

NEWSFLASH

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



HEIFER INTERNATIONAL 2020

KICK-OFF

Attention all animal lovers: Come and see live farm animals up close in our church parking lot! Please join us Sunday morning, October 25, 9:45 - 11:30 AM, to help kick-off the Heifer International mission campaign. There will be a calf, mini pony, sheep, and chickens! Heifer International works in the areas of livestock and agriculture to help end hunger and poverty world-wide while caring for the Earth. Learn how you and your family can help impoverished families.



PICTURE DAY COMING SOON

Mark your calendars! Universal Church Directories, whom we've used for our photo directories in the past, is making a return on November 9 & 10! To schedule your appointment, please visit www.ucdir.com and click on the "click here to schedule your photography session." Enter your church code: **mi1552** and then enter your church password: **photos**. Next, click on the enter button and then click on the desired photography date. Follow the prompts after that. Feel free to call Ari at 989-745-3492, if you are having troubles or do not have internet to schedule online. Pictures will be held in the Church Building and everyone is welcome! You do not have to purchase a picture packet to get a SUMC Photo Directory.

SUMC QUICK REEL

Tune into 105.5 FM to catch our Sunday Worship services LIVE over the RADIO! (every Sunday at 10 AM)



Come see and pet a calf, miniature pony, sheep, and chickens this Sunday at our Heifer International Kick Off event!



Don't forget! November 9 & 10 is Picture Day for our 2020 SUMC Photo Directory! Contact Ari to schedule your appointment



Sunday, October 25 at 1 PM is our Big Top Takedown.

Hope to see you there!



SUNDAY ATTENDANCE IN REVIEW

- 9/27 - 71
- 10/4 - 45
- 10/11 - 65
- 10/18 - 41

RETURN TO INDOORS AND IN-PERSON WORSHIP

Behind Our Plan

This plan has been developed based upon recommendations from our Michigan United Methodist Conference, other area churches, and our government. This is our attempt to keep everyone as safe as possible while returning to our indoor, face-to-face worship experience.

To keep us up to date in our understanding of the rate of Coronavirus infections in our area, our leaders are monitoring the Kent County Health Department COVID-19 Dashboard (<https://www.accesskent.com/Health/coronavirus.htm>). We also follow the number of COVID-related hospitalizations at Spectrum Medical System. For example, on October 19 Butterworth Hospital in G.R. had 124 COVID patients, which is 25% higher than any other time since the beginning of the pandemic. Also, Spectrum Medical has been moved from “Green” to “Yellow” in its COVID-19 Alert System as of 10/20. The Coronavirus is, indeed, ramping up in G.R. and sadly, there were several COVID deaths at Spectrum just this week.

We recognize that not everyone will be able to come back to church right away. We want the people of our church to know that we are supportive of each person’s choice about the best time for their return to in-person, indoor worship.

Our plan, outlined here, is intended to provide as much safety as possible. However, this virus is dangerous (more to some than to others) and no safety protocols are perfectly safe. As stated in earlier articles, our sanctuary is small and does not have a heating/cooling system with air handling capabilities that brings in fresh, clean air or remove potentially dangerous air. Therefore, we’re taking extra effort to address these challenges.

Only those feeling comfortable with indoor, in-person worship are encouraged to attend. High-risk individuals (and/or caregivers of high-risk individuals) should consider staying home and utilize the live stream video option.

Medical experts find those at highest risk for life-threatening illness from COVID-19 are:

- With underlying health conditions
- Above the age of 65
- With other various increased risk factors
- Who care for, or live with, someone with greater risk factors


Before You Arrive On Sunday Morning:

- Pray
- **IF YOU FEEL SICK (HAVE A TEMPERATURE, A COUGH, OR ANY OTHER COLD OR FLU SYMPTOM) PLEASE STAY HOME!**
- Only those feeling comfortable attending should come. Online worship is available through our Facebook page. Our FM audio broadcast can also be picked up in our parking lot at FM-105.5.
- If you choose to come, please maintain a six-foot separation from people with whom you are not living with.
- The Sanctuary will be, appropriately cleaned/sanitized before each service.
- DRESS WARM! WEAR OUTDOOR WINTER CLOTHING! Hats, gloves, boots, and even lap blankets will help. Some of the windows of the sanctuary will be open to bring fresh air into the room. The fresh air will add a measure of safety. The theory is similar to holding activities outside. Virologists are consistently saying that outside is the safest place to gather. Our goal is to gain some of that safety while opening our sanctuary to use.

What Will Sunday Morning Look Like?

- Use of masks and hand sanitizer (masks will be provided upon entry and hand sanitizer stations are strategically placed throughout our facility) will be expected. This is a way we care for each other.
- Please plan on arriving no earlier than 9:55 a.m. We will heat the church building prior to your arrival and we will leave the windows closed until everyone enters the sanctuary.
- Please keep overcoats and wraps with you. The worship area will be cool (or even cold) at time as we flush the sanctuary with fresh outdoor air.
- An Offering Bowl will be available in the entrance of the sanctuary for those who wish to contribute. This will eliminate the passing of a plate, thus reducing one touch contamination point.
- The Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has issued orders that restrict our sanctuary to a maximum of 20% of its normal seating capacity. Ushers will help us find socially distanced seating. Family groups (people we live with) will be fine to sit close to. These family groups will be spaced at least 6 feet from other groups. To help us with social distancing, some of our pews will be blocked off.
- Restrooms will be accessible.
- When the service ends, we are asking that everyone please leave the church building directly after the service.

What Will Sunday Morning Look Like? Continued...

- Please, no physical contact (you can use sign language for “I love you” or the “Sign of the Cross” or a wave or thumbs up, etc.). 
- Please do not sing out fully since it spreads germs even worse than a cough. However, you’re encouraged to hum/sing to yourself during music with your mask on.
- Use the handrail or elevator as needed but sanitize your hands after use.
- Nursery and in-person children/youth ministry and regular adult and children’s choir are on hold until further notice. There is, a special adult choir that is in the works as a special way of adding music to our services.



Where Are Things Going Next?

Our leaders are sincerely attempting to assist us in “BEING THE CHURCH” in these trying times. This is complicated and serious work. The health and wellbeing (both physically and spiritually) of our church people are on our minds constantly. However, if cases of the Coronavirus continue to rise in our area we may need to pause in-person worship and revert to our live stream and FM broadcast only. We are all extremely fatigued by the pandemic. It’s unclear what tomorrow will bring. However, you can be certain that your Pastor and this church are fully engaged in providing meaningful church experiences throughout the pandemic.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Our Church Leaders recommend that any group that gathers indoors try to stick to a 10 person/per group gathering (in one space at a time). They recommend that you use your best judgement when gathering indoors and if your group extends past 10, that your group understands the responsibility that takes on.
- The Church Office/Ministry Building remains closed to group gatherings at this time.



**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS
IS APPROACHING!**

**DON'T FORGET TO TURN YOUR
CLOCKS BACKWARDS 1 HOUR ON
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1.**

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Our Church Leaders met virtually Monday evening and discussed the following topics:

- Our Finance Committee received approval to start the 2021 Stewardship campaign. More information to come!
- Missions is excited for the Heifer International kickoff this Sunday!! There will be a calf, mini pony, sheep, and chickens. Hope to see you there! See page 1 for details.
- The next Trustee meeting will be October 26 at 6 PM. Please meet at the Church Building and contact Denny Knappen with any questions.
- The Ad Council continued their discussion about reopening our church for Worship come November 1. Please see pages 2-4 for more details.

If you'd like to read the full details of the Ad Council's meeting, please email Ari at spartaumc@spartaumc.com and request a copy of their minutes.

Q3 FINANCE REPORT

The Church finances are well, as giving has been down slightly but still strong. Expenses are also down, balancing each other out through 2020. The tent fundraiser was a success, we look forward to the future.

	July	August	September	YTD	Annual Budget
General Giving	\$ 15,113.00	\$ 18,017.00	\$ 15,626.00	\$ 176,390.00	\$ 260,000.00
Expenses	\$ 15,317.00	\$ 31,754.00	\$ 22,554.00	\$ 203,452.00	\$ 267,117.00
Other Giving (i.e. Tent, Building, etc.)				\$ 27,847.00	

NOTES FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

- Quarter 3 giving statements will be emailed out this week! If you do not have an email address on file with Ari, your statement will be mailed to you. If you do not receive your statement by mid-next week, please call Ari and she will be able to provide insight.
- An updated Church Directory will be available by this Friday. It will be shared in our private Facebook group "SUMC Church Directory" online and also be available for pick up at Service on Sunday. You may also request a digital or mailed paper copy by contacting Ari.
- This week, Ari will be in the Office on Thursday (October 22) from 12-2 PM, instead of Friday (for this week only). If you'd like to stop by, please call Ari to make an appointment.

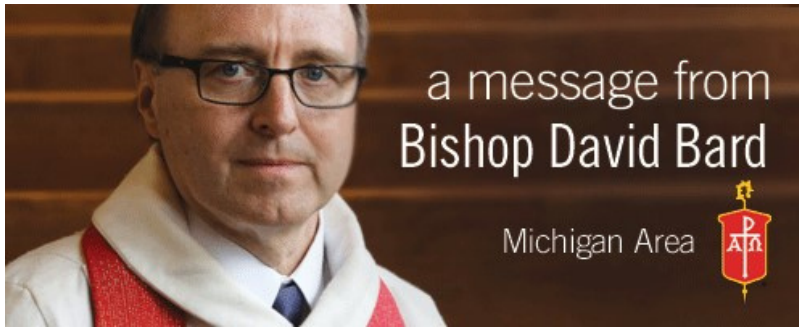
If you have any questions or need general information, please do not hesitate to call/text (989-745-3492) or email (spartaumc@spartaumc.com) the Office Admin, Ari, thank you!

PRAYER REQUESTS & PEOPLE NEWS

Please continue to pray for LTJG Nicholas R. Spaleny, US Navy, who is stationed in Bahrain. He is serving on the Navel base there as a Public Affairs Officer for one year. Please pray for his safety.

Thanks, De Knappen





CLARIFYING THE IMPACT OF RECENT MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT RULINGS

October 9, 2020

Dear Michigan United Methodists,

Grace and peace to you from God and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that Governor Whitmer exceeded her authority in issuing executive orders after the legislature did not extend her emergency authority in April. The legal situation surrounding our state's response to the coronavirus is now uncertain, with the Michigan Department of Health and many county health officials issuing new guidelines, guidelines to which I would ask you to pay attention.

As your bishop, I have not viewed the coronavirus pandemic primarily in legal or governmental terms, but have always wanted to focus on public health. I found in the Governor's executive orders helpful guidelines for promoting public health. In their absence, I want to reassert the importance of continuing to act in ways that promote public health, that further the common good, and that demonstrate loving care for the well-being of others.

When you meet together, wear masks and maintain social distance. Wash your hands frequently and clean your facilities thoroughly. Continue to offer on-line options for people to participate in the life of your church.

The same Jesus who invited us not to be afraid also encouraged us to be wise. We need not be dominated by fear, but we do need to be wise. Wisdom asks of us to exercise good judgment. Love asks of us to care for each other.

Thank you for being wise and loving.

Grace and Peace,

David A Bard

David Alan Bard
Michigan Area Bishop

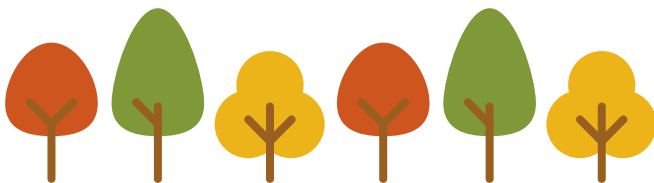


This Halloween, Sparta UMC is partnering with the Sparta Baptist Church in their annual Trunk R Treat event! This will be an outdoor, kid friendly activity that will take place in our shared parking lot on October 31 from 5 PM to 8 PM. There will be fun decorated trunks and lots of candy! Those of you who wish to participate in the trunk decorating will need to sign up in advanced and also arrive in the parking lot at 4 PM for the event to begin at 5 PM. Those of you who'd like to participate in other ways can donate supplemental candy to SBC. Please drop of candy donations to the SBC Office or bring it with you to our Sunday worship services. To participate in the trunk decorating please email Amanda (SBC Admin) at info@spartabaptist.org (though email is preferred, you may also call with your information at 616-887-8813). Please be sure to leave your name and contact information so that Pastor Ben may contact you closer to the event with additional instructions.

SBC Office hours for candy donations:

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9 AM to 2 PM

Tuesday/Thursday 9 AM to 1 PM



We are in need of helpers to take down our big top on Sunday, October 25, at 1 PM. This will be a weather pending event and only will be held if it is not raining and if there aren't high winds. Everyone is welcome to help and we hope to see you there!

UPPER ROOM DEVOTIONAL BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE

The new November-December Upper Room Devotional Books have arrived! You may pick up a copy in the clear plastic box located outside of the back of the Church, by the double glass doors (the doors by the elevator). In that box, you will find older copies of the Upper Room as well as the newest editions. Please feel free to grab an older copy to take home too. If you'd like or need a copy mailed to you, please contact Ari at 989-745-3492 and ask for a copy to be mailed to you. You can also download the Upper Room App on your smart phone or tablet. The cost is \$13.99 per year. This is a very convenient option for those of you who prefer to have your devotional at your finger tips!



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

October 25

Set-up Crew (Arrive by 8:30 AM).

- Denny Knappen
- TBD

Greeters (arrive by 9:30 AM).

- Jeanne Drier
- Mary Scott

Scripture Reader

- Shelly Murdock

Intercessory Prayer

- Carla VanAsselt

November 1

Soundboard/PowerPoint:

- Brandon Ingersoll

Head Usher:

- Denny Knappen

Holy Communion Assistants:

- TBD

Intercessory Prayer on behalf of the Pastor:

- Paul Schulz

Scripture Reader:

- Brandon Ingersoll

Greeters:

- TBD

Altar Flowers:

- TBD

November 8

Soundboard/PowerPoint:

- Brandon Ingersoll

Head Usher:

- TBD

Intercessory Prayer on behalf of the Pastor:

- Bonnie Wilkinson

Scripture Reader:

- Mary Scott

Greeters:

- TBD

Altar Flowers:

- TBD

FOUR EASY METHODS OF GIVING

1. Use your debit or credit card through our website. Gifts may be made through our website by clicking the “give” tab at the top of the page. 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 (please do not mail cash)
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.

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 10:05 AM 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.