

# “The CHIMES” – April

Volume 55, No. 4

2020

## Continuing the Conversation...

*“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



This has been the strangest and longest week I recall experiencing in my 60 plus years; and as I sit down to write this letter it is only Wednesday...the week is still relatively young. During this extraordinary time of pandemic fears and the resulting need for “social distancing” to minimize the possibility of exponentially passing on the virus that has disrupted our lives many of us are feeling a mixed bag of emotions.

“Social distancing” is the new buzzword. Many businesses are now closed. Restaurants are closed except for carryouts. Weddings, and even funerals, have been postponed. We are all urged to stay home unless we have to go out for work or needed groceries or medical appointments.

We are very careful, and rightly so, about stepping into crowds. We don’t shake hands with each other. We wash our hands religiously and use hand sanitizer. So we’re hunkering down with at least a slight sense of control and optimism—we have hand sanitizer and plenty of toilet paper.

As I was talking about this with my family (actually canceling some plans to gather at my house) my youngest son summed things up well: “This is bad, but hopefully for the best...Maybe this ordeal will help society/people take a step back, evaluate themselves and rejuvenate their faith. It is a reminder of the things that are most important in life and a lesson to not take even the smallest things for granted.” He is right, slowing down without all the distractions in life that we have become so accustomed to may not be such a bad thing.

But if you are one who usually lives life at full speed a majority of the time and find yourself feeling stir crazy here are a few suggestions to help you get through this time. Take the opportunity to work on your spring cleaning in stages; sort through those old boxes of pictures and organize them or put them in scrapbooks; try a new recipe; write letters to people who would love

to hear from you; the possibilities are really endless if you think about it.

I, with the help of church leaders, have begun to creatively adjust on the church level. I am sharing morning and evening prayers on our church Facebook page as one way to stay connected; we are offering Sunday worship online through our YouTube channel; I’m very thankful for Cyndi who came in to play piano for the service and for Lynn and Larry who came in to record the service. I hope to find a way soon that works for us to have necessary committee meetings through phone conferencing or some other technology.

Social distancing is an important strategy. Slowing our lives down and paying attention to the small, still things in life may be a blessing. But here’s the big thing to hold on to: As much as we ought to practice social distancing, we can be sure of one thing. God quite emphatically does not practice social distancing.

It is not in God’s nature to be distant. The central event in the story of salvation as we have heard clearly in our focus on the Gospel of John is all about God entering our experience—pitching his tent to live among us—and not departing from us. Immanuel—God with us! God will not and does not, distance himself from us. God has not done this in the past, God is not doing it now, and God will not do it ever.

This theme runs throughout Scripture. God is near us, not distant from us. This is why the apostle Paul can say with authority: *“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:35-39)

In the weeks (maybe months) to come, social distancing will require us to make sacrifices and find new ways of staying connected. Hold on to Paul’s words, remembering, God will be with us no matter where we are.

In the meantime, we are still the church and there are opportunities to:

- Worship together online

- Join in morning and evening prayers with me on Facebook
- Call, text, or message in your prayer requests
- Call if you are feeling anxious and just need to talk
- Have necessary committee meetings via conference calls or FaceTime (I could use help figuring this out if any of you have experience with this and could help set it up)
- Get creative and send me your ideas for different ways of ministering together in this strange time of adjustments

As I said at the beginning of this letter, you may be feeling many different emotions right now and that is ok, it's normal in times of uncertainty. While you are social distancing yourself, don't isolate yourself; we can still talk over the phone and sometimes having someone to just listen can be the help we need. We are going to get through this together; our God is bigger than anything the world can throw at us and he has put us together to love and support each other in this and all times.

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

Pastor L



Many thanks for all of the wonderful birthday wishes, cards, prayers, and gifts. I had a fabulous birthday and felt very much loved because of your thoughtfulness. God bless you all!

Pastor L



## Financial Update

I want to start with some good news. We made our goal for the work that needs to be done on the outside of the church to keep this lovely old building safe and dry. Good work! I knew that together we would get there.

That is great, but I also have to share another challenge. With the requirement to close the church building to any gatherings, including worship, we still need to pay our bills and ministry commitments.

I know that some of you who have temporarily lost your employment or had hours cut back due to CDC requirements and will not be able to give your regular offering. You have enough to worry about in keeping a roof over your head and food on the table. With that

said, if we, your church family can help in any way, including helping you find the community resources to aid with various needs, know that we are here and will help to the best of our ability. That is part of being the church.

For others who are still working and collecting a regular paycheck, I ask that you be very mindful and intentional in sending in your offerings. They are more important than ever in this very challenging time, if we are going to continue supporting our ministries and keep up this building, where we all hope we will soon be regularly meeting again. In fact, if you are in a position to be able to give over and above your regular offering, this is the time to prayerfully consider how God might be calling you to give more sacrificially for the glory of his name and kingdom work.

You can mail your offering to the church at: Sparta UMC, 210 N Court St., Sparta, WI 54656; 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.

—Respectfully submitted by Paul Foulke,  
Finance Chair



## Records & History

Records and History Committee would like to announce that **Our Community In Concert** date is set for **October 17, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.** Mark your calendars and, if you are interested in being in the concert, please contact a committee member. We are looking for vocalists and musicians.

**THANK YOU** to Sara Kemp. The Little Free Library is so happy for the donation of children's books you left for us. Now our young readers can have some age appropriate books to read! Your willingness to help us keep our Free Library well stocked is appreciated!

We Are - Keeping the Eternal Flame Glowing



## UMW News

The North Central District *Jubilate* lists 29 local units, including Sparta. The District received \$305 for "Fill the Gap" which aids units that can't meet their pledge. Sparta UMW gave \$200 of that amount. It's a good feeling to help when we can. Census 2019 was filled out and we have 35 faithful local unit members.

North Central District UMW Spring Retreat will be Saturday, May 2, at Pine Lake Camp. Registration deadline is April 15.

Mission U Studies will now be held at 3 locations/dates this summer. The Social Issue Study will be *Pushout: Mass Incarceration School-to- Prison Pipeline*. The Adult Spiritual Growth Study will be - *Finding Peace in an Anxious World*.

### Dates and locations:

June 12-13, 2020 at Good Shepherd UMC, Oconomowoc, WI

July 20-21, 2020 at Hotel Mead & Conference Ctr., Wisconsin Rapids, WI

August 14-15, 2020 at Lake St. UMC, Eau Claire, WI

More information and registration forms can be found in the *Jubilate* posted on the UMW bulletin board by the chapel.

—Respectfully submitted by Cathy Nichols,  
UMW Communications Coordinator

## Privacy or Secrecy

*"The love of money is the root of all evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains."*

(1 Timothy 6:10)

Rev. Molly Baskette has written an interesting devotional ([www.ucc.org/daily\\_devotional\\_the\\_burden\\_of\\_money](http://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional_the_burden_of_money)) in which she states that, "Church people often tell me that money is a private matter, but what they really practice with money is secrecy, not privacy."

The problem, according to Pastor Baskette, is that fear, shame and secrecy about money do the work of evil just as much as our love of it. Yes, some things need to be secret: like the recipe for Coca Cola or the identities of spies. However, many of our institutional practices at church become distorted because we, the members, have unhealthy relationships with money.

We may think of the person who loves money as a monumental striver, always trying to get richer, never having enough. But those who love money also may long for more and then feel ashamed of that longing, or they may not balance their checkbook and live in fear of the debt collector (and feel ashamed), or may desire

to be generous, but cannot let go (and feel ashamed). We want to keep these things secret.

But, shame is not a healthy relationship with money and secrecy is not a healthy relationship with God or our fellow Christians. The Lenten/ Easter season is a good time to recognize our shortcomings, confess them to God, ourselves, and maybe others, and to repent. That is, to try to do things differently in the future.

Many United Methodist churches provide courses on personal finance and getting out of debt. If yours does not, please contact us at the **Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation**.

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

## Nurture News

### Ecumenical Lenten Luncheon

52 people were served lunch on Wednesday, March 4 by Emily Axelsen, Eileen Gajewsky, Maxine Gudbauer, Priscilla Hemmersbach, Margie Lakowski, and Marty Wally. Many thanks to all who donated grocery items for this meal.

### Wednesday Evening Lenten Soup and Bread Suppers

Delicious soups were furnished by Cheryl Isensee, Peggy Wright, Pastor Loretta, and Ann Olson on March 4 and 11. Thanks to those who offered to serve, but because of the unexpected health crisis the remaining suppers were cancelled. The three evenings of devotions from the Gospel of John video were thought-filled, and brought us into a closer relationship with Christ and each other. Thank you to the confirmation students for helping at the service by handing out bulletins and receiving the offering. We were encouraged to continue our reading of the Gospel of John.

### Holy Week Services

**Maundy Thursday, April 9.** A 24-hour Prayer Vigil begins at noon and ends at noon on Good Friday. Because we may not be able to gather yet in early April a Prayer Vigil guide is being sent along with this newsletter so we can all be in prayer together.

**A Tenebrae Service is planned for 7 p.m.** in the sanctuary. Again, if we cannot gather to worship together look for a service on YouTube so we can worship together from a distance.

**Good Friday** Our traditional ecumenical Good Friday services likely won't happen this year with the current

health crisis. Stay tuned for any updates that will be sent out via Facebook and email.

**Easter Sunday** If we are able to gather on for worship on Easter it will take place at our usual time of 9 a.m. We will **not** have a Blossoming of the Cross this year because of all the unknowns at this time. If we are able to gather, feel free to bring in a pot of your favorite spring blossoms to brighten up the sanctuary. If we are not able to gather look for our service on YouTube as we worship across cyber space.

Until we can gather again, if any of you musical types would like to share your gift of music in our recorded services, let Pastor Loretta know. She would love to have you participate and we will figure out a way to do it while still practicing safe social distancing.

“He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!”

Submitted by Cyndi Wise, Nurture Chair

---

Thank you, Trustees and John Lodico for installing the new Bunn Coffee maker in the kitchen—it’s great!

---

## Pipe Organ Update

Recently, our 94-year-old pipe organ was tuned and repairs were made with suggestions for further improvements by William Pugh, from Athens, Tennessee. He and his cousin, Dave Simpkinson, Sparta, spent five long days improving the sound of our organ. He took several pipes back with him to repair. The organ has not had any attention for nearly two years since our long-time tuner Murray Burfeind, retired.

We were very pleased with Mr. Pugh’s work and his interest in the organ. He commented often on the beauty and value of this instrument. If you have any questions that I might answer, please let me know. Cyndi Wise 269-4529.

“Hymn singing is one of the most enjoyable, meaningful ways for the congregation to actively participate in the worship service, and it’s our responsibility to maintain this joy!”

—from *The Organist* publication, Carol M. Johnson



## From the Parish Nurse...

Watching the nation as it struggles to understand any pandemic is frightening. We, as God’s people, seem all too easily caught up in the same speculative panic that rules the minds of many when a crisis such as the coronavirus manifests itself.

Studies show that prayer reduces anxiety and depression. A reduction in anxiety allows people to process and react to external events with a more cognitive rather than emotional manner. And a time in which there is worldwide concern over a virus without a treatment, a strategic and peaceful approach to problem solving is a good thing.

The facts make clear the coronavirus is potent and there is not yet a treatment or cure.

When faced with fear of the unknown, turning to an all-knowing God is a good place to start. And for people of faith, we know that God answers prayers and that, as it says in James 5:16, *“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”*

That doesn’t mean we only pray; we act as well, but, calmed by the awareness of the presence of God, we can respond with clarity and direction.

From the late Dr. Billy Graham, *“We are to pray in times of adversity, lest we become faithless and unbelieving. We are to pray in times of prosperity, lest we become boastful and proud. We are to pray in times of danger, lest we become fearful and doubting. We are to pray in times of security, lest we become self-sufficient.”*

In the Bible’s book of Matthew chapter 6, Jesus says, *“Therefore do not be anxious,”* saying Christ does not want us to panic. We have opportunities during this time to model the Christian difference and to demonstrate how this gospel of ours is a better message than any other.

First, as Christ-followers, we need to remember that our God is a *“refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble”* (Ps. 46:1). God has not given us a spirit of fear. We should not panic. Our Heavenly Father is still the all-knowing, ever-present, omnipotent God.

Second, we need to pray for all those who have been infected, those who will be, and for their families. We need to pray for God to deliver the world from this menace to human health and well-being. We need to pray for wisdom, guidance, and protection for our national, state and local leaders as they seek to fulfill their oaths of office in protecting the citizenry.

Third, we need to take necessary precautions. Listen to the medical experts. Be informed, sensitive, and wise in the way we approach this pandemic

Fourth, don’t do anything knowingly that would put anyone else at risk. If you are sick—please stay home and contact your physician. And during this whole process, as Christ-followers, we must always remember and have in our consciousness the Lord Jesus’ command to *“love your neighbor as yourself”* (Mark 12:31) and *“to do unto others as you would have them do unto you”* (Luke 6:31). Let’s all pray that when we look back on this crisis, our fellow Americans will see this episode of our history as one that reflects credit on the Lord we serve as they see His work in us as we serve them.

In Christ’s Love,

Priscilla Hemmersbach, RN

Parish Nurse

## A Note of Thanks...

Thanks, sisters of UMW, for the lovely mum plant I received to honor my birthday. Its golden yellow color reminds me of springtime!  
Sara Kemp



## Pictorial Directory Updates

Vera "Sally" Shann's new address:

4715 Dallas Ave.

Sparta, WI 54656-4847



*(Note: We will only be gathering for this movie night if COVID-19 restrictions are lifted by then. Stay tuned...)*



## April Pizza and a Movie

Who: Everyone is invited

What: Pizza and the movie... "Beautifully Broken"

Where: Sparta UMC Small Kitchen and Chapel

When: **Saturday, April 25**

**6 p.m. for Pizza / Movie begins at 6:30 p.m.**

**RSVP: Please contact Toni Burrows at 608-343-3029 before 12 Noon on March 28, if you will be attending, so we know how much pizza to order**

### Beautifully Broken

A refugee's escape, a prisoner's promise, and a daughter's painful secret converge. As three fathers fight to save their families, their lives become intertwined in an unlikely journey across the globe. Rated PG-13



## Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of James "Jim" Guinn, husband of Darlene, stepfather of Scott (Deb) Thurston and Jeanie (Dan) Davis, for the loss of Jim.

The family and friends of Mona Meseberg, sister-in-law of Patty (Dave) Wiedemann, for the loss of Mona.



*Please stay*

**SAFE AT  
Home**

## COVID-19 and "Safer-at-Home" Notice:

Dear SUMC Members and Friends,

With all of the change going on, including the governor's new mandate to close non-essential businesses and stay at home, the PPRC made the decision to close the church until further notice. Along with that the difficult decision was made to lay off our office manager starting this Thursday, March 26 at 4:30 p.m.

Pastor Loretta will still be working between the church and her home office. She will check phone messages and emails and be picking up the mail so we can make sure that essential business is still taken care of (paying bills, depositing offerings, etc.). Because our financial secretary and treasurer do most of their work remotely, with a minimum of time involved, they will be asked to continue doing their jobs. One way or another Pastor Loretta will work to provide a recorded worship service. We will re-evaluate all of this in a couple of weeks as the situation continues to change.

Pastor Loretta has also been in contact with our ad council chair and we hope to come up with a way the council can meet remotely, either through video or phone conferencing. Stay tuned.

With all of the said, please know we need to stay in touch as best we can 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. Maybe get out your new pictorial directory and pick a couple of different people a day to call or send a note to.

If you have recently changed/updated your email address, please let us know in the church office. Depending on the situation at that time, next month's newsletter may only come out by email to those who can receive it.

We will get through this together and hopefully stronger.

Pastor Loretta

John Lodico, PPRC chair

