

January 2, 2019

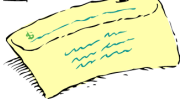


A weekly newsletter of The Sparta United Methodist Church



Discover our church website and all of the stories linked to our newsletter at [www.spartaumc.com](http://www.spartaumc.com).

## Offering Envelopes



### 2019 Offering Envelopes are Available in the Church Parlor

If you do not see a box with your name on it but would like 2019 giving envelopes for your offerings, please contact Financial Secretary Mary VanGessel.

### Reading Resolutions

Every January, many Christians resolve to read the entire Bible in one year. That's a worthy goal, but God doesn't require us to read a certain number of verses or chapters per day. Instead, he tells us to simply be in his Word — and thus be with him — so he can grow our faith, light our path and assure us of his love and forgiveness. God's Word is a precious gift, but we need to "unwrap" it!

F.B. Meyer offers this helpful advice for a new year of discovering (and rediscovering!) Scripture: "Read the Bible, not as a newspaper, but as a home letter. If a cluster of heavenly fruit hangs within reach, gather it. If a promise lies upon the page as a blank check, cash it. If a prayer is recorded, appropriate it and launch it as a feathered arrow from the bow of your desire. If an example of holiness gleams before you, ask God to do as much for you. If the truth is revealed ... entreat that its brilliance may ever irradiate ... your life."



As the New Year begins, you can't help but reflect on all the gifts God has given this past year. So blessed I feel to work and worship making song with you as we all share our gifts and talents in Glory to God. Thank you church so very much for the monetary gift you provided me at Christmas time.

Peace Friends,  
Steve Barnum

### Earn. Save. Give. Small Group Opportunities

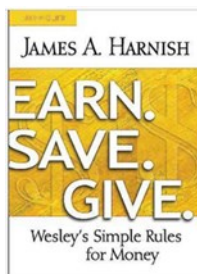
Mondays, Jan. 21 — Feb. 11

8 AM: Starbucks (3287 Alpine Ave NW, Walker) with Erica VanLaan.

6:30 PM: Offices & Ministry Building with Denny & De Knappen.

Tuesdays, Feb. 2 — March 5

9:30 AM: Offices & Ministry Building with Girl Talk Study Group.



### A Prayer for New Beginnings

In his book *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth* (Fortress Press), Walter Brueggemann writes in an Epiphany poem:

... this is a time to be born.  
So we turn to you, God of our life  
God of all our years,  
God of our beginning....  
We dare pray that you will do for us  
and among us and through us  
what is needful for our newness.  
Give us the power to be receptive,  
to take the newness you give ....  
There is a time to be born, and it is now.  
We sense the pangs and groans of your newness.  
Come here now in the name of Jesus. Amen.

How fitting that the Epiphany season and the new year coincide! Epiphany reveals a new King, the beginning of his ministry, his new disciples, his first healings, his "new teaching — with authority" (Mark 1:27). We, too, experience newness, now and year-round. But newness can be tough. So we trust that God, who "[makes] all things new" while banishing "mourning and crying and pain" (Revelation 21:4-5), walks with us in this new year — and always. Epiphany of the Lord Sunday is January 6 this year.

### Praying for Unity



Every January, the Christian church worldwide marks the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This ecumenical "octave," or eight-day observance, lasts from January 18 (the Feast of St. Peter) to January 25 (the Feast of St. Paul).

The week is based on Jesus' prayer to his heavenly Father in John 17:21 that his followers "may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (ESV). Jesus knew that if Christians were fiercely divided, people outside the faith wouldn't want to learn more about him.

The theme for the 2019 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is from Deuteronomy 16:20 (NRSV): "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue." The Sparta Community Service will be held at Peace Lutheran Church on 12 Mile Road, and Pastor Phil will be preaching.

# ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONS DAY

United Methodists from across the connection help bridge the gap between church and community by participating in the Human Relations Day offering. Human Relations Day is one of the denomination's six churchwide special Sundays with offerings. It is observed annually on the Sunday before the national observance of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

The offering for Human Relations Day supports three programs:



Community Developers Program of the General Board of Global Ministries



United Methodist Voluntary Services Program, also administered by Global Ministries



Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program, administered by the General Board of Church and Society



## Special Offering January 20, 2019

Your gifts to Human Relations Day nurture a variety of ministries:

- Child care
- Children's after-school and summer initiatives
- Domestic hunger and poverty
- Economic development
- Education, including tutoring
- Emergency services
- Employment
- Gang intervention
- HIV/AIDS and other health issues
- Homelessness and housing
- Older adults
- Parenting
- Prison outreach
- Restorative justice
- Substance abuse and rehabilitation
- Youth, especially at-risk teens
- Technological empowerment

## 2018: Remembering Influential Christians

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — United Methodists in 2018 marked the deaths of multiple trailblazing women, a Holocaust survivor and a world-changing evangelist who transcended denominational lines. Heather Hahn offers a look back. [Read story](#)

### Schedules

- Tuesdays  
9:30 AM.....Girl Talk Study Group
- Wednesdays  
6 PM.....Worship Design Team  
7-8 PM.....Adult Choir practice
- 4th Thursday of the Month  
6 PM.....Vision Team
- Sunday mornings  
8:45-11:45 .....Nursery (ages 0-4 years)  
8:30-9:45 .....DISCIPLE Bible Study  
9:00 .....Adult Bible Study  
9:00 .....Middle & Senior High Sunday School  
9:00 .....Chime Choir Practice / Craft Time (Pre-K - 5th)  
9:30 .....Children's Choir Practice (Pre-K - 5th)  
Parents: pick up your child at 10 AM from practice  
9:50 .....Adult Choir pre-service rehearsal  
10:10 .....Morning Worship Celebration  
10:30 .....Pre-K - 5th Grade Sunday School

### 10:10 AM Worship Attendant Volunteers January 6

- Soundboard..... Brandon Ingersoll & Isaiah Marks  
Head Usher ..... Alan Hartman  
Nursery Assistant ..... Amy Brillinger  
Nursery Leader..... Amy Hume  
Communion Assistants..  
Welcome Table ..... Margaret Blaauw  
Intercessory Prayer ... Ron Drier  
Fellowship Time..... Chase, Tilli & Wever Families

### Save the Date

- Jan 8 9:30 AM..... Girl Talk Study Group begins  
*The Journey*  
5:45 PM..... Finance & Stewardship Committee  
6:30 PM..... Church Council
- Jan. 9 5:30 PM..... Dorcas Circle
- Jan. 10 12-7 PM.... Community Blood Drive

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

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)

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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. Contact the church office with updates and additions.