



## THE GOOD NEWS

APRIL 2010

*Available at [spartaumc.org](http://spartaumc.org), or in printed form through the office (973-729-7773) of Sparta United Methodist Church*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am going to begin a Grief and Healing group on Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m. starting April 29<sup>th</sup>. I invite you or anyone you know to join us.

Grief takes many forms. It may involve the loss of a loved one, but it may also involve a move, loss of a home, a job, loss of health, change in a relationship, or other kind of painful life situations. Healing, while unique for all of us, is always the work of God. The pain we bear is lessened when we share it with others. The joy we experience is doubled when we witness God's working in one another's lives. John Wesley himself understood the power of intimate, small groups. They are the foundation upon which our United Methodist tradition is built.

These are tough times for many people all around us. We all know people who have lost their jobs or may lose them along with their homes. A number of people have lost loved ones as well, or had major stresses and life transitions. As I share these experiences with others, I think of all the biblical passages that contain summaries of Jesus' healings. We are not always given the names or the particulars. We simply read that many people came from surrounding towns to listen to Jesus or to be touched and made well. I am also being reminded quite regularly of a very powerful dream from earlier years in ministry.

Perhaps ten years ago I had a dream in which I saw myself standing outside a large house with a wrap around porch. Jesus was on a set of broad, back steps that opened up to a large, open field. People with various kinds of ailments and problems were standing in line, and my job was to bring them to Jesus. As each person spoke to me, I identified with them. For example, one man said that he was deformed; I responded by saying that I was deformed too. Another man said that he was a murderer. I responded that I was a murderer too. A woman said that she gossiped and betrayed people. I said that I gossiped and betrayed people. It continued in a seemingly endless progression until I finally woke up.

Upon waking I knew that I was being told to identify with every human condition, acknowledging that I was not better than anyone else. I knew I could not heal these people any more than I could heal myself. However, I did know someone who could help them, namely Jesus Christ. I knew I had to take them to Jesus. As he received them, they were transformed and entered into the house. This indicated to me that the church needed to become more intentional about being a place of healing. I started a Steven's Ministry and a lay visitation program shortly thereafter. Both ministries are still flourishing.

I am being reminded of that dream on a regular basis these days, and there's no mistaking the spirit's leading. A Grief and Healing group will be a first step.

Shalom

**SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
71 Sparta Ave., Sparta, NJ 07871  
Phone: 973-729-7773 Email: [www.spartaumc.org](http://www.spartaumc.org)

## **HOLY WEEK AT SPARTA UMC**

### **Palm/ Passion Sunday Worship**

**March 28, 8:30 & 10:30 a.m.**

Includes the Children's Parade of Palms at the beginning of the 10:30 service and an Easter Egg Hunt afterwards in the church's backyard

### **Holy (Maundy) Thursday Service**

**April 1, 7:30 p.m.**

Commune in small groups around the altar table.

### **Twenty Four Hour Prayer Vigil**

**Thursday, April 1, begins at 8:30 p.m.**

Sign up in the vestibule area.

### **Good Friday Service**

**April 2, 7:30 p.m.**

Based on The Lord's Prayer and including liturgical dance

### **Easter Sunday Worship Services**

**April 4, 8:30 & 10:30 a.m.**

The services will be identical with the choir singing at both services and special music. Refreshments will be provided after the 10:30 service instead of in between services as originally planned.

## **Early Easter Service on the Boardwalk**

Sparta Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service will be Easter Sunday morning, April 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. on the Boardwalk at Lake Mohawk. The presiding minister this year will be Rev. Randy Parks, Director of Pastoral Care at Newton Memorial Hospital. Other clergy assisting include: Rev. Bob Malsack, Interim Minister, Sparta Presbyterian Church; and Matthew Querns, Director of Youth Ministries, Sparta United Methodist Church. The offering this year will benefit Project Self-Sufficiency in Newton.

## **ADULT FAITH ENRICHMENT**

All the Adult Faith Enrichment classes on Sunday mornings begin at 9:15 a.m.

**Our regular Adult Faith Enrichment Classes will not be held on April 4<sup>th</sup>, Easter Sunday.**

### **Easter Faith Alive, Sunday, April 4th**

There will be a special adult study on Easter Sunday, April 4<sup>th</sup> during which individuals may share their "Resurrection" stories and discuss the sermon. If you have a story you would like to share as a testimony to God's grace, please contact Pastor Diane. We'll meet in the Wesley Room at 9:15 a.m. with coffee, tea, and snacks as we usually do at our adult enrichment classes.

**We will resume our regular Adult Faith Enrichment classes below on April 11, 2010:**

#### **1. "Living the Questions: Jesus and the Kingdom of God"**

We will continue study on "Living the Questions: Jesus and the Kingdom of God" by Marcus Borg (Biblical scholar). Journey on location throughout the Galilee & Jerusalem with world's leading Jesus scholars. No preparation necessary. Just come for short DVD and discussion. The study will be led by Bud Larson in Room 8.

#### **2. "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons – Is This Possible?"**

This issue is timely because two international treaties concerning nuclear disarmament are coming up for renewal this year, and the Obama administration has made nuclear disarmament a priority. Join us to learn about these issues and consider how we can support the call of our faith to eliminate nuclear weapons. Led by Litsa Binder in the Wesley Room.

## **ADULT BOOK STUDY**

### ***The Monday Night Book Study***

The book study is held in the Wesley Room on Monday evenings from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The Monday Night Book Study Group will not meet March 29<sup>th</sup> or April 5<sup>th</sup> because of Holy Week and Easter. The study will resume Monday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. On April 19<sup>th</sup> everyone is invited to come early at 6:30 p.m. and travel to Drew Theological Seminary to hear a presentation by Bishop Spong on his most recent book, Eternal Life. We will finish the Nouwen study on Here and Now: Living in the Spirit April 26<sup>th</sup>.

We will begin a new study on Matthew Fox's book, Original Blessing beginning May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:30 p.m. in the Wesley Room at the church. If you would like a copy of Matthew Fox's book for the study, you may pick one up in the church office for \$12.50.

## **CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES**

### **Vacation Bible School**

Our Vacation Bible School will be July 19- July 23, 2010 this summer. Be sure to put it on your calendar! We need volunteers to help. Please call the church (973-729-7773) if you are interested in being a part of the VBS team. Jennifer Randazzo will be the director of this year's school.

## **YOUTH MINISTRIES**

Well, warmer weather is on its way, and at the first sight of the sun, I was in my shorts. This was not the smartest move, since the last snow came the same day! Still, deep inside me, it feels right! The spring for our youth groups is shaping up to be one full of service and fun. From soup kitchen work to hiking, from the 30 Hour Famine to swimming, and beyond, our youth ministries has a lot to do. I also want to thank everyone who has supported our summer mission trip through sponsorships and donations. We need \$2,100 extra due to the high number of youth participation. WHAT A GREAT PROBLEM TO HAVE!!! If you have not yet already supported us in this means, I invite you to pray and to see if this is a way in which you, your family, or your business would be able to help us spread the gospel through service!

### **4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Grade Youth November Event**

#### **April 18- Spring Hiking and Ice Cream**

- Meet at the church at 12:00 where lunch will be served
- We will then drive to a nearby hiking trail and have a guided hike by Bob Schutz from 1:00-2:00.
- We will stop for an ice cream treat on the way back to church for a return of 3:30
- Cost, the price of an ice cream treat. ~\$5-\$6

### **Junior High Youth November Events**

#### **April 11- Youth Church Clean Up Day Service Project w/Pizza**

#### **April 23-24 Spring Lock In-**

- Meet at the church at 7:00
- Bring \$5.00 for pizza and a snack to share
- Breakfast will be at 7:00 and pick up at 8:00

### **Senior High Youth November Events**

#### **April 10- Bread of Life Soup Kitchen-**

- Meet at the church at 10:00 and return to the church around 1:00

#### **April 30-May 1- 30 Hour Famine**

- @ Trinity UMC, Details TBA as they come

### **Aldersgate Center and the Pinelands Center**

Now that the snow has melted, Aldersgate is alive with buds, creatures, and the sounds of life throughout the day... and throughout the night! It is a wonderful place to be as the seasons move forward. As many of you know,

along with Youth Directing at church, I am also the Program Director for the camping ministries for our conference. Thus, I have a few announcements that I would like to share with you all.

First, we are having a work day and an open house coming up. April 10, from 10-4, we will be having a work day for all who can come to help fix up the camp for the summer. We have jobs for peoples of all abilities. Also, on April 25, from 2-5, we will have an open house for all interested to come and to check out what Aldersgate has to offer.

Second, we still have jobs openings for the summer. I am looking to hire counselors, ages 18 or older, life guards, ages 17 and older, and a summer nurse or nurses, with each serving a designated period of time. These positions will run from about June 13 through August 17.

Lastly, if you or someone you know would like to volunteer at camp, I really need to find a carpenter for one week. Please let me know, and we can discuss how you can serve our young people in this ministry.

For any and all camp questions and needs, please feel free to ask me anytime. Matthew Querns, phone # 520-904-1404 or email, [Matt@spartaumc.org](mailto:Matt@spartaumc.org).

See you all at Aldersgate and the Pinelands!!!

## **MUSIC MINISTRIES**

### **Genesis Ringers**

Are you interested in learning to ring? The Genesis Ringers is for beginning ringers of all ages. Starting April 11 this group will meet each Sunday at 12 noon for either 45 minutes or an hour. We'll start with very simple pieces and learn some music reading skills. Depending on interest the group may be divided. Genesis Ringers will meet until the end of May.

For more information contact Yvonne Roux, at 973-209-2288 or [yrouxrings@gmail.com](mailto:yrouxrings@gmail.com).

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Yvonne Roux, Handbell Director  
Sparta United Methodist Church  
71 Sparta Avenue  
Sparta, NJ 07871

### **Sparta UMC Praise Band**

Sparta UMC Praise Band is looking for a guitarist to replace Mike Batche. If you are interested, please call Cullen Kempson (973)579-0140.

### **Choir Concert with Newton UMC in May**

We will share a pot luck and a choir concert with our sister church in Newton on Saturday afternoon, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.. Come for the music, the food, the fellowship and a fun but early evening out with friends and family.

## **MISSIONS**

### **Interfaith Hospitality Network at Sparta UMC, April 4<sup>th</sup> – April 18<sup>th</sup>**

We will be hosting the homeless families in our church for TWO weeks, from **April 4<sup>th</sup> (Easter Sunday) – April 18<sup>th</sup>** and we hope that YOU want to help in some way during that week. Some of the ways you can serve during the week are: provide the dinner meal, visit with the guests and children, use your imagination or talent to entertain, stay overnight (we need two people each night), greet the guests and make them feel welcome, help with laundry, and clean-up. There will be further information and a sign up poster after both services and someone to answer any questions you may have. So get a few friends together and volunteer to be the hands and feet of Christ! For further information contact: Linda Giammanco 973-383-8443 or Mike Vrabel 973-726-7851.

### **Church Mouse Thrift Shop Donations**

As of March 15<sup>th</sup> the Thrift Shop is open at its regular hours accepting donations for the spring/summer season. We made a more extensive list of "Do Not Accept Items" which consists of items that do not sell or that we cannot test to be sure they are working. We gladly accept many items. Please check the list which is published on the church website ([www.spartaumc.org](http://www.spartaumc.org)) for items we cannot accept now.

Sometimes we have excess inventory of good merchandise which we pass on to other organizations. So far this year we have given clothes and needed supplies to:

- The Passionist Missionaries (for Haiti relief)
- Specialty Surgical Center (for Haiti relief)
- Salvation Army (a van load of clothes each week)
- Sparta Girl Scouts – clothing drive
- Life Choices, Inc. in Phillipsburg (clothing and baby supplies)

We also gave gift certificates to those in need and to some Dasi clients to shop in our store once a month.

We want to be good stewards of all that you donate to us. Many people in Sparta and in other areas of our state and world benefit from your generous gifts. THANK YOU.

### **Missions Disbursements for January and February**

The Church Mouse Thrift Shop continues to experience great growth each year. We are extending the areas of justice and mercy to our neighbors around the world. The disbursements for January and February 2010 are as follows:

Pastor's Needy Fund	\$1,000.00
UM Homes	1,000.00
UMCOR (Haiti)	1,000.00
People Help	3,000.00
KEEP	2,000.00
Sparta Food Pantry	1,000.00
Habitat for Humanity	700.00
Youth Summer Mission Trip	500.00
Katie's House	250.00
CUMAC/ECHO	<u>1,000.00</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><i>\$11,450.00</i></b>

The efforts of many people and God's blessings of our efforts have enabled the Church Mouse to be of service to God's children everywhere. Please join us in this mission. (We are in special need of some younger and some male volunteers.)

## **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN NEWS**

The Sparta United Methodist Women Group is re-organizing. We have brought under the UMW umbrella several groups that have been functioning independently and we have created several new ones. We have deliberately called our group spirals to indicate our openness for all to participate. Please join us as much as you are able. Friends, visitors and men are always welcome.

### **Healing Prayer Time**

Healing Prayer Time - Wednesday, April 7, 11:15am to 11:45

Healing Prayer Soup-Time, Wednesday, April 7, 11:45am to 12:30

### **New Writing Group Meets Again on Saturday, April 3**

It's not too late to join the writing group that started out in March. Four of us met---we still have room for four or five more. So join us Saturday, April 3, at 9:30 a.m. This is a group which is open to both women and men and a chance for you to write what you want to write. Some will write memoir, some poetry, some fiction---whatever you choose will work.

The leader is Ann Freeman Price who has led groups like this for the last 15 years in New City, NY; Nyack, NY and Cranford, NJ. The only charge is a \$5 donation each session to UMW's World Thank Offering.

Come try it out. Tea will be available but if you want coffee, bring your own.

If you have questions call Ann at 973-383-5014 or email her at [annfreemanprice@embarqmail.com](mailto:annfreemanprice@embarqmail.com)

### **UMW Book Club**

We meet monthly on the second Monday in the Wesley Room from 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Please feel free to join us, whether or not you have read the entire book, for tea and conversation about these interesting topics.

Upcoming readings:

April 12<sup>th</sup> - Cane River by Lalita Tademy

May 10<sup>th</sup> - Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson

June 14<sup>th</sup> - Sarah's Key by Tatiana DeRosnay

## CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The Church and Society Committee of Sparta United Methodist Church is connected to both the Conference, and General Boards of Church and Society. It is the job of Church and Society at all these levels in the United Methodist Church to work on issues of social justice within the society.

**“DANCING IN THE DAWN” – A Peacemaker’s Workshop, led by Rev. Dr. Wayne Lavender  
April 17, 2010 from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

The Church and Society Committee invites you to attend this important event. Wayne describes the workshop this way: Despite a plethora of articles and books on conflict resolution and peacemaking, the fact is that, to use a phrase from Bruce Springsteen, we are still “dancing in the dark” in terms of applying known techniques and strategies to unique situations of violence and war – a balancing act of art and science. **“Dancing in the Dawn”** will explore creative opportunities for persons of faith to reach out as citizen diplomats in order to help create a new day of global peace and justice for all of God’s children.

Please fill out the following registration form and mail it or drop it off at the church office.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

The pre--registration fee is \$20.00. Scholarships are available. Please make checks payable to SUMC (Sparta United Methodist Church). In the memo line, please note: “Church and Society Committee.” You will not want to miss this exciting workshop. Everyone is invited.

Many of you met Wayne Lavender when he led a workshop and preached at our church last June. He is a United Methodist pastor and director of *Passing the Peace*. He is the author of *Counting Ants While the Elephants March By: Thoughts on Church and State, Poverty and Terrorism, War and Peace*, and has a PH. D. in Public Policy from George Mason University. Rev. Dr. Wayne Lavender will also be our preacher on Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. (See worship article on page 6)

*Faithful Security: National and Regional Religious Coalitions Working for Nuclear Disarmament* 2010 is a crucial year for taking major steps toward nuclear disarmament. Three international treaties that require the reduction and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and prohibit testing of nuclear weapons are coming up for renewal in 2010. World leaders and non-governmental representatives from all over the world will come to the United Nations in NYC in May, 2010 to work on nuclear disarmament. The Church and Society Committee is a member of the August 9<sup>th</sup> Saving Lives Task Force, a northern NJ partnership of faith-based, interfaith and secular organizations that are promoting nuclear disarmament through education and advocacy, and support redirecting nuclear weapons funding to humanitarian needs. You are invited to participate in one or all of the following programs:

Friday, April 9, Peace Vigil 6-7pm at Morristown Green

Friday, April 30, Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, 6 to 9 pm at Riverside Cathedral, NYC

Sunday, May 2, 11 AM to 8 PM Peace Trains to NYC and Rally at the UN. We will board the Peace Train in Dover at 11am and return at 8 pm.

Please contact Litsa Binder, [litsa@embarqmail.net](mailto:litsa@embarqmail.net) or at 973 726-0741 for more information or if you want to join a carpool to these events.

**A quote for pondering-----from Sparta Church and Society Committee:**

### Who Owns the House?

Walter Coleman said in a recent issue of "Response", a UMW magazine: We in the church have traditionally approached this as a question of welcoming the stranger. And there's some truth there; we should welcome God's children, no matter their national origin or condition. But this concept of offering hospitality assumes that you are the owner of the house and that you're offering hospitality to someone else. That's a problem in the church. We're a majority white denomination, although we won't be much longer. We have a tendency in the church to think we're the owner, and when you're the owner, you get to decide how much hospitality you're going to extend. You can say, 'We're gonna let you into the front room, but not into the back room.' We need to discern exactly what we mean by hospitality. We can put ads on television saying we're a welcoming church, but we need to ask: Who owns the house? I believe God does. Whether we're welcoming or not isn't in our hands. It's God who opens the doors and says, 'Come on in.'"

---The Rev. Walter Coleman, pastor of Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago, who offered sanctuary to a Mexican woman refusing to be deported and her 7-year-old son Saul, a U.S. citizen.

## **WORSHIP**

### Native American Sunday

#### **Guest Preacher**

Rev. Wayne Lavender, will be preaching Sunday, April 18<sup>th</sup> with our pastor leading worship.(See Church and Society article, page 5.) This is Native American Awareness Sunday, one of the six special offering and special emphasis Sundays in the UMC (others include: Human Relations Day, One Great Hour of Sharing, Peace with Justice Sunday, World Communion Sunday, and United Methodist Day). The service will include Native American music, prayers, and traditions like last year's service which opened and closed with drumming circles.