



December 20, 2017

The Mission of Sparta United Methodist Church:
Helping each other follow Jesus' way (John 14:6)
The Vision: That through Him all might be saved (John 3:17)



A weekly newsletter of the Sparta United Methodist Church

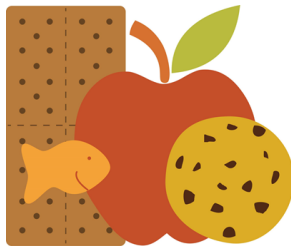
Discover our church website and all of the stories linked to our newsletter at www.spartaumc.com.



"Greatest Worth"

He came a babe of lowly birth.
He was God's Son of greatest worth.
We, like the angels, sing with mirth
because God sent his Son to earth
to ransom us and claim our worth.
Praise God this babe of lowly birth!

—MaryAnn Sundby



Fellowship Time

2018 Fellowship Time Open Dates

Please use the sign-up form posted in the church parlor
to host Fellowship Time next year. Two to three people
are needed each Sunday, as well as about 15 dozen
single-serving goodies. Sugar-free items are provided
by the church. Available dates are:

- February 18 & 25
March 4, 11 & 18
April 1
June 10 & 24
July 8, 22 & 29
August 5, 19 & 26
September 9, 16 & 23
October 21
November 11 & 18
December 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30

Schedules

Choir Practices

Sundays

9:30 AM ..... Children's (Parents: please pick up
your child at 10 AM from practice)

9:50 AM ..... Adult preservice rehearsal

Wednesdays 7 PM.....Adult

Tuesdays

9:30 AM ..... Girl Talk Study Group

Third Thursday of the Month

1 PM ..... Reading Group

Sundays

8:45 AM ..... Adult Sunday School

9 AM ..... Middle School Sunday School

9 AM ..... Pre-K – 5th Grade Craft/Prayer Time

10:10 AM ..... Morning Worship Celebration

10:30 AM ..... Pre-K – 5th Grade Sunday School

10:10 AM Worship Attendant Volunteers Dec. 24

Soundboard ..... Doug Shupe & Brandon Ingersoll

Candlelight Service ..... Chad & Shelly Murdock

Head Usher ..... Alan Hartman

Acolytes ..... Dylan & Emma

Usher ..... Dan McCracken

Nursery Assistant ..... Naomi Collins

Candlelight Service ..... Elizabeth Hartman

Welcome Table ..... Mary Scott

Greeters ..... Doug & Bonnie Shupe

Intercessory Prayer ..... Bonnie Wilkinson

Scripture Reader ..... Pat Sharpe-Babcock

Fellowship Time ..... Jim & Jane Bosserd

Bob & Rachel Shangle

Save the Date

Dec. 24 10:10 AM ..... Worship Celebration Service

7 PM .....



Dec. 25 & 26 ..... Church Offices Closed

Jan. 1 ..... Church Offices Closed



Carol Kane—ankle surgery  
on Dec. 20  
Evelyn Jacobson  
All military and  
public service personnel



“Always be a little kinder than necessary.”  
—J.M. Barrie



|                        |                                |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dec. 25 Janet Bassett  | 12/28/90<br>Paul & Barb Bettes |
| Dec. 27 Steve Miling   |                                |
| Dec. 30 Amy Brillinger |                                |

Contact the office with updates and additions.

“I really only love God  
as much as I love the person I love the least.”  
—Dorothy Day

**The Perfect Gift**

Do you stress about finding just the right gift for everyone on your Christmas list? Does it make the season more a hassle than a joy? Pastor Mike Slaughter reminds us that Christmas isn't about perfect presents for people, as if it were their birthday — or ours. Christmas is about the perfect presence of Immanuel, God with us, through the birth of Jesus; it's his birthday, after all!

In *Christmas Is Not Your Birthday* (Abingdon), Slaughter writes, “How funny that it can be so hard to find gifts that will please certain family members or friends — the people who seem to have everything — and yet it is so clear what the Lord of lords and King of kings wants for his birthday. God wants you — your time, your talent and your treasure — used in service to others.”

If you plan to take an itemized charitable deduction on your 2017 tax return, your donation must go to a qualified charity by December 31. Ask the charity about its tax-exempt status; Sparta UMC is a qualified tax exempt organization. You can also visit [www.IRS.gov](http://www.IRS.gov) and use the Exempt Organizations Select Check tool to see if other charities qualify.

The church website provides online giving. Donations charged to a credit card by December 31 are deductible for 2017, even if you pay the bill in 2018.

A gift by check also counts for 2017 as long as it is postmarked no later than December 31 (please note this year Dec. 31 falls on a Sunday, so your mailing envelope must be postmarked by Dec. 30).

Gifts given to individuals, whether to friends, family or strangers, are not deductible.



**After Purchasing Holiday Delights,**

**Bring Your Family Fare / Econofoods Receipts to Church**

Donating your Family Fare / Econofoods receipts to Sparta UMC supports the missions of the church. Holidays usually mean large food bills and last minute cooking needs, so please bring your receipts to church. Leave the *entire* grocery receipt in the blue basket at worship, the white mail box in Wesley Hall, or the church office. To date, \$83,722 has been received in Direct Your Dollars. Direct Your Dollars is noted at the bottom of your cash register receipt. When Sparta UMC has collected \$150,000 in Direct Your Dollar receipts, Missions will receive \$1,000.

(FYI: some purchases do not apply, like gasoline)  
Receipts that qualify can come from any of the 160 SpartanNash-owned retail stores or fuel centers in nine states.

SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH • 54 EAST DIVISION STREET • SPARTA MI 49345

CHURCH OFFICE p 616.887.8255 • Pastor Phil Friedrich c 616.799.4281  
FAX 616.887.8256 • WEBSITE [www.spartaumc.com](http://www.spartaumc.com)  
OFFICE HOURS Monday – Thursday, 9 AM – 1 PM  
WORSHIP TIME Sunday 10:10 AM

We are a connected ministry. Check out  
[Michigan Area United Methodist Church](#)  
[United Methodist, Grand Rapids District](#)  
[United Methodist News Service Daily Digest](#)

Articles for next week's *News Flash* are due on Tuesday.