

“The CHIMES” – October

Volume 57, No. 10

2022

Continuing the Conversation...

“But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask.”—James 1:5

“Don’t fear, because I am with you; don’t be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand.”

—Isaiah 41:10

At last month’s disaffiliation discernment Town Hall informational meeting it was determined that there are enough questions and concern that we needed to continue the discussion. We, as Christ’s church, are officially in a time of discernment—of asking **“who are we as Christ’s body here in Sparta?”**

This church began as a faith community of five worshiping in a log cabin built in **1851** served by a Methodist Circuit Rider. In February of **1856** this church officially became a Methodist Episcopal Church. The original church building burned to the ground on Christmas Sunday in **1924**. When the new building was constructed three large, stained-glass windows graced the new sanctuary as a way to characterize the identity of the Sparta Methodist Congregation. The south window, *Christ at Gethsemane*, represents **prayer**. The east window, *The Good Shepherd* portrays **service**. And the north window, *Christ in the Temple*, stands for **teaching**.

You became the United Methodist Church in November of **1968** when Sparta First Methodist Church and Sparta Zion Evangelical United Brethren Church merged and became the Sparta United Methodist Church. There have been many ministries started and others supported through our United Methodist connection throughout the years. Couples have married



here and brought up their families here. Children have been baptized, loved, and educated in the ways of Jesus. Members have come and gone for various reasons. There have been disagreements and reconciliations over the years. Pastors have come and gone, bringing with them their various gifts and graces for leading this church through particular times. This is all part of the history of this faith community, part of what has shaped you as a congregation.

You are now at a place in your history where you are being asked to discern and clarify who you are as a faith community in **2022 and beyond**. The catalyst for this discernment process is the 2019 General Conference paragraph 2553 dealing with disaffiliation for reasons of conscience regarding human sexuality.

The discussions around human sexuality are not new in the United Methodist denomination; the disagreements over human sexuality have played out in Annual Conferences and General Conferences since at least the mid-seventies. What is different now, is through the addition of paragraph 2553, the 2019 General Conference has provided a limited-time window of opportunity to disaffiliate from the United Methodist denomination with your church property and a new identity “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline*” on specified matters of human sexuality, or “actions or inactions of the annual conference” related to those *Disciplinary* provisions.” **Please note**, at this time there has been no change in the *Book of Discipline* around human sexuality.

The United Methodist Church has always been a “big tent” denomination where all are welcome—conservative and liberal. We have worshipped together and engaged in ministry together. We have celebrated joys and mourned losses together. We agree on 90% of our theology and are able to have respectful and fruitful conversations about the parts we disagree on. 99% of United Methodists are and will remain theologically

orthodox on basic Christian principles such as the Trinity, divinity and humanity of Christ, authority of Scripture, etc.

The area where passionate disagreement now threatens to permanently divide us is the issue of human sexuality. But, even with that issue there is not a clear-cut division. There is a range of theological and practical opinions, from:

- It's an abominable sin; even the inclination is evil. It cannot be tolerated in the church.
- It's a sinful inclination which can be resisted (like a predisposition to alcoholism). Celibate LGBTQ people are welcome. Love the sinner, hate the sin.
- It's sinful, but no different from many other sins. Many people in the church sin and seek forgiveness. We welcome LGBTQ people but will not officially bless their unions. Who am I to judge?
- Don't know, or don't care, whether it's a sin. Christians have other more important things to focus on: Love God and love neighbor, and make disciples of all people.
- It isn't a sin now; God has released the prohibition on this issue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Homosexuality in a committed, married relationship is something to celebrate.
- It was never a sin; the prohibitions in the Bible do not address committed, loving, same-sex relationships. God made LGBTQ people this way. Homosexuality in a married relationship is something to celebrate.

That's the range; from conservative to liberal with centrists varying opinions in between. With that being said, I reiterate what I have already stated many times, "you are not a one-dimensional, black or white congregation." You are a complex, intricate, faithful community of faith who do your best to follow Jesus and his commission to go and make disciples, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them all that Jesus commanded you."

Some in the congregation have stated plainly that they are ready to move on to a new denomination, their minds are made up because of the way they interpret the Bible. Others have stated that they interpret the Bible

differently, and for many good reasons are more inclined to go forward asking "what did Jesus have to say about this and/or how did Jesus treat people?" Still others have questions about what this all means for you as a church, and for their individual beliefs. We have faithful members who fall in various places in that range noted above.

What you really need to discern at this time is if you can in good conscience continue to be a "big tent" United Methodist Congregation that makes space for respectful disagreements in your understanding of God and interpretation of Scripture. Can you continue to have respectful conversation; recognizing that people on different sides of these issues are all trying to be faithful to their understanding of God and reading of scripture. Can you say with John Wesley, "*Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works...*" (John Wesley, "Sermon on a Catholic Spirit")

So, you are in a time of discernment. What does that mean? In the words of Charles Spurgeon, "*Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right.*" If a decision is clear-cut and easy, it doesn't require discernment. When we attempt to follow Christ as a disciple, however, decisions are often challenging. The paths we are to take are not mapped out nor easy to navigate.

When we enter a discernment process, when we attempt to listen to God's voice and follow, we must plan to struggle. Like Jacob wrestling with the angel, true discernment requires us to grapple with our hopes and our fears, our highest possibilities and our greatest vulnerabilities. It is not simply an academic activity. It encompasses the practical and the theological, the personal and the corporate, the head and the heart. Discernment leads to change, and we are the ones whom God is transforming. Whenever we wrestle with God's call for us, we are changed. And in the end, we discover we are grappling with LOVE.

This month in worship there will be a prayer and discernment station set up on the worship table in the sanctuary. You will find post-it notes you can write a short prayer, or fear, or concern on and then leave it on the cross on the table. There will also be index cards you can write questions or concerns on; there will be a basket you can leave those in. If you would like to come into the church during open office hours to pray in the sanctuary, you are welcome. Later in the month we will have a Discernment Q & A session for members. As well as answering questions, we will be getting a feel for where we are in the process from those present.

This process is not to be taken lightly. There is a lot at stake. The decision you make with regard to this issue will shape your identity—how you see yourself and how others see you—for years to come. Your decision will have practical, relational, and spiritual ramifications that cannot be predicted. Listening for God’s voice, listening with you hearts and minds is a serious and sacred task.

Serving and leading in Christ’s love!
Pastor L



Breakthrough Prayer

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

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

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



Sparta United Methodist Church

Our Mission Statement

We are called to make *new* and *maturing* disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our Core Values

Christ-centered: Focused on the life, words, way, and Spirit of Jesus proclaimed in the New Testament.

Biblically-rooted: Encourages spiritually-alive, faithful study of the Bible using tools of devotion and scholarship that are appropriate to a diverse body of people.

Warm-hearted: A joyful, loving, laughing congregation that experiences the grace of God in Jesus Christ in personal and positive ways.

Open-minded: A place where people search, think, question, and honestly express their growing experience of the faith in an accepting and affirming atmosphere.

Mission-directed: Continuing the strong sense of mission, which has been part of our identity, both in terms of mission to our community and mission to the world.

Connection-committed: As part of the United Methodist Church, we see ourselves as a leader/supporter of the global ministries in which we share.



Nurture Update



October 2 – Coffee Fellowship following Worship service. Hosts: Scott and Rose White Naeseth and Rich and Danette Zidich. Servers and bakers are needed for November 6 and December 4. Please let the church office know.

October 22 – “Our Community in Concert” 2 p.m.

November 27 – Advent begins

Don’t forget to check out the “Leisure Time” posters in the Gathering Place. Either take the lead to organize a get-together with like-minded folks or sign up to join a group.

Stay connected to God ~

Stay connected to others.

God's Voice

In my ministry, several people have asked why God doesn't speak to people like God did in the Bible. Their assumption is that any time Scripture talks about God speaking to someone, that person is hearing a literal voice saying words. I think this is a far too limited understanding of how God speaks to us every day. Consider this story told by Scott McKenzie and Kristine Miller.

"Every day, on her way to work, Audrey's route took her past a women's penitentiary. Surrounding the building and grounds stood a large chain-link fence topped off with barbed wire intended to keep separate those on the inside from those on the outside. Each time Audrey passed the woman's penitentiary, she saw the women walking the grounds or sitting at picnic tables soaking in a few precious moments of warm sunshine. As she passed, Audrey would quietly say a prayer for the incarcerated women and their families. One day, as Audrey was driving past, she felt a strong urge to pull in. Without fully realizing what she was doing, she turned sharply into the entrance of the prison. In an instant, she found herself face-to-face with a large, intimidating prison guard whose face suggested a humorless disposition. Feeling the awkwardness of the moment, Audrey explained that she had felt God's push to visit the facility and asked if they received volunteers."

"The prison guard responded by giving Audrey the business card of the volunteer coordinator and sent Audrey on her way. God's nudge had sent Audrey to an unfamiliar place, and she was courageous enough to go. Soon she started a Bible study class at the prison sharing Jesus' message of love and hope."

Audrey believed that the urge to pull into the penitentiary was God speaking to her. I tend to agree. Rather than waiting for a literal voice to speak to us, what if God spoke and called us through our nudges, yearnings, and hopes. That would mean that God is closer than many of us think or realize. It also means that God challenges us more frequently than we realize. But, when we courageously listen to God with a willing heart, we will discover that the result is transformational, not just for us, but for everyone whose life is impacted.

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

Shop with scrip...support your church



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

The next scrip order will be going in on **October 9**.

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



Brighter Tomorrows Wish List

Brighter Tomorrows in Sparta is seeking donations because of an uptick in those seeking help and loss of grant funding. Brighter Tomorrows value-driven programs seek to connect women and children coming out of domestic violence situations with a nurturing community while enhancing their personal security, independence, and self-esteem.

Brighter Tomorrows can no longer accept donations of any used items due to health concerns. This includes items such as: clothing, toys, footwear, bedding and furniture. If you have any questions or would like to drop off, please call them at 608-269-7853.

Current new items needed include:

- Shampoo and Conditioner
- Shaving cream
- Hand soap
- Laundry soap
- Multipurpose cleaner
- Laundry baskets
- Toilet paper
- Feminine hygiene products
- Kleenex
- Paper towels
- Gift Cards from local stores



Thank You

Thank you to United Women in Faith for the lovely altar plant, and to everyone for all the birthday wishes and cards. Also to Cyndi Wise for stopping by. It was greatly appreciated. Maxine Gudbaur

THANK YOU: The Little Free Library was blessed by more books from Lynn Humphrey, Sara Kemp and Ce Stow. Thank you so much for your great additions to our Library. Margie Lakowske, Little Free Library Steward



Pizza and a movie night this month is **October 15**. Pizza will be served in the small kitchen at 6 p.m. with the movie to follow in the Chapel. Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend! Please contact Toni Burrows at 608-343-3029 before 12 noon on Aug 20 if you will be attending so we know how much pizza to order



October's movie is "Crossroads. A Story of Forgiveness"

Bruce Murakami (Dean Cain) discovers that the tragic accident that killed his wife and daughter was the results of a street-racing incident. When the case against the teenage driver finally reaches court, Bruce's powerful desire for revenge is replaced by an equally powerful desire to forgive. Based on a true story. Hallmark Hall of Fame movie. Not rated.



Records and History Committee

SAVE THE DATE: The Records and History Committee is happy to be presenting *Our Community In Concert* on Saturday, October 22 starting a 2 pm. This FREE event will be held in our Sanctuary. After an entertaining afternoon, please join us for light refreshments in the Gathering Place.



CLEANING OPPORTUNITY: Anyone wishing to join Records and History Committee on Wednesday, October 12 at 9 am, is welcome to do so. We will be cleaning the Sanctuary, Gathering Place, and Family Room in preparation to our October 22nd concert. Many hands make light work. Thanks for considering this opportunity.



Summit Spirits will be meeting on Tuesday, October 4 at 6:30 p.m. in the library.

School for Ministry at Green Lake for Pastor, Wednesday, October 5—Friday, October 7.

The **Nurture Committee** will meet in the library, Thursday, October 6 at 6 p.m.

Lois Circle will meet in the small kitchen, Tuesday, October 11 at 1 p.m.

Wesleyan Circle will meet on Tuesday, October 11 at 6:30 p.m. in the library.

Pizza and a movie continues on Saturday, October 15 at 6 p.m.

Community in Concert will be held, Saturday, October 22 at 2 p.m. in the Sanctuary with refreshments to follow in the Gathering Place.

Stewardship Spooktacular Workshop at Hudson UMC, Saturday, October 22. Pastor L is giving a presentation.



From the Parish Nurse...

"I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me."

—Matthew 25:36

"And the King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for Me.'"

—Matthew 25:40



The Health Ministry Team has lost many of their members and we are in need of our congregation to join in this very important Ministry—to offer encouragement, spiritual and emotional support—by bringing shut-in members the Love of Christ through a visit, a phone call, and/or sending them a card on a regular basis—every couple of weeks to check in on them.

We must not let them feel forgotten. They were once a vital and active member—whether it be working the Soup Supper, heading up a meeting attending a circle, praying for others, sitting in a pew, they were participants among us.

There will be a list of “shut-ins,” whether it is due to frail health, chronic illness, or any issues where they are not able to leave home. And home may be their personal home, assisted living residence, or Nursing Home.

As I said there will be a list of names and when to contact the Pastor or myself should the need arise for either one of us to touch base with them.

Closing Prayer of Blessing

All praise and glory is yours, Lord our God, for you have called us to serve you in love. Bless those that are no longer able to attend Worship service with us for whatever the reason. Restore them to health, ease their doubts, fears, and loneliness. Give them hope and to know that they matter to us and are not forgotten—through a most important and simple gesture on our part (visiting them, phone calls, cards). We know this is Your work—use us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

With love,
Priscilla

Men's Retreat Opportunity

The Faith Evangelical Free Church of Sparta “Men of Valor” are hosting a Men’s Retreat 5 pm to 9 pm on Friday October 14 and 8 am to 2:30 pm on Saturday October 15. It is being held at the Sparrow’s Nest, 17304 Havenwood Rd, Sparta.

The theme for the event is “**Daniel, Lessons in Spiritual Courage.**” Cost is \$10 per day or \$25 for both days and to stay overnight. A Friday evening meal, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and live entertainment by Brendan Brooks are included. There will be door prizes throughout the event with the grand prize of a Barnett XF380 Crossbow.

Ages 15 years old and up are welcomed to attend. For more information or to sign-up contact Tim Lawrence at 608-633-9501 or Chad Johnson at 608-343-0748. To sign-up online, go to *Sparta Faith Free.com*.



Let's Celebrate!

October Anniversaries

- 01 Ron & Donna Burnham
- 02 Marty & Larry Walley
- 15 Evan & Jess Wiedemann
- 18 LeRoy & June Jackson
- 19 Beth & Tyler Anderson
- 19 Dan & Deb Dishinger
- 23 Jim & Clarice Stuessel
- 25 Muriel Canfield & Hutch Hutchinson
- 29 Tom & Jeanine Houtavelde
- 31 Laurie & Jerry Hesselberg

October Birthdays

- 03 Mary Lou Cole
- 05 Jess Wiedemann
- 07 Pat Clark
- 07 Zach Herrman
- 09 Monica Davis
- 09 Kelsey Foss
- 10 Nicole Jacobs
- 10 Pete Jerrman
- 11 Duane Hobson
- 12 Kegan Rodgers
- 12 Emily Von Ruden
- 14 Beverly Donahue
- 15 Latesha Dishinger
- 17 Ron Ebert
- 17 Dot Hering
- 18 Antonia Gutierrez
- 18 Dan Davis
- 20 Berndt Borreson
- 20 Sarah Rodgers
- 21 Kory Foss
- 22 Emma Wiedemann
- 23 Beth Nowak
- 24 Nathan Goodenough
- 25 Eden Glut
- 27 K'Andrea Ebert
- 27 Cathy Nichols
- 29 Dick Gajewsky
- 31 Hailee Scheurich



October Schedules

Bakery pick-up

- 2 Ron & Denise
- 9 Cyndi Wise
- 16 Margie Lakowske
- 23 Amy & Kurt
- 30 Dave & Sara

Tech Team

- 2 Ben & Hailee
- 9 Ron & Kristine
- 16 Toni & Amy
- 23 Cheryl & Cindy
- 30 Ron & Kristine

Liturgist

- 2 Cheryl Isensee
- 9 Toni Burrows
- 16 Judy Fuhrmann
- 23 Amy Kiefer
- 30 Marty Walley

Ushers

- 2 Bob & Cathy
- 9 Kurt & Amy
- 16 Peggy, Donna & Ron
- 23 John & Karen
- 30 Dave & Sara



Is The UMC really...?

With some congregations considering leaving The United Methodist Church or just wondering about its future, *Ask The UMC* offers a series of questions and answers to help clear up some common misperceptions or misinformation around disaffiliation. **You can find more answers to commonly asked questions at www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-2** (there is also part-1 and part-3)

6. Immediately dropping all prohibitions related to human sexuality, now that the Global Methodist Church has been officially started?

No. The creation of the Global Methodist Church has no bearing on the existing policies of The United Methodist Church. The policies of The United Methodist Church are set by its General Conference. The General Conference is the only body that can change them. The General Conference is scheduled to meet next in 2024 at a time and venue to be announced.

7. Going to drop all prohibitions related to human sexuality at its next General Conference in 2024?

Probably not. The 2024 General Conference will certainly consider legislative proposals that would drop several existing prohibitions. There are items that could authorize clergy who choose to do so to preside at same-sex weddings or union ceremonies. There are several proposals to drop the statement “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” Some proposals would remove the current policy that forbids committees and boards of ordained ministry and clergy sessions to approve and bishops to license, commission, ordain, or appoint self-avowed, practicing homosexuals as clergy. Another would drop the prohibition on annual conferences and general agencies to provide any funding for any activity or publication that promotes “the acceptance of homosexuality.”

The key words are consider and proposal. The General Conference must consider all legislative items it receives. All legislative items before a General Conference are proposals only. They have no force unless a General Conference approves them.

All of these kinds of proposals have come before General Conferences in the past. And all have been defeated, every time.

At present, there do not appear to be enough shifts in the makeup of the delegations to the General Conference in 2024 to conclude that any of these proposals will pass.

8. Going to require its clergy and clergy candidates to agree to offer same-sex weddings as a condition of candidacy, status, or appointment?

No. There are no proposals before the next General Conference to do so, nor have there ever been such proposals.

As noted above, proposals to permit clergy who choose to do so to preside at such ceremonies have come before previous General Conferences and will come before the 2024 General Conference. All such proposals have been defeated in the past. And there is no basis, considering the makeup of the delegations, to conclude this will change in 2024.

9. Ordaining drag queens and supporting worship of a “Queer God?”

No and no. Both of these allegations are based on things that actually happened. But both of those things have been seriously misrepresented.

No United Methodist bishop has ever ordained, commissioned, or licensed a drag queen.

So what is that allegation based on? The Vermillion River District of The Illinois Great Rivers Conference voted unanimously to approve the certification of Mr. Isaac Simmons as a candidate for ordained ministry in 2021. The *Book of Discipline* prohibits “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” from being certified as candidates for ordination. Mr. Simmons identifies as a gay man, but not as a practicing homosexual. He also performs under the drag name, Penny Cost, for the purposes of evangelism in audiences made up of people of many sexual and gender identities. Nothing in the *Book of Discipline* disqualifies persons who are gay but not practicing or who perform in drag from consideration or certification as a candidate.

The vote by a district committee to certify a candidate is one of the earliest steps in a process toward ordination. The process typically takes 5-8 years to complete.

Being approved by a district committee for candidacy is **not** being named clergy in The United Methodist Church. That can occur only after substantial work toward the completion of seminary educational requirements, ongoing supervision over a period of years, and ultimately approval for commissioning by a 3/4 vote of the clergy session of the annual conference. Until that time, if assigned by a district superintendent to serve a local church, candidates cannot preside at sacraments or at weddings.

The reference to supporting the worship of “Queer God” comes from a chapel service at Duke Divinity School sponsored by an LGBTQ+ student group. Duke

Divinity School serves students of many denominations, not just United Methodists. And students of many denominations make up the LGBTQ group that sponsored the service in question, as that service has been described in some publications. Exactly one of the students named is identified as United Methodist, and that student is, at this point, a candidate, not yet clergy in The UMC. Further, such "group sponsored" services represent the views of their sponsoring organization, not the Divinity School, nor its faculty. Such services are not a basis for making any statements about the beliefs or views of The United Methodist Church. General Conference establishes the official statements of The United Methodist Church and its ritual. Chapel services in a seminary do not.

10. Ignoring or refusing to implement the *Discipline's* statements, restrictions, and requirements regarding practicing homosexuals and same sex weddings?

In the majority of conferences, no. In some conferences, it may appear so. In those placing these matters "in abeyance," also no.

Ignoring the *Discipline*?

The bishops of the Western Jurisdiction have publicly stated that they will not "withhold or challenge ordination based on a candidate's gender identity or sexual orientation."

The *Discipline* nowhere states that gender identity or sexual orientation is a basis for withholding or challenging ordination. The *Discipline* does prohibit district committees on ordination from certifying as candidates and bishops from licensing, commissioning, ordaining, or appointing as clergy persons who are "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals." Stating one is homosexual is not disqualifying. What is disqualifying is being or being proven to a jury of peers in a church trial to be a self-avowed, practicing homosexual. So this statement of the Western Jurisdiction bishops does not ignore the *Discipline*.

The statement by the bishops of the Western Jurisdiction also says, "We are unwilling to punish clergy who celebrate the marriage of two adults of any gender or sexual orientation seeking the blessing of God and the Church for their covenanted life together." Bishops do not apply "punishments" as part of the complaint process. Rather, bishops oversee the process to its conclusion. If a church trial is necessary, bishops preside at the church trial. If guilt is found in a church trial, it is not the bishop who imposes a "sentence." It is the jury of peers who both reach a verdict and set a

sentence. The *Discipline* names a mandatory minimum sentence the jury must apply to those found guilty of having conducted a same-sex marriage or union ceremony: one year suspension without pay. No other offense has a mandatory minimum sentence. See ¶2711.3 of the 2019 revision to the *Book of Discipline*. Since bishops do not "punish" in the complaint process, this statement does not ignore the requirements of the *Discipline*. Instead, it expresses the intent of the bishops not to be punitive.

Abeyance: Refusing to Implement the *Discipline*?

While there are few examples that come close to "ignoring the *Discipline*," a number of bishops and some cabinets have indicated their commitment, in the words of the Minnesota Conference extended cabinet, to **hold in abeyance** all... administrative and judicial complaint processes addressing restrictions in the *Book of Discipline* regarding gay and lesbian clergy and/or same-sex weddings until after General Conference meets and action related to the separation of the denomination can be considered."

What is abeyance, and where did this idea come from?

The term "abeyance" means "delay." It does not mean a refusal to implement the *Discipline*. It means delaying further action on certain kinds of charges for a limited period of time and for particular reasons. Bishops who have announced they are placing such charges in abeyance are not refusing to implement the *Discipline*. They are indicating they will process such charges in light of actions that take place at a later time. ...

What can we accurately say about the isolated examples noted and the wider practice of abeyance? The *Discipline's* statements, restrictions, and requirements regarding self-avowed, practicing clergy and same-sex marriages are unevenly enforced in The United Methodist Church at this time. Initiatives by individual conferences or jurisdictions are one source of this unevenness. The practice of abeyance derives from a mutual agreement of United Methodists who identify as progressive, centrist, and traditionalist. Still, the provisions of the *Discipline* remain in force and are more widely more enforced across the whole denomination, worldwide, than not.

More answers to common questions can be found at: [*www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-1 \(and part-3\)*](http://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-1 (and part-3))

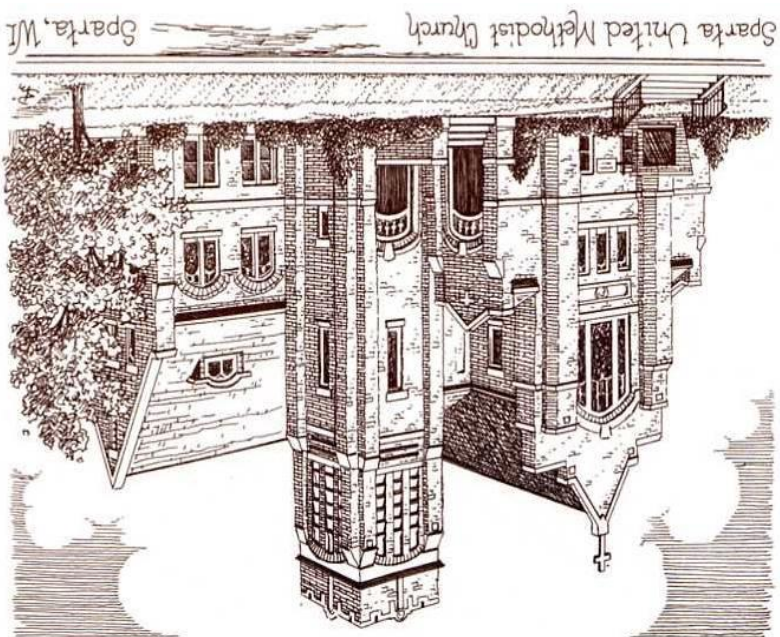
The Chimes

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Prepared Especially For:



Pastor: Rev. Loretta Waughal

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

Phone: (608)269-6949

Fax: (608)269-6940

Email: office@spartamethodist.com

Website: lewaughal.wixsite.com/spartaumc

SUMC Worship Schedule

In-house Service

9:00 a.m. Sunday mornings

Online Service

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year