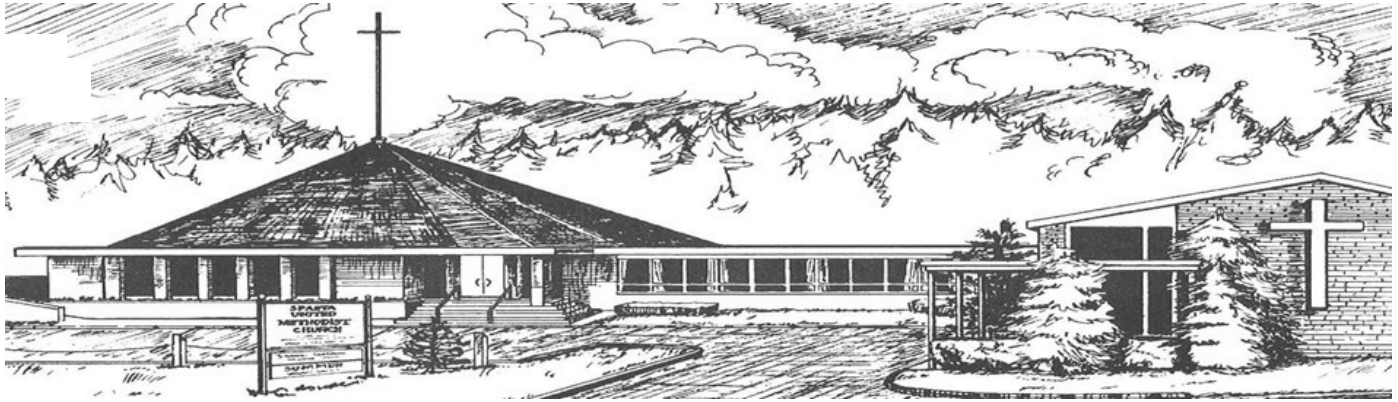


SPARTA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



NEWSLETTER December 2024

Dear Friends,

Why did Jesus come into the world? That is the question that is at the heart of our celebration of the Advent/Christmas season. This is a season where so many find themselves exhausted by the holiday itself because we lose sight of the reason for the season. While we may look to the gospels of Matthew and Luke for the stories of Jesus' birth and the events leading up to it complete with angels, shepherds, magi, sheep and an imaginary inn keeper (sorry, but there is no inn keeper in the Biblical account), during the season of Advent leading up to Christmas, we will be focusing on a different story for our Sunday Worship theme. "*A Dickens of a Christmas*" will take us through the story of Ebenezer Scrooge and the visitations he had on a fateful Christmas Eve. While Dickens is not a Biblical author and Scrooge is not mentioned in the Bible, this beloved story expounds on the meaning of Christmas and the reason we need Christ. Just as the novella "*A Christmas Carol*" is the tale of a man who is transformed as he faces honestly his past, present, and potential future, we celebrate in this season Jesus who is the transforming figure for our lives and all human history.

I hope that as we move through the month of December, you will choose to worship with your church family either in person, via live-stream, or by a recording found on Facebook. Shepherds and magi came to Bethlehem to worship because this was their way of celebrating this most significant event, each in their own way. Each Sunday, there are two different services of worship. At 8:45 a.m. each Sunday, there is a shorter, quieter service that is focused on the ecumenical lectionary readings for that day, joining with other Christians across denominations and around the world in hearing these same verses. Holy Communion is also celebrated each week at 8:45. At 10:30, worship will be on the theme of "*A Dickens of a Christmas*" beginning December 1st. December 15th will be our Children's Christmas Pageant at 10:30. Christmas Eve services will be at 4:30 and 9:30 – both will be filled with carols and candle lighting, with the early service featuring a children's story "The Forgotten Lamb" and the later service a sermon entitled "The Christmas Still to Come." The 9:30 service will also include the celebration of Holy Communion. Also, on the first two Wednesdays of advent, December 4th and 11th, there will be a Contemplative Service at 12:15 p.m. in the sanctuary, and on December 18th we will have a labyrinth walk in the Narthex between 4 and 8 p.m. You are invited to come at any time during this four-hour period for a time of reflection as part of your Advent Journey.

I pray that you will be a part of our Advent and Christmas services, and that the true meaning of the season will be in your hearts in this season of hope, peace, joy and love.

In Christ,

Steve

Worship Information

The first two Wednesdays of advent, December 4th and 11th, there will be a Contemplative Service at 12:15 p.m. in the sanctuary, and on December 18th we will have a labyrinth walk in the Narthex between 4 and 8 p.m. You are invited to come at any time during this four-hour period for a time of reflection as part of your Advent Journey.

Altar Flowers

Many thanks to all who donate flowers to decorate the altar each week! The Altar Flower calendar for 2024 is filled!

Donations of flowers are now being taken for 2025. We have openings for January 12, 19, and 26. Altar flowers cost \$30. We keep costs low by reusing containers and vases. (Donations of vases that are between 7 and 8 inches tall are needed!) Please pay the church directly, and include a note that the payment is 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.

College Students

Calling all College Students/Parents

We are organizing holiday care packages to send to all current college students from the church. We are collecting updated mailing addresses for all of the kids - please send your student's address or any questions to Laura Ammaturo - Ammaturo23@gmail.com.

Also, if anyone would like to sponsor a student, please send a check to the church in the amount of \$25 (write College Student in the memo) Thanks for your support!

Poinsettia Order Form

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Please join the Worship Committee in decorating the sanctuary with poinsettias for Christmas.

The deadline to order is Sunday, December 8th. Cost is \$10.00 per plant. Please make your check payable to the church and indicate "Poinsettias" in the memo section.

Please complete the form below and place it in the offering plate along with your payment, or mail the completed form with your payment to the church office.

Thank you for helping us celebrate the birth of our Lord! Donors may choose to take their plants home after the Christmas Eve service or leave them to grace our sanctuary.

NAME(S) OF DONOR(S) _____

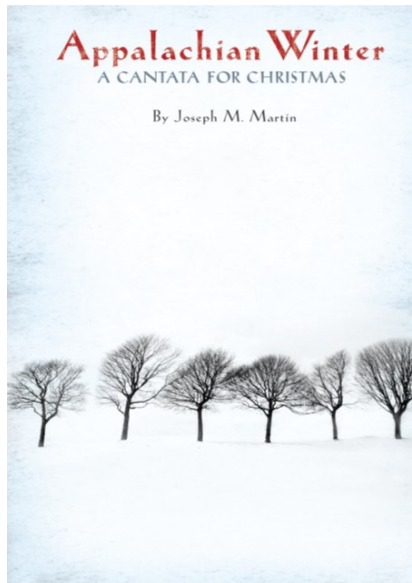
Please do not leave this line blank!

Name(s) will appear in bulletin exactly as printed above.

| Red | White | Pink | CIRCLE ONE | Dedication (please print clearly) |
|-----|-------|------|--|-----------------------------------|
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Music

**Christmas Cantata : "Appalachian Winter" with Choir and Orchestra
Saturday, December 14th : 7:00p.m.**



Bells at the German Christmas Market!

The Heavenly Metal Ringers will play at the German Christmas Market on Saturday, December 7 at 4:15. Come and cheer us on! You can save money by purchasing tickets ahead of time from the Market's website: <https://www.germanchristmasmarketnj.org/>

See you there!

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

The Monday Night Group meets at 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM. We will be reading and discussing a short book entitled *Through the Eyes of Victims* by Alex Awad, looking at the history of Israeli/Palestinian conflict through the eyes of a Christian from Bethlehem. It is available on PDF at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-OgxX2tDgS263fEmRgpAhzUjDwvpYwuH/view?usp=sharing>

For more information, see Pastor Steve

Zoom link for Monday Nights: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/771970415?pwd=bFdUOQk9YQUlyZXRhYUZnNVhRVEZvUT09>

HEALTHIER LIVING GROUP

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

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXqgjh6RICDFWN93I16_aMcguqx.F.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

Church & Society



The Church and Society Committee
of the Sparta United Methodist Church

Pursuing Peace; Seeking Justice; Living Faith

Join us for a community potluck during our December meeting! With the holidays approaching, we wanted to create a warm, welcoming space for everyone to gather in a judgment-free environment. This is the perfect opportunity to enjoy great company, engaging conversations, mutual support, and, of course, delicious food.



If you'd like to contribute a dish, please visit our website www.pflagsussexnj.org/events for more details and to sign up. However, you are more than welcome to join us even if you're not bringing anything—your presence is what truly matters. Let's celebrate the season together with kindness and community!"

Community Support Meeting & Potluck

Wednesday
December 18th 2024
7:00PM



PFLAG

SUSSEX COUNTY
Sparta UMC 71 Sparta Ave Sparta, NJ

For more details & to signup visit
PFLAGSussexNJ.org/Events

Church Mouse Thrift Shop

DECEMBER SALES

December 4-7 --“National Volunteer Day” in honor of all volunteers Entire Shop 50% off

December 11 -14 -- Pick a Christmas ornament at time of purchase to reveal your discount

December 18-21 -- All Christmas 50% off

December 26- 28 -- Welcome Winter, pick a snowflake at time of purchase to reveal your discount

Christmas Angel Tree

Mission Opportunity

Each year the generous people of the Sparta UMC fulfill Christmas wishes for children in our community. We thank you for your generosity and kindness in making children's wishes come true. We get names from various sources: Pathways, Feed the Body/Feed the Soul, and occasionally children in our congregation. Names will be added as we receive them, but for those of you who like to shop early, feel free to get started using the link below:

[Christmas Angel Tree](#)

Many more gifts are on the list and the return date is December 8 (Sunday) or before. Please place wrapped and labeled (family # and child #) gifts in the Music Room.

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.



& Happy New Year