

June 17, 2020



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

A FEW WORDS FROM PASTOR PHIL... WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF OUR CHURCH?

With churches closed down across America, people of faith are struggling to choose the right path forward for their congregations. Many churches will be relieved to simply survive this awful pandemic. It's said, that you can tell what someone is really made of when you see how they operate under extreme circumstances. *I'm wondering, what kind of church we really are.* Are we a church that will accept just getting through this, or do

we see ourselves as arriving at this very moment because God has something extraordinary for us to do?

As your pastor, I want you to know that I have no interest in living out a mundane or slowly diminishing future, for our church or for myself. I believe that God has, indeed, prepared us for this very moment. The



question is, do we have the courage to seize the day? Are we willing to do the difficult and unconventional thing to fulfill our calling?

On Sunday we held our first in-person worship

experience in our parking lot behind the church. It sure was great to see many of our church family again. Even though we had a few technical glitches, things went amazingly well. We have many people to thank for this success, and we expect to do better and better each week. For now, meeting outside is considered the safest way for churches to come together. If you drive around on Sunday morning you'll see people gathering on church lawns and in parks all around the area.

Thankfully the timing of all this has given us summertime with which to work. But already, the weather forecasts for this coming Sunday have us worrying a bit, and as we imagine later this summer, we know the un-shaded asphalt will bring other challenges.

However, moving inside to our sanctuary is fraught with additional health challenges and risks. The Federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) recently stated that it will not be recommending that people return to church



any time soon. It's not that they oppose church in any way, it's simply that the activities we do in churches are the kind that can easily spread the coronavirus.

As we consider how we can best care for the people of our congregation the obvious question is, *how can we continue worshipping outside (where it's the safest) as long as possible?* Answering this question will also mean

finding ways to make worshipping outside predicable, well-organized, consistent and meaningful week after week. I gave an answer to this question on Sunday morning at the end of our worship service. *I suggested we purchase a large open-sided tent and place it in our parking lot in the spot we are now gathering.* This would be a very large and very tall structure. Safety dictates a space large enough for us to socially distance from one another. Such a tent would be the talk of our town. One can only imagine a bright white, forty-foot by sixty-foot tent with flags flapping from its tall spires.



Now, I realize that this may sound quite unusual to some in our church, but I guarantee it will be equally attractive to our children and to the curious of the Sparta community. These tents come with attachable eight foot sides (that have cathedral-shaped windows!). What a wonderful space this could provide to us for years to come for Vacation Bible School and other special events. Our church has rented similar, though smaller, tents for our Back To School events in years past. The cost of a tent of this type is approximately \$10,000. While that sounds like a large sum of money, we are facing the challenge of the century. Not in 100 years have we been

forced to close our buildings and threatened by a health-care crisis that is making indoor worship so compromised. I am quite confident that not too many churches will be so bold as to take this daring step. But, again, what kind of church do you want to belong to, one that is unwilling to take risks, or one that steps out when everything is on the line?

If you're reading this article and you can help make this, or some other amazing solution to our present dilemma, a reality, lets get to work. Never has our church been in greater need. The future truly hangs in the balance. It's not just small businesses that will not recover from the pandemic. Many churches will never be the same. What about our church? What will our church be like in five or even ten years? I believe it's up to us, and now is the time that will determine much of our future. Thank you for taking the time to read this and joining me in prayer and discernment.

~ Pastor Phil



FOUR EASY METHODS OF GIVING

1. Using your debit or credit card through our website: Gifts may be made through our website by pressing the menu box at the top and pressing "give" in the drop down menu. There are some small fees associated with this service.
2. Mail a check: Checks may be sent to the Church at Sparta United Methodist Church, 54 East Division Street, Sparta, MI 49345
3. Automatic Debit: This is another way that some people of our church make their contributions. This is an automated process that requires a signed form that Arieal can help you set up. Call her at 989-745-3492 if you would like to do this.
4. Automatic Bill Pay: This is an arrangement you can make with your bank or financial institution. With this procedure, your bank sends the church the amount you determine at the intervals you also choose.

VIEW LIVE STREAM SERVICE

To view our live stream every Sunday, please click this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/SpartaUnitedMethodistChurch/live/>



PRAYER REQUESTS & PEOPLE NEWS

- Please continue to pray for LTJG Nicholas R Spaleny, US Navy, who flew to Bahrain recently. He is serving on the Navel base there as Public Affairs Officer for one year. Please pray for his safety.
Thank you, De Knappen
- Please pray for my great niece Aryea. She has a severe case of Epilepsy. She is in the hospital now. Thank you, Tena Stuhan



HAPPY 60 YEARS!

Happy 60th Wedding Anniversary to Gordon & Sharon Helsel on June 18! Wishing you all the happiness and love in the world and congratulations on your anniversary.

With Love, Jeanne Drier



DON'T FORGET

Join us every week, virtually, for the following activities via our Facebook page:

- Sunday Worship Service at 10:10 AM
- Fellowship follows Sunday Worship Service
- Ad Council meets on Mondays at 7 PM via ZOOM (email the Church Admin for login details)

HAPPY 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY EARL & PAT BABCOCK!

June 18, 1960...Having met and married in White Cloud, MI, Earl & Pat Babcock have been blessed with a great marriage, good health and a happy life. In 1968 they moved to Sparta. Their life has always been centered around their faith in God. This has been portrayed through their worship and dedication to their church home. Over the years, travelling was something they loved to do together and as a family. Also spending time with friends and attending church/events. They have 2 great kids: Karen (Ron) & Dave, 2 awesome grandchildren: Erick (Katie) & Bethany and 5 super 'great' grandkids: Karson, Brendan, Spencer, Weston & Madisonlyn. They are thankful for all they have and especially for each other. Congratulations!



TIPS & TRICKS

If you don't want to miss the Churches live stream or Facebook updates follow these instructions:

1. Log into Facebook on your computer, tablet or smart phone device that you want to watch the live stream on.
2. At the top of Facebook, search for Sparta United Methodist Church or use this link: www.facebook.com/SpartaUnitedMethodistChurch
3. Click on the "Like" button. If the page already has "liked" under the picture then you have already liked the page.
4. Be sure you are on the device you'd like to watch the Sunday Service live stream on. Around 10 AM on Sundays, watch for the notification from Facebook that we are "live" and click on the notification (it will bring you right to the live service).
5. If you did not get the notification by 10:05AM on Sundays, you can find the live stream manually by searching for Sparta United Methodist Church on Facebook and it will be towards the top of our page.

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

- Please do not send cash in the mail. Thank you!
- Father's Day is this Sunday, June 21.

SUNDAY WEATHER



Please keep in mind that if it is likely to rain on Sunday, there will be no in-person worship. Announcements will be made on our Facebook and Website pages Sunday morning by 8 AM.

You can also phone in and listen to the service:

1. Dial 312-626-6799
2. You will be prompted for a Meeting ID
3. Enter 616-887-8255 #
4. You will be prompted for a participant number
5. Press #
6. You will then be prompted for a meeting password, Press 316#
7. Enjoy listening to our Worship Service!