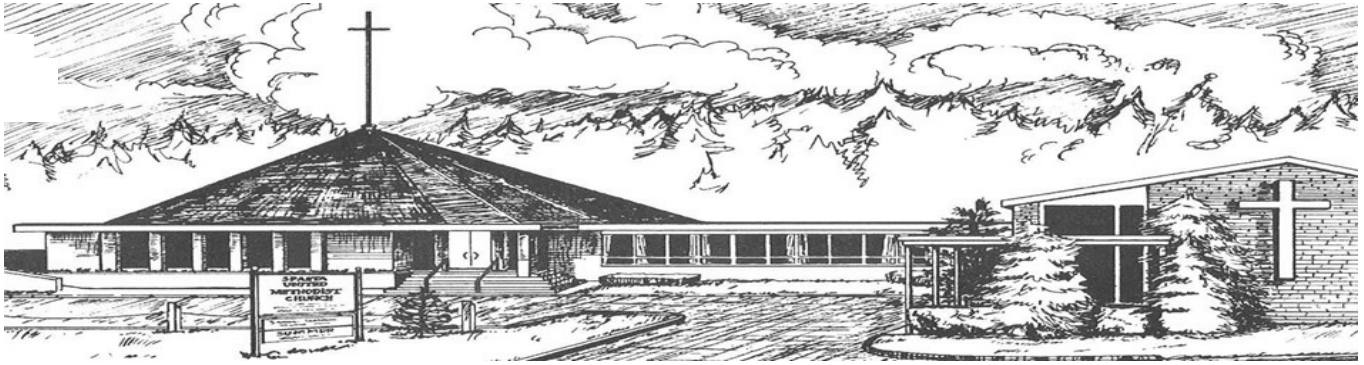


SPARTA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



NEWSLETTER March 2020

The Lenten journey has begun. This is a time for regeneration of our spiritual lives and reconnecting our hearts to the heart of God. Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness where he was tempted, but each of the temptations recorded in the scriptures were more importantly a time of discernment of his mission: a mission that led to the cross but culminated in resurrection. The people of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years where they were formed as a people. It was a journey that culminated in their entrance into the promised land. Over the next 40 days, it is my prayer that we as a congregation will use this time for formation as followers of Christ and discernment for how we will live out our discipleship in an ever complex and challenging world.

While we have plenty of opportunities to learn about life in the Spirit, we also need opportunities to simply live in the Spirit, practicing the disciplines such as prayer and fasting, generosity, worship and service, sacraments, hospitality and Sabbath rest. These ancient and yet very contemporary practices help us to connect our hearts to the heart of God, and lead us to peace and wholeness. It is a pathway to new life in Christ.

My hope is that you will take every opportunity to worship, pray, and grow in the Spirit. In the midst of what is a very busy life for us all, I am sure you will be richly rewarded.

In Christ,

Steve

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SUMC
YOUTH &
SUNDAY
SCHOOL

MARCH

2020

Upcoming Events

Sunday School: Mar. 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th

Youth Group Event: Sunday, March 8th - IGNITE
@ Trinity UMC in Hackettstown, NJ 5-8 pm
(Dinner, activities, worship, small groups)

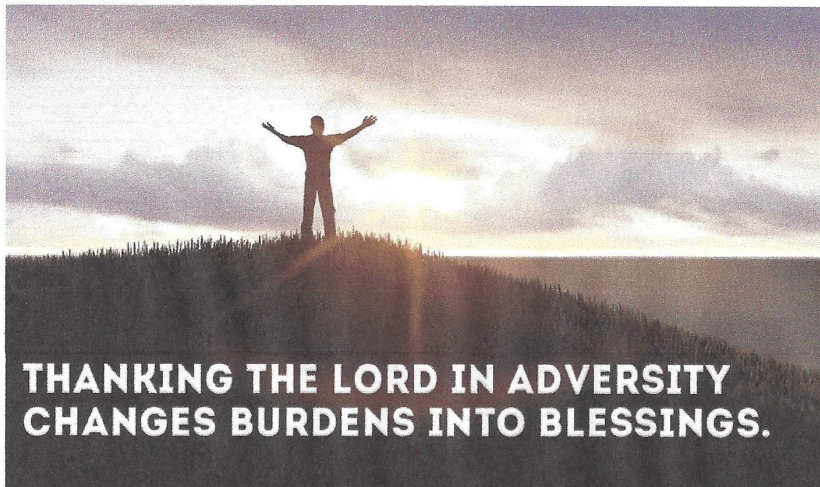
Survival Skills Youth Workshop: Sun. March
22nd @ 1-2 pm, led by Bill Haas



Event Invitations
sent via text using
Hobnob!



Spread the gift of a smile 😊



SPARTA UMC

71 S SPARTA AVE. SPARTA, NJ 07871

Worship



CONTEMPLATIVE SERVICES
Every Wednesday during Lent at 12:15 p.m.
and 7:00 p.m.

Vacation Bible School



SAVE THE WEEK FOR VBS!!!

August 3-7...for all children ages 4 years-8th grade.

12 year olds through rising 8th graders will again "travel" and become mission workers in the community.

High School helpers and adults are needed for planning, decorating, clean up, supervising, and teaching.

Please see Pat Schutz or Melissa Lambert if you are willing to help.

We NEED YOU!

Get Connected

STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP AT SPARTA

Beyond the Basics (Exploring the Mysteries) Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday mornings at 7:00 a.m.:

Men's Study & Reflection at the Sparta Diner!

Reading Together Bible Study: Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

Monday Night Study Group: Monday Evenings at 7:00 p.m.

Opportunities to Serve

There are Endless ways to be of service:

Join the Chancel Choir or Bell Choir, Be a liturgist, Make dinner for a family, Help with Feed the Body/Feed the Soul, Help with Family Promise, Help in the Thrift Shop, Help at Manna House, and/or Skylands Outreach Depot, Take Worship to Knoll View

MARCH WORSHIP LEADERS

	<u>8:30 a.m.</u>	<u>10:30 a.m.</u>	<u>Children's Message</u>
March 1	Debbie Gilone	Mike Vrabel	Beth & Emma Deery
March 8	Debbie Gilone	Jim Sodt	Debbie Dickerson
March 15	Donna Scott	Yvonne Roux	Mike Batche
March 22	Donna Scott	Sue Baldini	Pat Schutz
March 29	Donna Scott	Sean Jans	Kathy Scehovic

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE Bring snacks for fellowship!

March 1

Cullen & Laura Kempson

John & Susan Appaluccio
 Mike & Kerri Batche
 Jason Howard
 Rich & Ruth Kelley
 Edna Moriarty
 Joseph & Noelle Riesenman
 Harry & Linda Tappen
 Betty Woodginski

March 8

Chris & Jenny Deery

David & Heather Acker
 Laura Ammaturo
 Mary Burke
 Barry & Lynn Higgins
 M.J. Hummers
 Bill & Linda Pohlmann
 Lois Sorensen

March 15

Steve Magnotta & Yvonne Roux

Craig & Martha Berghahn
 Hugh & Eileen Krone
 Scott & Kim Noel
 Laura Pomeisl
 Beth Sheldon

March 22

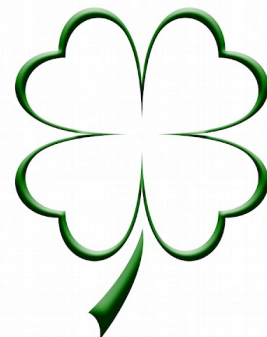
Kathy Scehovic

Ken Kolkebeck & Merry Mans
 Becky Kotrba
 Lois Manigian
 Sam Meo
 Ryan & Katrina Schutz
 Brian & Kelly Stites

March 29

Rich & Allison Sidoli

Linda Brower
 Gary & Kathy Gelston
 Anthony & Jennifer Hutchison
 Adam & Tara Lavalley
 Ann Freeman Price
 Betty Van Orden



Church Mouse Thrift Shop



March may come in like a lion but will go out like a lamb! Spring is coming to the Church Mouse Thrift Shop.



First, we have our famous Bag Sale from March 11-14. Everything, yes everything, you can stuff in one of our bags is \$5.00 per bag! And no limit to the number of bags you can buy! Larger items will all be half price.

Then, we have our clean up and change-over day, and on March 18th our transformation will be complete. Spring clothing, home decorations, Easter items, bunnies and baskets, floral arrangements, and potting vases will be ready for you.



Come on down. You'll be glad you did! And, as always, all our proceeds to towards Missions.

Store Hours:

Wednesday: 10-2, Thursday: 1-4, Friday: 1-4, Saturday: 10-2

Spring Forward

Daylight Savings Time
Sunday, March 8th

Remember to set
your clocks !!



Church & Society

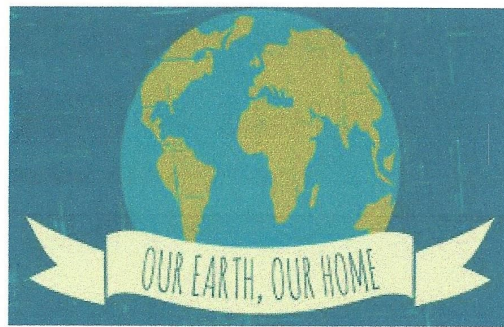


The Church and Society Committee
of the Sparta United Methodist Church

Pursuing Peace; Seeking Justice; Living Faith.

COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF EARTH DAY

PARTICIPATE IN SUMC'S ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR
SUNDAY, MAY 3RD, COFFEE HOUR



According to the book of *Genesis*, throughout the feverish process of creating the earth, God looked out and declared that all was “good.” As citizens and stewards of this planet, we need to ensure that God is able to continue to assess that all is “good.” It’s up to us. God created it, and it’s now our job to keep it.

The Church and Society committee and the United Methodist Women are planning an environmental fair to mark the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Immediately following the worship service, displays and information will be available in Demarest Hall to share ideas, information, and tips to help us preserve this precious, fragile gift. ALL ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE!!!! If you have any information you’d like to share and you’re willing to make it available on May 3rd, please speak to any member of the Church and Society committee or the United Methodist Women. For example, what you offer can be as far-ranging as tips to reduce our use of plastic that you have found valuable, gardening with native plants, reducing the use of fossil fuels in our own homes, or preserving and respecting our wildlife. The possibilities are limitless. We need your help.

Wanted: ideas and willingness to share them. No idea is insignificant. All groups and individuals are welcome. If you have questions, suggestions, or possibilities for a display, please contact Kim Noel (kimberlynoel@gmail.com) / (973) 512-3350 or Sandy Svenningsen (sandra.svenningsen@gmail.com) / (201) 317-4493).

Butterfly Garden



What is going on in the back field of the church? Why is a portion of the field not being mowed? Wellseveral church members and youth have been planting a garden for butterflies and other pollinators. In order to thrive, butterflies and pollinating insects need native plants including milk weed, flowers and tall grasses. We began the garden last summer, but it will take several years for it to fully develop. This fall, 1,000s of seeds were planted and mulch applied in an effort to encourage additional native flowers and milk weed to grow. The goal is be able to become certified as an official Monarch Way Station, making us a part of a nationwide network of gardens designed to provide sanctuary to Monarch butterflies during their migration south. Butterflies and other pollinating insects are critical to the production of food. Nearly 80% of all food crops require pollination. This is another one of Sparta UMC's efforts to support a healthy planet.

Any and all assistance is welcome! How can I help? If you have any native plants or seeds to contribute, please feel free to add them or bring in. In addition, if you would like to paint any signs describing what is happening, those are welcome also. An example is "Pollination in progress!" Reach out to me with any questions. Thank you! Kimberly Noel

Confirmation Class

Confirmation Classes to Begin this Spring

Pastor Steve will be starting a confirmation program for our young people beginning after Easter with a target of confirmation in the early fall. Confirmation is the time when

young people affirm the vows made on their behalf at the time of their baptism, or a time for young people who have not been baptized to profess their faith themselves and make a commitment to be an active and integral part of the faith community. There will be a gathering of youth and parents to go over the program and set a flexible schedule that takes into consideration the varying commitments that our young people have.



While there is no specific age requirement, this class is recommended for young people from 6th grade and up at the time of confirmation. Class content and process will be developed based on the ages of those who are interested. Young people who are interested in becoming professing members of the church should let him know during the month of March at (pastor@spartaumc.org or 973-214-1698).

Ministry Opportunities for Lent

Worshipping God Together

Contemplative Worship in Lent

Every Wednesday at 12:15 and 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Contemplative Worship is a time of deep listening, of waiting in silence as God speaks to us.

Our church's Labyrinth is available at all times. Located in back of the church behind the parking lot, feel free to come and experience this pilgrim journey as you walk the Labyrinth in prayer.

Sunday Morning Worship

8:30 Service includes Communion every Sunday

10:30 Service includes music from the choir, a children's message, with communion celebrated on the 1st Sunday of the month.

Learning and Growing Together

Sunday Morning Adult Class – Beyond the Basics meets from 9:30 – 10:30 in Room 8

Monday Night Group – Currently reading and discussing Brian McClaren's *Naked Spirituality* – from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. in the Wesley Room

Men's Breakfast Study – 7:00 a.m. at the Sparta Diner.

Reading Together Study Group – Wednesday's at 10:30 in the Wesley Room -- *24 Hours that Changed the World* – Book and Video Study –

Serving God and One Another

The 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month is our congregation's **Feed the Body-Feed the Soul** ministry. There is always a need for helpers to make and distribute lunches. A new element launched in Advent is the availability of communion, that those who come for physical sustenance might also have an opportunity to feast on the bread of life. Persons are needed to share the Bread of Life with our neighbors.

Rise Against Hunger Meal Packing – Saturday, March 21st in Demarest Hall. This conference wide meal packing event will be using our church for this one day event. People of all ages can help by coming for one of the three shifts during the day. Registration is needed, and can be found at <https://www.gnjumc.org/congregationalvitality/mission/yeswecan/> or during coffee hour at the church. Meal packing shifts are two hours each at 9, noon and 3.

First Friends of NY/NJ

Our Church and Society Committee and the United Methodist Women and collecting \$25.00 gift cards or funds towards them for persons served by First Friends. All are invited in practicing their generosity as they reach out to our sisters and brothers in need.

First Friends

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND A HELPING HAND



“At the George W. Bush Institute, we value the contributions of refugees. We support them through our work, and we are blessed to know and work with colleagues who were refugees. The U.S. welcomed them, and we are all richer because of it.”

(Displayed at the George W. Bush Presidential Institute; Dallas, Texas)

During this Lenten season, the United Methodist Women and the Church and Society committee are initiating a project to support Pastor Steve’s emphasis on the spiritual discipline of generosity. Last fall, these committees had sponsored at our church an information session open to the public with the executive director of First Friends of New Jersey and New York, an organization seeking to assist refugees. According to the **UN Convention** and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion...” cannot return to her/his home country.

First Friends reaches out to refugees and asylum seekers being held in the detention center in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and nearby facilities, while they await a hearing regarding their situation. When they are released from the detention center, they often lack the resources and the means to unite with their families here in the United States. First Friends provides much needed assistance. They seek to “uphold the inherent dignity and humanity of detained immigrants and asylum seekers.” They “provide compassion and hope through volunteer visitation, resettlement assistance, and advocacy.” (See firstfriendsnjny.org for more information.)

Our Sunday School children are assembling packets of stamps and stationery to donate as these refugees often have no way to communicate with their loved ones. The Vacation Bible School will be putting together backpacks that hold towels, socks, and toiletry items to be distributed to the detainees through First Friends. There is a bin in the narthex where you can donate any of these items.

Monetary donations are also being collected. **Checks should be made out to SUMC with “First Friends” noted in the memo line.** Envelopes labeled “First Friends” have been provided in the pews for you to place your checks, or you can simply make a notation on your pledge envelopes. All envelopes may be placed in the collection plate or brought to the church office. Thank you for considering this act of kindness and generosity.

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25:35)

United Methodist Women

Greater NJ Conference United Methodist Women

Present for their Spring Meeting

2 Corinthians 9: And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.



Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

Speaker: Dianna Morrison, Pathways to Prosperity

Sparta United Methodist Church
71 Sparta Ave, Sparta, NJ 07871

April 4, 9-2:00 PM

**Light Breakfast and Lunch, \$10.00 preregistered, \$15 at
the door**

RSVP by March 28 to holly.cyrus@faa.gov

United Methodist Women

March 16 and April 6 Are Next Meeting Dates for UMW BookWorms

We've got a plan for the year but it's been a rocky start. The UMW BookWorms will meet March 16 at 9:30 to discuss the book *Which Way Lord? Exploring Your Life's Purpose in the Journeys of Paul* by Rob Fuquay. This book helps you rediscover the truths that you are wonderfully made, created for purpose, and equipped to live a life of significance. On April 6 we will meet at 9:30 to discuss *How the Woman at the Well Became the Well Woman* by Donna Rhodes. This is a memoir about a woman with a past similar to the well woman that Jesus spoke with and how she pulls her life together again with faith and God's help.

Bookworms Books for the Rest of 2020

May 4 - Working Class Rage by Tex Sample
June 1 - The End of the Island by Jeffrey C. Tucker
July 6 - What Comes with the Dust by Gharbe M. Mustafa
Sept. 7 - Six by Ten by Taylor Pendergrass
Oct 5 - Still to be decided
Nov. 2 - Tears We Cannot Stop by Michael Dyson
Dec. 7 - The Aging of Aquarius by Helen Wilkes

UMW Board To Meet at 11am March 16 and April 6

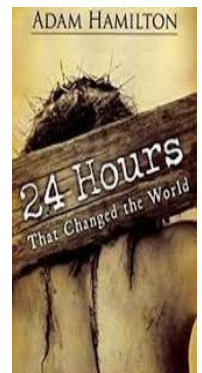
The Board of United Methodist Women will meet at 11am following the 9:30 meeting of the book group, both on Monday, March 16, and Monday, April 6th.

March 10 at 10 am Is Time For Healthier Living

Join us for information, health tips, wisdom, and for the laughs. That's what the Healthier Living group is turning out to be filled with—good spirit. At the February meeting one of the wisdom pieces was trust—and sometimes that's not easy. Another insight was a person who when in difficulty thinks of herself surrounded by light. And the last wonderful thought was the positive aspect of "it's good enough." Put another way you could say "Done is better than perfect." Now to get all of that plus laughter in one ninety-minute gathering is quite good. March 10 we will talk about chapter 13, 14, and 15 in our book, *Four Quadrant Living* and Ann will present Chapter 6 in the book *Healthy Living by Design* which is about sleep. So join us.

Reading Together/Bible Study

The Wednesday Study group will be beginning a Lenten series, *24 Hours that Changed the World*, by Adam Hamilton, for 6 weeks, beginning April 8th from 10:30 a.m. - Noon. There is a book (see Laura Kempson to order) and we will watch a video. We welcome all of you and hope if you are free during the day, you'll come. If you don't get the book, come anyway. No quizzes involved.





YES, WE CAN!

Pack a half million meals in one day? Nothing is impossible with Jesus.
There are more than 7 billion people in this world and more than 800 million of them are hungry. Everyone deserves an education and the opportunity to flourish - but in order to do this they need enough to eat.

JOIN US SATURDAY, MARCH 21

United Methodists of Greater New Jersey are partnering with *Rise Against Hunger*, to pack meals across the region, with the goal of packing 500,000 meals in one day.

SIGN UP WITH YOUR CONGREGATION TODAY!

For information about individual sign ups, go to www.gnjumc.org



UNITED METHODISTS
OF GREATER NEW JERSEY