

“The CHIMES” – June

Volume 55, No. 6

2020

Continuing the Conversation...

“I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”

(Psalm 27:13-14)



A natural response to loss, change, or ending is to ask, “What’s next?”

As I write this letter the church has just celebrated ascension day—the day Jesus left his disciples for the final time after his resurrection appearances to return to the

Father. Before Jesus ascended, his disciples asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) The disciples had been on a veritable roller coaster ride since they had celebrated Passover then witnessed Jesus’ trial, death, and resurrection. Now he is leaving them again and they want answers; they want to know what is next?

Jesus doesn’t refer to the Father, who knows all things, when he answers. Rather, Jesus assures them with these prophetic words: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:7). Jesus returns to his Father and the disciples stare at the sky until two angelic messengers appear and send them on their way. They head back to Jerusalem to gather in the upper room along with other disciples and wait; while they wait, they pray.

Waiting, or words with the root wait appear over 150 times in the Bible (yes, I got out my Bible Concordance and counted). It’s a word familiar in life, but not necessarily one we fully appreciate. But, waiting upon the Holy Spirit is a key to discernment, to speaking the right words to another, to listening well to a spouse, to loving a child wisely. Any woman who has ever been pregnant knows about waiting; it is also the calling of hospice. Waiting is the heart of prayer.

I know many of you are waiting anxiously for your church building to open again so we can worship together in person. As your pastor, I am waiting for the guidance of God and on a practical note, I am waiting for the opportunity to purchase supplies like

disinfectant wipes and cleaners, face masks, etc. These items continue to be sold out when I search for them; I don’t want to invite people back and then not have the necessary supplies to keep the church safe and you protected.

There are other details that will need to be worked out also, like: when we do resume in-person worship how much—if any—singing will happen, how offerings will be taken, will we need to offer a couple of services to keep numbers lower, etc. Much of the work of a pastor is done behind the scenes. Pray with me for discernment. There is much information to be carefully considered before we reopen the doors. The bishop and his cabinet are also doing their best to help churches wade through the ocean of information. I have included a short article from Bishop Jung on the next page.

I will get detailed information out to you about what in person worship will look like for the foreseeable future when we are able to resume. At this time, according to Bishop Jung, it looks like the earliest we might be able to open for in-person worship is June 21. In the meantime, I hope you will continue to worship with me online and update me with prayer requests.

For those who do not have internet access and are not able to join us from home for worship I would like to offer an opportunity to view the online service in the small chapel at church. I will only be able to allow nine people in at a time. I will ask you to wear a mask and practice social distancing. There is hand sanitizer inside the K Street entrance and I will have nine chairs set up in the chapel six feet apart to make it easy. There will be an offering plate at the entrance of the chapel if you would like to leave an offering. You will be asked not to shake hands, hug, or stay and visit after the service—I understand these are very difficult things to ask a congregation as loving as you, but think of it as a sacrifice we are all making for the welfare of others.

If you are interested in this opportunity you will need to call me (my cell number is: 608-386-1862) and make an appointment to come so I can assure only nine people are here at a time. If you do not call and reserve a time I will not be able to let you in. Times I will plan to show the worship video are: Sunday morning at 9 a.m., Monday at 10 a.m., or Tuesday at 10 a.m. If none of these times work for you, I would be open to considering other times also.

I understand these are difficult days; they are for me too. But if I am doing my best to make sure no one gets sick on my watch I know I am doing God's will.

In the meantime, we wait and like the disciples in the upper room, we pray. We have the benefit of knowing what the disciples were waiting for; Pentecost, the birth of the church, was coming and the world has never been the same. Continue to pray with me as we wait to see what big new thing God has in store for us as we remain faithful *making new and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

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

Pastor L

Behind the scenes look at recording worship



In case you have wondered who helps Pastor Loretta get those worship videos done, here is your answer: Larry Humphrey, Cyndi Wise, and Lynn Humphrey. Pastor is very appreciative of all their help; church is never a one-person show.

Bishop Jung Announces Possible Date for In-Building Worship

With the lack of state-wide direction after the *Wisconsin Legislators v. Palm* Wisconsin Supreme Court decision, Bishop Jung, in consultation with his COVID-19 Task Team, decided that June 21 would be the earliest possible Sunday for relaunching public worship in church buildings. The Task Team will soon release a recommended process of making the decision about the right time for a church to open its building in the various contexts of United Methodist Churches throughout Wisconsin.

The highest expression of loving God is how we love our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable among us. For this reason, Bishop Jung asks that Wisconsin United Methodist Churches not put people most at risk of severe complications of COVID-19 in peril, by holding worship in our buildings prior to June 21.

Bishop Jung expressed an understanding that churches in communities with no Corona Virus will have different attitudes than places with high rates of infection. Churches who have members who have suffered or died from the virus will have different views than churches yet untouched. Churches where many have lost their jobs will surely have different views than churches whose members are less economically impacted. We remain a connectional body, connected to one another in a covenant of Christian love. Let us live out this covenant together with the spiritual fruit of patience by refraining from holding worship services in our buildings until at least June 21.



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 5 24 2020.



UMW and Wesleyan Circle update

There will be no UMW June potluck because the church is not open yet.

The Wesleyan Circle will postpone their summer potluck gathering until August to kick off the year. Watch future *Chimes* for more details.

Personnel Change

Office manager, Jan Hanson, will not be returning to fill that position when COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. We wish Jan the best in her retirement.

When the time is appropriate, we will be doing a search to fill an administrative assistant position in the church office. In the meantime as some of the "safer at home" restrictions are loosened, if you have good organizational skills and would like to volunteer some time organizing, filing, etc. let Pastor L know. She would appreciate the help organizing the office so it will be easier to train a new assistant.

Financial Update

We have been holding our own financially through the ups and downs of the past few weeks. Thank you for your faithfulness! 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 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.



Thank you...

Thank you to everyone who continues to support the church through the shop with scrip program. It is such a simple way to help as you do your regular shopping or eating at your favorite restaurants with scrip cards. Those businesses then donate a percent of your spending back to the church. It is a great way to support the church and some of our local businesses!



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 **June 7**. 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).



GIVING New Era, New Church

"...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will fly up on wings like eagles; they will run and not be tired, they will walk and not be weary."
(Isaiah 40:31)

After Superstorm Sandy, my brother's church on Long Island became the center for recovery efforts in the Mid-Atlantic. 75% sustained damage to their homes; all had neighbors affected by the storm.

Today, we are in the midst of an unprecedented urgent response and recovery effort in which every church must be a center of recovery. Unlike a hurricane, earthquake, wildfire, flood or famine, the COVID-19 pandemic affects every person and every community worldwide.

As we return to church after quarantine, we should not fall into the trap of thinking, "How do we get back to the way we were?" Rather, we ought to ask, "How can we be a better church coming out of the pandemic, than we were going in?" Economic and emotional recovery is going to be a matter of years. What will your church do to help?

Each United Methodist should be discerning his or her own and their congregation's strengths; praying and preparing to join with a small group of congregants who will identify needs in the community/ nation/world. Then each group must create, fund, and carry out a plan to address those needs.

There will be children who have fallen behind in school. They will need tutoring and encouragement. There will be those who will have no job to which to return. They will need help applying for benefits, negotiating with banks, or getting enough food for their families. There will be people who continue to fall ill with the coronavirus. Fear and anxiety will continue to be widespread.

Prepare yourself for the times to come.

Jim Wells, Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation
Visit the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation at
www.wumf.org or Facebook/wumf.org
Or call 1-888-903-9863



UMC Food Drive for the Ecumenical Food Pantry a success!

We are very grateful for the outpouring of community support received at the food drive held on Saturday, May 9. It was a cool and cloudy day but the Sparta community brought the sunshine along with three vanloads of food and just over \$1,700 for the food pantry. A special thank you to AMKM Gymnastics for letting us use their parking lot, the three Sparta police officers who volunteered their time to help, and to Domino's for feeding the volunteers.

Lori Ascher of the Sparta Ecumenical Food Pantry was very happy with the quantity and quality of food (and even some personal care items) that were donated. With the current situation caused by COVID-19 "Safer at Home" the food pantry has had challenges with buying bulk items of some of the popular staples that they go through. Your donations will go a long way in helping to restock those items. The monetary donations are always helpful and appreciated when opportunities to shop in bulk do occur.

In these difficult and uncertain times when many face financial struggles due to loss of income, please help get the word out that we do have help with food and essential personal care items through the Sparta Ecumenical Food Pantry. The pantry is open Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. until noon and Tuesday evenings from 5 until 7 p.m. They are located at 116 N Water Street in downtown Sparta. At this time during the COVID-19 "Safer at Home" initiative, those wanting assistance are not allowed inside but are asked to fill out their list of needs at the door and volunteers will bag up their groceries and bring them out so that everyone's safety is cared for.



All of the volunteers had a good time. It was nice to be out in the community providing a service to those in need.



From the Parish Nurse...

God is good at all times and in every way! You know it's true, but right now you're just not feeling it. Right now—in this crazy time of uncertainty, when a storm is raging in our lives, and we wonder if He's even noticed. Right now—waves are crashing over your head and you feel like you are drowning. Right now—the winds of adversity and fearfulness are threatening to capsize your boat and send it to the depths.



In the Bible, we read about a storm on the Sea of Galilee. At the end of a long day, Jesus suggested that He and His disciples go across to the other side, probably to escape the crowds and get some much-needed rest (see Mark 4:35–41). As soon as the boat left shore, Jesus settled down in the stern and fell asleep. Soon after, and without warning, the Sea of Galilee (notorious for sudden storms) began to rage around them. Waves crashed over the boat threatening to sink it, and still Jesus slept peacefully. Finally, fearing for their lives, the men awakened Jesus and asked, “*Don't you care if we drown?*” Jesus stood and spoke to the storm, “*Peace, be still!*” Immediately, the winds ceased and the sea became as smooth as glass. “*Where is your faith?*” He asked His disciples.

Jesus used this storm on the Sea of Galilee to strengthen His disciples' faith. He knew the times ahead would be difficult. In a dramatic demonstration of His power, He hoped to teach His disciples that He would always be with them, ready to answer whenever they called on Him.

Jesus was there to rescue His disciples, He's here with you as well, right in the middle of this storm in our lives. God always uses the struggles in our lives. He doesn't allow us to suffer in vain. Ask yourself what lessons He might be teaching you.

1. He may be drawing you closer to Him. God is much more than the far-away Creator of the Universe. He wants to be right there with you as you encounter the struggles of this life. Hebrews 4:16 (ESV) says, “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

Open your heart to Him, go to your place of prayer, and reach out to Him.

2. He may be strengthening you. The stronger you are spiritually, the better you will fare when the storms come. Psalm 138:3 says, “*On the day I called, You answered me; You increased strength within me.*” God wants to make us soldiers, ready to fight the good fight of faith. Pray boldly and stand strong in your faith.

3. He may be increasing your patience. We want God to deal with our discomfort and our inconveniences and meet our needs—right now! But God asks us to wait, to develop patience. Waiting often produces valuable insight into ourselves and our situation. Psalm 40:1 says, “*I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.*” Ask God to give you peace as you wait on Him.

No matter how fierce the storm, how strong the waves, how deep the water, how long this pandemic lasts, God is there with you, ready to use the storm for His purposes in your life. You are not alone in your suffering. He sees your struggle, and just as He did with Jesus' disciples on the Sea of Galilee, He will carry you safely to the other side.

In Christ's Love,
Priscilla Hemmersbach, RN
Parish Nurse



I want to thank all of you who sent me cards or called me on my birthday.

God bless you!
Ruth Ebert

To all the dads out there...



Congratulations to Jenny Johnson!



Jenny and confirmation mentor, Cyndi Wise

Congrats to Jenny on graduating from Sparta High School. Jenny is one of our more active young adults, helping with BASH, serving at the Tuesday Soup Suppers, as well as being a welcome addition to the chancel choir. We wish Jenny the best in her future endeavors.

Here is the prayer that was shared for Jenny during the worship service on May 24:

“God of truth and knowledge, by your wisdom we are taught the way and the truth. Bless Jenny as she now finishes her course of study. We thank you for those who taught and worked beside her, and all who supported her along the way. Walk with Jenny as she moves forward in life. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “Father of glory, give her a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to her. I pray that the eyes of her heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God’s power that is working among us believers. Lord in your gracious love and wisdom, take away any anxiety and confusion of purpose. Strengthen her and instill in her confidence in the future you plan, where energy may be gathered up and used for the good of all people; in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.”

Trustees update



The trustees have met (over the phone) to approve a bid for an audio visual system for the sanctuary. The new system will be paid in full by financial gifts that were given to the church and designated for this purpose. We are hoping that the new system will be installed around the middle of June. It will have a better camera for recording the services as well as two large

screens that will be used similarly to what we are doing now when we record services (for example showing the words to hymns). This system will also allow us to make DVDs of the service for those who can’t watch them online.

When we are able to worship in person the screens will have many beneficial uses like showing announcements, words to hymns (when we can sing again), showing video clips, etc. The controls for the screens and camera will be installed in the back of the sanctuary where the sound system is. That way those recording the service won’t have to be banished to the balcony.

When the system is installed there will be training provided for anyone interested in learning how to use it in worship. If you are interested call Pastor Loretta on her cell phone at 608-386-1862 and let her know so she can make sure you get the training. Our hope is to get a few people trained so that a rotating schedule for recording worship services can be developed. Please consider giving of your time and talent to serve the church in this way.

Respectfully submitted by Dave Kemp, Trustees chair

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

As we continue to distance ourselves and stay “safer at home,” 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 also 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

A word from our Bishop

What Next? Sing and Dance

Published: 18 May 2020

When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.' (Genesis 1:19-21)

As we emerge from an eighth week of separation due to the pandemic, many people are growing restless and less certain than ever. When the Wisconsin Supreme Court rescinded the "stay-at-home" order, it caused many people to ask, "What should we do now?" Do we continue to stay in isolation? Do we return to the routines of daily work and social engagement? Can we go back to church? What are we to do?

First, I continue to offer the same advice I have offered all along. As Christian disciples and witnesses from our United Methodist tradition, we are guided by our General Rules: Do No Harm, Do All the Good You Can, Attend to the Ordinances of God (e.g., pray, worship, meditate, fast, share your faith, serve others). These are grounded in the Great Commandment: Love the Lord your God with all you heart, mind, soul, and strength; love your neighbor as yourself. So long as we care as much about our neighbor's health and well-being as our own, I believe we will make good choices and we will continue to practice physical distancing and care-giving engagement.

But we are also seeing a great strain on people's attitudes, behaviors, and mental health. What should we do about that? I believe there is strong Biblical support for two more spiritual practices during this endurance test of pandemic: sing and dance.

You may be thinking, "Bishop, that is crazy! We need to do something serious!" I simply reflect that when the Hebrew children were led safely across the Red Sea, they escaped slavery and oppression, but they faced a vast desert wilderness, full of danger, peril, and threat. Many began to reconsider whether running away was such a good idea. People got nervous. People got anxious. So, Miriam, sister of Moses and prophet of the Lord, took up a tambourine and led the women in dancing and singing. I want to



encourage us to turn to music as we endure the ongoing health crisis. Music indeed "hath charms to soothe a savage breast," (William Congreve), but it also has great power to improve our moods, strengthen our resolve, and reenergize our weary spirits.

Many people use music to power through intense workouts because music can set a beat, a tone, and a rhythm that the body naturally responds to. Studies show that people listening to music during workouts can sustain their activity much longer than people that do not. And dancing is a wonderful form of exercise that everyone can do; it engages the entire body in rhythm and movement. Alternative studies show that people who say they cannot engage regularly in exercise find they can dance for extended periods of time, to a very similar benefit.

Scientists have shown that music, singing, and dancing increase dopamine (increasing pleasure, energy, focus, and awareness) and decrease stress hormones. It helps us sweat out toxins, and can generally calm, soothe, and heal frayed nerves and unhealthy emotions. I would not tell anyone what music to listen to, but I want to encourage everyone to adopt the practice of spending some time each day with whatever kind of "soul" music you listen to. My definition of soul music is music that makes your heart glad, that engages your body, mind, and spirit, inspiring you to sing along and even get up and dance. What kind of music you like is not important. My encouragement is that you find some time each day to shut down all the screens and tune into the music you like best.

Author Neel Burton says, "Music is the school and the hospital of the emotions," (Hypersanity: Thinking Beyond Thinking) and many of our battered psyches need some urgent care. Music is a gift to us, a blessed art that can inspire, comfort, and heal. Beyond the physical and psychological benefits, I want to remind everyone of the spiritual benefits. Throughout our Hebrew scriptures, especially in the Psalms, the invitation to sing out, to make a joyful noise, to dance in adoration and praise is prominent.

At most times throughout the history of God's people, there were mighty challenges to survival. People did not know what tomorrow might bring. The news they heard was often frightening and threatening. The population of "have-nots" grew almost daily, with poverty, hunger, disease, and military oppression normal. And through it all, no one could take away the music. No one could stop the singing. No one could control the dancing. So, as we wait for the world to stabilize, listen to music, sing, dance, and you will find a new mind, a new heart, and a new spirit, filled with hope, peace, and joy!

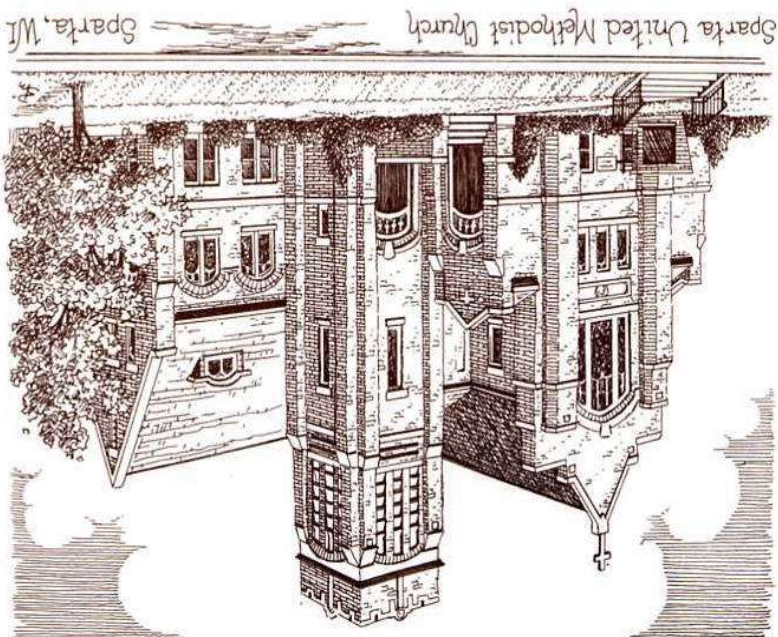
Grace and Peace, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

The Chimes

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Our Worship Schedule

Online during "Safer at Home"

YouTube: Sparta UMC month day year