

“The CHIMES” – December

Volume 58, No. 12

2023

Continuing the Conversation...



Hello friends,
Greetings!

As you know, after the three months I served in Sparta Church, I got COVID. It took a month and a half before I recovered. I had to go through a time that I had never gone through before. There was physical weakness, which was okay. Physical weakness was familiar. But COVID caused my brain to almost stop functioning. I do not know how the virus influenced my brain. The Korean language didn't translate into English, and English didn't translate to Korean. I understood both languages, but they floated in my consciousness like separate layers.

Thankfully, a couple church members became close to me and became my friends in that hard time. I thank them! I also thank you all for your patience and prayers for me during this period. I feel sorry that I gave you cause for concern. God also gave me precious lessons through the season of sickness. I got to understand those who are mentally not functioning so well. There was also a spiritual lesson. Now I am back. I thank God for the precious time!

We are entering into the Advent season. Time goes fast. At the end of the year, I want to thank all the church leaders for their faithful work. Many groups returned to the church after I came to Sparta UMC. Family Fun Night became a part of the church program. I am thankful to the praise band that returned after a few years. The choir and children's choir give the worship services a joyful, unique touch. We will soon enjoy the play by SUMMIT Spirits!

Rich was joyful with the Soles for Souls ministry. God let him meet a second-hand shop with hundreds of shoes during his fishing vacation and the shoe count became unprecedented! Above all else, we should celebrate Tuesday Soup Supper Ministry, which has served the community for decades! There was also a lovely community concert. Thank you for all your faithful work and steadiness of service toward the

community! Thank you for all the other ministries and circles I didn't mention here!

May God be praised and glorified through your heart and service for the Lord!

I wish you all a meaningful and beautiful Advent and Christmas season!

Grace and love
Pastor Hae-Jeong



December Sermon Series

Dec 3 / 9 a.m. Theme: Face of God
John 1:1-14/Pastor Hae-Jeong Yoon

Dec 10 / 9 a.m. Theme: Worship Works Wonders
Luke 1:46-47, 49/Pastor Hae-Jeong Yoon

Dec 17 / 9 a.m.

Dec 24/9 a.m. Theme: God guides the Wise
Matthew 2:1-12/Pastor Hae-Jeong Yoon

Dec 24/4 p.m. / Theme: Every Heart a Manger
John 3:16

Dec 31/9 a.m.
TBD/Pastor Paul



December Memory Verse

“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him.”

John 1:9-10



Why December 25th?

Did you ever wonder why we celebrate Christmas on December 25th? Jesus didn't have a birth certificate, so how do we know when Jesus was really born? Because the Bible offers no date for Jesus' birth, the placement of the nativity is up for debate. But there are three explanations that land us on December 25th.

First, the Christian historian Sextus Julius Africanus had identified the 25th as Christ's nativity in the 3rd century. Chronographers reckoned that the world was created on the spring equinox and four days later, on March 25th, light was created. Since the existence of Jesus signaled a beginning of a new era, or new creation, the Biblical chronographers assumed Jesus' conception would have also fallen on March 25th, placing his birth in December, nine months later.

The second theory proposes that early Christians were convinced that Jesus must have lived upon earth for an exact number of years. Therefore, the date on which he died would also have been the same as the date of his conception. Because they believed that he was crucified on March 25 (and therefore conceived on March 25), his birth would have been placed nine months later, on December 25th.

The final theory concludes that December 25th was chosen at Rome because it was also the date of the winter solstice in the Julian calendar and a popular pagan feast celebrating the birthday of the invincible Sun. The pagan feast was established by Emperor Aurelian in 274 A.D. After Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he wanted to draw people away from these pagan festivities and point to Christ as the true Sun of Righteousness, and so instituted at Rome the feast of the Nativity on the same date. So, you can take your pick as to which theory you believe has us celebrating Christmas on December 25th. No matter what option you choose—or even if you believe we have the date all wrong — Christmas is a reminder that God has come near and that the world and our lives will never be the same.

Rev. Jason Mahnke, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation



Records and History Committee Update...



Records and History will not meet in December. Our next meeting will be January 10. We are still looking for someone that is willing to take pictures of our congregation. If you have the inclination, please let me know. Records and History Committee wishes each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year!

We are – Keeping the Eternal Flame Glowing



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 **December 3**. With the holidays coming soon, you will have one more opportunity to order scrip cards to use as **stocking stuffers, Christmas gifts**, or just to do your own shopping. The extra date will be **December 17**. 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.



Nurture Committee

♪ “O, Come all ye faithful...”

December 3 – Advent begins. Advent devotionals titled “A Little Child Shall Lead Them” are available.

December 10 – Big Creek Christmas service – 6 p.m.

Christmas Flowers –

Purchase a plant of your choice “in memory of” or “in honor of” and bring to the church. If you’re out of town, call the church to purchase one. They will be red poinsettias, small \$6/large \$13.

December 24 “Light the Night” luminaries will be available this year to honor our loved ones. These luminaries will light up the Court St. sidewalk, while all are inside celebrating Christ’s birth at the Christmas Eve candlelight service at 4 p.m. They will be \$5 each, or 3 for \$10. Monies will help support our Ecumenical Food Pantry. Please use the forms provided. The Nurture Committee will prepare the bags.

Nurture will not meet in December. The next meeting will be January 4, 2024.

Thank you Kurt & Amy Kiefer for being our head ushers. You are always so willing to serve.

A special **thank you** to Dick Gajewsky for his years and years as our faithful head usher – we appreciate all you have done.

Thank you to Erin Tadisch and her Girl Scout troop for planning, preparing and serving a Tuesday night Soup Supper in November. Their leaders helped supervise these polite, energetic and cheerful young girls. Our soup supper guests truly appreciated the delicious meal you served. Keep up the good work!

♪ “Hark the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King...”



Thank you: Scott Naeseth for your dedication to keeping the grounds at church always looking immaculate. Your lawn mowing and leaf raking is greatly appreciated.

Thank you: Lynn Humphrey for all of the hours you have dedicated to making the Family Fun nights fun! You pour your heart and soul into creating a fun, learning atmosphere for our youth and it is appreciated! Larry, your work on the Family Fun Nights does not go unnoticed either. Thank you for all of your help making these events come off without a hitch.

Thank you: Michele Thornton we just want you to know that we appreciate all you do to keep us “in the loop”. You have a never ending job and we appreciate everything you do!

Thank you Margie Lakowske for always volunteering for anything we need help with. We can always count on you.

The Sparta Area School District would like to extend our **sincere appreciation** for your kindness with your school supply drive this year. These much needed supplies are being used through our school. It is by working together that we can provide the most positive and productive school experience for all the children in our community. We value your contribution and continued partnership.

Thank you Margie Lakowske for being our representative at the Community Thanksgiving Dinner and scheduling home-delivery meals. You attended many meetings and made many calls to make sure this part of the event went smoothly. You are a “volunteer blessing” to our church and community.





Note from the Financial Secretary

The **deadline** for all donations and contributions to Sparta United Methodist Church for deposit in 2022 to be received is **Wednesday morning, December 27, 2023**. That is the final day Heidi Sullivan, the SUMC financial secretary, will be making a deposit to the bank for 2023.



Pizza and a movie night this month is **December 16**. 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



December 16 if you will be attending so we know how much pizza to order



“I Heard the Bells”

I Head the Bells tells the inspiring true story behind the beloved Christmas carol and its author, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Known as America’s Poet, Henry leads an idyllic life – until the day his world is shattered by tragedy. With a nation divided by Civil War and his family torn apart, Henry puts down his pen, silenced by grief. But it’s the sound of Christmas morning that reignites the poet’s lost voice as he discovers the resounding hope of rekindled faith.



Summit Spirits News...



The ladies of the Charitable Sisterhood of the Second Trinity Victory Church are preparing for their Annual Christmas Spectacular, but are having trouble staying focused because someone has stolen the Baby Jesus from the Manger scene. Follow this who dun-it and the mystery is not revealed until the end! There are plenty

of laughs and seasonal music to boot. The cast includes: Toni Burrows, Karen Joos, Joyce Putman, Juanita Mathews and Nicole Dutter.

The performance dates are: **December 1, 2 & 3 and December 8, 9 and 10**. Friday and Saturday shows are at 7pm and Sunday matinees are at 1:30pm. Tickets are \$13 for adults, \$10 for seniors, students and military and kids under 10 are Free. They may be purchased at the door at the K Street entrance.



Needing a card for someone special?

You can now find new and recycled cards for all occasions: Birthdays, Anniversaries, Weddings, Thank You, Get Well, Sympathies and now Easter. The cost is only 50¢ each. All proceeds go to our Missions & Outreach Fund. You can find them in the Gathering Place if you’d like to check them out!



Two Special Candlelight Services Coming Up this month

A candlelight service of lessons and carols will be held at the **Big Creek Church** at 6 p.m. on Sunday, **December 10**. If you are looking for a quiet break in the midst of a busy holiday season to help you refocus and re-center, this may be just the ticket for you. Everyone is welcome!



Light the Night Christmas Eve *Service of Lessons and Carols* Saturday, December 24 at 4 p.m.

It is such a joy to anticipate once again worshipping on Christmas Eve, hearing the wonderful story of our Saviors birth through Scripture readings and carols. Come and celebrate with joy and anticipation the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ and his continuing revelation in our lives, in this beautiful service of light and sound.

Luminaries are available to purchase in honor or memory of loved ones. An order form is available in worship on Sunday mornings and through the church office.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people... Luke 2:10

Light the Night Luminaries



"Light the Night" luminaries will be offered this year to honor our loved ones. On **December 24**, these luminaries will light up the Court Street sidewalk while all are inside celebrating Christ's birth at the Christmas Eve service at 4:00 p.m.

They will be \$5 each or 3 for \$10 and these monies will go to the Ecumenical Food Pantry. Please use the forms provided.

Christ is the light of the world!



Christmas Flowers



Purchase a plant of your choice "in honor" or "in memory" of a loved one. Please stop in to the office for a form to fill out or get one at Sunday Worship. If you're out of town and would like us to purchase one for you, please let us know. We will be doing red Poinsettias only. You can get a small one for \$6 or a large for \$13. Please call the office with you choice, name and "in honor" or "in memory."

Flowers maybe taken home to enjoy following the **4:00 p.m.** Christmas Eve service.



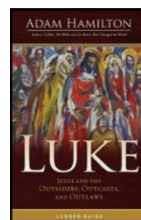
Thank you to all who have donated to Soles4Souls!

We have collected 802 pair of shoes through November!

CHANGING THE WORLD
ONE PAIR AT A TIME



The Gospel of Luke



Explore the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus as told in the Gospel of Luke. Join Paul in this new study, starting Thursday, January 4 at 2 p.m.



COMING SOON

The Sparta Ministerial Association will meet at noon, in the small kitchen, Wednesday, December 6.

Nurture will not meet in December.

SUMMIT Spirits will not meet in December. Come see their play December 1, 2 & 3 and December 8, 9 and 10. Friday and Saturday shows are at 7pm and Sunday matinees are at 1:30pm.

Pastor will be in Madison for the Institute of Congregational Development December 5-6.

Records & History will not meet in December.

Lois Circle will meet for lunch at La Herradura Restaurant, 702 Industrial Dr., Sparta at 11:30 a.m. on December 12.

Wesleyan Circle will meet in the little kitchen at 6:00 p.m. on December 12 for a potluck dinner followed by a White Elephant gift exchange.

Servant Leadership Board along with the Stewardship Committee will meet Thursday, December 14 at 6 p.m.

Pizza and a movie is Saturday, December 16 with pizza in the small kitchen at 6 p.m. and the movie in the chapel at 6:30 p.m.

January *Chimes* newsletter deadline is Friday, December 22 by noon.

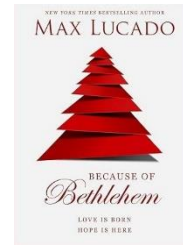


Christmas Caroling

The Chancel Choir will be caroling on **Wednesday December 20 at 6 PM**. Anyone who would like to join us is welcome. Carolers should meet at Cyndi Wise's home at 409 N. Benton St. at 6 p.m. Dress warm and bring Christmas goodies to share after the caroling. Hope to see you there. Everyone is welcome!



Advent Bible Study



For some, Christmas is a time of excitement, celebration, and family, while for others it is a time of loneliness, grief, and loss. No matter what this season holds for you, be encouraged that the God of the universe came to be near you. In this book, Max will help you:

- Rekindle your connection to the Christ of Christmas who offers lasting hope.
- Lay down your endless Christmas to-do list and receive what Jesus has already done.
- Heal your heartache by embracing the God who is always near you, always for you, and always in you.

There will be two sets of classes for this study.
1st set: Sundays, December 3, 10, & 17 at 10:30 a.m.
2nd set: Thursday December 7, and Wednesdays, December 13 & 20 at 2 p.m. All classes will be held in the classroom



Altar Plants



UWIF would like to thank all those who signed up for one or more plants on one or multiple dates for 2023. **2024 calendars are now up!** 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, UWIF treasurer, who pays the invoice from Sparta Floral quarterly. At this time please continue to make your checks out to UMW.

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 UWIF,
Cathy Nichols



UMIF Update...



The United Women in Faith would like to congratulate Scott Naeseth on receiving the Special Mission Recognition pin.

The entire congregation appreciates what Scott (and Rose) do for SUMC. Special Mission Recognition is one of five criteria UMF try to achieve each year. Once again, Sparta UWF achieved the 5 Star status. We're pretty proud of our small local unit. Eileen G., our treasurer, has sent off the final portion of Pledge to Mission, our Gift in Memory for Pat Eggers and the World Thank offering to the District. Soon she will be sending our Christmas Giving Gifts to many local charities.

Thank you to the 12 volunteers who picked up monthly altar plants. Thank you to each and every one who signed up to sponsor altar plants for each Sunday service in 2023. Michele has fresh 2024 monthly calendars up in the hallway by the elevator. Check it out so you get the dates you want to remember or celebrate those we love.

A thank you note was received from SASD backpack program for the donation made and the support of grocery items dropped off in little kitchen. 170 backpacks are sent home to families each week.

The Lois and Wesleyan Circles began monthly meetings in September and will continue, with good weather, until June of 2024. During the past year these faithful women have provided snacks for St. Clare Mission, hosted a successful Spring Luncheon, and made cookies for the Red Cross blood drive.

The Wesleyan Circle ladies will meet in the little kitchen on Dec. 12 at 6:00 for a potluck meal followed by the traditional White Elephant gift exchange in the Gathering Place. Unbelievable laughter will be heard throughout the church. Julie Adams (Wesleyan Circle) and her family will shop for a family of 5 this year to make their Christmas a little brighter.

The Lois Circle will gather for lunch at 11:30 on Dec. 12 at La Herradura Restaurant on Industrial Dr.

Sparta UWF thank our congregation and community for the support given in 2023. We wish God's blessings to each and every one of you. Merry Christmas!

Cathy Nichols



The Legend of the Candy Cane



Many years ago, a candy maker wanted to make a candy at Christmas time that would serve as a witness to his Christian faith, so he made the Christmas candy cane.

He incorporated several symbols for the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus. He began with a stick of pure white hard candy. The white symbolizes the Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-35) and the sinless nature of Jesus (1 John 3:5). The hardness of the candy symbolizes the Solid Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), the foundation of the Church (Matthew 16:18); and the firmness of the promises of God (Psalm 18:30-32).

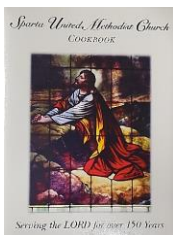
The candy maker made the candy in the form of a "J" to represent the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior (1 John 3:16-17), and a symbol to represent the staff of the Good Shepherd (John 10:14).

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the candy maker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received prior to his crucifixion (Mark 15:15) for our healing (Isaiah 53:5). The large red stripe represented the blood shed by Christ on the cross for our salvation (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7).

Unfortunately, the candy lost its original meaning and became just a decoration seen only at Christmas time. But the true meaning is still there for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Pray that this traditional symbol will again be used as a witness for the glory and honor of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Looking for a unique gift?



Maybe you know someone who is just beginning the adventure of learning to cook or is setting up a household for the first time. A copy of the Sparta UMC Cookbook might be just the ticket. It is full of famously delicious recipes from our very favorite cooks in the church. This is a beautiful cookbook that comes in a small three-ring binder so favorite family recipes can easily be added to the collection. The cookbooks are a real bargain at \$5 each. There are only 6 left!!





December Anniversaries

- 09 Pete & Beth Jerman
- 24 Tom & Laurie Graber
- 27 Tim & Judy Fuhrmann
- 27 Russ & Dana Tock

December Birthdays

- 01 Mandy Moore
- 02 Jack Buswell
- 03 Kmaya Richards
- 04 Mary Axelsen
- 04 Joyce Graewin
- 05 Hayden White
- 06 Craig Goodenough
 - 09 Olivia Cole
 - 10 Kay Foulke
 - 10 Eileen Roller
- 14 Deb Thurston
- 15 Diane Noonan
- 15 Laurie Bartholomew
- 15 Madeline Tadisch
- 16 Donald Knoll
- 17 Jeffrey Ascher
- 17 Dave Kemp III
- 19 Mark Christiano
- 21 Gary Ascher
- 22 Tim Fuhrmann
- 23 Bridget Von Ruden
- 29 Amarra Davis
- 30 Matthew Foss



Bakery pick-up

- 3 Priscilla & Jeff Hemmersbach
 - 10 Pat & Gail Clark
 - 17 Donna Burnham
- No bakery pick up on the 24th or 31st.

Tech Team

- 3 Ben & Hailee
- 10 Toni & Amy
- 17 Ron & Cindy
- 24 Cheryl & Kristine
- 31 TBD

Liturgist

- 3 Amy Kiefer
- 10 Beth Nowak
- 17 Kristine Phillips
- 24 Judy Fuhrmann
- 31 Marty Walley

Ushers

- 3 Bob & Cathy
- 10 Peggy, Donna & Ron
- 17 Russ & Tina
- 24 John & Karen
- 31 Kurt & Amy





CHRIST *the savior*
is **BORN**



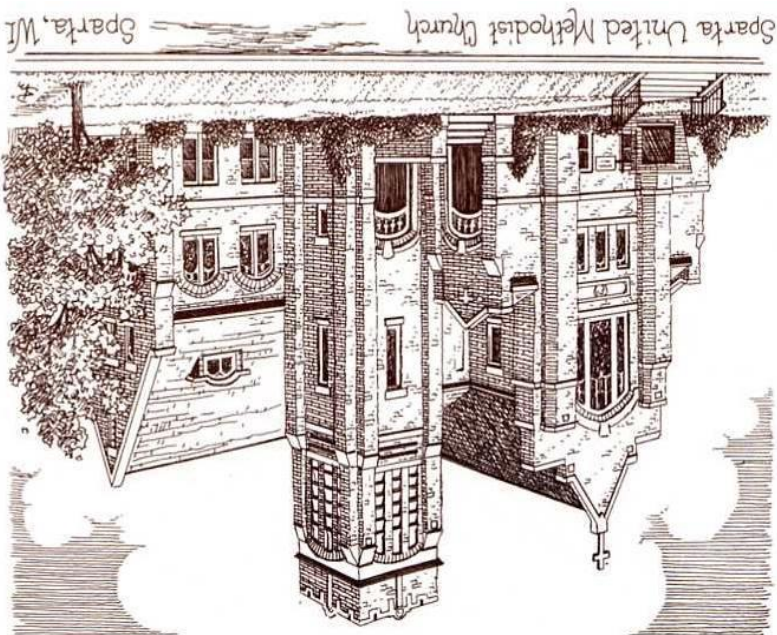
The Chimes

Sparta United Methodist Church
210 N Court Street
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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Phone: (608)269-6949

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Email: office@spartamethodist.com

Website: spartamc.net

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