

July 22, 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](http://www.spartaumc.com)

## OUTDOOR WORSHIP BECOMES NEW NORMAL FOR WEST MICHIGAN CHURCHES

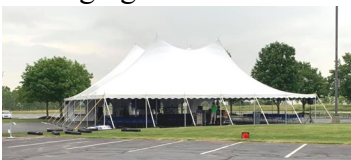
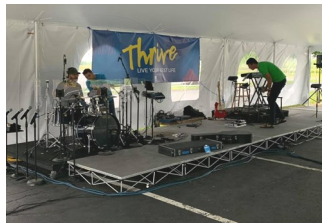
As our new “normal” is upon us, we are seeing more and more churches take charge and lead their communities. One Sunday stroll, Arieal the Office Admin came across a few churches in Holland, Michigan who had constructed outdoor worship areas. After some calls and emails, she was able to learn more about their struggles and accomplishments they’ve had while navigating these uncertain times.

Ridge Point Community Church in Holland has had very similar challenges when the pandemic started. How do they offer worship to their congregation? How do they do it safely? After much consideration, they chose to purchase a large outdoor tent. Luckily for them, last year they had a

construction fundraising campaign and planned on adding some areas to their outside property. Though a tent wasn’t originally in their purchasing plans, it worked out to have the funds available when the pandemic struck. So Ridge Point purchased a tent and has had it in their parking lot since June. It has been the focal point of most of their worship services and activities since. They’ve placed some church chairs under the tent but also ask their guests to bring their own chairs for under the tent and out in their grass areas. The tent could actually seat a few hundred people, but of course with the current COVID-19 pandemic, they are very careful that everyone is spaced out at least 6 feet apart under the tent and on their lawn spaces. This tent will be left up well into the fall and is currently being used for more than just their Sunday services. They also offer Bible Study groups, VBS and Spring Hill groups to meet under their tent as well. In the future, they plan to repurpose their tent and allow their congregation to use it for outdoor weddings, receptions,

company picnics, etc. But next year they hope to relocate it from their parking lot to a different location on their property. So when asked about

the drawbacks of their tent purchase, Tammy Tamminga, Director of Facilities at Ridge Point said,



“It is very much an investment. The tent was expensive but if you can get creative in ways to reuse it and possibly rent it out in the future, that would be really good. People love being under a tent, there is just something special about it!” So far they have had an outpour of support and are currently offering 2 outdoor services, 9 AM and 10:30 AM. “People love being outside and I think it [the tent] helps others be more comfortable with the idea of being around other people,” said Tamminga. Similar to us, they are not offering any nursery or Sunday school services but will revisit that possibility later this Fall.

Even our friends at Calvary Reformed Church on 8th St in Holland are enjoying the benefits of worshipping outdoors however without a tent. Similar to us, Calvary has been offering virtual worship on their Facebook livestream since mid-March as well as establishing

outdoor, in-person worship since June. “...after much prayer, discernment and following state guidelines,” stated Sky Chen, Office Manager of Calvary

Reformed Church. They have been welcoming people to sign up in advance for their outdoor Sunday services that take place in their parking lot. The safety and wellbeing of their worshipers are their top priority so they provide a list of guidelines to be sure that face coverings like masks are being worn and that social distancing is being practiced. They also limit the number of people who can sign up for their Sunday services. This allows for their “monitoring team” to be able to appropriately space devotees out. “Overall it has been going well, but we decided to go from two services to one in July due to the heat...and people being away for the summer. We are continuing to reevaluate and pray about whether to continue with one service. Can we safely serve people by worshipping indoors, or is God calling us to find different ways to serve our community?” Chen pondered.

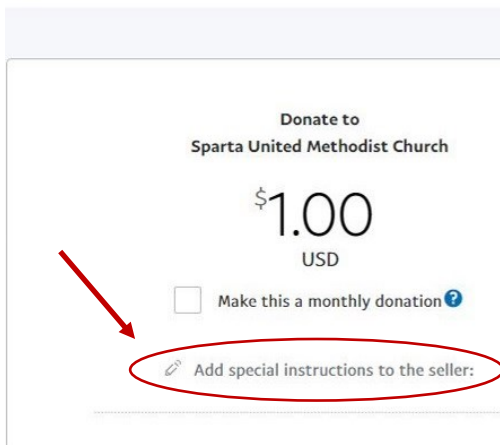
To conclude, many like us are still wondering what lies ahead but one thing is certain. Worship is important but being healthy and alive are what is most important in these pandemic times. Fortunately for us, a Multipurpose Worship Tent could be the answer SUMC is looking for.



## NOT SURE HOW TO DONATE?

Have you returned your Multipurpose Worship Tent fundraiser donation envelope back to the Church yet? If not, there is still time! Due to the inclement weather last Sunday, there was no official count performed, so unfortunately we are not able to provide an updated amount of what has been raised just yet. Though as a friendly reminder, please be sure to include your name on your donation envelope so it can be counted appropriately! Gift matching will be up to \$7,000 so there really is plenty of opportunity to raise over \$14,000! What an impact we will make.

There have been a few questions regarding how to give online. To give online using a Debit or Credit card, please visit our website at [www.spartaumc.com](http://www.spartaumc.com). Once there, you will click on the "Give" button in the top-right corner. This will bring you to a page with all of our donation options. To give online, you will want to click on the yellow "Donate" button. This will take you to our Paypal page. From there, you will need to enter your information. For now, there isn't an option to donate specifically to the Multipurpose Worship Tent fund, but there will be soon. For now, we are asking that you use the space



under the giving amount, that says, "add special instructions to the seller:"; click on that text and a space will appear for you to type that this gift is for the Tent Fundraiser. Giving online does have its advantages for

those of you who don't have personal checks readily available.

Undoubtably, there are some fees to be aware of when you are giving online via our Paypal link. Currently, our Paypal rates are 2.9% + \$0.30 per transaction fee. That means a \$50 Paypal donation will ultimately only be a \$48.25 gift after the fees. So for large donations (anything over \$500) should be made either through an Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT (email Ari for more information)) or by a certified Bank Check (visit or call your local bank to see if they have this option available). Currently, the Office is working with Paypal to see if our account qualifies for lowers rates and will provide updates soon.

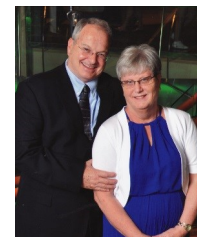
## PRAYER REQUESTS & PEOPLE NEWS



- Please pray for our new friend Manny. He's an elderly man who's recently lost his wife. His son is a struggling alcoholic and terminally ill. Please pray for both of them. Thank you, Kristin Johnsen
- 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 Public Affairs Officer for one year. Please pray for his safety. Thank you, De Knappen
- Congratulations C.J. Goodfellow! For those of you who would like to attend C.J. Goodfellow's open house, it will be held outdoors, with lots of room for social distancing and hand sanitizer, on July 25, from 1 to 4 PM, at 2735 11 Mile Rd NW, Sparta.

## HAPPY 50 WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

50 years ago Pat & Paul Spangenberg said "I do" on a very hot and muggy night in July 1970. It seems only fitting that it will probably be very hot and muggy on the 31st of July 2020. We honeymooned in the Straits Area 50 years ago at Wilderness State Park in a borrowed travel trailer. We will be celebrating our anniversary this year once again in the Straits Area camping at Wilderness State Park in our own travel trailer. We'll be joined this time by family and friends to help celebrate the occasion.



## POWER OF PRAYER

Would you like to be on the Intercessory Prayer rotation? Intercessory Prayer takes place during the worship services, usually in the Church Office but can be done in the peace of your Home during this unique pandemic. There is much to be said about the power of two or three gathered in His name; therefore, you are welcome to ask someone to join you if you wish. Prayer focus is on behalf of the Pastor. Guidelines are provided that cover difficulties Pastors face today, such as loneliness, stress, feelings of inadequacy, depression, and spiritual struggles and doubt. Therefore, we are in need of a few Intercessory Prayer readers for the following dates:

- \* 8/2
- \* 8/9
- \* 9/27
- \* 10/4
- \* 11/22
- \* 11/29



Indicate your willingness to be on the rotation for morning worship by contacting the Church Office at [spartaumc@spartaumc.com](mailto:spartaumc@spartaumc.com). Thank you!



**HAPPY 67 WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**  
 On July 25, 67 years ago, Roger and Joyce Osbeck said, "I do" and has lived happily ever after since!



*Congratulations from your friends at Sparta UMC!*

**SUNDAY ATTENDANCE**

Please keep in mind, attendance numbers only reflect those who are in physical attendance on Sunday. Since our Facebook Livestream lacks the ability to accurately tell us who was in attendance for the whole service, those numbers will not be used, for now.

**We are in need of a volunteer who can physically attend worship every Sunday to do a proper attendance count each week for attendance and reporting purposes.** If this is something you're interested in, please email Ari at [spartaumc@spartaumc.com](mailto:spartaumc@spartaumc.com). Thanks!



**Sunday attendance in review (past 4 weeks):**

- 6/28 - 54
- 7/5 - No Attendance Reported
- 7/12 - 50
- 7/19 - No Attendance Reported



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY JEANNE DRIER**  
 Happy Birthday Jeanne on Thursday, July 23! Even though our physical Office is temporarily closed, the virtual Office staff wanted to wish you a very happy birthday!

**Q2 GIVING STATEMENTS**

Quarter 2 giving statements will be emailed out later this week. You will see all of your donations starting from January 1 until the end of June. For those of you who are considered a SUMC Weekly Mailer (formally known as a Shut-In mailer), you will receive yours in the mail later this week as well.



If you notice any mistakes or have any questions, please email Arieal at [spartaumc@spartaumc.com](mailto:spartaumc@spartaumc.com). Thank you!

**DON'T FORGET!**

Don't forget to send your prayer requests online via our [spartaumc.com](http://spartaumc.com) webpage! Click the "Prayer Request" tab at the top of the page. From there you will need to complete the prayer request form and click submit. You will receive a confirmation email that says we received your prayer.



**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 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.

**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)

**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](http://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.

**SUNDAY WEATHER**

Please keep in mind that if it is likely to rain on a Sunday, there will be no in-person worship. Announcements for cancellations only, will be made through our NewsFlash emailing list and on our Facebook and Website pages on Sunday mornings by 9 AM.



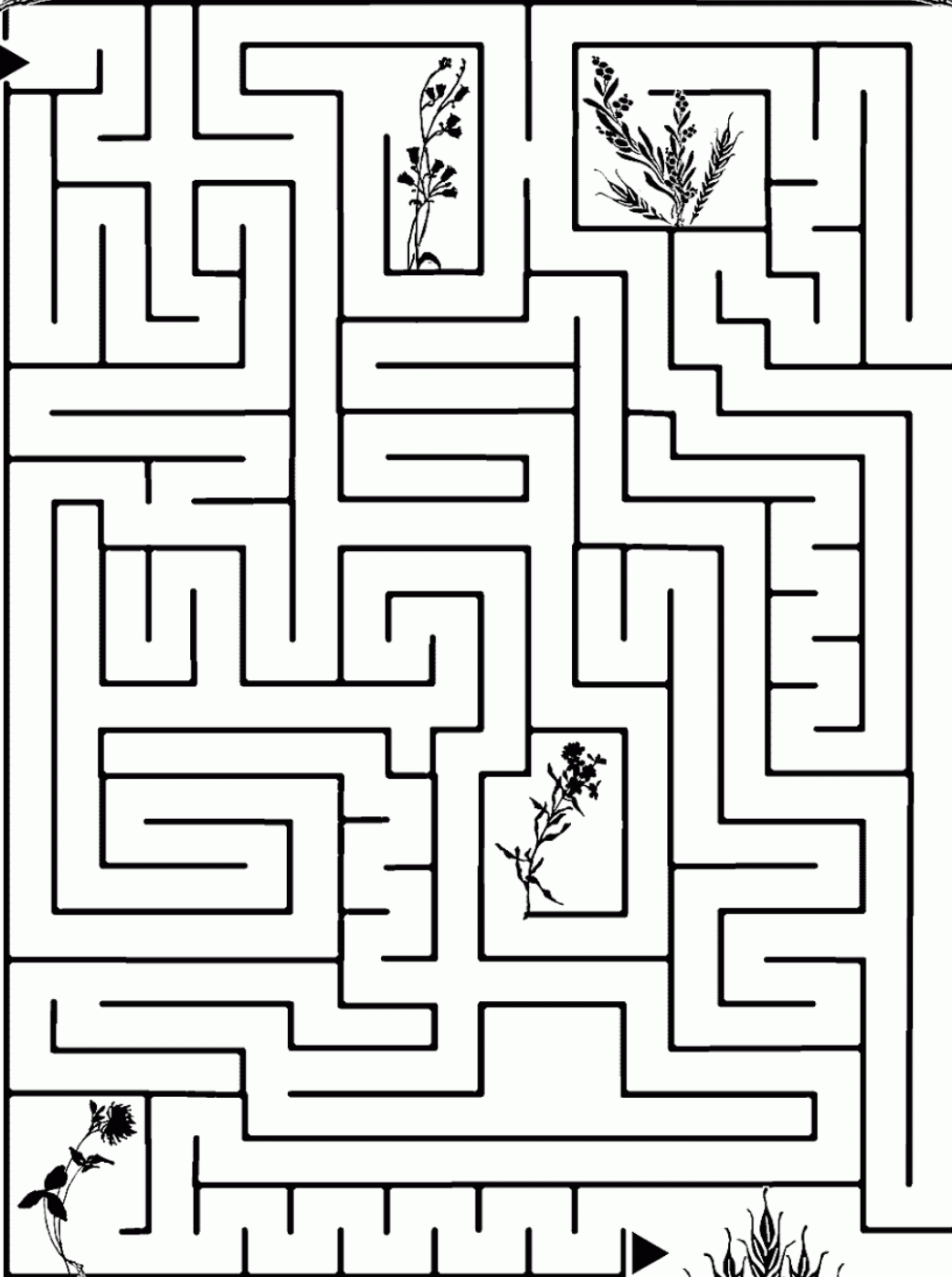
# ~ Kids Korner ~

Variable

## The Wheat and the Weeds

Help the owner of the field separate the wheat from the weeds.

START



Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was like a man who sowed his field with quality wheat seed. While he was sleeping his enemy crept in and sowed weeds. Rather than risk hurting the wheat he chose to let them grow together until harvest time. Then the reapers gathered the weeds to be burned and gathered the wheat into the barn.

