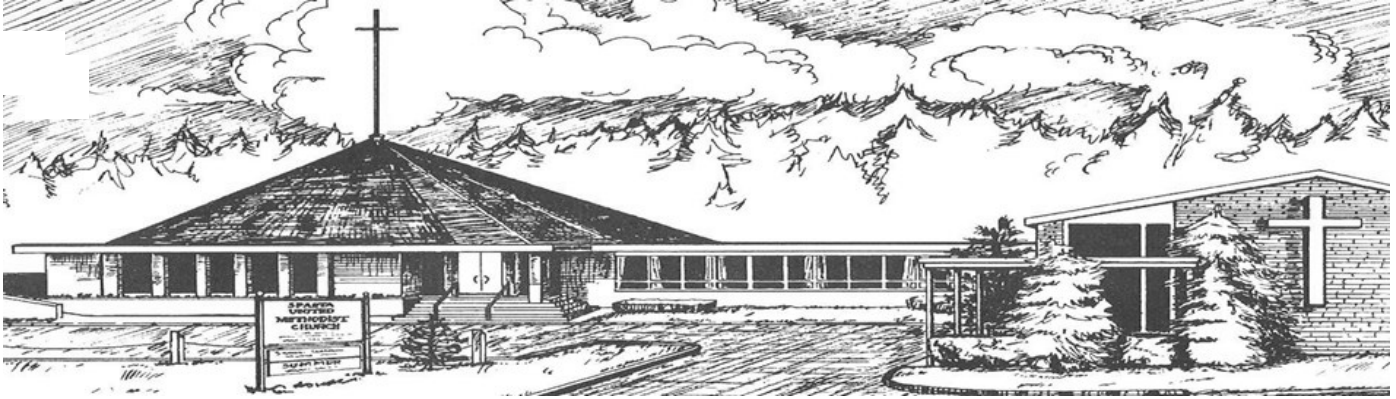


SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



NEWSLETTER October 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the rhythms of United Methodist life, we are in the Church Conference season. While recent years have seen church conferences become basically the annual business meeting, that was not always the case. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, called his traveling preachers together for a yearly conference that was filled with preaching, prayer, Bible Study, and discernment for where the people called Methodist would be going in the coming months ahead. There wasn't a lot of business to be done. The focus was on being open to the spirit of God working among the preachers, the class meetings, and Methodist gatherings and missions across Great Britain.

Today's conferences may not last as long or have the same kind of agenda, but the need for spiritual growth, discernment, and setting direction is just as essential for the 21st Century church as it was in the 18th century. With the change of the season so visible, it is a good time to think about what are the next right steps for us to take as a church. We are in a post-Covid world in the church. We find that in any given week, for each person who worships in person on a Sunday morning, 2 are worshipping with us on line. What are the right next steps to make our digital worship presence more accessible, dependable, and meaningful? Stewardship has been a concern, and while we have made some good progress in the past couple of months, there is a need for us to rethink the meaning of stewardship as a spiritual discipline and not simply a means of meeting a budget but also in giving of our talents and time in leadership in various ministries within the church. A third area of discernment and decision making should be focusing on updated communication. There was a time when newsletters and announcement pages were all we needed to communicate. Even email is becoming a challenge for getting the word out, and so new steps need to be in place to help us make sure the good news of Christ is shared as widely as possible.

In this season of conferencing and conferring, I hope that we can come together in all sorts of ways to hear how we can better let the good news of Christ be shared widely. Christ calls us to be transformers, to be change agents. Together we can take the next steps that will bring us into the coming years as a more effective and influential witness for Jesus.

In Christ,

Steve

2024 Annual Church Conference

Thursday, October 24, 2024

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. via ZOOM

Link and Reports will be available a week prior to the conference

All are invited – All Professing Members are able to Vote

Worship Information



Contemplative Worship
Wednesday, October 2nd
at 12:15 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Altar Flowers

Altar Flower Ministry

While the church has almost always had flowers decorating the altar, during the pandemic the Altar Flower Ministry was started to help keep the more vulnerable members of our community connected to the church.

Many thanks to all who donate flowers to decorate the altar each week! Special thanks to those who also donate them to share with someone who is going through tough times or who doesn't get out much! The ministry continues but is in need of help. Would you be willing to visit a shut-in, or someone recovering from surgery, or someone who is suffering a loss? Flowers can be delivered on Sunday or Monday. Contact Yvonne Roux if interested.

Donations of flowers are needed for November 3, 17 and 24, and December 8. Altar flowers cost \$30. We keep costs low by reusing containers and vases. Please pay the church directly, and include a message that the funds are for Altar Flowers and the date chosen.

When requesting flowers please provide your name, phone number, email address and dedication. Let us know if you plan to take the flowers after the 10:30 service, or if you want them delivered to someone needing a pick-me-up. Use this [link](#) to reserve your flowers.

Any questions? Contact Yvonne Roux, yrouxrings@gmail.com, or 973-534-6129.

Church Happenings



Sunday, October 6, 1:00-3:00 - Intergenerational Hike

Meet in the church parking lot at 1:00 to carpool over to the Sparta Glen. 2 mile hike, 600 foot elevation gain.

Beautiful views from the top

Craft Fair

Bakers Needed!

LOOKING FOR BAKERS TO DONATE THEIR GOODIES FOR A CHARITY EVENT FOR PFLAG SUSSEX COUNTY

LOOKING FOR INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED GOODIES

PLEASE INCLUDE A NOTE CARD WITH ALL INGREDIENTS

Craft Fair & Benefit Concert
Saturday October 12th
PFLAG 12PM-4PM
SUSSEX COUNTY

♥ SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
♥ 71 SPARTA AVE
SPARTA, NJ 07871

Please have goodies dropped off by 11:30am to morning of the craft fair by the pavilion at the church

Email Events@PFLAGSussexNJ.org for questions or inquiries

OCTOBER CRAFT FAIR

Be sure to check out the fall craft fair and concert to benefit PFLAG's efforts and advocacies to support LGBTQIA+ interests.

The fair will be held in the outdoor pavilion here at our church on **Saturday, October 12th** from **12 to 4 p.m.**, rain or shine.

For all Zoom Gatherings, you may use either the Video Link or the Phone in # with ID #

BEYOND THE BASICS - (ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL)

Sunday Mornings at 9:30 a.m. in Room 8

MONDAY NIGHT BOOK GROUP

We will be reading NY Times best-selling author Jim Wallis' newest book, *The False White Gospel* exploring a faithful response to the right of Christian nationalism in the United States. When we see a civic promotion of fear, hate, and violence, we need love, healing, and hope to stand against it. And that must involve all of us—religious or not. Learning to practice a politics of neighbor love will be central to the future of the nation.

For more information, see Pastor Steve

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/771970415?pwd=bFdUQk9YQUlyZXRhYUZnNVhRVEZvUT09>

HEALTHIER LIVING GROUP

Every TUESDAY Morning at 10:30 a.m. Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXqgjh6RICDFWN93I16_aMcguxF.I

Meeting ID: 852 9401 8790 Passcode: 389789

One tap mobile +16465588656,,85294018790#

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 Meeting ID: 852 9401 8790

WEDNESDAY MORNING MEN'S STUDY

Wednesday Mornings at 7:15 a.m.

Angelo's Franklin Diner

READING TOGETHER/BIBLE STUDY

Friday's at 10:00 a.m.

Unafraid

Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times
by Adam Hamilton

Join Zoom Video Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/389284226>

Alternate Phone in #: +1 646 876 9923; Meeting ID: 389 284 226 -- Passcode: 7773

SATURDAY PRAYERS & CONVERSATION GATHERING

Join a ZOOM gathering on Saturday mornings at 10:30 a.m. just to touch base and connect with others from the congregation just to check in and share with each other.

Join Zoom Video Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/826747498> Phone in #: +1 646 876 9923;

Meeting ID: 826 747 498—Passcode 7773

October 2024

Church & Society



The Church and Society Committee
of the Sparta United Methodist Church

Pursuing Peace; Seeking Justice; Living Faith

Congress Failed to Renew the Child Tax Credit

The September 2024 U.S. Census Bureau's annual report indicated a very sad statistic: Child Poverty in America tripled since 2021. Here is why:

In 2021 Congress passed legislation to expand the Child Tax Credit up to \$2,000 per child, a tax break to about 40 million families every year. According to the U.S. Census Bureau the expansion cut the rate of childhood poverty by half. However, Congress failed to renew the policy the following year, resulting on the largest increase in poverty in a single year. In January of this year, the House of Representatives passed the bill to expand the Child Tax Credit. However, the Senate voted on the bill in September (last month) and failed to pass it in a 48-44 vote. NJ Senator Cory Booker supported the bill.

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society joined several other faith leaders of a broad array of religious beliefs, urging members of Congress to “support and pass the bipartisan tax deal, expanding the Child Tax Credit to make a real difference in the lives of so many in our communities and for Americans of all faiths and religions.”

If you'd like to track this issue for our Church and Society Committee in the coming year, please contact Sandy Svenningsen at sandra.svenningsen@gmail.com.

OCTOBER PFLAG EVENTS



The **October 16th PFLAG meeting, beginning at 7 p.m.** in Demarest Hall, will be a book discussion on *Becoming Nicole* by Amy Ellis Nutt. When Wayne and Kelly Maines adopted identical twin boys, they thought their lives were complete. But by the time Jonas and Wyatt were toddlers, confusion over Wyatt's insistence that he was female began to tear the family apart. In the years that followed, the Maineses came to question their long-held views on gender and identity to accept Wyatt's transition to Nicole, and to undergo a wrenching transformation of their own, the effects of which would reverberate through their entire community. Pulitzer Prize –winning journalist Amy Ellis Nutt spent almost four years reporting this story and tells it with unflinching honesty, intimacy, and empathy. In her hand, *Becoming*

Nicole is more than an account of a courageous girl and her extraordinary family. It's a powerful portrait of a slowly but surely changing nation, and one that will inspire all of us to see the world with a little more humanity and understanding.

It is not necessary to read the book in order to participate in the discussion, but it would certainly enhance understanding of the situations if you have the time to read the book.

All are welcome to attend. Participants under 16 years of age must be accompanied by a parent.

Church & Society

ENVIRONMENTAL CORNER



New Jersey Bees Can't Smell!

Why Should We Care?

Bees are important pollinators that play a crucial role in creating our own food sources. They have an acute sense of smell which allows them to find their own food sources. Bees are having more and more difficulty doing so, however, due to high levels of air pollution that lessen their ability to detect food locations.

Pollution severely handicaps bees' ability to orient themselves, find food sources, and make their way back home.

What contributes to the pollution? Power plants, gas-powered vehicles, and lawn and garden equipment emit tons of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds into the atmosphere. Gas-powered garden equipment that is most often used where bees may be seeking food is especially harmful in that it impedes the health of these pollinators that are so valuable in the creation of our own sustenance.

So...how can we help our insect friends?

Replace gas-powered lawn and gardening tools with electric.

The government must focus on making public land pollinator-friendly.

Stop the use of bee-killing pesticides.

Save the Dates

Save the Dates:

On Saturday, October 5 from 8:30 – 12:30, the Sparta UMC will be hosting a group charge conference for the district. Helpers will be needed for light refreshments, giving directions, and set up. Watch the bulletin for what will be needed.

The SPARTA UMC Annual Church Conference will be held on Thursday, October 24th at 7:00 p.m. Via ZOOM. Please mark your calendars. All are invited, and reports to be approved and ZOOM link will be sent closer to the date.

Church & Society

SAVE THE DATE!

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2ND, 9 A.M.

SPARTA UMC

WHAT'S UP WITH THE REVISED UMC SOCIAL PRINCIPLES?

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

WHAT IS THE CURRENT THINKING OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH?

On Saturday, November 2nd, Sparta UMC will be hosting an in-depth informational workshop for any who attend our church, all of our Methodist neighbors, and **anyone** who is interested in joining in vital discussion about the dynamic interaction between faith and society. The revisions approved at the 2024 General Conference to the UMC's *Social Principles* will be a key focus. ALL are welcome to attend. This is an opportunity to share ideas and perspectives about where our faith is leading us. ALL ARE WELCOME!
(Please see Pastor Steve, Pat Schutz, or Sandy Svenningsen with any questions.)

Use the QR code below to register or email Sandy at sandra.svenningsen@gmail.com.



Church Mouse Thrift Shop



Church Mouse Holiday Fashion Show

Monday, December 9th at Noon

Please contact Jackie in the Thrift Shop (mousemgr@spartaumc.org) if you are interested in modeling in the show. All clothing that will be modeled will come from the Thrift Shop.

Volunteers
NEEDED

**THE THRIFT SHOP IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS
PLEASE SEE JACKIE IN THE THRIFT SHOP FOR MORE
INFORMATION OR EMAIL HER AT
MOUSEMGR@SPARTAUMC.ORG**

THANK YOU

Music

Bells Are Ringing!

The Heavenly Metal Ringers will begin rehearsals they are every Tuesday from 7 to 8:30 pm. The bell choir plays during the 10:30 worship service once a month. New members (high school age and up) are welcome but must be able to read music. For additional information contact Yvonne Roux, yrouxrings@gmail.com or 973-534-6129.

Choir

It is not too late to join our choir! We rehearse on Sundays at 12 Noon. We warmup on Sundays at 9:45a.m. before the service.

Christmas Cantata

It is not too late to join our Christmas Cantata Choir! We rehearse on Sundays, 12:00-12:15p.m. The concert is on December 14th.

Furniture Ministry

The Sussex County Furniture Ministry helps hundreds of families in financial distress each year to furnish their homes with the basics like beds, tables and chairs that they otherwise could not afford. They are now in need of donations to shore up a dwindling inventory.

If you have any serviceable furniture items including kitchen supplies, sheets, pillow cases and mattresses, please call Carolyn Malone at 201-602-8898 or Mike Vrabel at 973-600-2960.

Please help to hand it down so we can use your generosity to lift others up!

Thank you!

SPARTA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

71 Sparta Avenue

Sparta, NJ 07871

973-729-7773

spartaumc.org

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Thrift Shop

973-729-9121

Wednesday 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Thursday 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Friday 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

