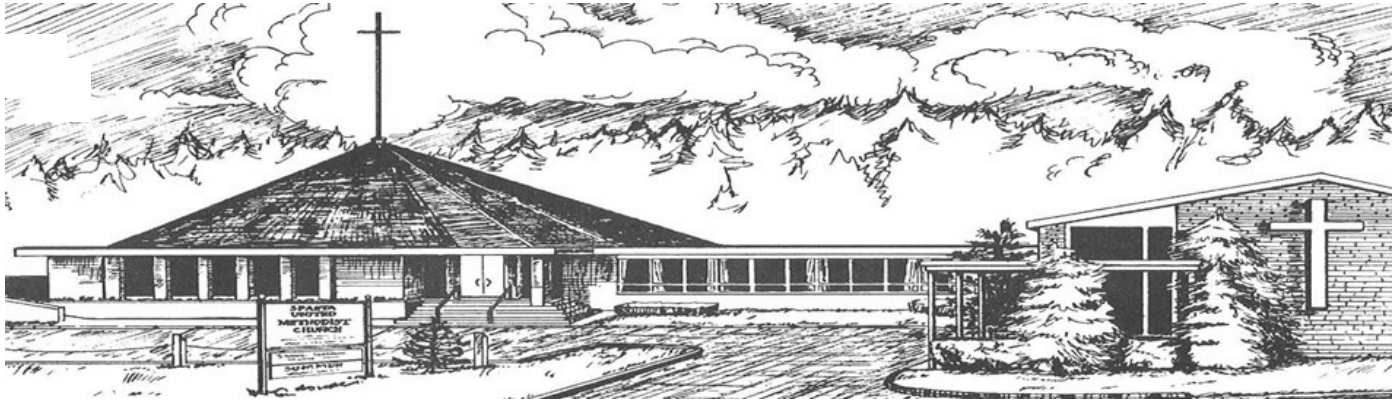


# SPARTA

## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



## NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

February is the shortest month of the year but is packed with many significant birthdays. I've known this since at least the second grade when our class did a school play entitled "Famous February." I played Thomas Edison and was tasked with sharing about my life alongside other classmates who were portraying George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Galileo, Babe Ruth, and Susan B. Anthony. Remembering that this was 1962 in a totally white school district, contributions of people like W.E.B. DuBois, Frederick Douglas, and Rosa Parks (all of whom had February birthdays) weren't even mentioned and never taught. In fact, Black History Month wasn't nationally recognized until 1976, so the stories of many men of women of color weren't a part of our national conscience whether they were born in February or not.

The stories of our African American sisters and brothers are not only for people of color, but for us all because their contributions to the nation and the world have been highly significant for everyone. As author David Barton wrote in his introduction to *Setting the Record Straight*, when asked why he should care about the stories of African Americans, he simply stated, "It is because I am an American. Period." Just as we have in the Biblical narrative, it's important to know the whole story of our American history whether that is flattering or not because it helps us to reflect more deeply about the values that we hold today and what we need to do to embrace those values and pass them on to future generations.

Throughout the month of February, we will continue the preaching series on Moses: Faithful Leader. It is significant that this Biblical character was consistently held up among enslaved African Americans and highlighted by Civil Rights activists for many years. Why? Because Moses led people to freedom towards a new hope and new life. That's what leaders do – then and now – and you and I are leaders together in our world today that desperately needs ethical and moral leadership that honors the dignity of all people. Join me in the sanctuary or on line so that we can take the deeper dive into how God is calling us to lead.

In Christ,

Pastor Steve

# Worship Information

## Contemplative Worship

The Contemplative Service for February will be moved to the second Wednesday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 p.m. as Pastor Steve will be at a national training event in Houston during the first week of the month.

As the first Wednesday of March will be Ash Wednesday, there will not be a Contemplative Service at noon that day, but there will be services each Wednesday in Lent beginning March 12<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 p.m. Lenten Contemplative Services will be held on March 12, 19, 26, and April 2 and 9.

## New Sermon Series Beginning in March:

### *The Gospel of Mark: The Urgency for Wholeness*

Throughout the Lent, worship and preaching will focus on the Gospel of Mark. You are invited to take a deeper dive into the gospel in a special 4 week Study of the Gospel to take place On Wednesday Evenings, March 19, 26, April 2 and 9. Mark your calendar – more information to follow.

# Christian Outreach Project

## Christian Outreach Project Mission Team

Applications are now being collected for this summer's mission team at the Christian Outreach Project in Sussex County. Applications are available from Pastor Steve. We need to get these back as soon as possible but no later than March 10<sup>th</sup>. Please see Pastor Steve for more information.

# Altar Flowers

## Say it with Flowers

Your donation of altar flowers honors special people in your life, and can also brighten up someone's day.

Reservations for flowers are being taken for March 23, and April 6, 13, 27. Altar flowers cost \$30. We keep costs low by reusing containers and vases. (Donations of vases that are between 7 and 9 inches tall are needed!) Please pay the church directly, and include a note that the payment is for Altar Flowers and the date chosen.

Use this [link](#) to reserve 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.

Any questions? Contact Yvonne Roux, [yrouxrings@gmail.com](mailto:yrouxrings@gmail.com), or 973-534-6129.

## Feed the Body/Feed the Soul

Feed the Body/Feed the Soul occurs on Valentine's Day this year! YAY!!! 

The Mission Committee has set a goal of collecting 200 Valentines between now and Sunday, February 9 so each of our FTB/FTS clients receives a Valentine with their lunches. These can be home made, store bought, kids Valentines, or a combination. Encourage your children and grandchildren to make them also.

Let everyone know God loves them and so do the people of the Sparta United Methodist Church.

Please give your Valentines to Marilyn Garrison on Sundays and she will be sure to get them to the bag stuffers for Valentine's Day. Start creating NOW!

Thank you for being the church!

**Feed the Body/Feed the Soul, February 14, 2025**

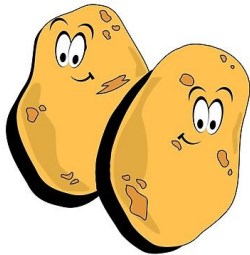
**Please review the available slots below and click on the button to sign up. Thank you!**

[Feed the Body/Feed the Soul, February 14, 2025](#)

# SPUD BOWL

## Spud Bowl - February 9, 2025 following Worship

**Please note: An email was sent out to a link to Sign Up Genius for the Spud Bowl.**



# United Women in Faith

Vision: Turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

Sparta UWF will be meeting on Tuesday, March 18 at 12:30. All women in the church are invited to bring lunch (kids and spouses are also welcome) and come get to know more about the work of our small group. Come get to know us!

Our Sparta UWF is supported by Soup and Quiche sales and a new ministry called, **From Tags to Riches**. Jill, a member of our church, is turning old/used greeting cards into gift tags! These tags come in an assortment of festive themes. Imagine adorning your gifts with tags featuring delicate butterflies, winter wonderlands, or festive Christmas scenes.

Grab a selection of 20 tags for just \$2! Every penny supports the amazing work of United Women in Faith (UWF) at our church.

It's easy! Gather your used cards, pop them in a bag labeled "Jill R.," and drop the cards off in the PFLAG mailbox. Let's upcycle and support UWF together! If you are interested in supporting the UWF through the purchase of gift tags, please send Jill an email at [hugsnothate@yahoo.com](mailto:hugsnothate@yahoo.com). Please write "Gift Tags" in the memo. Thank you.

**Mission u 2025 study**, July 18-20 (adults, children, and youth studies), Centenary University, Hackettstown, NJ. The theme is **HOPE**; we will discuss this and what it means at our meeting on March 18. Come to hear more and save the date! Exciting things are happening!

**United Women in Faith: we believe love in action can change the world.**

**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.

New Book: Good Goats, Healing Our Image of God. The author is Dennis Linn.

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

**HEALTHIER LIVING GROUP**

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

The Tuesday morning Healthy Living group is now reading:

The Well-Lived Life by Gladys McGarey, MD Mother of Holistic Medicine

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXggjh6RICDFWN93I16\\_aMcguqx.F.I](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXggjh6RICDFWN93I16_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.

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

February 2025

# Church & Society



The Church and Society Committee  
of the Sparta United Methodist Church

**Pursuing Peace; Seeking Justice; Living Faith**

## **Church and Society Opposes Mass Deportation in U.S.**

A statement from The General Board of Church and Society calls for a bold witness to stand against U.S. immigration and mass deportation policies influenced by misinformation, hate, fear and harm.

*General Board of Church and Society January 13, 2026*

## **What does The United Methodist Church Say About Migrants, Immigrants and Refugees**

The United Methodist Social Principles call for humane immigration policies, the protection of immigrant families, and the upholding of dignity for all persons as bearers of God’s image. Mass deportations tear apart families, destabilize communities, and exacerbate global suffering—actions that are incompatible with our Christian belief “to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8).

“We urge United Methodists to welcome migrants, refugees, and immigrants into their congregations and to commit themselves to providing concrete support, including help with navigating restrictive and often lengthy immigration policies, and assistance with securing food, housing, education, employment and other kinds of support.” (The Political Community, Basic Rights and Freedoms - section G, United Methodist Social Principles)

In addition, UMC Social Principles call for United Methodists to “oppose all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants or refugees”.

Here is the link to the entire article: <https://www.umcjustice.org/latest/church-and-society-opposes-mass-deportation-in-u-s-3739>

Join us for a Community Support Meeting on February 19, 2025, at 7:00 PM.



PFLAG community support meetings provide a welcoming and safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals, their families, and allies to connect, share, and grow. Whether you’re looking for guidance, celebrating milestones, or seeking understanding, we’re here for you. We can be your biggest cheerleader during the good times and the shoulder you need to cry on during the challenging ones.

You’re not alone—come and be part of a supportive and uplifting community.

## Church & Society

### Close Guantanamo Torture Is a Moral Issue

For several years, the Church and Society Committee has been working with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, to **support closing the detention facility on Guantanamo, Cuba.** About 800 Muslim men and boys were held at Guantanamo after 2002, most never charged or tried for any crime. Guantanamo, as opposed to the USA, was chosen to evade legal constraints. **Torture was used widely at Guantanamo.**

The Guantanamo Bay prison, open for 23 years as of January 11, 2025, is the symbol of our nation's use of indefinite detention and torture. Former Presidents Bush, Obama, and Biden agreed to close the prison at Guantanamo, but the issue was not a priority; each of them rushed to see that prisoners were released just when they were to leave office. On January 15, 2025, just before President Biden left office, 11 prisoners were transferred to Oman. Six of the remaining 15 men have never been charged with any crime, and three have been cleared for transfer. The cost for each prisoner in Guantanamo is \$13 million per year.

For additional info and updates on Closing Guantanamo go to the National Religious Campaign Against Torture [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)

## Mission Committee

### Mission Highlights

The Missions Committee has become aware of a new need in our neighborhood. Some Sussex Tech students are experiencing food insecurity and are coming to school hungry. The Tech Student Center has food available for any student in need. We have sent the Student Center, under the direction of Suzanne Sarner, \$1000 to help them meet their needs as they continue to minister to their students.

The Watoto are coming! The Watoto are coming! THE WATOTO ARE COMING!!!!



**Save the date: Thursday April 24. More information will follow.**

# 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

Valentine's Day