

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let's take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God's Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy's strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God's goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

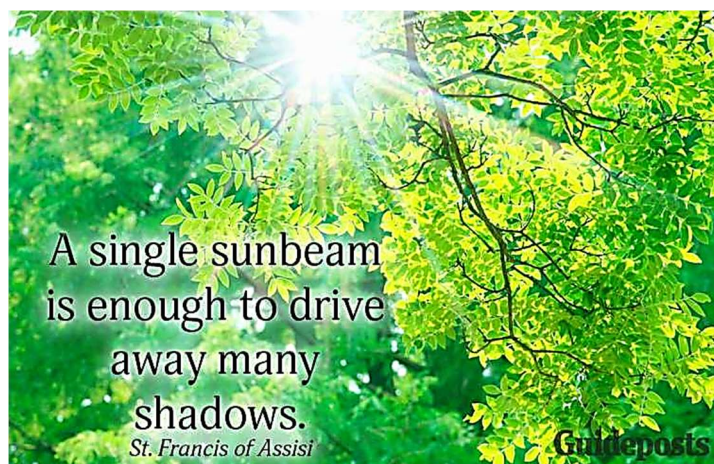
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



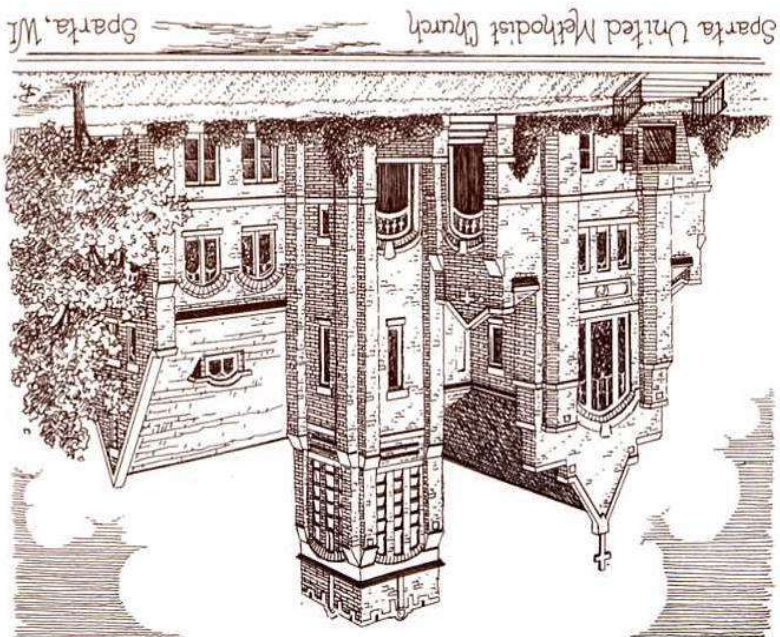
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

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## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

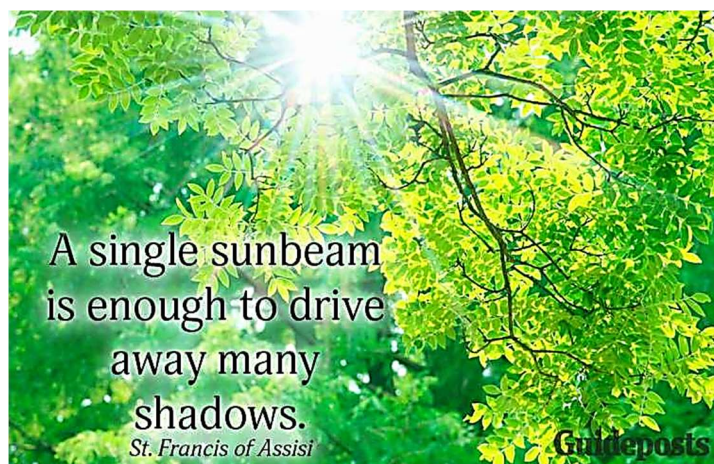
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

"Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful."

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



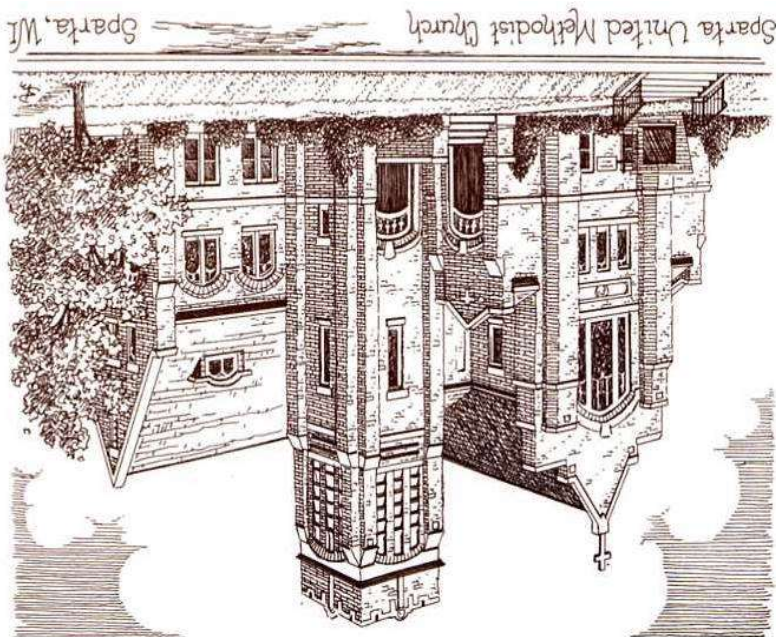
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a "New Way" Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

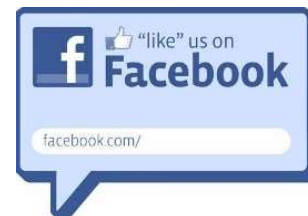
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.

## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

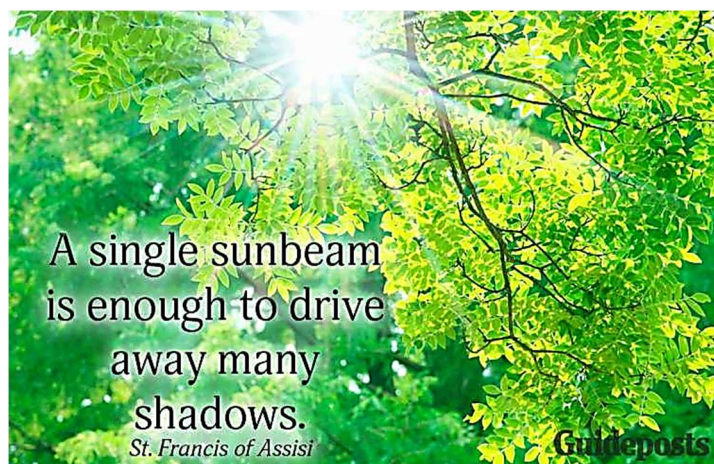
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

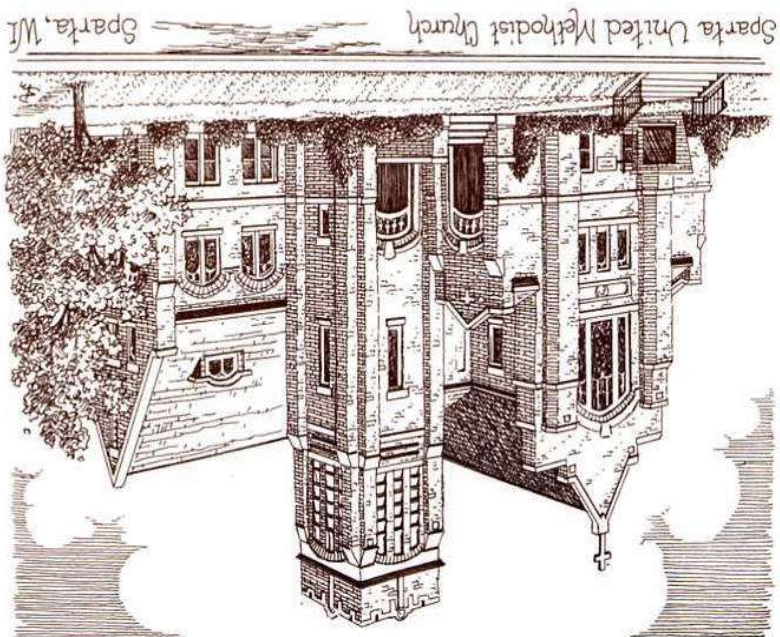


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.

## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

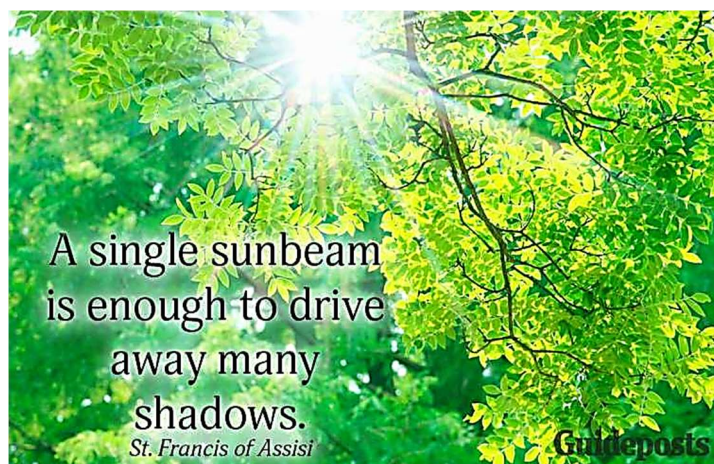
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



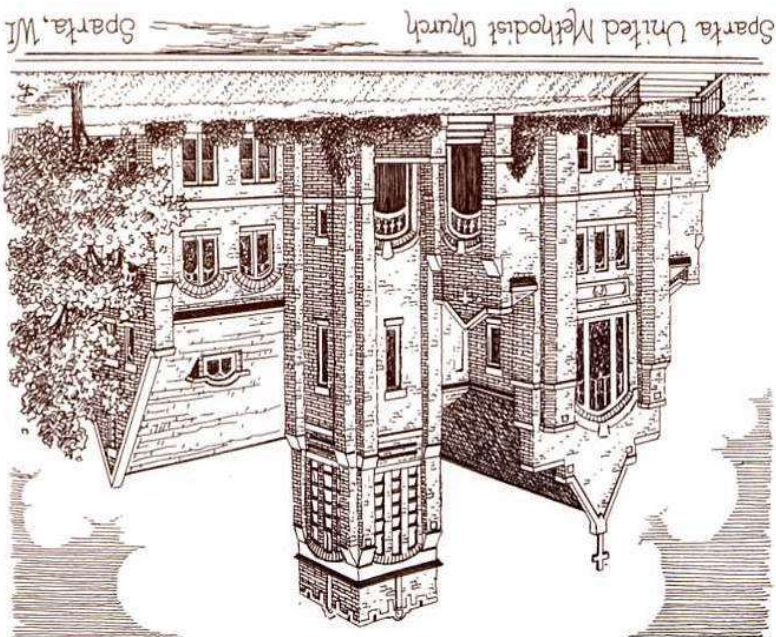
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

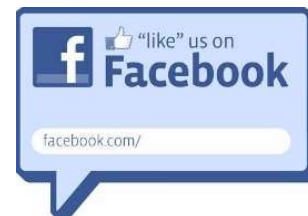
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

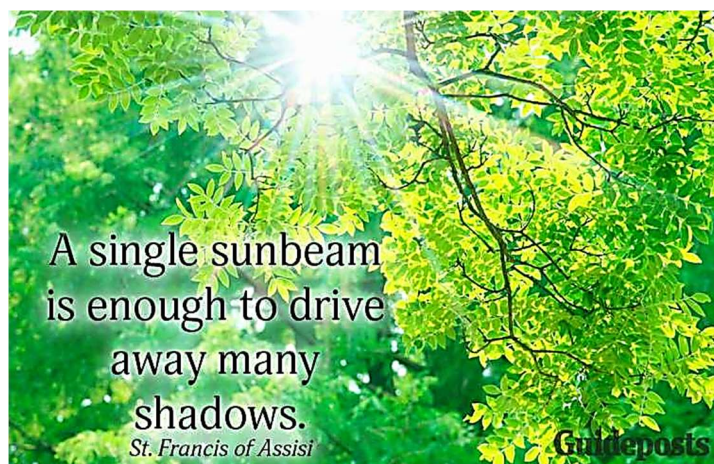
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



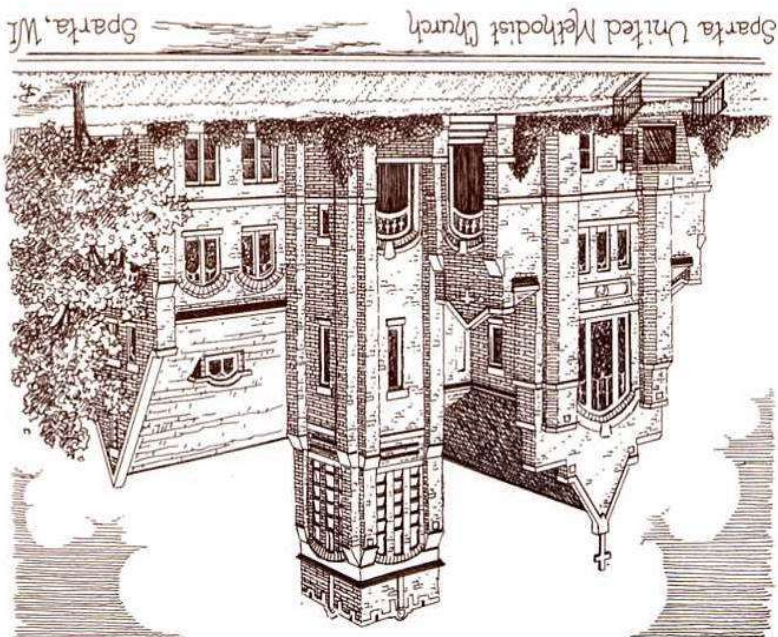
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

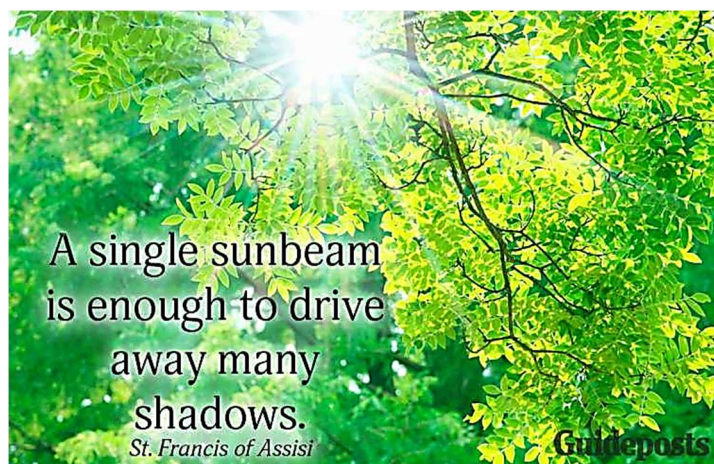
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

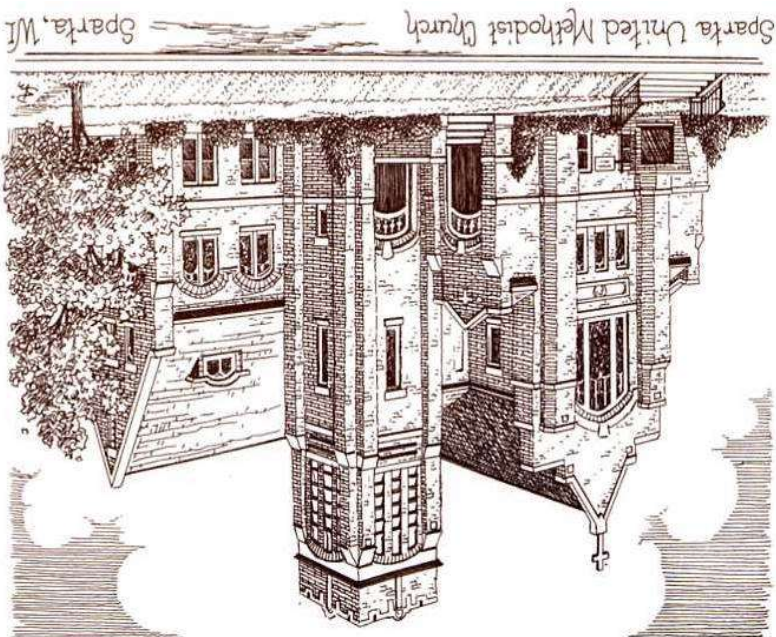


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*

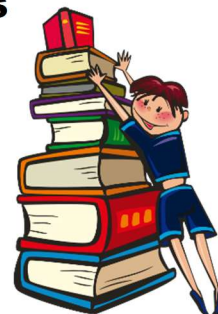


If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

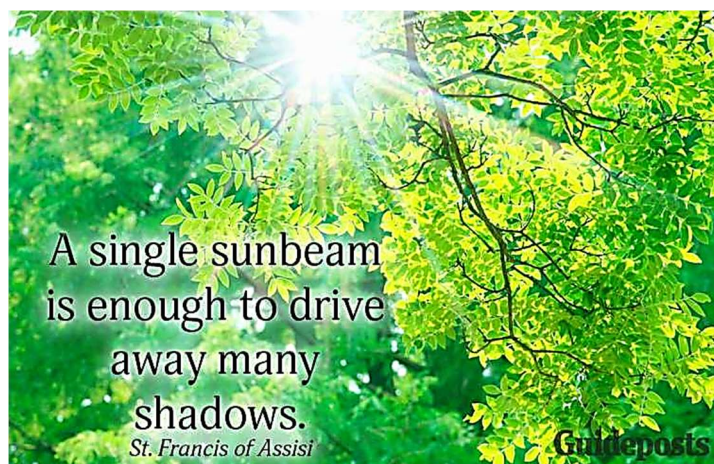
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



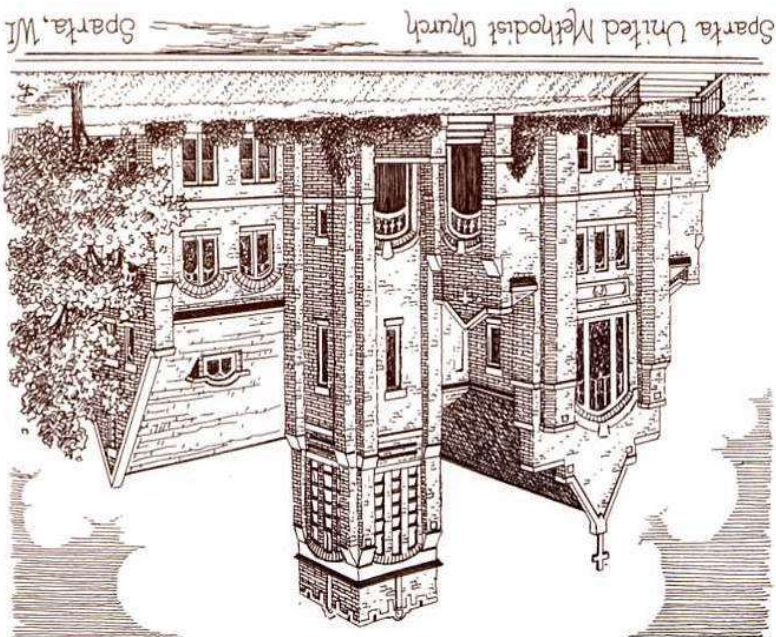
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

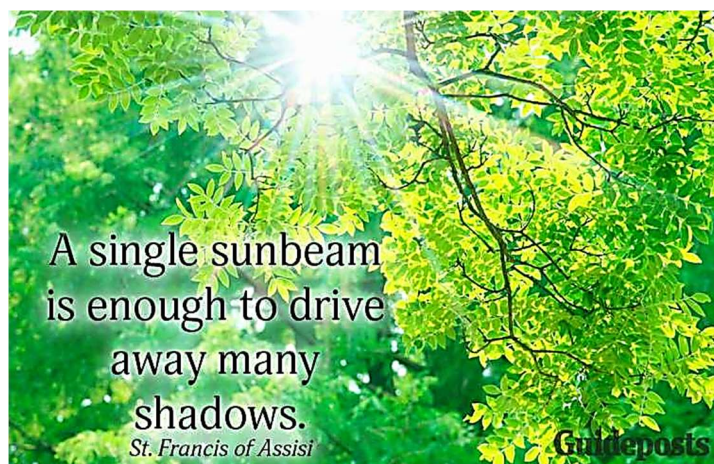
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



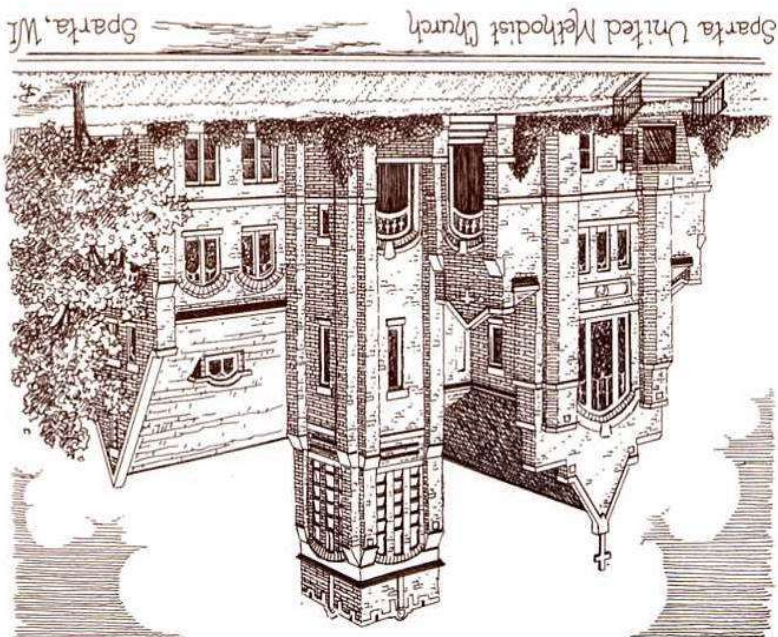
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

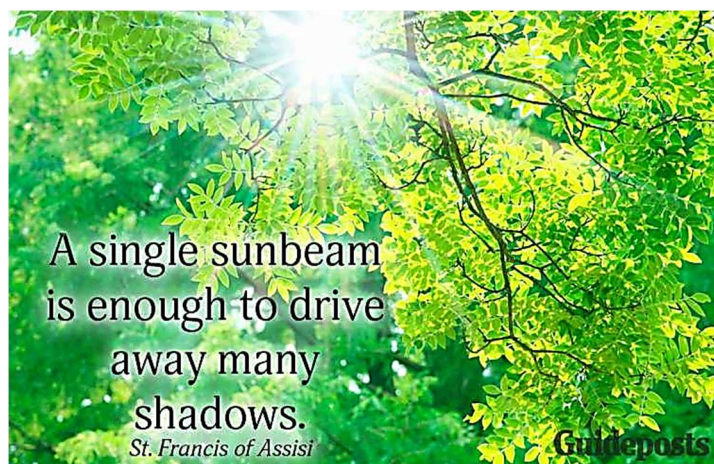
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

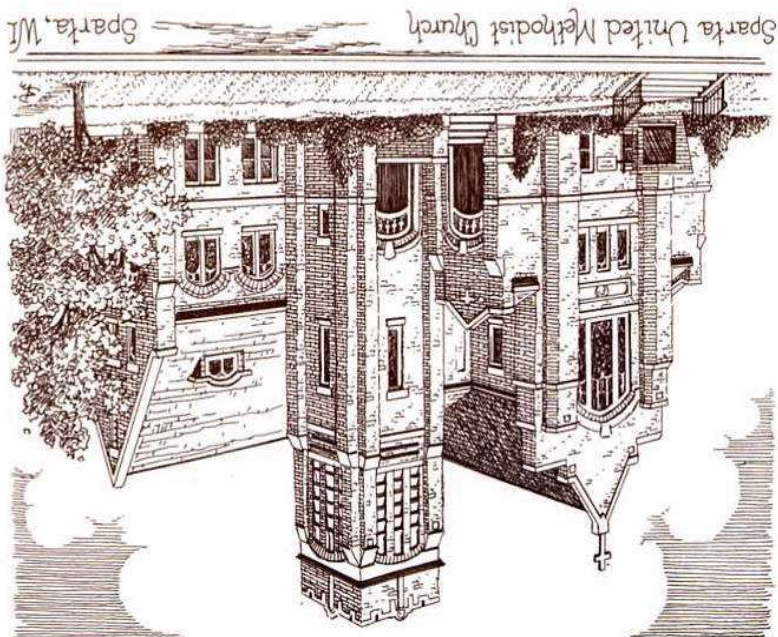


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

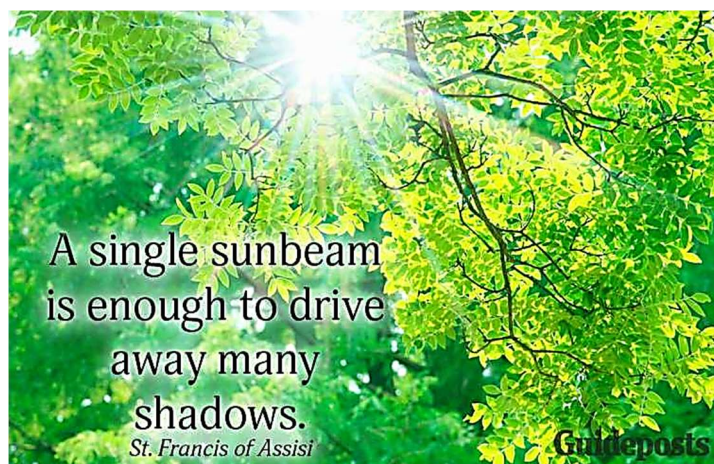
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



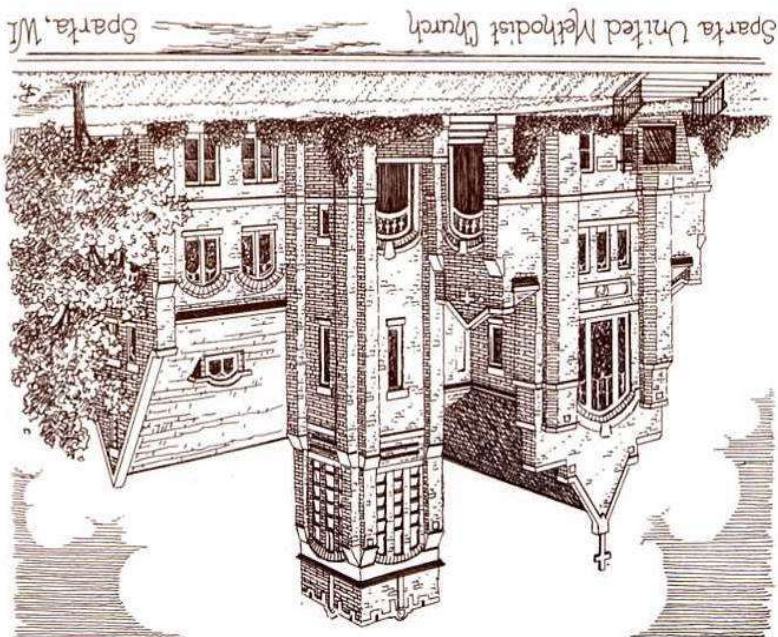
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or Facebook/wumf.org  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

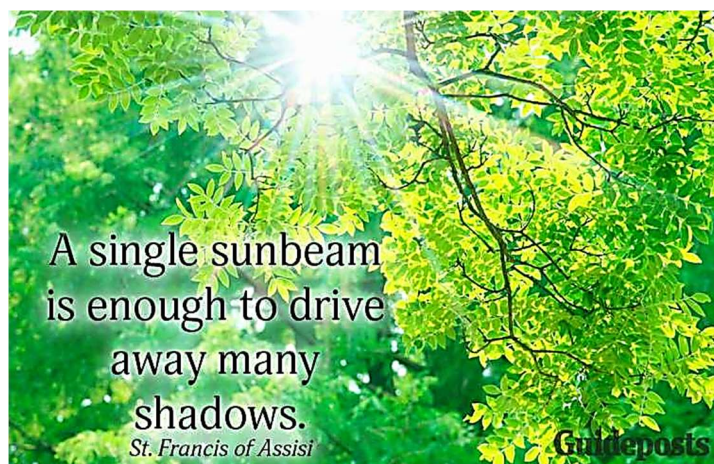
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



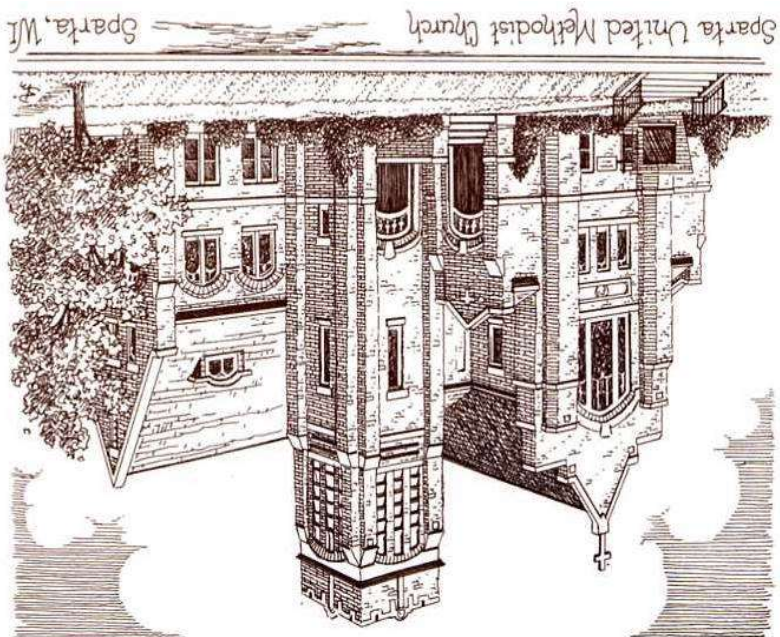
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

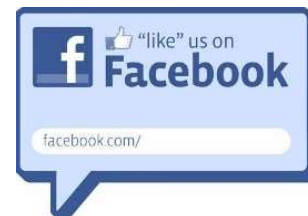
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

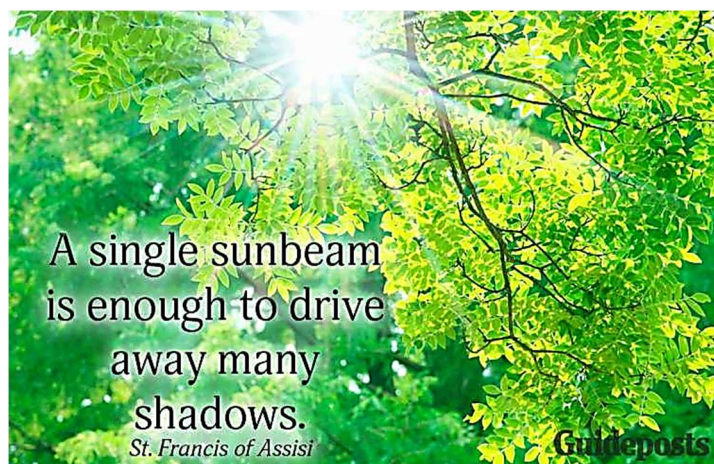
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

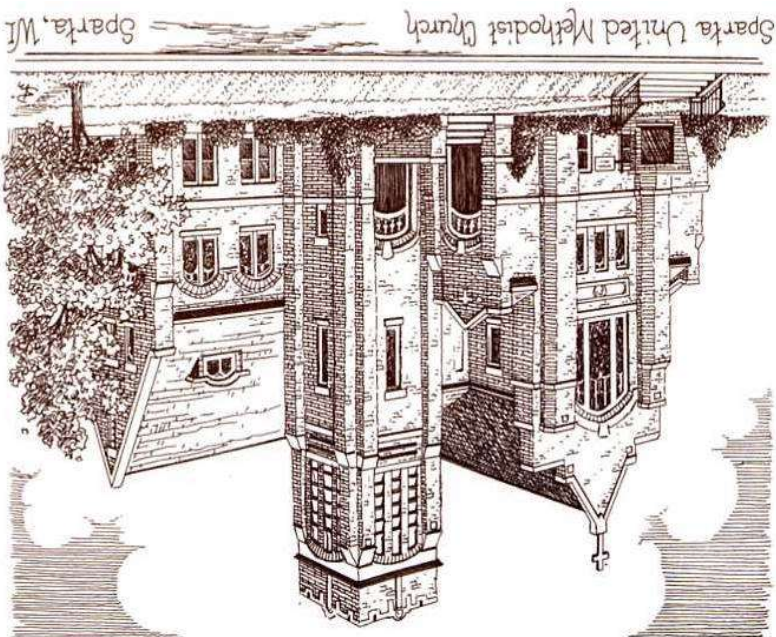


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



Sparta, WI

Sparta United Methodist Church

**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

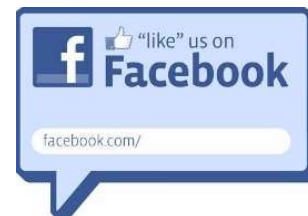
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

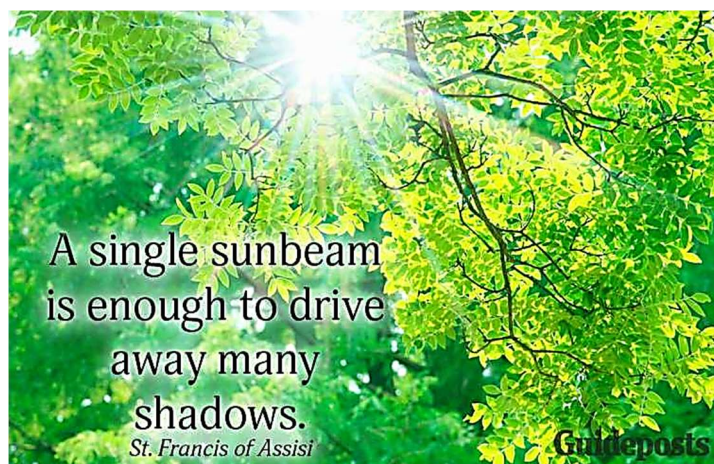
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



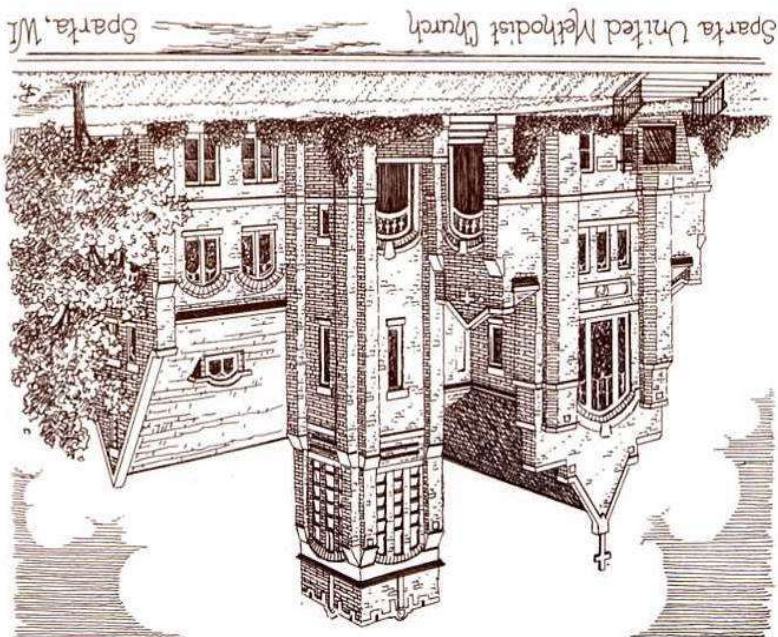
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

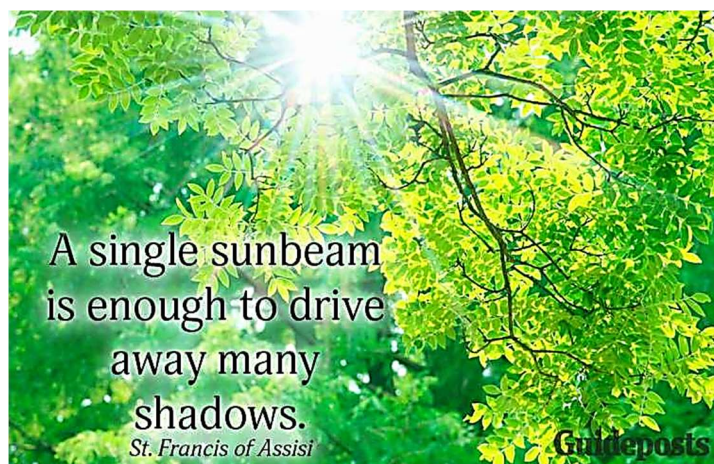
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



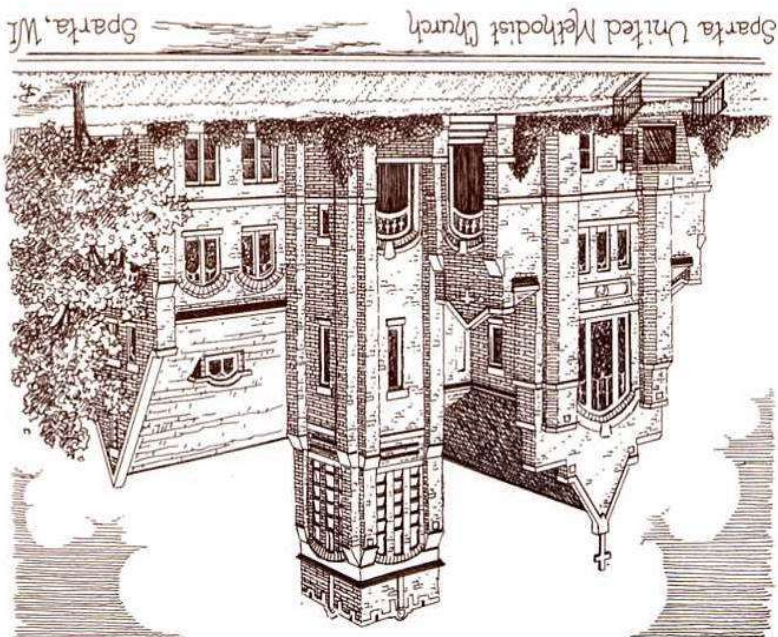
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

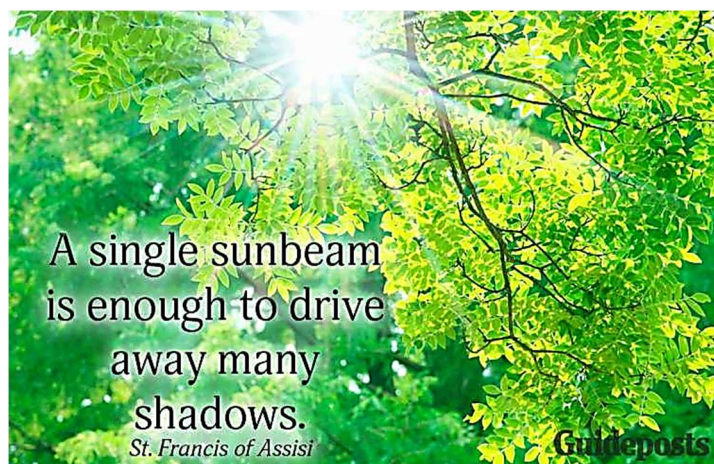
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

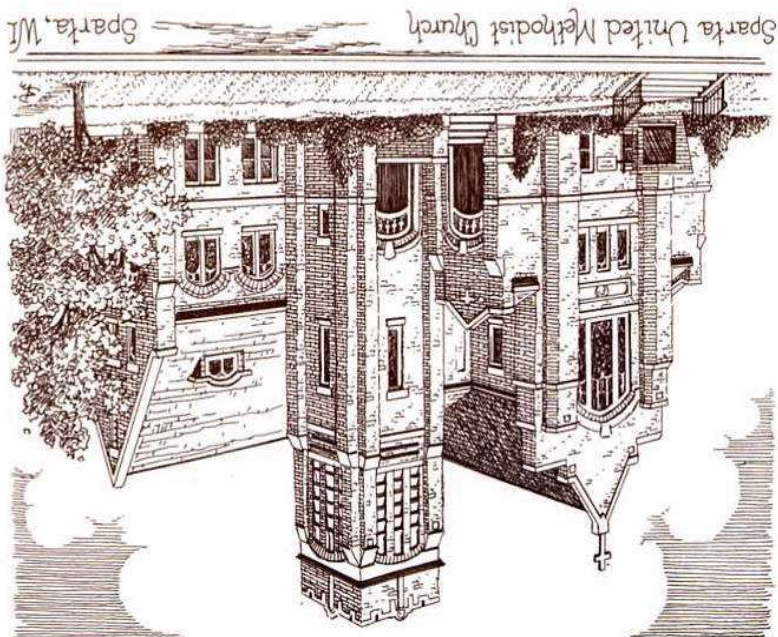


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

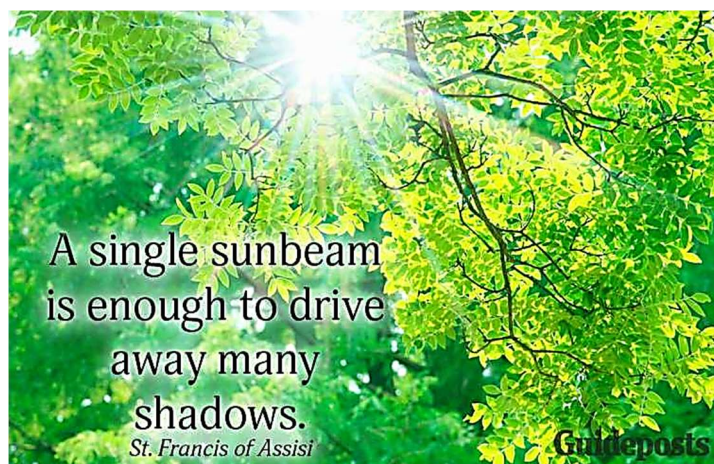
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



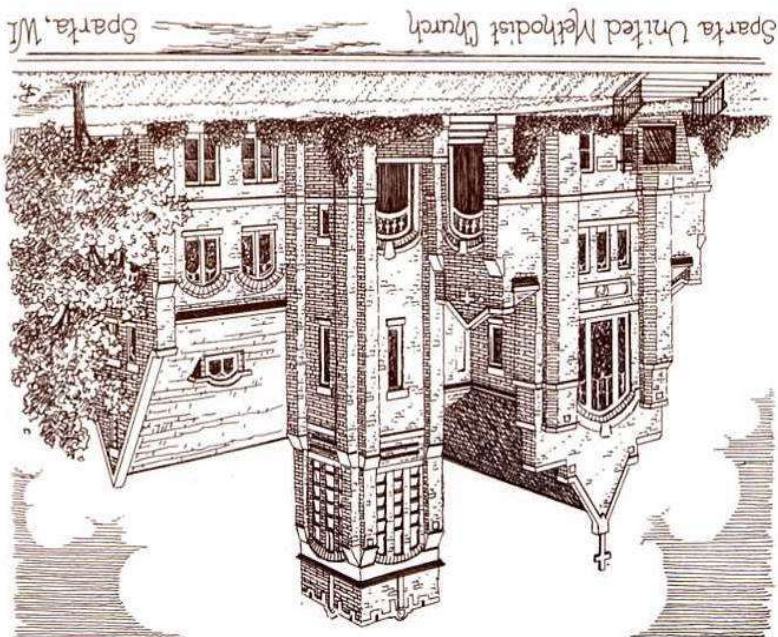
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

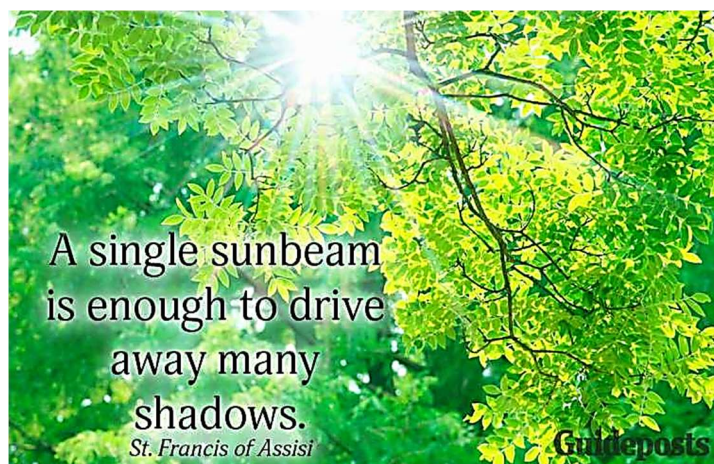
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



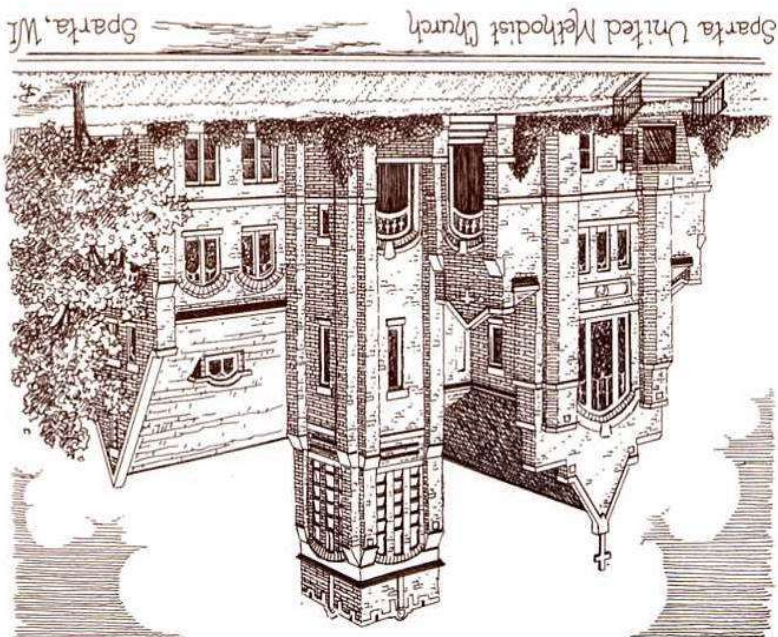
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

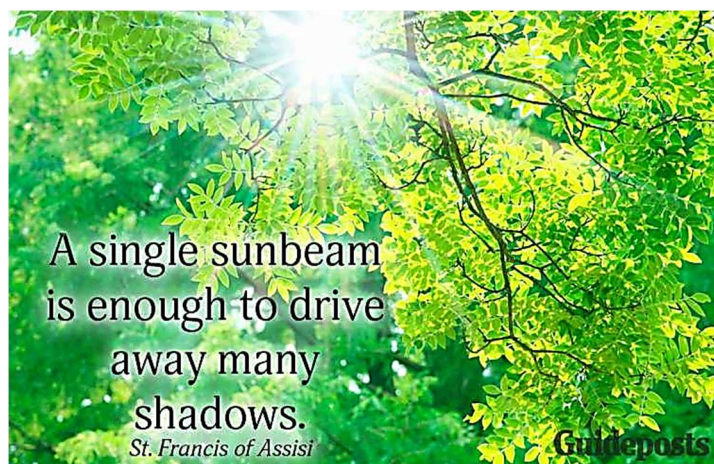
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

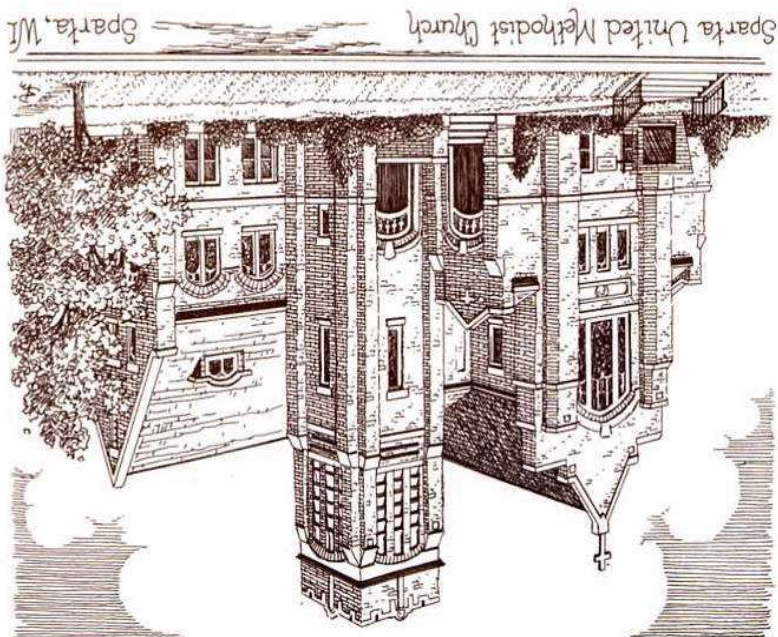


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

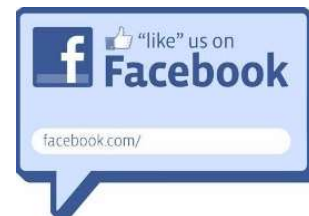
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

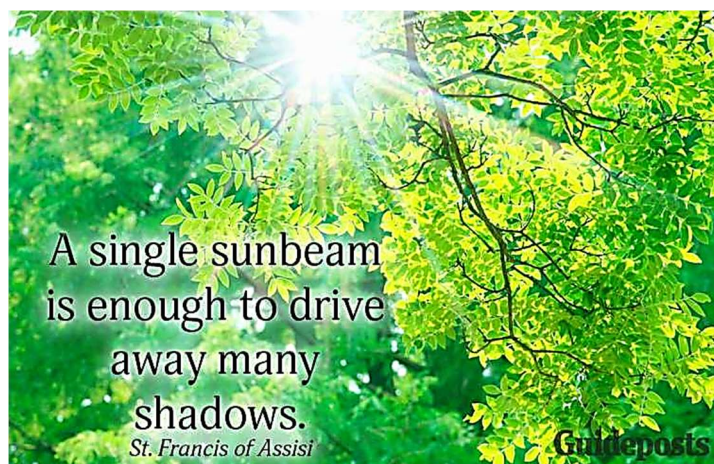
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



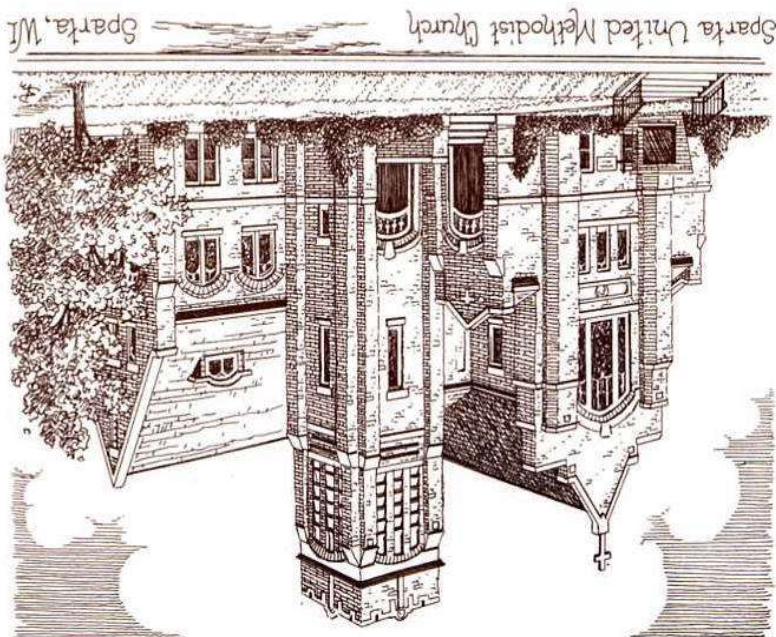
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

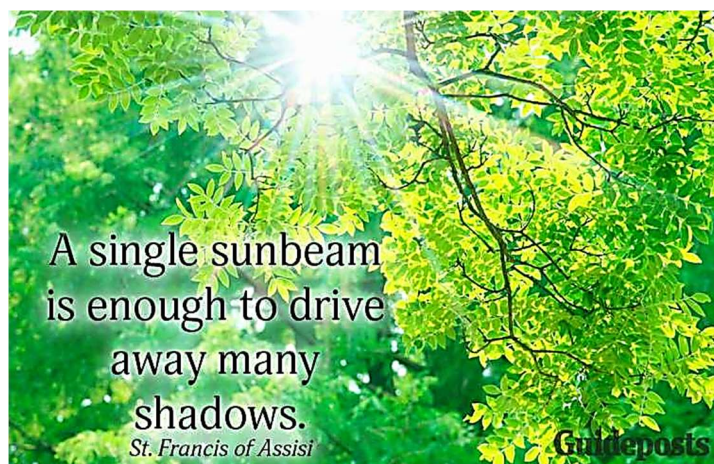
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



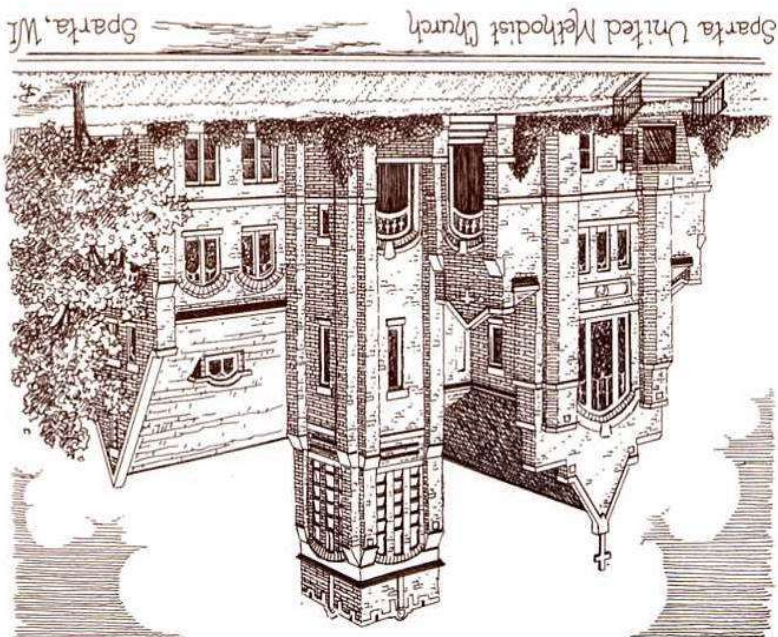
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

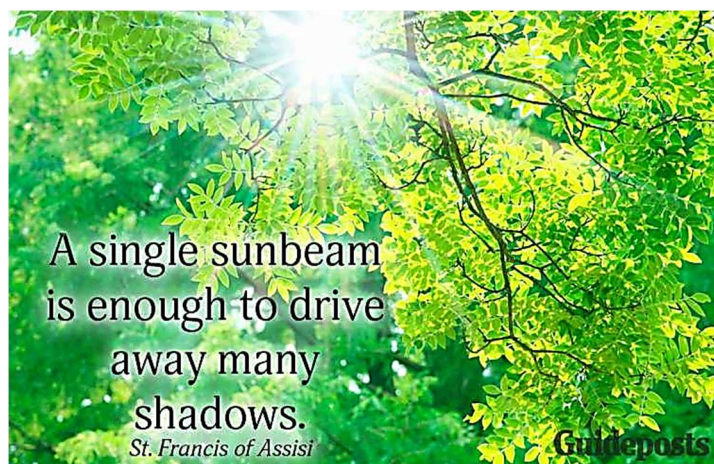
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

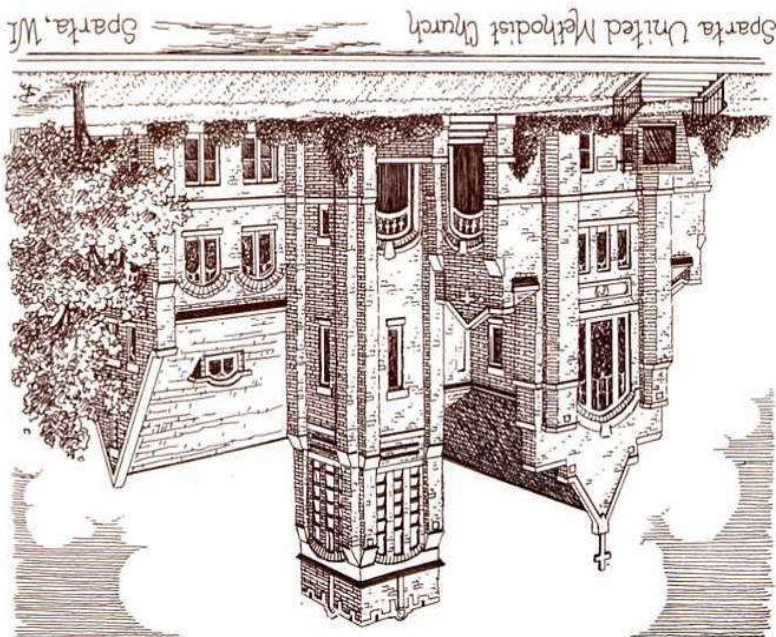


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

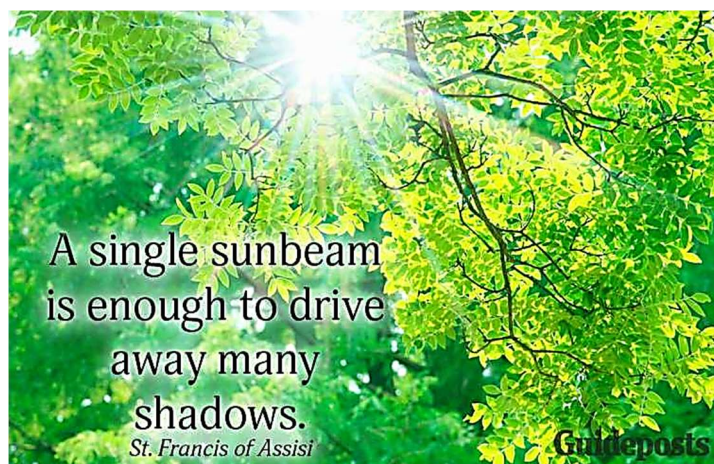
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



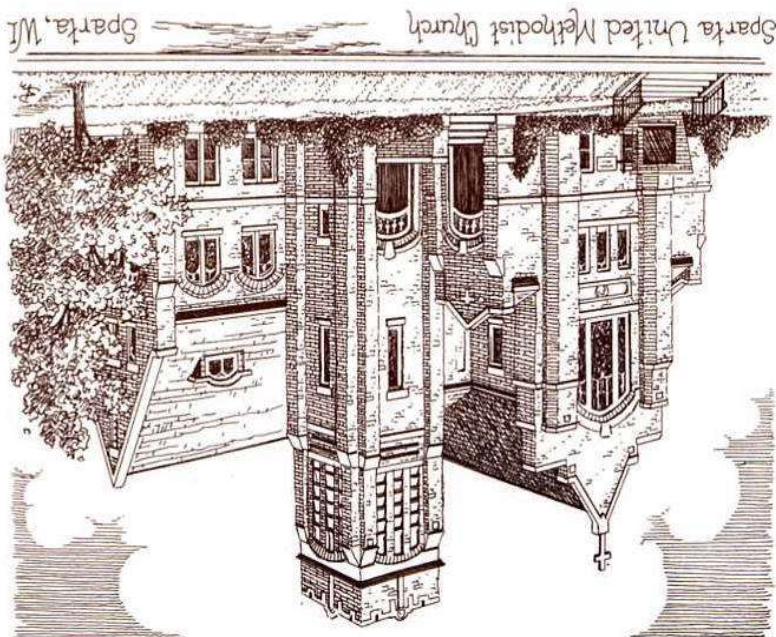
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

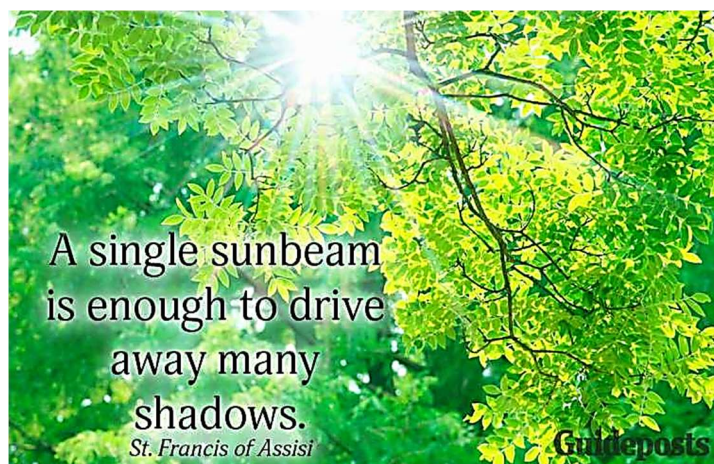
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



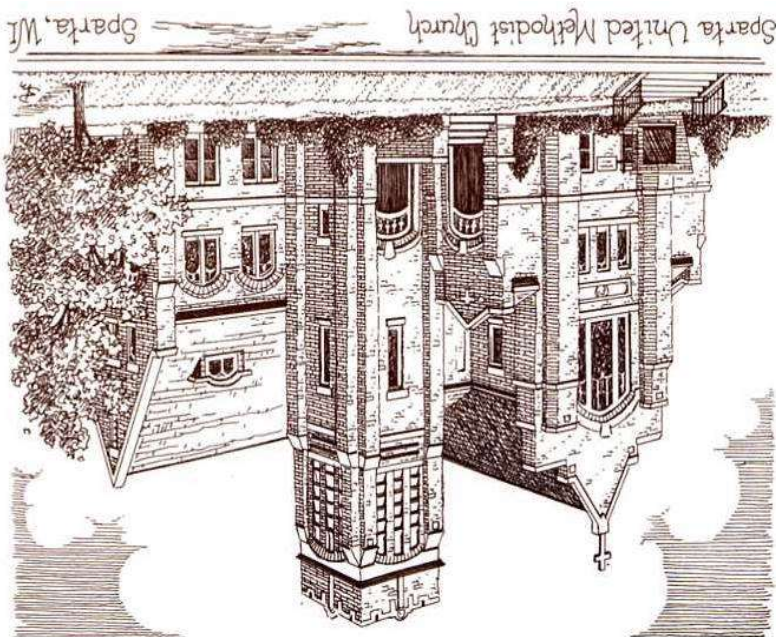
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

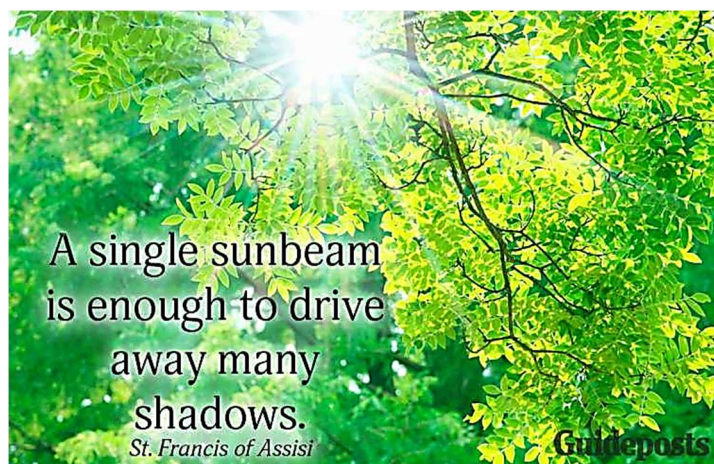
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

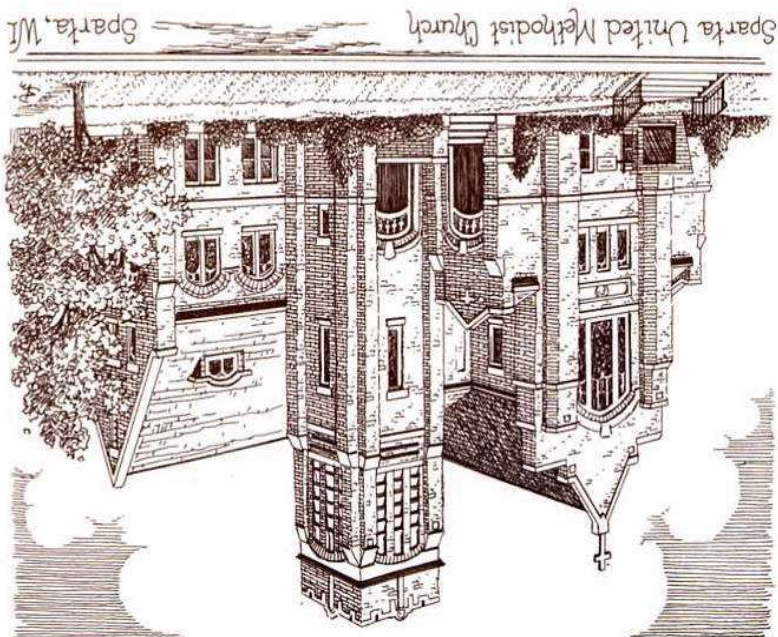


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

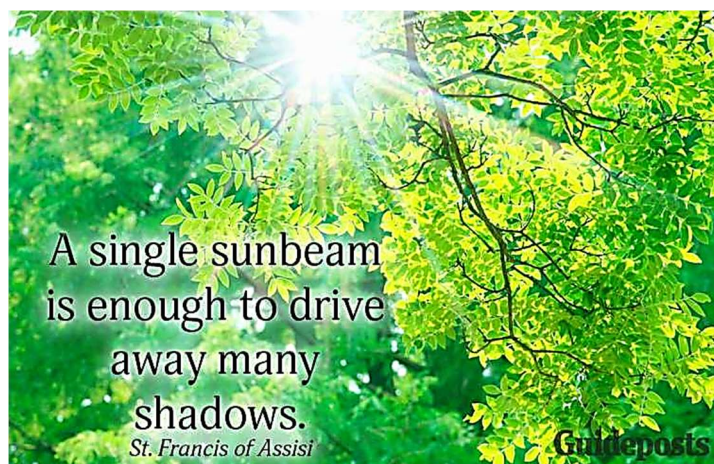
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



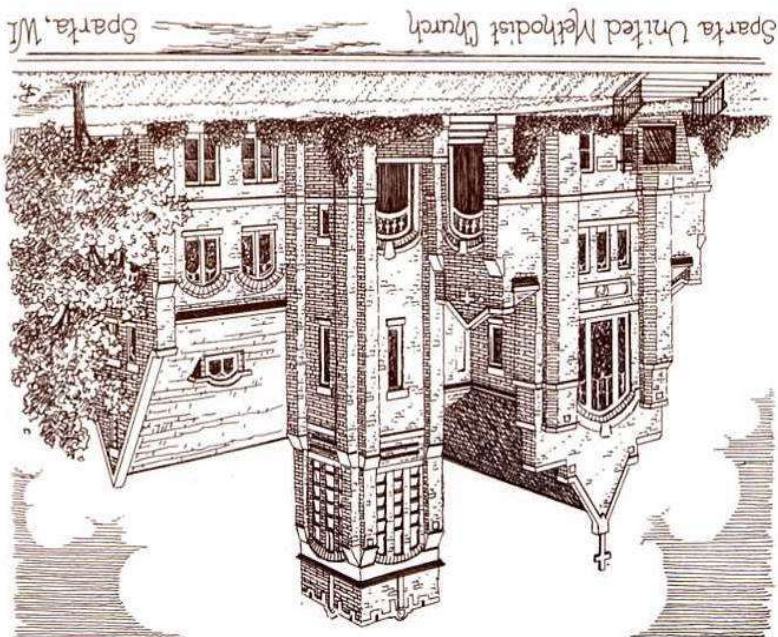
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*

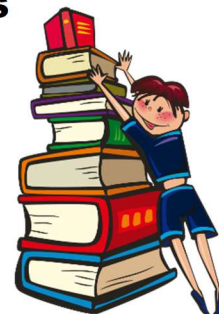


If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

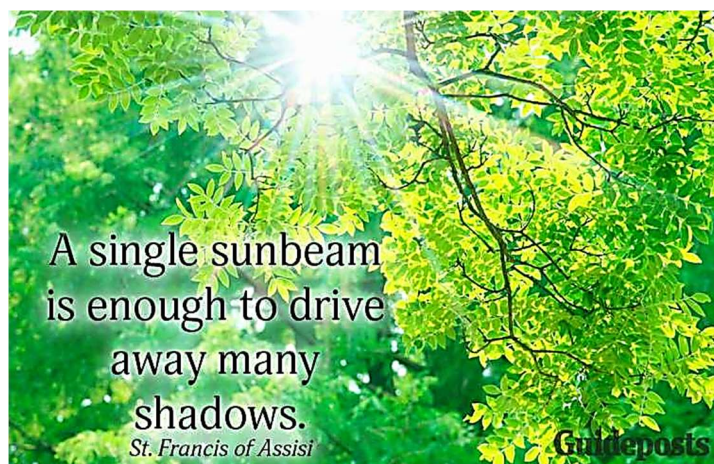
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



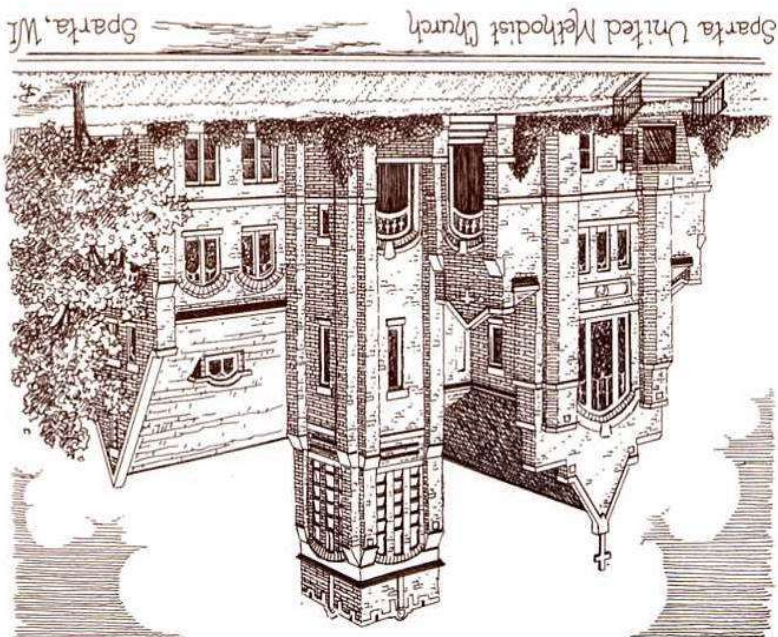
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

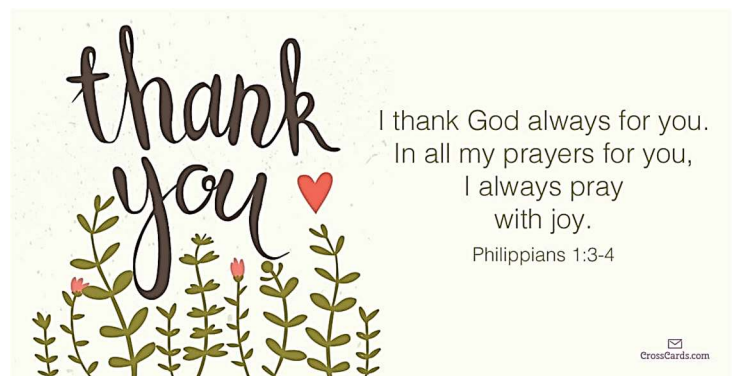
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

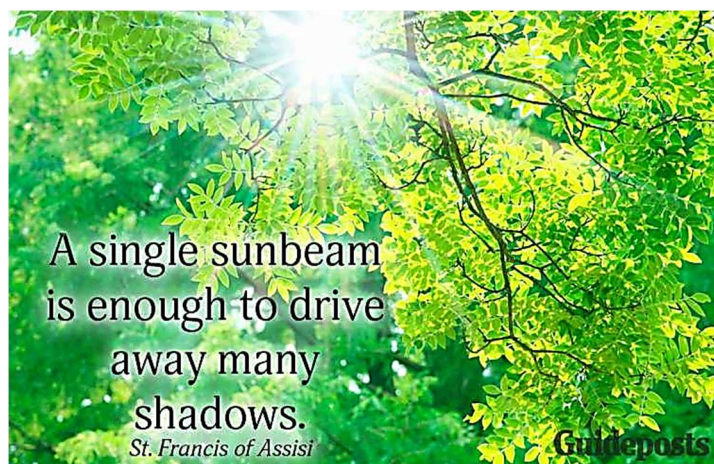
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

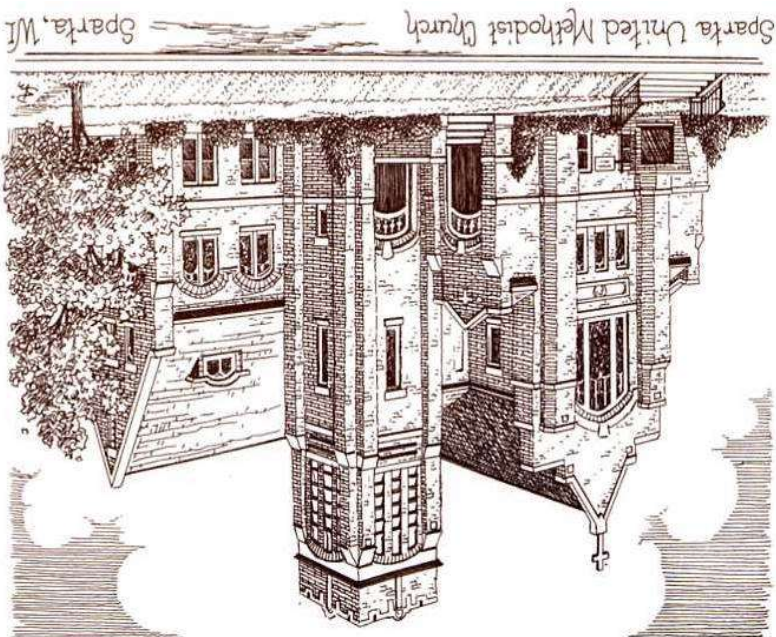


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

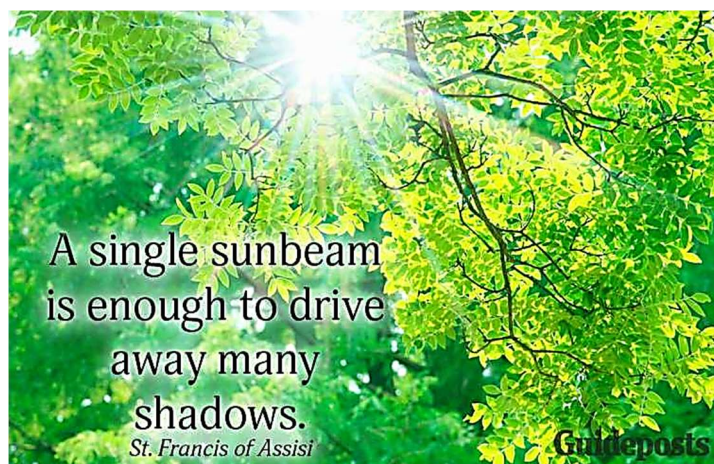
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



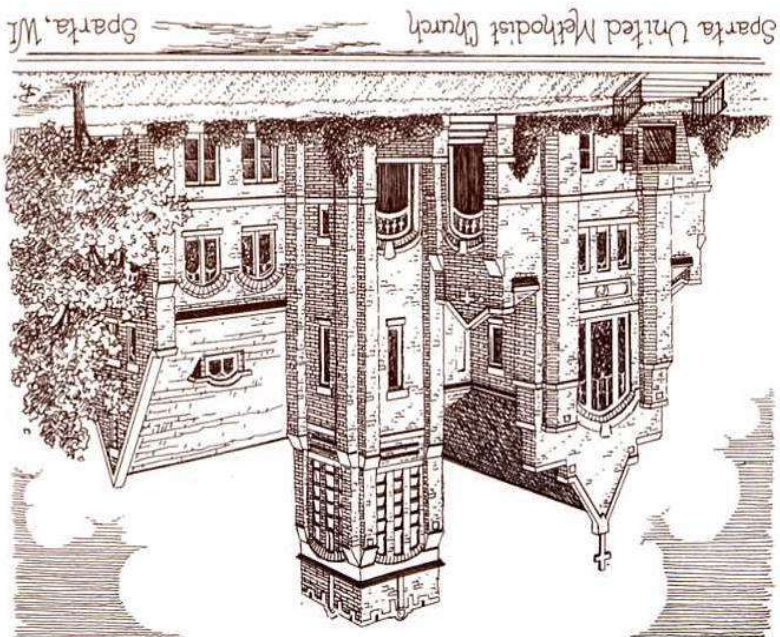
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

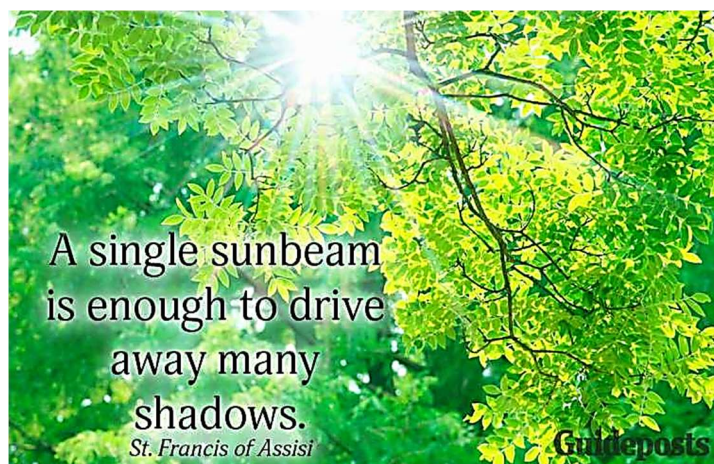
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



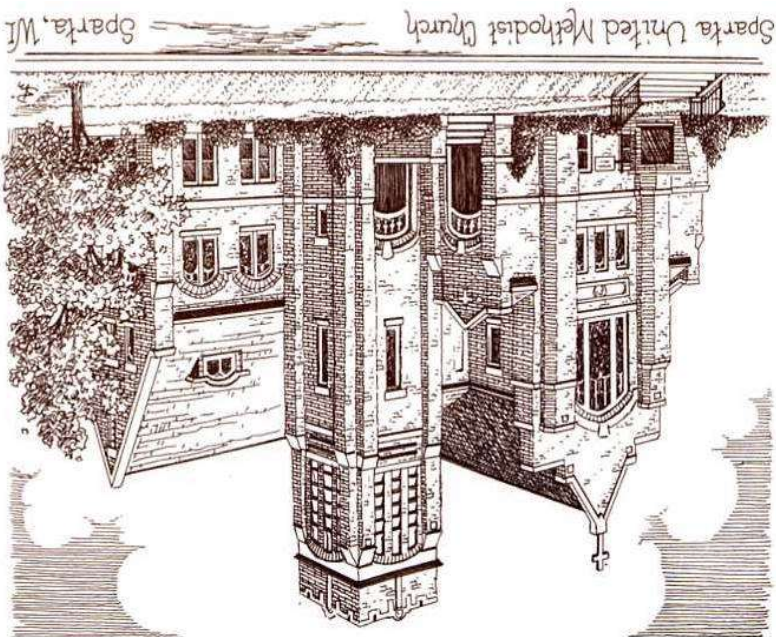
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

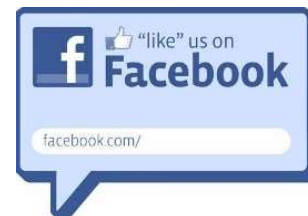
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

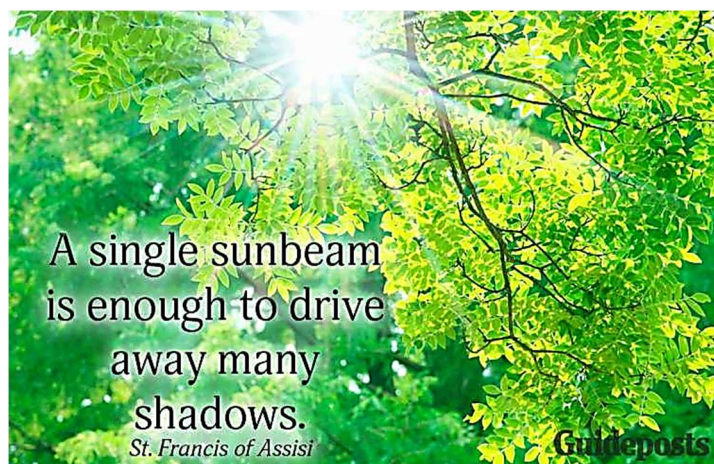
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

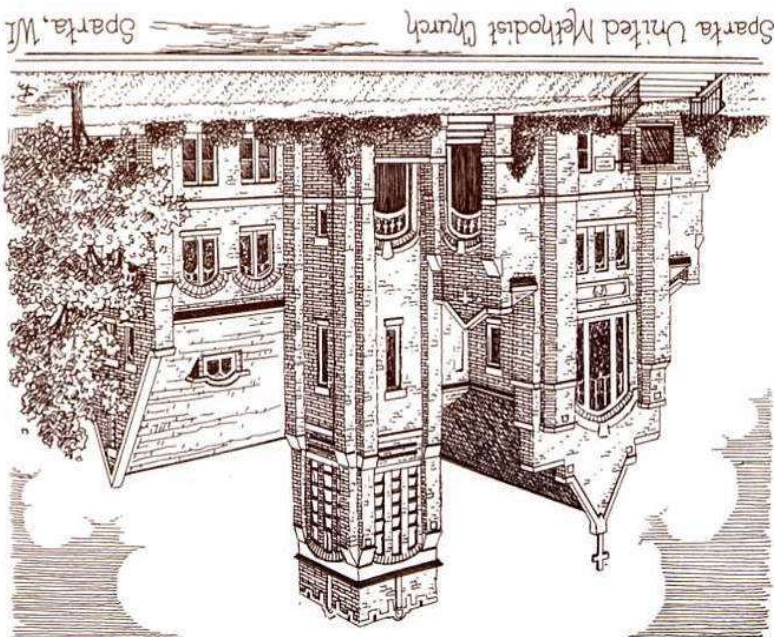


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

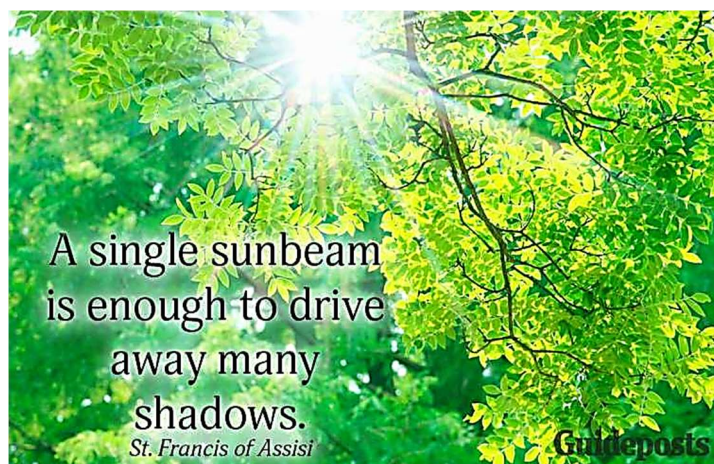
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



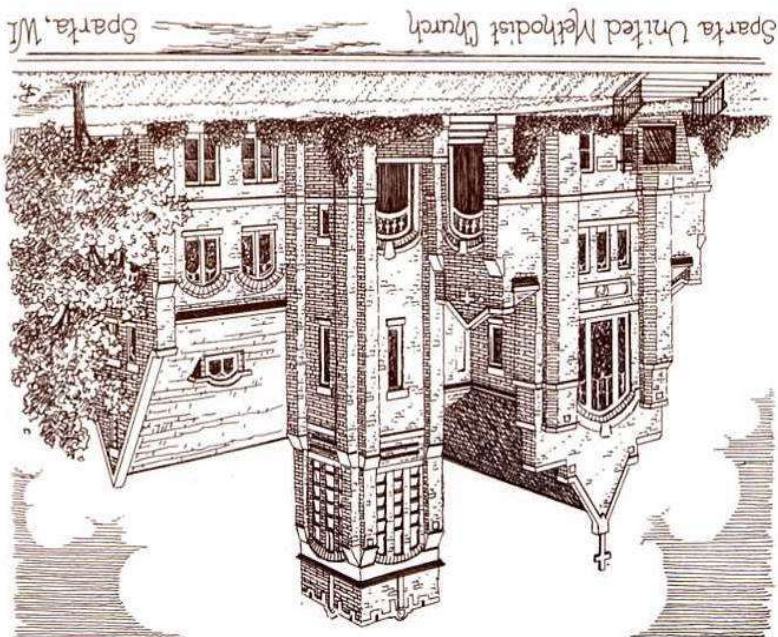
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

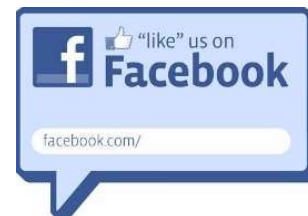
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

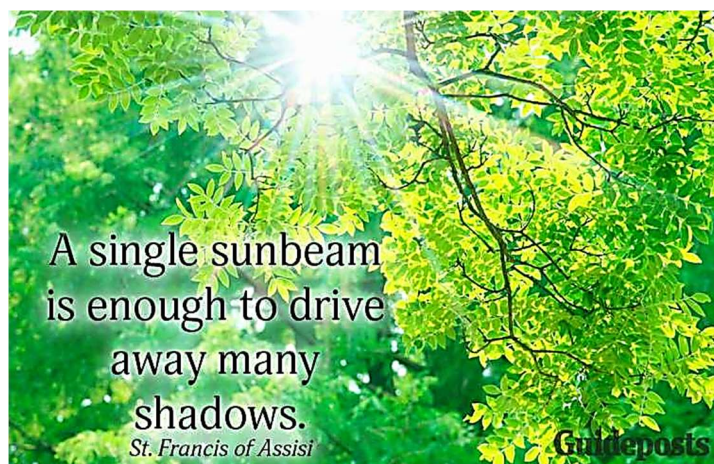
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

"Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful."

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



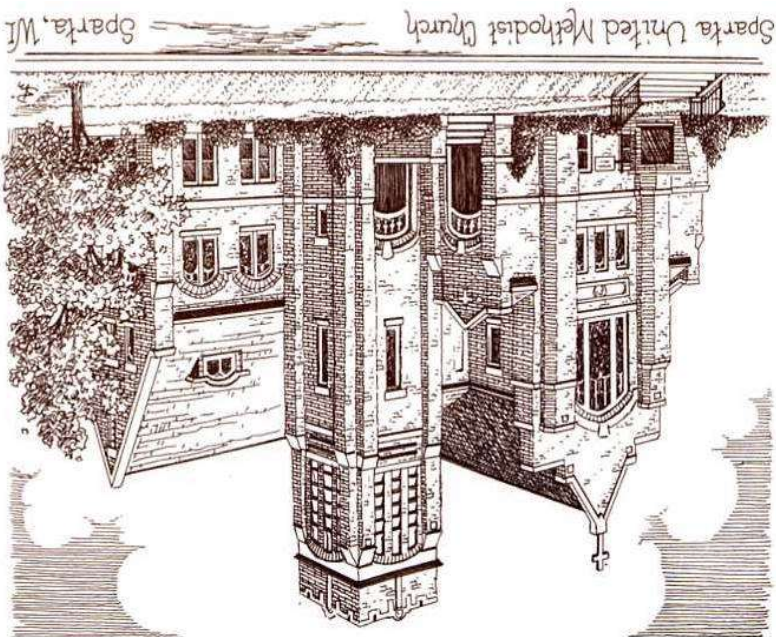
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a "New Way" Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

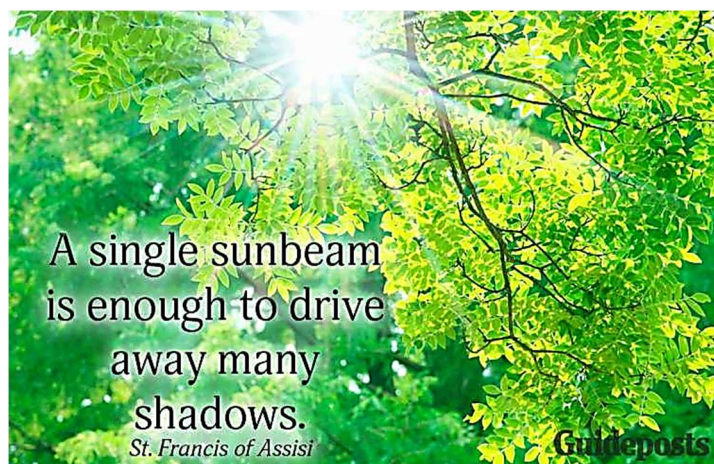
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

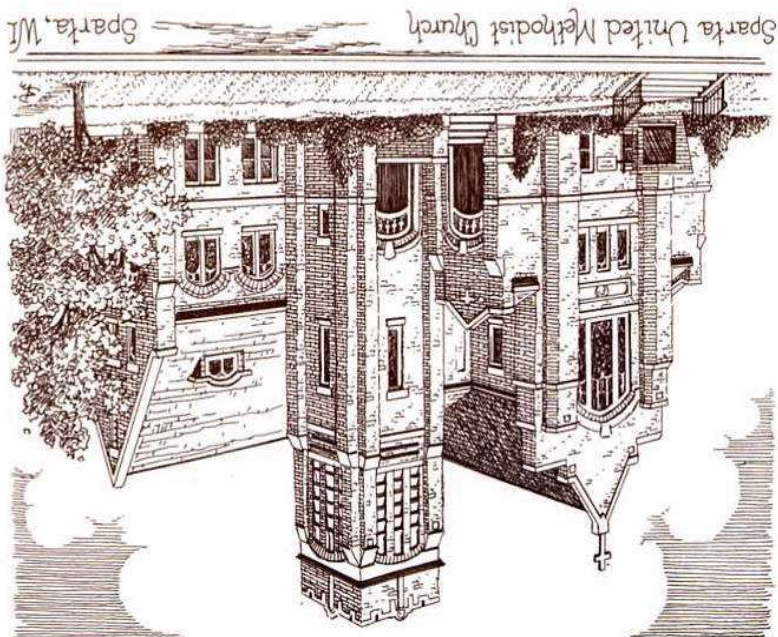


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

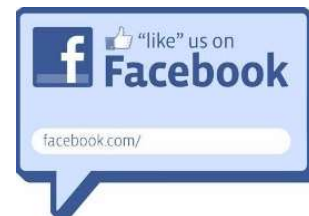
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

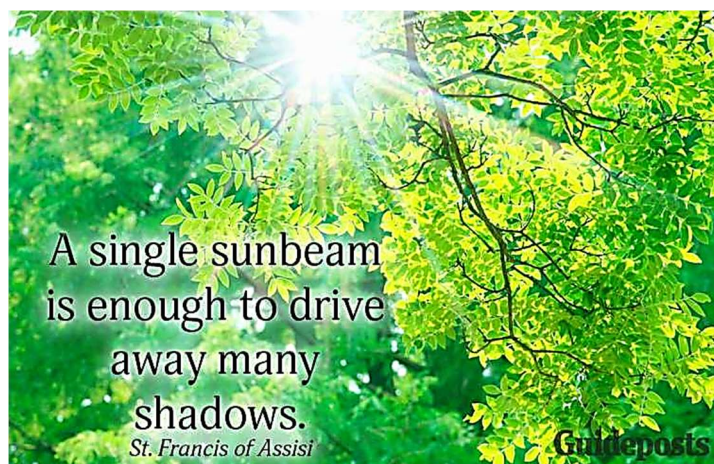
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



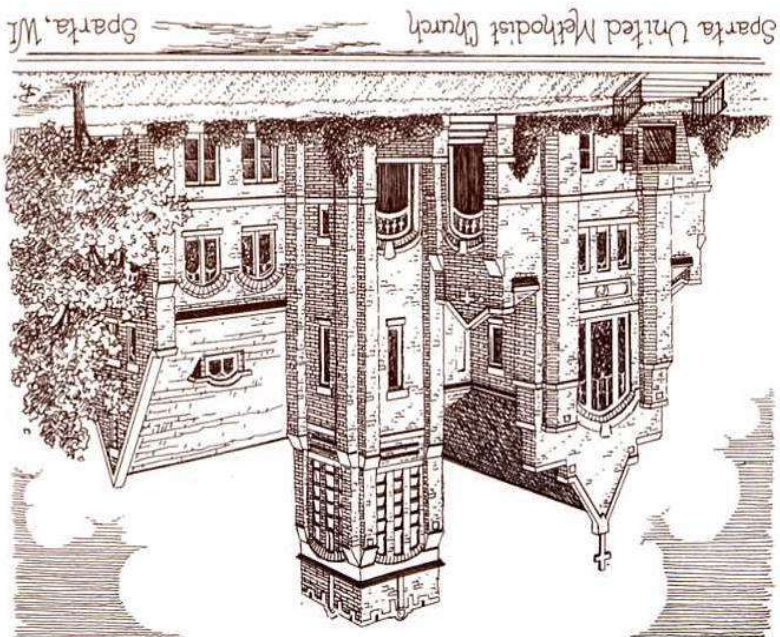
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

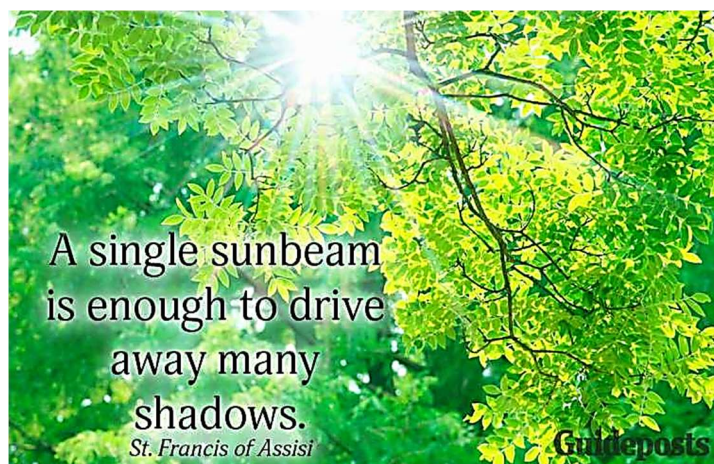
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

"Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful."

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



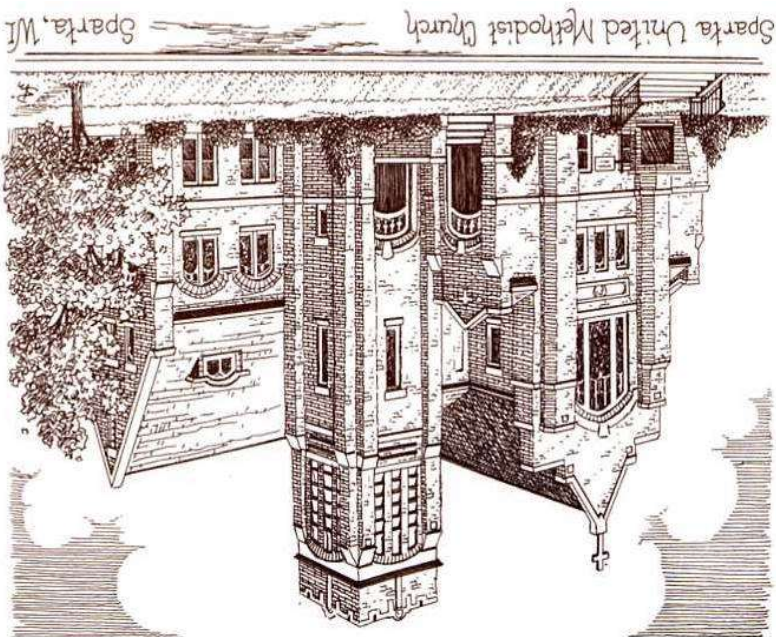
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a "New Way" Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

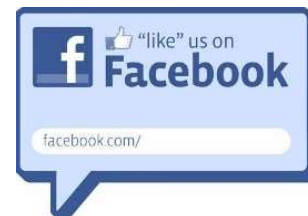
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

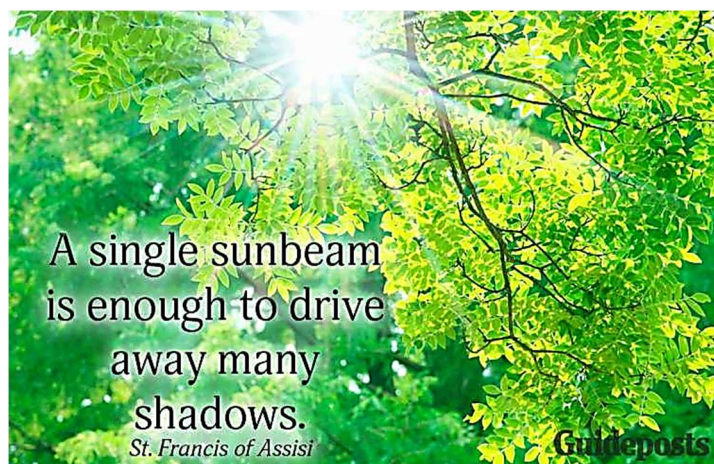
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

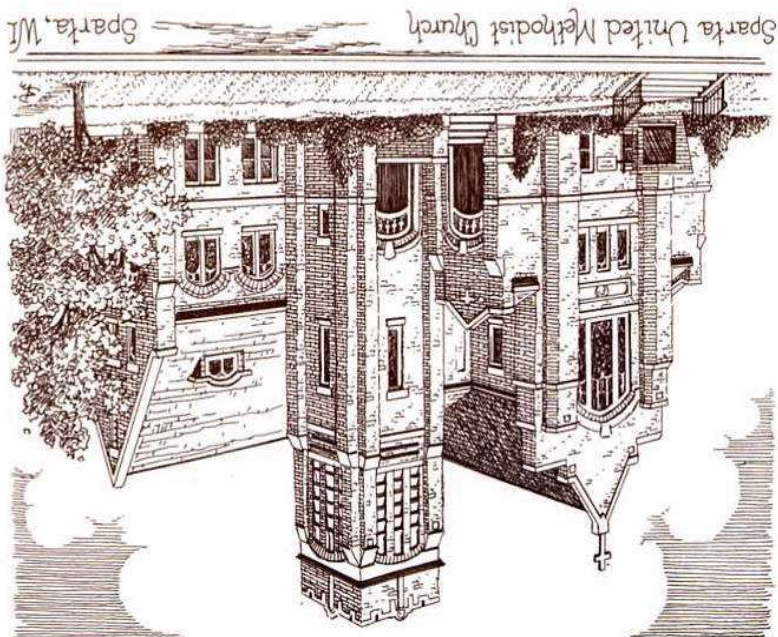


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

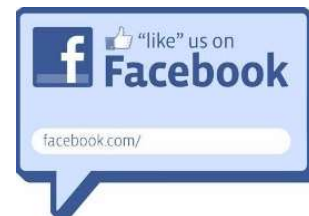
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

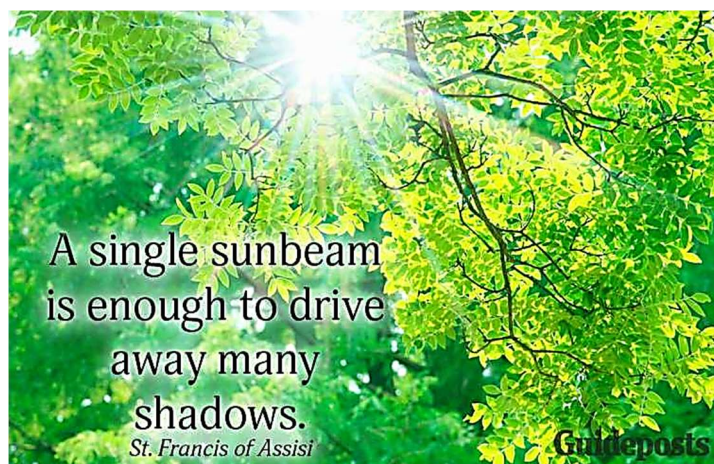
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

"Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful."

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



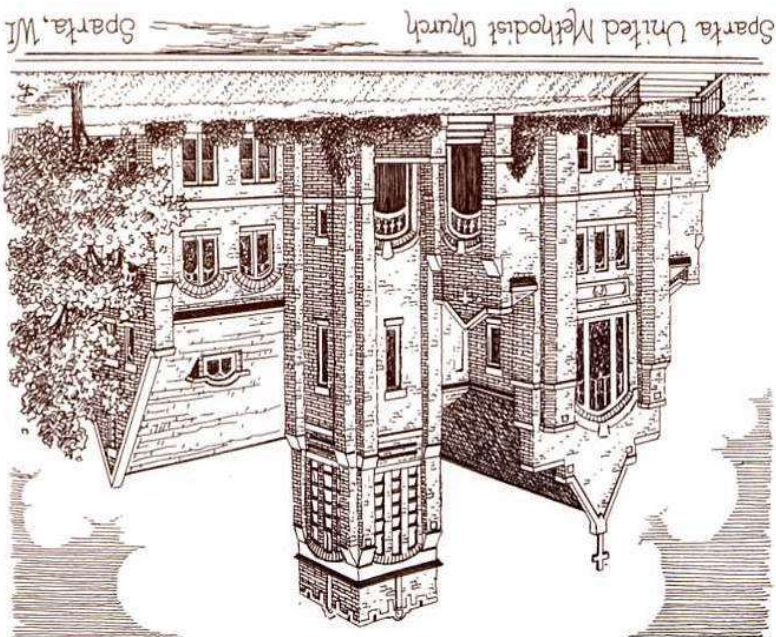
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a "New Way" Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

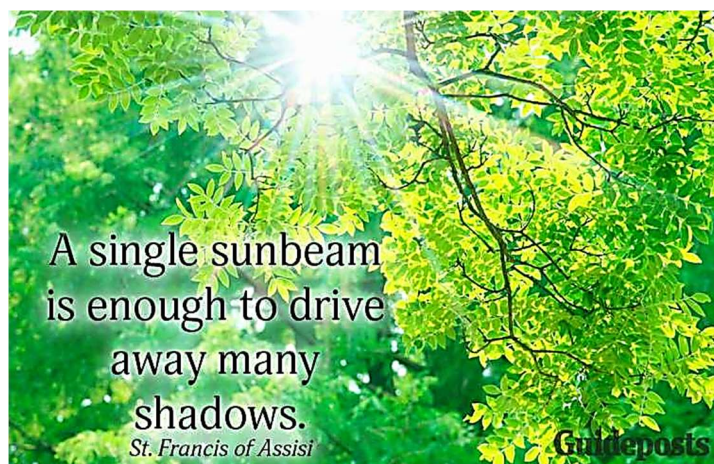
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



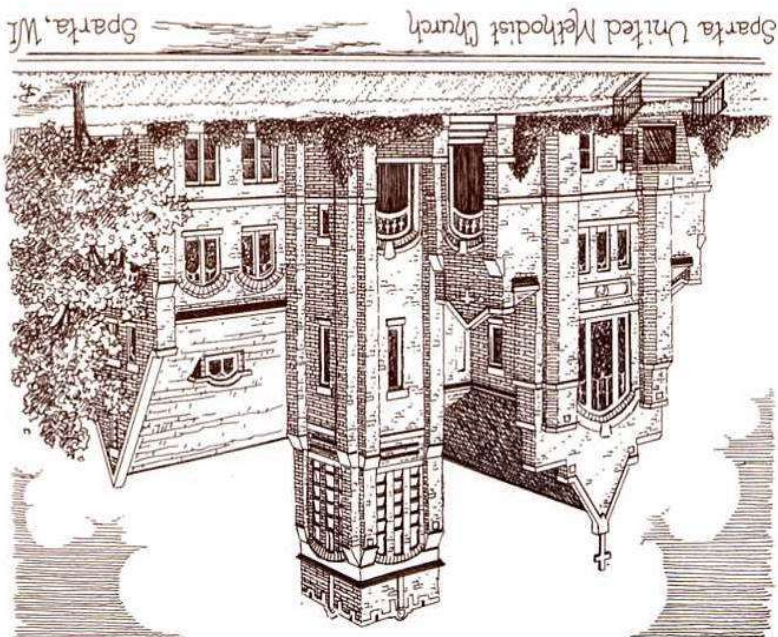
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*

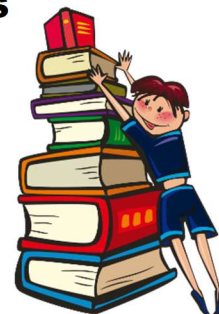


If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

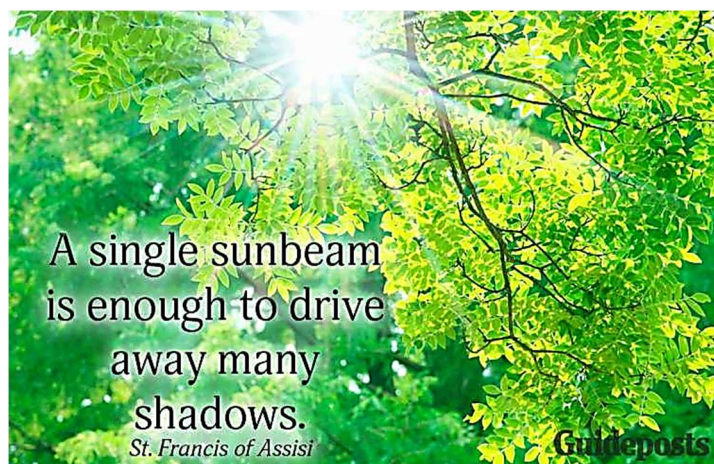
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

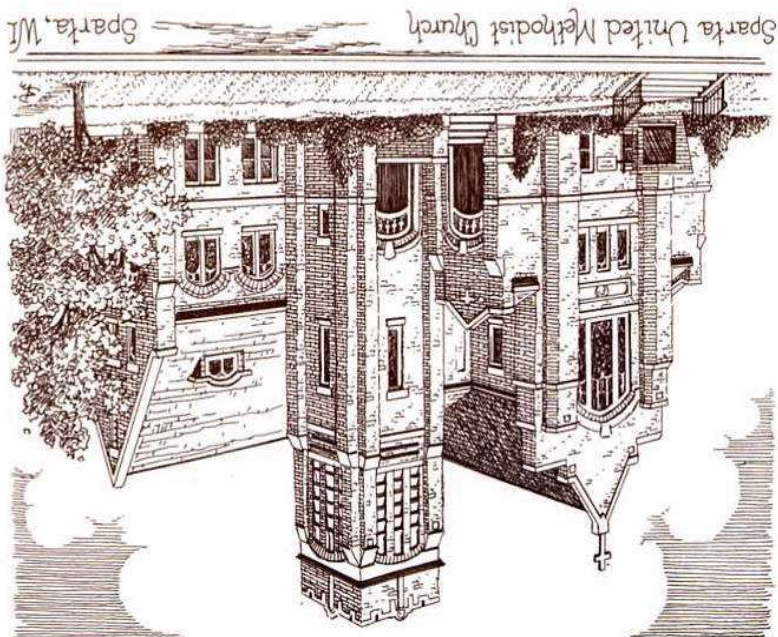


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let's take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God's Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy's strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God's goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

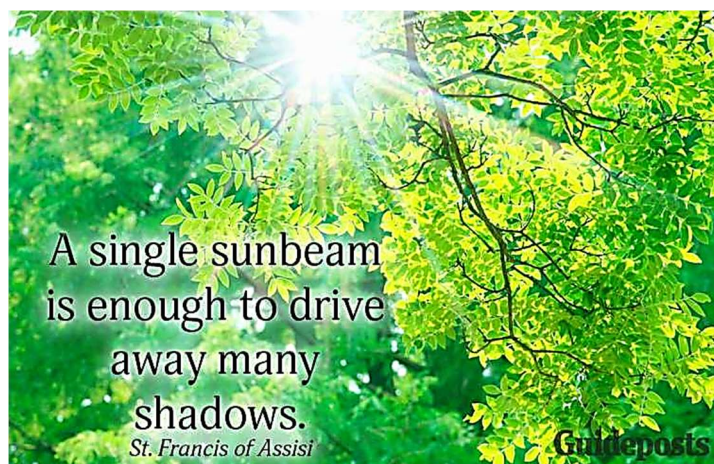
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



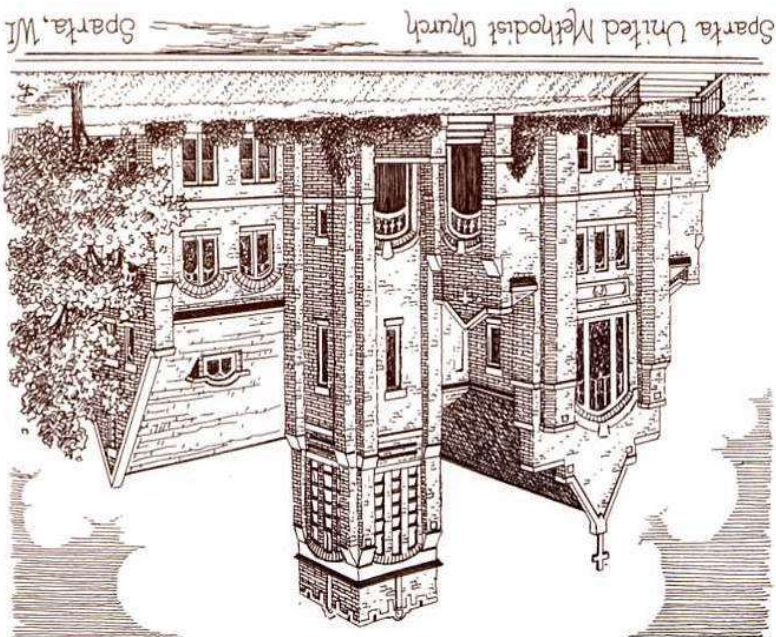
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

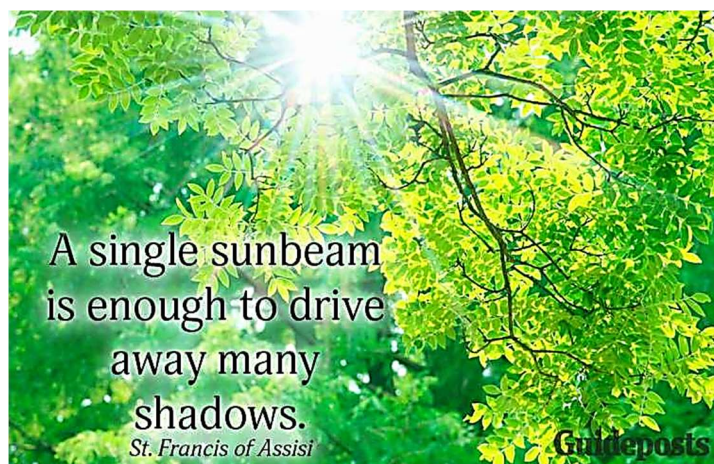
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



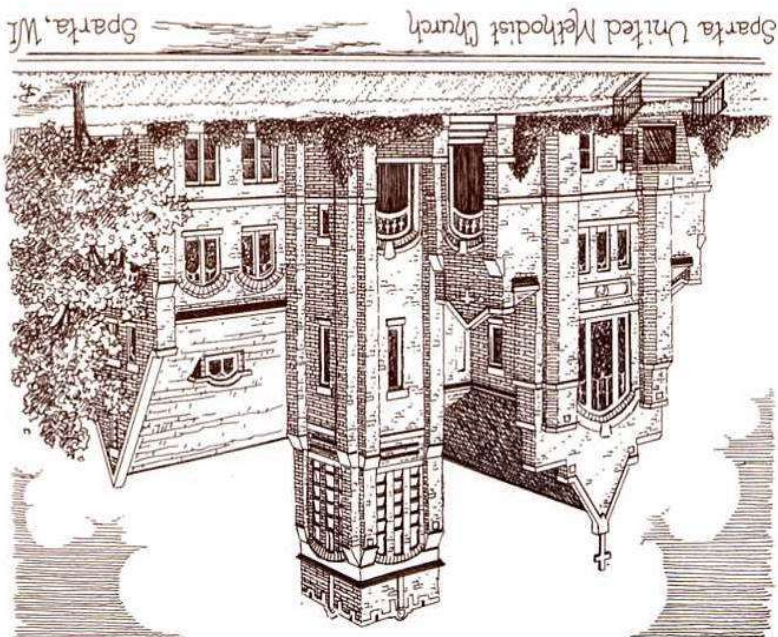
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

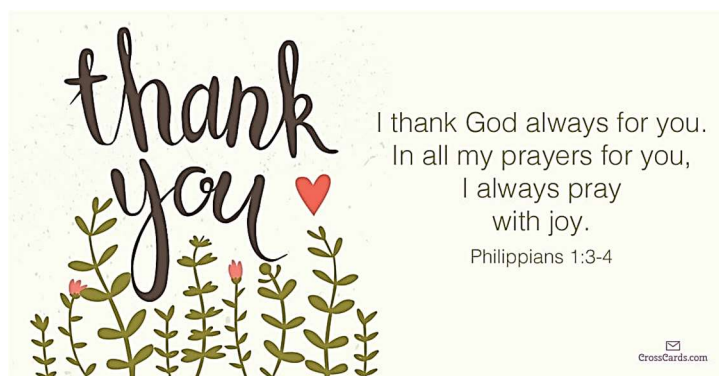
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## **An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire**

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## **Online Stewardship Retreat Offered**

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## **Records and History Update**

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## **Nurture News**

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

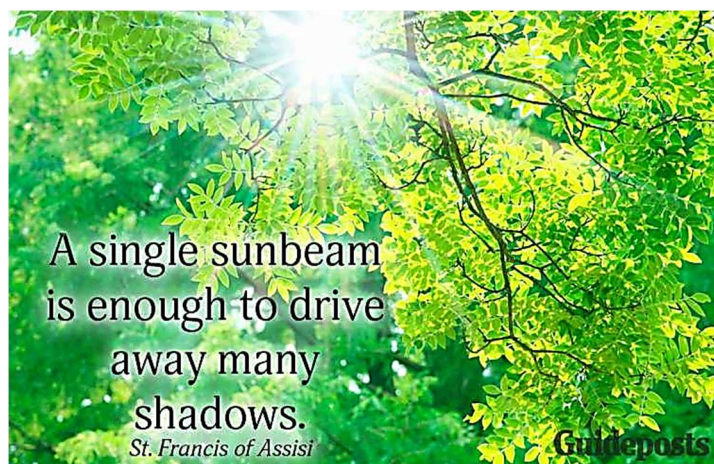
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

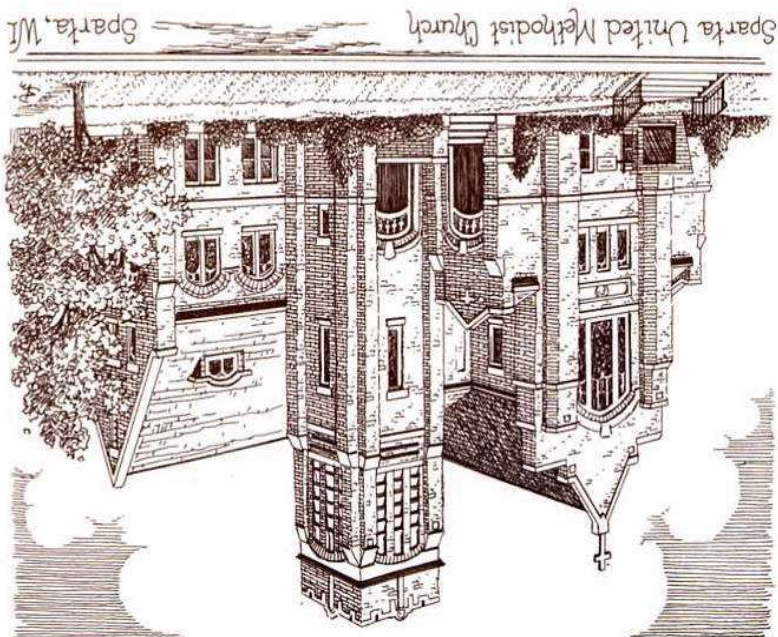


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let's take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God's Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy's strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God's goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).



## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.



## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

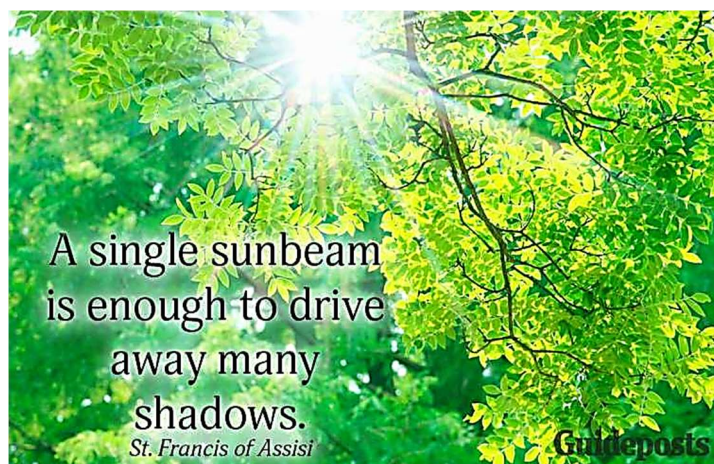
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



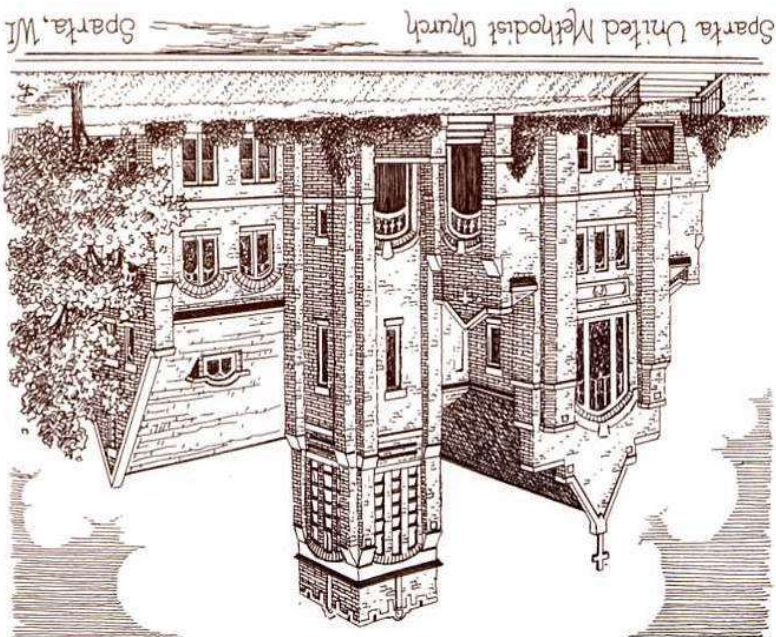
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



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## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year

# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*



This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.

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## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).

## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.



## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

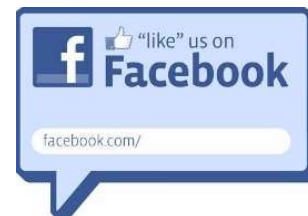
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske





## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta



## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

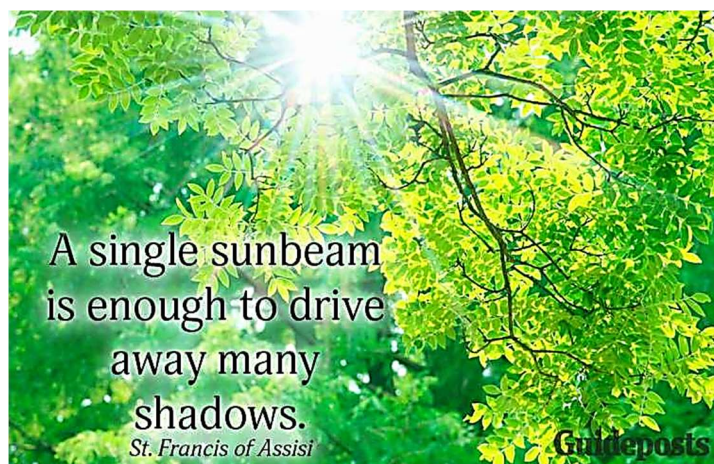
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

“Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful.”

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



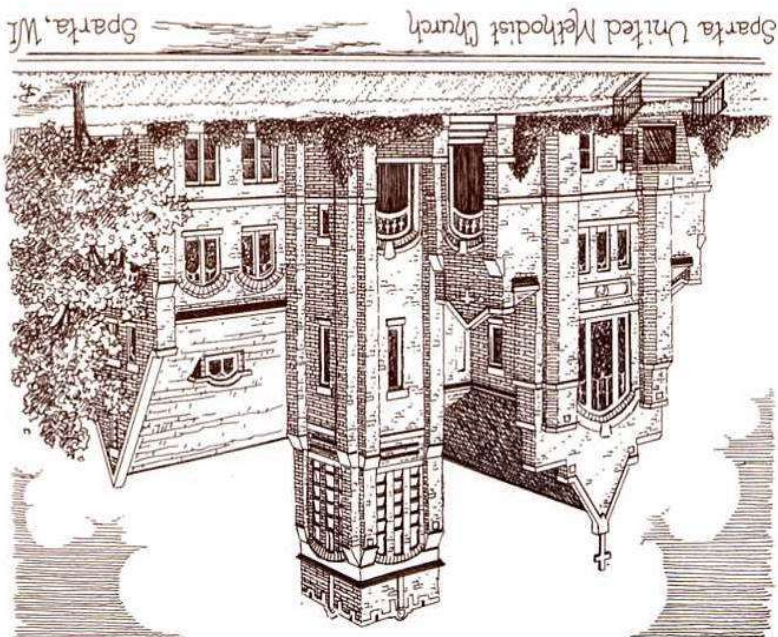
The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a “New Way” Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

**Fax:** (608)269-6940

**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year



# “The CHIMES” – August

Volume 55, No. 8

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)



Where is your focus these days? With everything going on in the world today, from the pandemic to racial and political unrest, we could easily become discouraged and depressed. On days when my focus begins to become skewed I remember the words from Psalm 16. I love

how the above verse starts: *“I keep my eyes always on the Lord.”*

We must ask why is that important? Why does this verse start with these words? It means that you choose to relate everything you encounter to your trust in God. What you choose to focus on becomes the dominant influence in your life. You may be a Christian, but if your focus is always on your problems, your problems will determine the direction of your life. If your focus is on people, then people will determine what you think and do.

As we read further in the passage, we see the result of keeping our eyes on the Lord. Let’s take a look at what happens when we do this.

First, we are reminded that God is our strength. *“With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”* God’s Word tells us in Psalm 61:3, *“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”* Also we see his strength in our lives in Psalm 28:7 *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.”*

When we keep our eyes focused on the Lord, we remember He is always with us. Regardless of the battles we may be facing, He is our strength. With Him by our side, we will not be shaken. We can rest in complete assurance that He is with us in all situations. Even in our thought life.

If you, like me, have days when your focus begins to become skewed and something comes into your mind that gives you fear, frustration, anxiety, or anger, know that these things are not from the Lord. This is the enemy’s strategy to shake us up. You see, satan knows that if we take our eyes off the things of the Lord, then our eyes will be focused on what he has distracted us to see.

The Lord says that we should focus on, *“whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:8-9) When we focus our eyes and think of God, we have peace. We have joy. We will not be shaken.

Second, God gives us joy and God is faithful. Verse 9 states, *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”* As we just saw in Philippians, we will have joy and peace, and we can rest when our eyes are focused on God. He takes delight in us and views us as His most precious and most beautiful creation. He is faithful to us and is always with us.

We see God’s goodness in Zephaniah 3:17 *“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”*

*continued*

This beautiful time with the Lord is what the enemy wants to steal from you. How can you stay in this place of perfect peace? A place where you have lasting joy, no matter your situation? The answer is simply by putting your focus on God always.

Finally, God gives us direction and all eternal pleasures! *“You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”* What a way to end this passage! In biblical times, the right hand was the most distinguished position, reserved for one’s chief adviser and supporter. When you choose to focus on Christ, you invite Him to take the most important position in your life as Counselor and Defender.

Every time you face a new experience, you should turn to Christ for His interpretation and strength. When people insult you and mistreat you, you should seek direction from your Counselor regarding the right response. When you face a crisis, you should receive strength from the One at your right hand. When you experience need, you should consult your Counselor before you react. When you face a fearful situation, you should take courage from the Advocate at your right hand. Everything you do is in the context of your relationship to Christ.

What an incredible act of God’s grace that Christ should stand beside you to guide you and counsel you and defend you! How could you ever become dismayed over your situation with Christ at your right hand? What confidence this should give you. By keeping our eyes on the Lord, we can know the path of life; we are filled with joy and His eternal pleasures! No wonder the enemy would love for us to take our eyes off the Lord.

My prayer for you today is that you keep your eyes and your focus on Jesus. That you combat anything that the enemy of this world tries to use to distract you. I pray that you can remember the Lord’s protection and love for you. Throughout the month of August, I encourage you to focus on the words of Psalm 91 in the next column. This is God’s promise to you today and every day. This is what He will give you when your eyes are on Him.

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

Pastor L

*“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely, he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say, ‘The Lord is my refuge,’ and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. ‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.’” (Psalm 91)*



If you haven’t joined us for online worship yet the services can be found on YouTube at Sparta UMC (date). For example the latest service is at Sparta UMC 7 26 20.



## Little Free Library Users

Thank you to whoever has been stocking our Little Free Library with fresh reading material. I must admit, I haven’t been as vigilant as I should have been. But, when I checked on it, the library was well stocked. Thank you mystery helpers! Keep reading—it passes the time so nicely.



Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward

## Will You Bear Fruit?

*"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

(Matthew 13:22-23)

What is a church to do in these difficult times? It is to be hoped that each church would continue to perform its mission and ministry as it has always done and strive to do it even better.

This summer, I am working with two churches, on opposite ends of the state, that have chosen at this time to undertake significant fundraising campaigns for debt reduction and building renovation. Each has a six-figure goal that is 1½ to 2 times its annual giving.

The Foundation interviewed 30-40 people from each church. What they shared with us is (1) an enthusiasm for the ministry and mission of the church, (2) a practical stewardship of the building and budget, and (3) a disregard for worldly worries and concerns. Not that they are ignoring the challenges of the Covid-19 epidemic, rather they will not let it deter their mission, their ministry, or their financial giving.

People from both churches noted that the greatest strength of their congregation is engagement in community outreach. They want to continue this outreach during the pandemic and grow it in the future.

This they can do most effectively if they act now to reduce indebtedness or address needed building renovations. So, at a time when some congregations are simply waiting and some Christians are holding back on giving, these congregations are starting major Capital Campaigns.

Join me in praying for their success and in discerning what you can do to support the mission and ministry of your church.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation  
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at  
[www.wumf.org](http://www.wumf.org) or [Facebook/wumf.org](https://www.facebook.com/wumf.org)  
Or call 1-888-903-9863

## Financial Update

You should have received your mid-year giving report along with a letter from our finance chair by now. If you did not receive a report and believe you should have, please let Pastor Loretta know and she will pass that information on to our financial secretary.

Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the ministries of this church! We continue to stay current in paying all our bills and ministry obligations.

As a reminder, you can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; or you can sign up for electronic giving by going to our church Web site at: [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc) and clicking on the "Give Online" link at the bottom of the page (call the church office or our financial secretary, Heidi Sullivan if you have questions); or check with your financial institution and ask if they have a "bill pay" option that you can send your offering through.

However you choose to give, please know how important that act is to keeping our church alive and vital during this challenging time. Together we will continue faithfully serving God with trust and confidence.



## Shop with scrip...support your church



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. So far the church has earned about \$500 through the program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants using the scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church.

A big thank you also goes out to Cheryl Isensee for organizing our scrip program and keeping it up and running. The next scrip order will be going in on **August 9**. You can mail your order directly to Cheryl 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).





## In-Building Worship Continues

Worship services continue with social distancing precautions in place. We have had anywhere from 13 to 31 people in attendance, with communion Sunday having the most in attendance. The self-contained communion cups and wafers were a hit. We will continue these services unless conditions warrant the church closing again.

If you haven't been back yet and decide to come in the near future you will find the pews have been taped off to make sure that a safe six-foot distance is kept between those in attendance that don't live in the same household. There are stations set up at both the K Street and Court Street entrances and the elevator with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and disposable masks for those who do not come with a mask. Offering plates are also set up at these locations, as we are not passing the plates at this time.

We are utilizing the big screens installed in the sanctuary for responsive readings during worship and announcements before worship begins because we are not using bulletins during this time.

Although Pastor Loretta and those in attendance are happy to be back worshipping in the sanctuary, we all understand that not everyone is ready to come back for many good reasons. If you are one who is not ready, please do not feel like you have to explain. You do not, and we will continue to record and post online services so that as many as possible have the opportunity to worship with this community of faith.

Please continue to call, text, or message Pastor with prayer requests and joys too. We all need to hear about and celebrate each other's joys! Pastor's cell number is 608-386-1862.

## Administrative Assistant Search Begins

The Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and Pastor Loretta have been working to develop a job description for an administrative assistant. We have a solid job description now and are ready to post the position online. This is a 28-hour per week position, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with potential for some flexibility).

If you know someone who might be interested, you can pick up a detailed job description in the church office or have him or her call Pastor Loretta and she will email them a copy. We are asking those interested to send a letter of introduction, their resume, and three job references to the church for our consideration.

## Welcome to the Church Family

Congratulations to the Echeverria and Smith families and welcome Amara and Winnie.



Amara Echeverria was welcomed by parents, Alex and Natalie Echeverria as well as brother Liam and sister K'maya on June 6. She is the granddaughter of Brian and Hollie Peth.



Winnifred (Winnie) Smith was welcomed home by parents, Mac and Abby Smith on July 9. She is the granddaughter of Kurt and Amy Kiefer.

## From the Parish Nurse...

This month I want to share with you a letter that was found in a bible, in a second hand store. This letter was written 101 years ago by a mother to her daughter. I want to share this because it contains a message describing the power of the word of God in the Holy Bible.



A letter from a Mother written to her daughter Clara for her birthday, Nov. 16, 1919.

*This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the sinner, the happiness of believers.*

*Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable*

*Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy.*

*It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you.*

*It is the travelers map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christians character.*

*Here Paradise is restored, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell are disclosed.*

*Christ is the grand subject and good design, the glory of God. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet.*

*Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory and a river of pleasures.*

*It is given to you in life, will be opened in judgement, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labors and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.*

*Written for my daughter Clara hoping that the Holy Bible will be all this to her. Your birthday wish from your own Mother, November 16, 1919.*

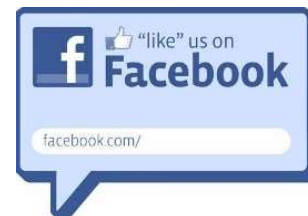
I had to share this with all of you. Stay Safe, be smart, praise God, pray and count your blessings and always thank God for them and do not take them for granted. Call if I can be of assistance to you.

Love and prayers, Priscilla

## Church Facebook Page

Our former office manager had set up an unofficial church Facebook page that will be shut down in the next couple of weeks. The church does have an official Facebook site if you would like 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 just doesn't seem like the appropriate words to express the gratitude I have for your calls, visits, cards, texts, gifts of food, meals, treats, memorial donations given in Mom's (Mary Ann Rader) memory and just knowing that you have included us in prayer. It has been a difficult time, not only in our loss, but also in dealing with COVID-19.

Blessings to you and your families.  
Kevin and Margie Lakowske and Bob and Lynn Rader



Thank you to Cathy Nichols for delivering our altar anniversary plant. It was a very nice surprise that I completely forgot about! Thank you also to UMW for remembering our anniversary with a greeting card. We may not see each other often but it is nice to know we are thought about. You all made us appreciate the day even more.

Kevin and Margie Lakowske







## An Evening of Song: A Student Voice Recital of Classical Repertoire

Nathan Janzen, accompanied by Ellen Hemstock, will present “An Evening of Song” at the Sparta United Methodist Church on Sunday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. Because of restrictions in place due to COVID-19 in-person attendance is limited with social distancing measures being practiced. But, please don’t despair, the recital will also be livestreamed. If you can’t make it at 6:30 for the livestream you will also be able to see a recording of the recital on the church Facebook page.



## Online Stewardship Retreat Offered

The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s 2020 Stewardship Retreat will be online rather than in-person this year. It will focus on 3-5 year planning with emphasis on impacts of the Covid-19 crisis and making recovery plans. There will be no cost for participating. Presentations will be about 20 minutes in length. They will be made available on August 15.

Stewardship teams will have a month to view the presentations they choose and download related materials. They are encouraged to formulate a draft Stewardship plan and share it with the Foundation.

After submitting their draft Stewardship plan, the Stewardship team may schedule a consultation of 60-90 minutes with a member of the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s staff. The consultant will review the church’s plan, providing feedback and ideas, as well as answering questions.

If you are interested in this opportunity or have questions, let Paul Foulke, finance chair, know. He can be contacted at 715-554-0246. The Foundation is asking churches to register their interest in participating so that we can send them notifications and materials as well as schedule consultations in the weeks ahead.

## Records and History Update

It is with regret that the Records and History Committee has to inform you that we will not be hosting the October “Our Community in Concert,” due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what the rest of the summer and fall will look like. We are hoping that by October 2021 we will be able to present the concert. Thank you to those musicians who had expressed an interest in performing. Please know that we will be back in 2021 if conditions allow. Thank you for your understanding. Stay safe and stay healthy.

## Nurture News

**Organ Repair and Maintenance** Our new organ tuner, Bill Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee put in several more days of work in July.

- He installed a used, but much more efficient and quiet blower motor in the closet near the kitchen,
- fashioned new galvanized 12-foot wind pipe (12 inches in diameter),
- reinstalled the pipes he had taken back to Tennessee to repair,
- corrected leaks and winding problems with the new blower.

Thank you to these men who helped Bill: Dave Simpkinson (worked every day with Bill), Dave Kemp, Kevin Lakowske, Scott Naeseth, and Brett Wise.

The old motor can be sold. It still works, but was not efficient enough for 1,500 pipes. There is also eight-inch PVC pipe available for sale.

An additional donation is being given to add to our Organ Repair and Maintenance Fund; at present the fund is approximately \$10,000.

**Soup Supper** Our Tuesday night soup supper may not resume until October. We are following guidelines and recommendations from Aging and Disability Resource Center. Their meal sites in the county are still closed to in-house dining, but they do provide carryout meals. That is something we might consider; carryout containers have been purchased.

The Soup Supper ministry has been awarded a grant from the state of Wisconsin for nearly \$2,500 under the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.



## A word from our Bishop

### Chaos Anyone?

Published: 6 July 2020

*“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)*



How many of you are feeling that things are a bit out of control? I know from time to time I am thinking, "Come on, what is happening?" My heart bleeds for my black brothers and sisters as I watch the news. What is going on? Why is this happening? I get news of more people afflicted by COVID-19, and it makes no sense. I see people struggling with what is best to do – stay home or go out – and I am as confused as anyone. I see the faithful protesters calling for racial justice and equality, and I worry for their safety. My own heart of protest says, “no more! Things must change!” and I see that there is still so much farther that we have to go.

It is easy to lose heart. It is easy to give into anger and frustration. Many of the arguments we hear today of racial equality and justice we have heard for generation after generation. In the face of growing pandemic spread, we hear people lamenting that we cannot return to “normal.” Many well-meaning people say, “what is the problem? We don’t think things are so bad.” It is indeed a challenging time for all of us.

Christian people stand in a unique position. We have seen oppression. We have witnessed plague. We have known dispossession and displacement. We have known the threat of violence. These things are part of our DNA. We are a people constantly confronted by chaos who believe in a God of order, justice, mercy and grace.

Our United Methodist denomination has gone through (is going through) some serious struggles. Yet, there is nothing we go through today that we have not gone through in the past.

Many times, we have faced the challenges to God’s love and grace for all people and we have emerged on the side of progressive acceptance and humility. We love because God loves. We make space for all God’s people because we are a denomination that believes in justification and sanctification. Through the darkest days we live continuously in God’s light.

Our God is a powerful, awesome, prevailing God. Diseases and plagues come and go. Threats to the Christian fellowship come and go. Devastating injustices and inequalities come and go. Yet, the love of God, the amazing and redeeming grace, and the incredible acceptance of God succeeds. There is nothing in this earthly existence that can overcome the unconditional love and grace of God. Chaos? Nothing but an opportunity for God to teach us new lessons. It falls to us to choose order over chaos and use our gifts, talents, knowledge, and abilities to build the peace, mercy, and justice God’s order demands.

We are God’s people, now and forever. All are welcome, all are beloved, all are children of God, and together we navigate the turmoil of chaos to emerge together into the peace, harmony, and stability of God, now and forever. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we slowly and safely open the church for worship and small group meetings, Pastor Loretta continues to work between the church and her home office, making sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). You can reach her most easily on her cell phone at 608-386-1862.

Please do your best to stay in touch through phone calls, texts, Facebook, online worship, etc. Pastor Loretta is still available through all of these means and you can be there for each other, checking in, finding creative ways to stay in touch.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

## Accountable Leadership Update

You may recall from previous newsletter articles or ad council discussions that we have been in the process of moving to the Accountable Leadership model from the Administrative Council model with all of its committee structure. This move is not a simple process, as we want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to understand and voice concerns or questions. That opportunity is one of the steps in changing to Accountable Leadership.

We had planned to offer forums for question and answer times after a worship services this past spring and this summer. Of course the COVID-19 situation put a damper on those plans.

We still want and need to offer a way for this important communication to happen. The plan is for Toni Burrows, Ad Council chair, and Pastor Loretta to record an information session similar to what was done for the ad council. Then a video link will be emailed to all that we have email addresses for. Please view and send us your questions. If you have recently updated your email information please let us know so you don't miss out on this virtual discussion.

If you have questions from the previous articles and would like us to address them in the video, please send us your questions as soon as possible so we can include them in the video. You can email questions to Pastor Loretta at [lewaughtal@msn.com](mailto:lewaughtal@msn.com) or mail them to the church at Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St, Sparta, WI 54656.

Because those that have already been in discussion about the Accountable Leadership model believe this will be beneficial to the church, we want to be able to move forward with as many people as possible understanding the process and on board for the move.

One important way you can stay actively involved in the future direction of your church and community is to pray daily and specifically for the church and community. For example:

- Pray for your current leaders (including but not limited to your pastor). If you would like a list of the current leadership, let pastor know and she will send it to you. Set a time each day to pray for each person as you go down the list. Thank God for them and their gifts, pray for God's Spirit to guide them and their lives, and

pray for this to be a season of leadership growth for both them and their ministry. Pray for discernment and guidance as the church seeks new leadership and for those new leaders to feel the call to serve.

- Pray for community leaders. Create a list of community leaders (police chief, fire chief, school principal, business owners, local government officials, etc.) and pray for one or two by name, rotating through the list, each time you pray. Grow your perspective of what leadership looks like and the many types of leaders God has placed all around your ministry.
- Focus on biblical leaders. In your quiet time with God's word, focus on a different leader in Scripture who you can learn from due to either their situation or their unique skills. If you need help with ideas in getting started contact Pastor Loretta. End each study time with a prayer for God to equip your leaders to best guide your congregation through the challenges of today.
- Continue to pray our breakthrough prayer. God is faithful and loving; God is seeking faithful people to lead in his church and community. In this time when so much face-to-face ministry is not able to continue, prayer is one thing that can happen anytime and anywhere.

### 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.

## Around the Neighborhood

St. Patrick's Parish is preparing for their Summerfest, which will be held August 14-16. This year's event will be different than previous years due to both COVID-19 and a big change in their venue and activities.

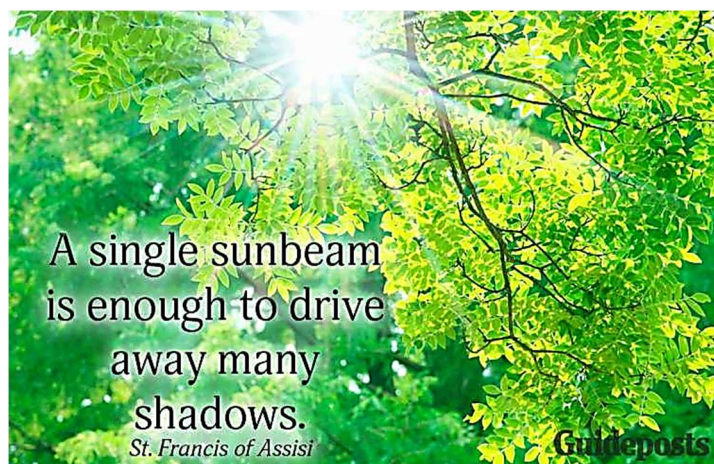
Friday kicks off the weekend's festivities with a motorcycle ride from St. Patrick's to Great River Roadhouse in DeSoto, WI. The ride begins at 5 p.m.

Saturday's festivities will all be held at the Eagles Club picnic grounds (which is on highway 21 on the north-east side of Sparta). This will allow for social distancing and provide room for some new activities which include:

- Softball tournament from 9 a.m. until done
- Trap shooting tournament from 9-11 a.m.
- Horseshoes, volleyball, and bags all day
- Flea and craft market from 9-3
- Firewood auction at 11:30
- Mexican food stands from noon to 8 p.m.
- Silent auctions from noon to 5:30 p.m.
- Ice cream and popcorn stand
- Children's family activities from noon- 6 p.m.
- "Live" specialty auction from 6-7 p.m.
- 50/50 raffles all day
- Live music from 2-10 p.m.

Sunday features a baked chicken dinner from 10 a.m. until sold out at St. Patrick's, 100 South L St. The dinner is take out only from the school.

For more information call 608-269-2655 or visit Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta](http://www.facebook.com/SummerfestSparta)  
Website: [stpatricksparish.weconnect.com](http://stpatricksparish.weconnect.com).



# SOLES 4 SOULS

People living in poverty want a better life, but many lack opportunity. At Soles4Souls, unwanted shoes are turned into opportunity, by keeping them from going to waste and putting them to good use—providing relief, creating jobs, and empowering people to break the cycle of poverty.

Through your continued support of this ministry during the COVID-19 shut down gently used shoes are still being sent to Soles4Souls. Rich Zidich, who continues to box up and send out the donated shoes, estimates that we have sent approximately 500 pairs of gently-used shoes out since the first of the year.

A message of thanks we received from the CEO of Soles 4 Souls reads in part:

"Together with the help of generous, compassionate folks like you, last year we were able to distribute nearly 6.5 million pairs of shoes and articles of clothing to people all across the globe. And now, kids are in school and adults are at work. Families are rebuilding after natural disasters. Entrepreneurs in developing countries are launching meaningful businesses. Communities are protected from injury and disease. It's amazing to think it all starts with shoes, isn't it? Actually, it all starts with you. And I'm so grateful."

Let's keep this good ministry going and see if we can at least double the number of shoes that has gone out so far.



The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation Board of Directors approved a "New Way" Grant to SUMC in the amount of \$1,000. This grant will go a long way in helping us to purchase items we need to re-open the church safely. It can be used for anything from masks and hand sanitizer to new technology to help in providing online or paperless worship. Thank you Wisconsin UM Foundation!

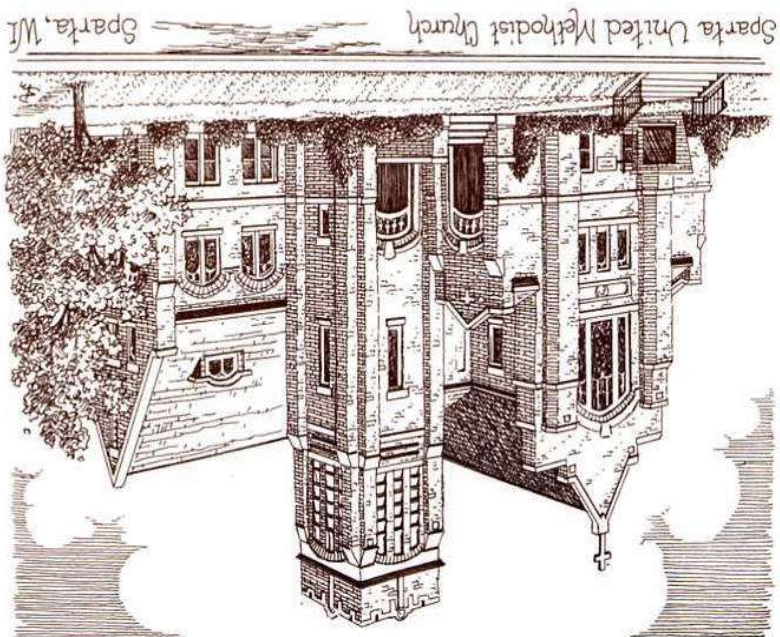


# *The Chimes*

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Prepared Especially For:*



**Pastor:** Rev. Loretta Waughtal  
**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (608) 386-1862

**Phone:** (608)269-6949

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**Email:** [office@spartamethodist.com](mailto:office@spartamethodist.com)

**Website:** [lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc](http://lewaughtal.wixsite.com/spartaumc)

## **SUMC Worship Schedule**

### **In-house Service**

In sanctuary with social distancing, masks, etc.  
Sunday, 9 a.m.

### **Online Service**

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year