

# “The CHIMES” – January

Volume 58, No. 1

2023

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

(Matthew 28:18-20)



With all of the recent uncertainty and division in our denomination and all of us trying to figure out what it looks like to be the church after covid, we can find our purpose and mission as the church getting lost in the desire to find and hold onto some vision of normal we recognize. In that

seeking it can become easy to forget we are the church—created to be missional people, passionately pursuing the growth of God’s kingdom. I point you to Christ’s call and commission to us (his disciples) from Matthew 28:18-20 above as a reminder of our purpose.

As we go into this new year I want to remind us of who we are and whose we are, and in remembering help us rediscover what we are called to do. As a foundation for discussion I’ll use our mission statement which says: *We are called to make new and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.* I want to focus our attention on the importance of the words and phrases in our mission statement beginning with...

**Make**—make is a verb that requires purpose, action, and creativity. In order to be a people who make something, we must be willing to invest time and energy toward creating and innovating. Making is more than just busyness. Makers are movers and shakers in the community and within their spheres of influence. Makers cannot be passive consumers.

**New and Maturing**—these are two categories of disciples we hope to make. The new are those who have yet to hear about and understand God’s love for his creation (including them) and their part in this great love story. The maturing are those who know and have a relationship with God (and each other) and are continuing to find ways to grow in those relationships; that means all of us who claim to follow Christ. Maturing doesn’t mean perfected, it means continuing growth in our relationship with God and each other.

**Disciples of Jesus Christ**—A disciple of Jesus Christ is someone who wants to become like Jesus, seeking to imitate not only his actions, but his mindset, choices and motivations. Disciples seek to have the mind of Christ, as Paul wrote in Philippians. Notice that we’re to make disciples of Jesus Christ, not of our local church.

**For**—the word “for” is a purpose word, explaining why you’re doing what you’re doing and what you hope to see from your work. This little word is important to remember because without it the disciples you make will turn inward and focus on themselves. “For” begins to point us toward the purpose and reminds us of our why.

**The Transformation**—the purpose of discipleship isn’t just sharing information, its transformation. Transformation is not just incremental change or helping people live a little bit better than they did before—it is a thorough change in form or appearance. Are you seeing people’s lives changed as a result of the work you are doing to make disciples? This work we do is significant and paves the way for the Holy Spirit to dramatically alter people’s lives.

**Of the World**—this work isn’t just for us, it’s literally for the sake of the world. We don’t become disciples so that we can look better or build bigger, nicer buildings; we become disciples to help others experience the transforming love of Christ.

*continued*

Our mission statement is not just for the institutional church; it is a directive for every individual member within the church! **Making disciples is personal.** With that in mind, I ask you to consider the following questions as we move into 2023 as Christ's disciples.

**Making**—Are you actively seeking to develop relationships with people who don't know Christ? Are you creating new ways to introduce them to Christ and bring them into the family of faith?

**New and Maturing**—The above questions take care of the “new,” but are you actively seeking ways to continue to mature as a disciple? Are you finding ways to step outside of your comfort zone and grow in new and exciting ways in your faith? Are you open to risking failure as you grow? That can be just as important in our growth as success (if we learn from it).

**Disciples of Jesus Christ**—Do you see the people in your church becoming more like Jesus? Are they growing in maturity in the way they express their love to Jesus and others? Do you point people to your church or to Christ?

**For**—Why does your church exist? Why do you do what you do? Who are you “for”?

**The Transformation**—Do you focus your programming and ministry on sharing information or creating the opportunity for transformation? In the past year, whose lives have you seen transformed by Christ?

**Of the World**—Are your ministries primarily focused on the people inside the church or outside the church? How do you seek to reach people who look and think differently than you?

As you consider these questions and prayerfully and honestly respond to them, I hope that they will be the driving force behind some good discussion within the congregation as to how we will be a prayerful, purposeful, vital church making and growing disciples for Jesus Christ in the new year and beyond. To help us keep our mission and purpose in the forefront of our minds you will notice that framed posters are now hanging near our entrances and in the fellowship hall with our mission statement and core values.

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

## Change Is Coming

*For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven... (Ecclesiastes 3:1)*

I have spent the past several months in prayer and discernment for my future and the future of this church. It has not been an easy decision, but I have finally concluded that at the end of June, 2023 I will be retiring.

I have enjoyed my time here—getting to know you and working with you—I think we have done some very good things together and I have grown as a person and a pastor. I also believe I am reaching the end of my work here and God has a new adventure for me (and you), and that another pastor will take you on the next steps as a vital church making disciples for Jesus Christ here in Sparta.

When I retire, Tim and I will be moving into our “tiny house” in Melrose (any house will seem tiny after living in the parsonage ☺), I look forward to being a full-time Grandma for a while (the grands are growing up so fast), and paying better attention to our health. I also hope to reinvigorate my relationship with God and reconnect with the person God calls me to be. I feel like I have lost that connection in all of the busyness and uncertainty of the last few years.

But, I'm not retired yet. You are stuck with me until the end of June and I plan to go out strong. I love being in ministry with you, I just don't have the energy and drive I did four and a half years ago—and you deserve better. As we continue together for the next six months, I ask you to join me in prayer for wisdom and guidance for our bishop as he discerns who your next pastor is.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor L

## Thank you!

Thank you for the beautiful nativity set that you gave me for Christmas. It found a lovely place under my Christmas tree. I will think of you all each year when I set it up. I also want to thank you for the Christmas cards and greetings. —Pastor L





## Putting God First in Living and Giving

*Do we worship idols?* The answer may surprise you.

During the month of January, our church will hear about God's generosity and our response as we experience our stewardship program, *first: putting GOD first in living and giving*, developed by author and pastor Mike Slaughter of Ginghamburg Church. There will be opportunities in worship, in small groups, and in devotions shared in the weekly *ENotes*.

We are made in God's image and are meant to be creators of life and hope, not the consumers of our culture's shiny gods. We have the ability to change the world and create a legacy that will live forever in the lives of generations to follow. That legacy starts when each of us takes the hard steps of financial discipline and fulfilling the call to generosity that God has placed in all of us.

The goal of this stewardship program is not to make you feel guilty, nor is it to say that you have to be exactly like this or that person. The goal is for all of us to ask questions of ourselves and be open to the possibility that God will lead us in new directions in our lives.

During the four-week program, we'll be challenged in a number of different ways. We'll be asked to look for the idols in our own lives (Hint: Most of them aren't animals made of gold) and name the ways these idols enslave us, holding us back from living in the true freedom that God desires for us.

We'll be challenged to consider the place that money, work, and debt have in our own lives. What are our common understandings of these, and might the witness of Scripture lead us to some different understandings?

We'll be challenged to ask ourselves what it means for us to be faithful, to save, and to give. How do we balance all the competing interests in our lives? What priorities does God want us to have?

Finally, we'll be challenged to give with our hearts, not out of obligation or a sense of duty and not just when we think the recipient deserves our gift. Instead, we'll be challenged to give the way God gives—freely, fully, with no favorites or expectations of repayment.

It is our prayer that, at the end of these four weeks, we will have begun to grow into the individuals and the church that God knows we can be. Please join us in *first: putting GOD first in living and giving*.

## A Word from Our SLB Chair



If you read Pastor Loretta's article entitled "*Change Is Coming*," here in the *Chimes*, you are now aware that she has decided to retire. I am so happy for her.

She has worked hard all her life and has now entered a new season. Many of you have already experienced this chapter in your life and understand how she is feeling.

I think I speak for many when I say that I am also a little sad that we will be losing her. I have personally benefited from working closely with Pastor with the Servant Leadership Board and will miss her greatly. However, I have learned that things don't stay the same no matter how much we want them to. ☺

I encourage you to pray for our Bishop and his cabinet as they begin their discernment process of who they will recommend for our church. Also, pray for our Servant Leadership Board as we begin a new year and plan for our future.

I've always said that this congregation is my family—and families support each other. Let's rally together and support Pastor and our church family during this transition. It's not the end, it's a new beginning.

Toni Burrows  
Servant Leadership Board Chair



### **Blessed to be a blessing...**

Thanks to generous members who wanted to give special gifts for holiday outreach through the church, we were able to help two families over the holidays—one with rent and a second family of a single mom with four young boys with Christmas cheer. The Christmas gifts were picked up from Pastor's office on December 20 and delivered to the family.





## I Like Floor Mats

*This story is from "I Like Giving" by Brad Formsma.*

It is hard to characterize my brother-in-law, James. He's not a guy who draws a lot of attention to himself, and he's not a guy with great wealth. In fact, James is, well, quite average, but when it comes to generosity, James is one of the most above-average people I've ever met.

For instance, if James needed to borrow your car, he would likely return it with a full tank of fuel or maybe a new set of tires. Or maybe it would have been detailed. And unless you happened to notice, he wouldn't draw any attention to it.

Which is exactly what happened with the floor mats in our Honda Accord. They were worn-out. I mean, they're floor mats. They are one of those things you think about replacing when you vacuum the car and say to yourself, "Wow, these look terrible. I need to replace them." You finish vacuuming, put the mats back, and never give them another thought until the next time you clean your car.

However, this particular time I did notice them. They were new. I immediately asked my wife if she'd bought the new car mats. She said she thought I had. Immediately we knew it was James. I could not think of when he might have done it. I went back in the house, called him, and asked if he was responsible. As I suspected, he was.

"When did you put new mats in the car?" I asked since we hadn't seen him in weeks. "About three months ago," he sheepishly replied.

I couldn't believe I'd been so unobservant, but I wasn't the least bit surprised by James thoughtful act of generosity. It's a lifestyle with him. I truly can't think of anything he enjoys doing more than giving, and I can't think of anyone who has more fun finding unique ways to give. I mean, who would ever think of replacing someone's floor mats?

Rev. Jason Mahnke,  
Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation

## How to Reach and Welcome New People (and how Foundation Grants can help!)

The days of most people showing up at church, joining, and becoming active without intentional outreach and hospitality on behalf of local congregations are gone. Unfortunately, many people in our congregations are uncomfortable with traditional evangelism (even if it is not pushy) and guests don't become active in the church just because they attend an event.

This one-day seminar will equip laity and pastors with the tools they need to reach and welcome new people in an effective way. In addition, participants will learn about the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation's *New Ministry Grants*, which can help fund these new outreach and hospitality ministries.

There are flyers posted on the bulletin boards with the day's schedule for those who are curious.

### When:

February 4, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### Where:

*In-person at:* Oak Creek Community United Methodist Church, 8675 S. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Oak Creek, WI 53154  
*Virtually via Zoom*

### Cost:

*In-person* – \$25 per person (includes lunch and materials); maximum of \$60 per church – no matter how many are coming  
*Virtual* – \$40 per church

### Registration:

Register on the Foundation web site at [wumf.org](http://wumf.org) by January 15 and receive a free copy of Kay Kotan's book, *Being the Church in a Post-Pandemic World* (one copy per church).

The registration deadline is January 30.\* Late registrations will be accepted, however we will not be able to provide lunch for in-person registrations after the registration deadline.

This seminar is sponsored by the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation and the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church.



## Trustee Update

We had a productive year in 2022 and accomplished a lot of repair items from our list last year. Our larger projects included:

- New concrete sidewalk to North Court St. Entrance to the church.
- Repairing the failing plaster in the church.
- We also completed smaller projects:
- Disposed of refrigerator, copier and computer tower.
- Plexi-glass covers for Confirmand History photo wall.
- Weather strip Parsonage door.
- Fixed kitchen/dining room door.
- Replaced missing window screens (4-5)
- Installed handrail to attic.
- Installed base shoe in kitchen.
- Weeding/perimeter and lawn cleanup at Parsonage.
- Repaired cracked pews.
- We have hired a custodial services company to clean the main areas of the church as funds are available.

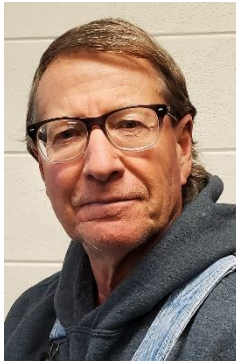
I would like thank all the people who have stepped forward to help with all the big and small tasks required to help maintain the church and the church grounds. Your time and talents are greatly appreciated.

The larger projects we would like to tackle this year include:

- Repair plaster and paint the Youth Room.
- Investigate possibly installing a “Barrier Free” restroom on the same level as the Sanctuary.
- Reinsulating all the air conditioning piping located on the south side of the church.

There are plenty of smaller projects we have pop up throughout the year and if you notice anything that needs attention, please let us know.

Submitted by Scott Naeseth, Trustee Chair



## Altar Plants



United Women in Faith (UWIF) would like to thank all those who signed up for one or more plants on one or multiple dates for 2022. The calendars for 2023 are up now. 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.

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 UWIF,  
Cathy Nichols



**Pizza and a movie** night this month is **January 21** 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 January 21 if you will be attending so we know how much pizza to order.

**January's movie is  
"Break Every Chain"**



Facing the threat of losing his job as a police officer, the loss of his wife and daughter, and contemplating suicide, a man turns to faith and finds hope and redemption.

Rating PG-13

*Our hope is not in the New Year...but in the one who makes all things new.*





**Thank you** for the beautiful plant and for the birthday cards to help make my birthday a great day!  
Love to all. Diane Noonan  
Dear church family,

It is with a grateful heart that I send this **thank you** for all your prayers and good wishes on my behalf during this time of healing from my knee replacement surgery. I appreciate you one and all. Have a blessed HOLIDAY SEASON!!  
Emily Axelsen

**Thank you** for opening up your wonderful Fellowship Hall for the play Grandpa & Lucy.  
Sincerely,  
Monroe County Dementia Friendly Coalition

**Thank you** for the nice gifts and cards and for all the kind words and support I have received for Christmas and throughout the year. I can't express how much it means to me.  
Michele Thornton

**Thank you** Russ Janzen for pushing snow off the K Street parking area. You make life after snowfall much better.



## 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.



## Church Website



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.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program.

The next scrip order will be going in on **January 8**. If you have questions or need an order form contact Michele at the church office 608-269-

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.



## Records & History



Wishing everyone a Happy, Healthy New Year! Records and History Committee will resume meeting January 11 at 9 am in the Church Library. Most of the meeting will center around organizing the History Room. If you like History please feel free to join us - we would love to have you!

Margie Lakowske



## United Women in Faith News

**New Year and new name.** The United Methodist Women will be known as United Women in Faith (UWIF). There are about 39 women in the organized unit of UWIF. There are many, many more women and men that support the purpose we use as a guide to help women and children.

Our 2021 curbside pick-up Meatball Supper was a success, which began the recovery of our Mission Budget. 2022 saw us return to in-person events as in our Spring Luncheon and Harvest Supper. The success of these two events would not have been possible without members of the congregation saying “Yes” when asked to donate, serve, cook and do dishes. We are profoundly thankful. If you hadn’t heard we will no longer host Harvest Supper. We’ll put our thinking caps on and pray.

Both our 2022 and 2023 budgets include Pledge to Mission and Christmas Gift giving. Gifting included Restorative Justice, APTIV (formerly Riverfront), Brighter Tomorrows, St. Clare Mission and the local Backpack Program and more. We are already receiving notes of appreciation from these local organizations.

Altar plants purchased by church members and friends are a beautiful part of our Sunday services. The 2023 calendar months are on bulletin board in hallway by the elevators. Plants can be designated to celebrate, in memory or in honor. You can keep or gift the plant. A thank you goes out to the 12 volunteers who pick up the plants. When you sign up for plant(s) the monies go to Eileen Gajewsky our treasurer. She pays monthly invoices to Sparta Floral.



Cyndi Wise presenting Marty Walley with the United Methodist Women special Mission Recognition pin and certificate. Mary has blessed the UMW for over



45 years with her generous heart, servant hands, and her kind and loving ways. Congratulations Marty!

Wishing you a very healthy and happy New Year  
Cathy Nichols and the Sparta UWIF



CHANGING THE WORLD  
ONE PAIR AT A TIME

**Thank you** to all who have donated to Soles4Souls! We have collected 2034 pair of shoes through December!



SUMMIT Spirits will be meet on Tuesday, January 3 at 6:30 in the library.

The Sparta Ministerial Association are meeting in the small kitchen on Wednesday, January 4 at noon.

On Tuesday, January 10, Lois circle will be in the small kitchen at 1 p.m.

Wesleyan Circle will meet in the Gathering Place on Tuesday, January 10 at 6:00 p.m.

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

Nurture will meet Thursday, January 5 at 6 p.m. in the library.

Records & History will meet Wednesday, January 11 at 9 a.m.



## How to celebrate Christmas all year

*“Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.”* (Psalm 105:1-5)



Each year, I hear many folks make the remark that they are “so glad that Christmas is over—all the hub-bub” But in truth “all the hub-bub” is what we have made it—focusing on putting on the “perfect Christmas.”

The hope of Christmas doesn’t have to disappear when the tree is packed up and the lights are put away. Christmas is a reminder of God’s faithfulness to fulfill His promises, and God’s faithfulness never ends.

As we sing and give praise to God, we “make known among the nations what he has done.” But we also remind ourselves that our God, the same God who sent His Son to earth so we could know Him, is at work all around us.

When life isn’t perfect and God feels far away, remembering His faithfulness and recalling those times when He felt close and intimate can calm our hearts and bring us peace.

### Ways to Remember God’s Faithfulness All Year Long

1. **Read about it.** The Bible is the story of God’s love for humanity and His faithfulness to those who love Him. As we read the Bible, we take comfort in remembering God not only provides for us in material ways, He gave us Jesus so we can have a relationship with God forever.
2. **Write about it.** Keeping a journal, written or mental, of the times God provided and comforted you, is a personal way to remember God’s faithfulness. Reading about a time He showed up and showed off in our lives helps us recall His character and “*glory in his holy name.*”
3. **Pray about it.** There’s an old saying that if God feels far away, it isn’t because He moved! “*Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.*” Always really does mean always. Cry

out to God with your frustration. Ask Him to show you His presence and give you peace.

For many, Christmas can be a painful reminder of who and what we lack. But, when our focus is on Jesus and His permanent location in our hearts, we remember that we are never alone or abandoned.

With Love to all,  
Priscilla



## A study opportunity to kick off the New Year

### Shiny Gods a study that explores finding freedom from things that distract us.

In a culture guided by shiny, life-promising distractions, “enough” seems elusive and keeps us chasing the next quick fix. What if the Giver of Life offered freedom from this downward spiral—would you take it? In this four-week study, pastor and author Mike Slaughter helps us

reassess priorities to create a culture and lifestyle of giving, based on the world of God and the example of Christ. In his inspiring, challenging, and humorous style, Slaughter helps us consider these topics:

- Naming Our Idols
- Money, work, and debt
- Be Faithful, Save, and Give
- Heart Giving

This video series begins **Thursday, January 12**. If you are interested, please let Paul Foulke know by January 8. Also let him know if you prefer afternoon or evening. This study is part of our stewardship focus for January.







### January Anniversaries

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

### January Birthdays

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



### Bakery pick-up

- 1 Margie Lakowske
- 8 Amy & Kurt
- 15 Dave & Sara
- 22 Priscilla & Jeff
- 29 Pat & Gail

### Tech Team

- 1 Ben & Hailee
- 8 Ron & Kristine
- 15 Toni & Amy
- 22 Cheryl & Cindy
- 29 Ben & Hailee

### Liturgist

- 1 Cheryl Isensee
- 8 Ellen Hemstock
- 15 Marty Walley
- 22 Judy Fuhrmann
- 29 Clarence Brooks

### Ushers

- 1 Bob & Cathy
- 8 Kurt & Amy
- 15 Peggy, Donna & Ron
- 22 John & Karen
- 29 Russ & Tina



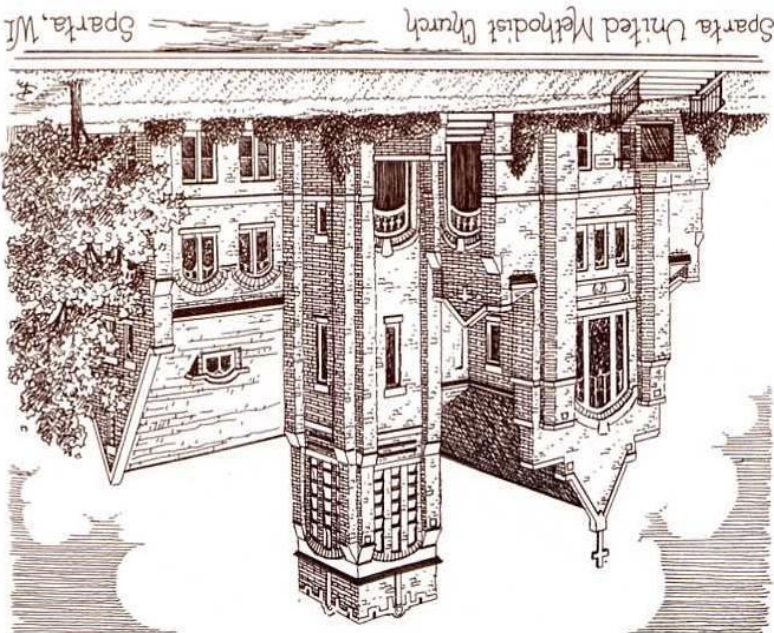
# The Chimes

Sparta United Methodist Church  
210 N Court Street  
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



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**Website:** [spartaumc.net](http://spartaumc.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