fr. Eric Berns, Fr. Peter Augustine, Chaplain Priscilla Hemmersbach, and Pastor Loretta. A freewill offering will be received at each lunch to support the work of the Ministerial Association in Sparta.

Save the Date

The **Good Friday** “Stations of the Cross Prayer Walk” sponsored by the Sparta Ministerial Association is back this year on Friday, April 7. We will meet at the Monroe County Justice Center on Court Street at 11 a.m. and will make stops throughout town as we go through the 14 Stations. We will end the prayer walk at Lanham Shanhofer’s Funeral Home parking lot about noon.

At noon there will be a service of The Seven Last Words of Christ inside Lanham Schanhofer’s Funeral Home. Both of these opportunities will be meaningful ways to commemorate the events of Good Friday and are open to the community. Come to one or both and reflect on the sacrificial love of God for you.



Confirmation Update

Since the beginning of January the confirmands have been learning more about faith and trust, experiencing God, and the Bible, all through the lens of our Wesleyan beliefs. If you are curious about what that means ask the confirmands about the Wesleyan quadrilateral (no, it’s not a math problem).

We have also been discussing “Who is God and who God isn’t” before moving on to a discussion of prayer. I have to brag on the confirmands a little here: they are some awesome pray-ers. Most recently we have been discussing what it means to be created “in the image of God” and “sin and grace.”

We have been having great discussions on some pretty deep topics. I have been excited these past few months to witness the growth in these students. As they continue through this journey of confirmation you will see them helping with more active roles in worship and other ministries as they figure out what role in the church they would like to take on as they start their faith journey as potential members of this congregation.

I am anticipating a **confirmation service** on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, as the confirmands prepare to publicly confirm their faith and become members of this church.

Nurture Update



The season of **Lent**—join in a 40-day journey of repentance, reflection and reverence, as we “walk that lonesome valley” with Jesus.

- Lenten devotional, “Amazing Grace” available at Sunday service and in the church office.
- Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in the Chapel – “Journey Through the Gospel of Luke” DVD series.

- Wednesdays at noon – Ecumenical Lenten Luncheons.


March 1, HERE at 12 p.m. with Pastor Brian Young.

With special thanks:

- For the delicious cakes and lovely table decorations at the All-Church Birthday Banquet in January.
- To the willing men who prepared and served the Shrove pancake breakfast after church.
- To those to generously helped with the community Shrove Pancake Supper—especially Michael Bonello and his homemade pancakes.
- To Rich Zidich and Missions, and all those who donate shoes.
- To our faithful Sunday school teachers
- To Maxine Gudbaur for the countless sunshine and cheer cards she has sent to all of us.
- To the creative greeting card crew—nice to have you back.
.....and still *many* others to thank throughout the church!

As you can see, it takes many hands and hearts to serve God and our neighbors!

Stay connected to God. Stay connected to others.



The **Church Leadership Team** list has been updated and posted in the hallway by the minutes. If you would like a paper copy to go with your 2022 Charge Conference booklet, stop in the office and Michele can print one out for you,

What Do You Really Want?

“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money . . .” (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

Many people will say that they want more money. But, the truth is that’s not what people really want. As far as I know, we still cannot eat money, make clothes from it, or build a house with it. If we were stranded on a deserted island, it would be practically useless to us.

No one really wants money. Instead, they want what they think it will provide for them. For some people, more, nicer, newer stuff; others want the sense of security or power they think it provides.

I would argue that, until we understand what motivates our desire for money, we won’t be at peace in our relationship with it.

This Lenten season, I would encourage you to take time to figure out your money motivation by taking a simple “Money Motivation Quiz.” There are copies available in the office; no one will know your results but you. As the quiz notes, none of the motivations are inherently good or bad, but each does have a “dark side”. More than just allowing us to lean into the positive parts of our motivation and avoid the dark side, knowing that people may have different motivations regarding money than we do, will help us when we deal with money in our relationships.

Ultimately, we believe that loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves is our greatest priority. It is always easier to do so when we know ourselves well.

Rev. Jason Mahnke,
Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation



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

Thank you Lynn Humphrey, Sara Kemp and Pastor Loretta for your donation of books to the Little Free Library. You have made many readers very happy. Margie Lakowske, LFL Steward

Thank you UMW for the lovely begonia plant that you gifted to Ardel Lakowske. The plant makes her room at Creekside look so Springy. Margie Lakowske

Thank you Scott Naeseth for your many hours of work around the church. You are doing a wonderful job plastering in the Youth Room and are always willing to help; be it setting up tables in Fellowship Hall, changing thermostat batteries in rooms, or climbing in very high places to change light bulbs. Please know your efforts are very much appreciated.

Sparta United Methodist Congregation,

Thank you so much for donating your advent giving to the Ecumenical Food Pantry. The pantry is facing new challenges with the rising cost of food, but generous donations such as yours keep our shelves stocked and allows us to continue our mission to help those in need in our community. Your support is truly a blessing!

Lori Ascher
President

Thank you for the beautiful, early birthday gift of the praying angel. This little angel will join me beside my prayer chair and I will remember you all fondly as I pray.

God bless you!
Pastor L





Pizza and a movie night this month is **March 18** 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 noon** on March 18 if you will be attending so we know how much pizza to order.



March's movie is

“The Mulligan”

An inspiring story about relationships, forgiveness and second chances. Paul McAllister seems to have it all as a successful businessman, but his life starts to fall apart. Guided by the wisdom and advice of an old golf pro (Pat Boone), Paul learns about playing a good game both on and off the course. Based on the popular book, The Mulligan is an inspiring reminder that second chances are only one shot away. Rated PG-13



New Bible Study...

Moses, The Reluctant Prophet is a new bible study being offered by Paul. This will start March 9.

This study with book and video by Adam Hamilton will include the following topics.

- The birth of Moses
- Two moments that defined the man.
- The Exodus
- The Ten Commandments
- Lessons from the Wilderness
- Don't forget...Pass it on.

Cost of the book is \$14. If you are interested in participating, let Paul know by March 1 so that books may be ordered.



Thank you to all who have donated to Soles4Souls!

We have collected 95 pair of shoes through February!

CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME

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 **March 12**. If you have questions or need an order form contact Michele at the church office 608-269-6949

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.



The Sparta Ministerial Association are meeting in the small kitchen on Wednesday, March 1 at noon.

Nurture will meet Thursday, March 2 at 6 p.m. in the library.

SUMMIT Spirits will be meet on Tuesday, March 7 at 6:30 in the library.

Records & History will meet Wednesday, March 8 at 9 a.m.

On Tuesday, March 14 Lois circle will be in the small kitchen at 1 p.m.

Wesleyan Circle will meet in the Gathering Place on Tuesday, March 14 at 6:30 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Service, March 22 at 6 p.m. in chapel.

Soaring Skills meet every Tuesday evening and every Saturday from 9-3 p.m.

The Study of The Acts continues on Mondays at 1 p.m. with Pastor Loretta in the library.

April *Chimes* newsletter deadline is Monday, March 20 by noon.

Altar Plants



UWIF 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 \$5.50 each or two for \$11.00. Plant

money goes to Eileen Gajewsky, UMW treasurer, who pays the invoice from Sparta Floral quarterly.

Call the church office if you would like one or more dates(s) 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



Greetings in Christ!

We are nearing my favorite time of the year when we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Before we get to Easter Sunday though, we prepare our hearts and minds for that awesome celebration as we walk together through the Lenten season. This important season provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how much God loves us and just how far God goes to show us that love, even the suffering and death of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Thankfully, we know Christ's work didn't stop at the grave; and so we celebrate his Resurrection and ongoing work through us. There is no better reason to celebrate than the truth that Jesus is victorious over sin and death and freely offers us eternal life! It's the truth that gives us hope despite our circumstances and keeps us going through whatever we may face. That is something not only worth celebrating but needs to be shared with folks who have never heard that great news.

This Lenten season some opportunities to come together and reflect on God's mercy and love. You will find more info on these opportunities in the *Chimes* & weekly announcements.

Consider inviting a friend who has no church family to come and hear the message of God's saving love & enjoy the fellowship here. Pray for those you may invite into our Christian fellowship to have hearts open to accept your invitation and to accept Christ's message of redeeming grace in their lives.

Another way we can share the hope that Jesus freely gives is by supporting people's physical needs through giving financially over and above our weekly offering. There are people all around us struggling with food insecurity and lack of healthcare. After prayerful consideration, the Servant Leadership Board voted to support the **Ecumenical Food Pantry** and **St. Claire's Health Mission of Monroe County** with our special Lenten and Easter collection this year.

An envelope for the Lenten and Easter collection has been included with this issue of *The Chimes*. Please prayerfully consider what the Lord would have you give to help support these worthy ministries and share the hope of new life offered by Jesus.

Joyful and Blessed Easter to you all,

Pastor Loretta Waughtal



March Anniversaries

14 Pat & Gail Clark

March Birthdays

- 02 Andrea Cole
- 03 Lillian Ebert
- 03 Larry Walley
- 05 Adeline Simplot
- 05 Ana Bonilla
- 06 Mac Smith
- 07 Derek McDonald
- 07 Kristine Phillips
- 08 Quentin Dale
- 09 Lori Ascher
- 14 Pastor Loretta
- 16 Phyllis Aney
- 18 Tristan Blackdeer
- 19 Barb McGreevy
- 19 Elijah Peth-Schaffer
- 22 Arvilla Crocker
- 24 Joel Tock
- 25 Bob Nichols Jr.
- 26 Melissa Culpitt
- 28 James Davis
- 28 Julie Hanson
- 28 Jennifer Johnson
- 30 Grenda Rugg
- 31 Brenda Herrman
- 31 Dana Tock
- 25 Mara Culpitt
- 25 Brian Hemstock
- 25 Jane Hobson
- 27 Peyton Hale



Bakery pick-up

- 5 Margie Lakowske
- 12 Amy & Kurt Kiefer
- 19 Dave & Sara Kemp
- 26 Priscilla & Jeff Hemmersbach

Tech Team

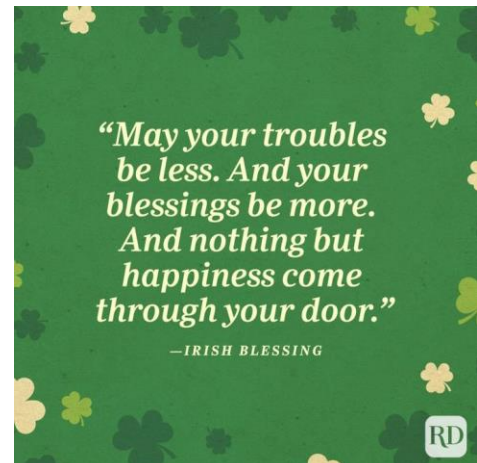
- 5 Ben & Hailee
- 12 Ron & Kristine
- 19 Toni & Amy
- 26 Cheryl & Cindy

Liturgist

- 5 Ellen Hemstock
- 12 Amy Kiefer
- 19 Judy Fuhrmann
- 26 Marty Walley

Ushers

- 5 Bob & Cathy
- 12 Kurt & Amy
- 19 Peggy & Beth Jerman
- 26 John & Karen



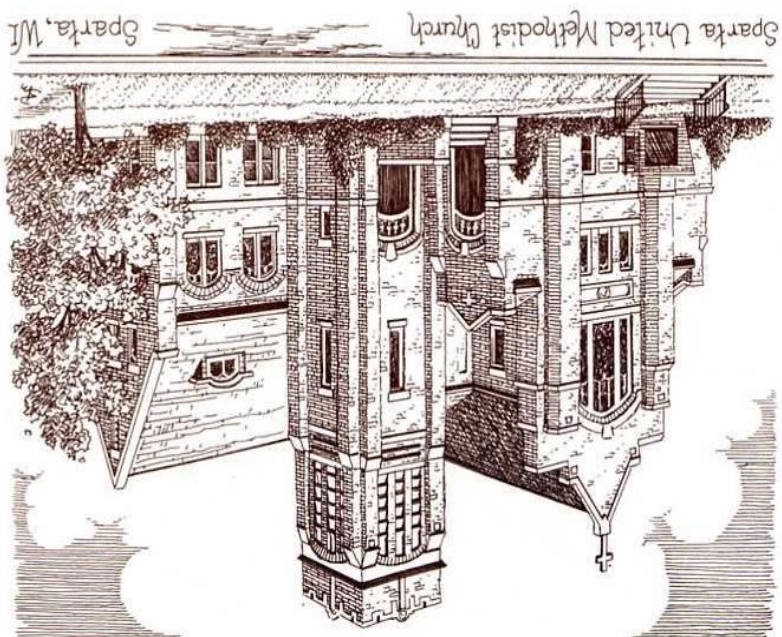
The Chimes

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings

Livestream Service

9:00 a.m. on Facebook

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year