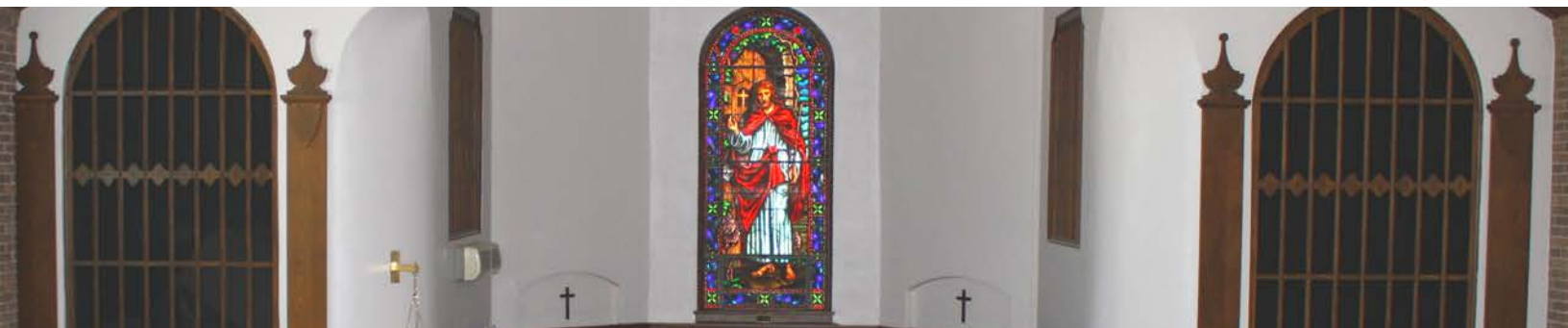


NEWSFLASH

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



PASTOR'S PHIL'S WIFE, GAIL, TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE

Pastor Phil is greatly relieved to hear that Gail will receive the new COVID-19 vaccine next week. Many of you already know that Gail, a Spectrum medical provider (PA-C), has been serving COVID patients during the pandemic. As a specialist in endocrinology, Gail works to keep hospital patients with diabetes as stable as possible. Diabetes is a risk factor that is present with many of the sickest COVID patients. Gail's splits her time between seeing patients in the office (some virtually from the parsonage) and in the hospital.

Like everyone in this first vaccine phase, Gail will receive her treatment (Pfizer/BioNTech) in two parts. Her first shot will come the day after Christmas, and the second on January 16th. Gail and Pastor Phil are very confident in the science behind the vaccination program. Although Pastor Phil will not be able to receive his vaccination for a while, he is highly encouraged that so many of those in desperate need will soon have the protection they need. "I hope everyone will receive this vaccination. We will conquer this pandemic as we come together and use this miraculous tool given to us by our scientists," said Phil.



SUMC QUICK REEL

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



The Missions Team is looking for someone with a passion for outreach to help coordinate & facilitate the Feeding America Food Truck program. Please contact the Church Office or Mindy Tilli for more information.
Thank you!



SUNDAY ATTENDANCE IN REVIEW

11-22 - 46* peak views
11-29 - 45* peak views
12-6 - 44* peak views
12-13 - 43* peak views

attendance marked with an asterisk () is based off of our Facebook live stream's peak number of viewers.

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL GIFT TOTALS TO DATE:



WATER FOR LIFE
\$750

Alpaca: 1
Goats: 6
Sheep: 9
Pigs: 3
Ducks: 1
Flocks of Chicks: 8
Honeybees: 1

*This is an example of
a gift you could give!*

Give a gift that will help change the world! Please consider a gift from Heifer International and help struggling families lift themselves out of poverty. Items range from a share of a pig, sheep, or goat (\$10), to a water buffalo (\$250), to feeding a village (\$10,000). Thank you for making a difference.

PICTURE RE-TAKE DAY

Did you miss our SUMC Photo Directory picture days, back in November? No worries! Picture re-take day is next month, January 11. Scheduling information will be provided next year.

GRIEFSHARE

Griefshare has ended for the year. They will start another 13 week session starting on February 2, 2021. Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings.

GIVING TREE UPDATE

The United Methodist Community House of Grand Rapids and the Dorcas Circle want to thank you for your very generous gifts that were donated this year! Four large bins of toys, books, hat, mittens and other items, along with some gift cards, were delivered last week Friday. They were so appreciative and thankful for your help!



2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2021 Offering Envelopes have arrived. To pick up next year's envelopes, swing by the Church Office on Friday, December 18, from 12-2 PM. There will be more opportunities to pick these up, after the new year, so stay tuned to the flash for updates. If you have already left the Sparta area and need your envelopes mailed to your temporary address, please call Ari at 989-745-3492 and be sure to provide your correct mailing address.



NEXT BLESSING BRIGADE: DECEMBER 19 AT A NEW TIME

Once again, everyone is invited to join the fun and be part of the next “Blessings Brigade” drive-by parade. It is this Saturday, December 19 and we will be visiting Roger & Joyce Osbeck and Tudy Middleton, who live on the same street and who are only about 5 minutes from our Church. We are switching to an earlier time in hopes that more people can participate. We will meet in the Church parking lot at 10:00 AM and leave at 10:15 AM.

Joyce & Roger moved to Sparta in 1991. They left their farm near Muskegon and built their retirement home here in Sparta. They raised 5 sons on the farm (one son is deceased). Joyce, a retired elementary teacher, is currently a member of Mary Martha Circle.

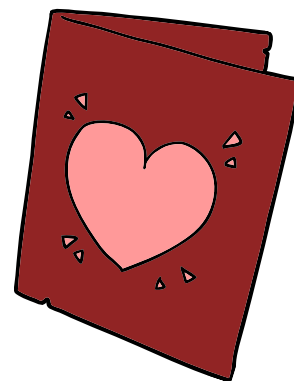
Tudy and her husband Clare first moved to Sparta in 1968, but then moved around West Michigan several times for Clare’s job with Michigan Bell Telephone Company. Their two sons, Doug & Denny, graduated from Sparta High School and live in the area. Clare passed away October of 2019. Tudy is also a member of Mary Martha Circle.

The CareLine committee’s goal is to show God’s love by keeping the lines of communication open during this time of uncertainty and into the future. We hope you will join us on the 19. *The smiles (no masks when people are in their cars) are contagious!*



2021 PLEDGE CARDS

Don't forget to return your 2021 pledge cards to the Church Office. These will help our Church Leaders forecast what our 2021 finances may look like. Thank you!



CAN YOU HELP?

Denny Knappen, Trustee Chair head, is looking for hard working, faithful members to join the Trustee Council. No experience is needed, just a great work ethic is preferred. If interested, please call Denny at 616-225-8359. Thank you!

HAPPY 94TH BIRTHDAY, DORIS!

Doris Eadie will be celebrating her 94th birthday on December 21! If you have time to make her day, please send a card to:

Doris Eadie
Rest Haven Home
1424 Union NE, Rm 509
Grand Rapids MI 49505

Thank you so much for taking the time to wish her a Happy Birthday this year! God Bless!

This Sunday will be the fourth Sunday of Advent. This candle is the Candle of Peace. The candle of Peace is purple. When we light it, it reminds us that the birth of Baby Jesus brought Peace to our world. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. The last candle in the center of our Advent Wreath is the Christ Candle. It is white and it is lit on Christmas Eve. It reminds us to celebrate the birth of Jesus and the light that Jesus brought to the darkness of our world.

Keep working on your Christmas crafts and send pictures of them to our Church Office (spartaumc@spartaumc.com) or message us on our Facebook page. Also, remember to watch the Kid Wonder video each week and follow the story in your Family Activity Book. Have a very Merry Christmas!

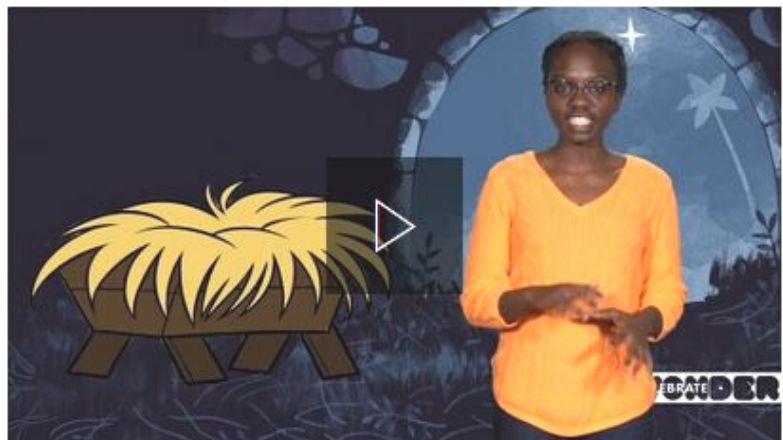


Mary Ellen and her helpers delivered Christmas craft projects and the Celebrate Wonder workbooks to families this past week. If you didn't receive one, please contact the Church Office (989-745-3492).

CELEBRATE WONDER LESSON 12/20: JESUS BRINGS JOY

We finally get to celebrate the greatest joy of all—the birth of Jesus! But this joy did not come easily. There were a lot of surprises, confusion, and changes that led to this miraculous birth. As seen in today's story...

CLICK
ON
VIDEO FOR
LESSON



A NOTE FOR PARENTS...

Did you know that you can access the Celebrate Wonder weekly lessons right here, from our [NewsFlash](#)? If you'd like to join our weekly emailing, please email spartaumc@spartaumc.com and ask to be added. Also, please join us at 9:50 AM every Sunday on our [Facebook page](#). Our Celebrate Wonder Children's Program will be live streamed right before our Sunday Service begins.

THE BIRTH STORY OF JESUS...

CHRISTMAS EVE AT SPARTA UMC

It has become clear that because of the pandemic we will not be able to gather in our sanctuary on Christmas Eve this year. There are so many things we will miss: the wonderful music, the excited children, and the full church. It's hard to imagine that anything meaningful can replace these traditions which go back as far as many of us can remember. However, we believe we have a plan that will be deeply meaningful for our church family, while also reaching out to the whole Sparta community.

On Christmas Eve (from 6 PM to 8 PM) there will be a beautiful nativity scene set up (outside) in front of our church. We will have instrumental Christmas music playing in the background while the Luke version of the birth of Jesus is read (live) by people from our church. This reading is about 7 or 8 minutes long and will be repeated throughout the evening. We are seeking volunteers to take turns reading. We may also play some vocal music between some of the readings.

There will be a couple of activities for those who stop to see and listen:

1. They will be able to light a votive candle to add their personal light to the beauty of our crèche.
2. They will also be able to fill out a prayer card which will be added to our Sunday service prayers, in the weeks that follow.



CHECK THIS OUT!
Pastor Phil does a lot to bring special elements to our Sunday Worship experience. Here, he is making part of our Christmas Eve display.

This event will also be live streamed so that those who are unable to attend can still virtually stop by. Those who are away from Sparta for the holiday (or winter) will also be able to tune in to our Facebook page to warm their hearts with a little bit of home.

Ways you can help with our Christmas Eve service:

- Setup crew: 2:00 PM, Christmas Eve Day
- Readers: 15 minutes slots (between the hours of 6 & 8 PM)

If you would like to assist, please call or text
Pastor Phil at 616-799-4281 or Arieal at 989-745-3492.

PRAYER REQUESTS & PEOPLE NEWS

Please take a moment and pray for all children, all across our world.

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



REMEMBERING OUR BELOVED MEMBERS

In the next two weeks, SUMC would like to pay tribute to our dearly missed SUMC friends and members who have recently passed. In our world of pandemic, many memorial services have been placed on hold, until it's safer to gather in-person. In our efforts to feel connected in our sorrow, our Church Leaders felt that sharing the obituaries of our missed ones, that we will be able to gain a better sense of fellowship and healing, during our most separated of times.

If you have a story that you'd like to share with the rest of our congregation and emailing readers, please email it to Ari at spartaumc@spartaumc.com or give her a call at 989-745-3492. Thank you!



Gordon L. Ostman

3/5/1931 - 11/12/2020 (of Sparta and Newaygo)

Gordon Lee Ostman, age 89, passed away peacefully at his home in Newaygo, Michigan, on Thursday, November 12, 2020. He was born in Sparta, Michigan to Edmund and Effie (Dykhouse) Ostman on March 5, 1931. Gordy grew up in Sparta and graduated from Sparta High School, where he was all-conference in basketball and football. He was also a member of the Sparta Athletic Hall of Fame. After graduating from Michigan State University, Gordy proudly served his country in the US Army, where he was an artillery and security officer during the Korean War. After discharge from the service, Gordy moved back to Sparta where he owned and ran Ostman Floral for 35 years. In his retirement, he wintered in Florida and later moved to Kimball Lake, in Newaygo. Gordy was president of the Sparta Area School Board, president of the Sparta Lions Club and served on many other boards in Michigan and Florida. He was proud to be a member of the Ft. Myer's Beach Veteran's Club and the Ft. Myer's Yacht Club. Gordy loved family gatherings at the lake, playing card games, listening to spiritual music, all sports and boating in the gulf. Gordy is survived by his sons, Dr. David (Rhonda) Ostman, Doug (Sally) Ostman; grandchildren, Taylor and Jake Siegel, Jade; significant other, Charlene Winegarden and her family; special friend, Nick Westcott; brother, Eugene "Joe" Ostman; sister, Patricia Ostman; in-laws, Jerry (Kathy) Bos, Pat Uecker; and many nieces and nephews. Gordy was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Arlene in 2004; granddaughter, Kendall Michelle; sister, Doris Ostman; and several in-laws.





Dorothy Shepard

5/8/1936 - 11/13/2020 of Sparta

Dorothy Elena Shepard, age 84, passed away at Spectrum Health Butterworth on Friday, November 13, 2020. She was born in Grand Haven, Michigan. She was born on May 8, 1936 to Roy Ritter and Jessie Elena Roe. She grew up in Grand Rapids and moved to Sparta, Michigan after her marriage to Donald Shepard in 1960, where she lived the rest of her life until 2010. She was a life-long member of Sparta United Methodist Church. Dorothy loved to sew, knit and crochet. She found joy in canning the vegetables and fruits from her garden. But mostly, she loved her family, spending time with them and playing games with her grandchildren. Dorothy is survived by her children, Denise (Terry) Mercer and David (Lori) Shepard; grandchildren, Danette Hammer, Gregory (Karlee) Shepard and Cody (Alicia) Shepard; and several nieces and nephews. Dorothy was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Donald; and her son-in-law, Daniel Hammer.



Janet M. Bassett

12/25/1935 - 11/19/2020 of Sparta

Janet Marie Bassett passed away November 19, 2020 at the age of 84. A long-time resident of Sparta, she was born on December 25, 1935 in Rockford, where she grew up. After graduating Rockford High School, she married Victor Jud Bassett of Cedar Springs in 1954. Married over 63 years, they raised four children in the home they built together, near Sparta. She was preceded in death by her husband, Victor, and grandsons, James Soules and Brent Bassett. Janet is survived by her children, Jill Marie West of Van Horn TX, Todd (Roxanne) Bassett of Howard City MI, Jane (Michelle Stuart) Bassett of Ann Arbor MI, and Ted (Kristie) Bassett of Sparta MI. She leaves behind nine grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Janet was a long time member of the Sparta United Methodist Church where she directed choirs and provided special music. She was a soloist at many area weddings and memorial services. Janet will be remembered for her beautiful voice, competitive spirit, great cooking, and dedication to her family and many friends. A memorial service is anticipated to be held in the spring of 2021, when the pandemic restrictions are lifted.





SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Our Church Leaders decided to suspend in-person worship until further notice. The information provided below is simply for informational purposes only. Thank you!

December 20

Soundboard & PowerPoint:

- Brandon Ingersoll
- Dave Steenhagen

Intercessory Prayer on behalf of the Pastor:

- Carla VanAsselt

Scripture Reader:

- Tena Stuhan

December 27

Soundboard & PowerPoint:

- Brandon Ingersoll
- Dave Steenhagen

Intercessory Prayer on behalf of the Pastor:

- Paul Schulz

Scripture Reader:

- Julie Levandoski



WESLEY HALL WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Though our buildings remain closed for in-person worship, our Wesley Hall space remains open for groups of 10 people or less. Below is that schedule or to view online, click [here](#). If you'd like to request this space, please fill out an [online form](#) or email Ari at spartaumc@spartaumc.com

Monday: AA 7 PM

Tuesday: AA 12 PM

Wednesday: AA 7 PM

Thursday: AA 7 PM

Friday: AA 12 PM

Saturday: *see online calendar for availability*

Sunday: AA 2 PM

DECEMBER VIRTUAL OFFICE CLOSINGS

The Virtual Church Office will be closed Thursday, December 24 **and** Friday, December 25 for the Christmas Holiday. The Office will also be closed Thursday, December 31 **and** January 1, for the New Year. During that time, please contact Pastor Phil (616-799-4281) with any questions. **Thank you!**

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE SCHEDULE

**The times listed below are approximates. We run a real-time live stream, so starting times may change throughout any given service.*

9:50 Celebrate Wonder Children's Programming

9:55 Powerpoint Announcements

10:00 Gathering Music

10:10 Welcome & Pastoral Announcements

10:15 Call To Worship & Opening Song

10:20 Opening Prayers

10:23 Children's Time & Song

10:25 Prayers of the People

10:30 Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

10:35 Scripture Lesson: Luke 1:26-38

10:38 Message from Pastor Phil: *Should I Still Go Down*

11:00 Closing Song & Dismissal with Blessing



FOUR EASY WAYS TO GIVE

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.