

NEWSFLASH

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



HEIFER INTERNATIONAL GIFT TOTALS TO DATE:



- Alpaca: 1
- Goats: 5
- Sheep: 9
- Pigs: 3
- Ducks: 1
- Flocks of Chicks: 7
- Honeybees: 1

This is an example of a gift you could give!

ALPACA

FULL \$150 | SHARE \$20

Please consider supporting Heifer International this Christmas season.

Your gift of an animal in honor of a loved one will help families across the world pull themselves out of crushing poverty. These gifts provide nutritious food and help parents earn a steady income. Thank you for giving a gift that will help others for years to come. For more information, please contact the Church Office or Mindy Tilli (616-644-2373).

GIVING TREE...LAST CHANCE!

Giving Tree items are due to the Church by Wednesday, December 9. Items and donations will be delivered to the United Methodist Community House in Grand Rapids on Thursday, December 10, by Mindy Tilli. Thank you for supporting those in need! If you have any questions, please be sure to contact Mindy at 616-644-2373.

SUMC QUICK REEL

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



Want to get involved? Missions is looking for a volunteer to help kick off a special project for 2021. Contact the Church Office or Mindy Tilli at 616-644-2373 for more info!



December Virtual Office Closings:
December 24 & 25
December 31 & January 1



SUNDAY ATTENDANCE IN REVIEW

- 11-15 - 43* peak views
- 11-22 - 46* peak views
- 11-29 - 45* peak views
- 12-6 - 44* peak views

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

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.



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 say a special prayer for all COVID response & hospital workers.

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





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. On Saturday, December 19 we will visit Roger & Joyce Osbeck and Tudy Middleton, who live on the same street and 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.

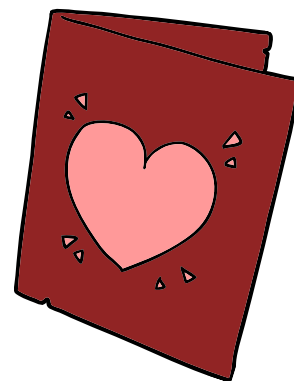
Joyce & Roger moved to Sparta in 1991. They left their farm near Muskegon and built their retirement home here in Sparta. They raised 5 sons on the farm (one son is deceased). Joyce, a retired elementary teacher, is currently a member of Mary Martha Circle.

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!*

ARE YOU READY?

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!

DORCAS CIRCLE

will **not** be meeting next week. Please consider a donation to the Compassion Fund. As that was what our White Elephant Auction was to help raise funds for.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Don't see your birthday? Email your birthday (mm/dd/yyyy) to Ari at spartaumc@spartaumc.com. Thank you!

Dec. 1 Bonnie Shupe
Myla Bemke

Dec. 3 Sally Tobey

Dec. 13 Stephanie Rienks
Marcia Thompson

Dec. 16 Kailey Spetosky

Dec. 20 Jasmyn Marks
Darrel Miller

Dec. 21 Nancy Christopher
Doris Eadie
Mike Modderman
Jack DeGlopper

Dec. 27 Steve Miling

Dec. 30 Amy Brillinger

2021 STEWARDSHIP LETTER

This year Renee Miles, SUMC Finance Chair, addressed over 150 envelopes (that even included return envelopes that were stamped and labeled for return) to kick off our 2021 Stewardship campaign. As of now, everyone should have received their letter in the mail. If you have not, please call Ari at 989-745-3492.

These pledge cards will help our Church Leaders forecast what our 2021 finances may look like. Please try to get your pledge in the mail at your earliest convenience.

Don't forget! Another popular way to give on a regular basis is electronically. On the 10 of every month, the Church will automatically make your monthly contribution for you, directly from your bank account (and it will go straight to the Church's account). Authorization forms are available and can be requested by calling Ari at 989-745-3492.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES

The 2021 Offering Envelopes have arrived. To pick up next year's envelopes, swing by the Church Office either on Friday, December 11 or 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.

GIRLTALK ON PAUSE

GirlTalk is taking a break from gathering, in-person, until further notice. Due to the Michigan Governor's orders and the fact that our Church Leaders have chosen to suspend in-person worship, as well. The group will be on pause until at least January 8, 2021. GirlTalk will decide where to go from there as new guidelines and recommendations are issued. Hopefully, GirlTalk will be kicking it back into gear soon. If anyone has any questions, feel free to give Bonnie Wilkinson a call at 616-887-8625. Thank you!

This Sunday, December 13 will be the third Sunday of Advent. The Candle this Sunday will be the Candle of Joy. The Candle of Joy is pink. The first two candles were purple. The Candle of Joy celebrates the Joy the birth of Jesus brought to the world on Christmas Eve. If you need extra paper rolls or tubes, there are some in the tote outside the Church Office.



Also Kids, watch for the delivery later this week of a Christmas Craft for you to enjoy making and to help you celebrate Christmas this year! Each of you will receive a special craft which will be dropped off to your house, if possible, by a member of our church. Have fun celebrating the birth of Jesus! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
- From Your Sparta Methodist Friends!

CELEBRATE WONDER LESSON 12/13: JOSEPH'S JOY

In today's Bible story, we find Joseph in a tough position. His soon-to-be wife is unexpectedly pregnant. Now Joseph must make a decision to marry her or to call off the engagement. While Joseph is contemplating this hard choice...

(to continue the lesson, click on the video image below)

CLICK
ON
VIDEO



DON'T FORGET!

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.



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 13

Soundboard/PowerPoint:

- Brandon Ingersoll
Intercessory Prayer on behalf of the Pastor:
- Cindy Young
Scripture Reader:
- Sheila Pederson

December 20

Soundboard/PowerPoint:

- Brandon Ingersoll
Intercessory Prayer on behalf of the Pastor:
- Carla VanAsselt
Scripture Reader:
- Tena Stuhan

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, GriefShare 6 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: Matthew 2:1-12
- 10:38 Message from Pastor Phil: *Signs of Seekers*
- 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.