

# The Good News



SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, 71 Sparta Ave., Sparta, NJ 07871

## Pastor Message... “Pulpit Swap”

You will have a guest preacher in the pulpit on June 6<sup>th</sup>. Some of you know him, some of you don't. His name is Gerry Koob; he is my husband. Actually, he and I are doing what is called a “pulpit swap”.

I am told that some people who are new to the church have started to question Gerry's existence because they have never seen him! They must think he is like Mr Snuffalufagus from Sesame Street. Remember when no one but Grover ever saw Snuffy and believed in him? (Hmmm,...perhaps there is a sermon in that...) Gerry, like Mr Snuffalufagus really does exist. He is serving the United Methodist Church of Pearl River, New York as a retired Elder on a part time basis. Two days ago the Bishop and Gerry's District Superintendent, Rev. Sung Ahn, asked him to serve yet another church in Suffern, New York. Understand, serving the Suffern church would be *in addition* to serving the Pearl River church.

We discussed this change, looking principally at all the reasons we did not need more stress, scheduling complications and plain old additional work for Gerry, who is now 72. Then we prayed and slept on it. The next morning Gerry called his DS and, of course, said “yes”.

There is something to be said for setting limits as necessary. There is also something important about going beyond our comfort level at times. Suffern is another small church in need, something quite common as traditional Christianity continues to decline in the USA. As you have undoubtedly realized, we are living in a neo-pagan or post Christian world today. As an interim pastor, Gerry won't be at Suffern or even at Pearl River long enough to help them experience revitalization or, if it comes to it, death with dignity. He will, however, be present to help them during a transition and the discernment process. He will do his best to help them become hopeful, peaceful and not to feel

abandoned or alone as they face the future. As a retiree, Gerry is under no obligation, but how can he say “no” to these communities and to these people? With our churches closing, dying and being made into shops and restaurants, this is a difficult time to be a mainline Protestant Christian. The pews are becoming more and more empty. It's frightening and confusing to those who are wedded to their churches, their church families and the faith that has nurtured them all their lives.

When we are ordained we take vows that are like vows of obedience; we agree to go where we are sent. Appointments are set once a year in June. Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances that make it impossible or unwise to proceed with an appointment. Sometimes a particular pastor is a bad fit for a particular congregation. As the expression goes, “it's complicated”! Generally we go where we are sent and do the best we can as called but imperfect persons.

All this is to say that you will see even less of my spouse. If you question his existence, you'll get a rare glimpse on June 6<sup>th</sup> when we will celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday and plant sunflowers. I will be sad to miss that Sunday, especially planting sunflowers with the children, but I will be preaching at Pearl River United Methodist Church that morning. They have never had an ordained woman in the pulpit, and some of them are questioning *my* existence. In the meantime, I have been reassigned to Sparta and will continue the journey with this much beloved community of faith.

# The Good News

## Upcoming Worship Services



June 6<sup>th</sup> Holy Communion and guest preacher, Rev. Gerry Koob.

June 13<sup>th</sup> Music Ministry Sunday. We pull out all the bells and whistles for the last service when the choral and bell choirs lead us in worship before a summer break. This is also the last day of Sunday School (see Sunday School news) until next fall. There will be very little verbal preaching but lots of

preaching through the sung word and praising God through music.

June 20<sup>th</sup> Our Praise Band, with new guitar lead Andrew Magnotta, will lead us in worship on Father's Day. Get ready for some fun and for a chance to say thank God for our fathers, those who have acted as fathers in our lives, and the "church fathers" who contribute so much to the ministry here.

**Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.**

—John Wesley

### Vacation Bible School At Sparta UMC!

**July 19<sup>th</sup>—July 23<sup>rd</sup>**  
**Ages 4 –14**

**"Galactic Blast"**

**Applications will be available soon in the church office or on our website,  
[www.spartaumc.org](http://www.spartaumc.org).**

**Volunteers are needed!**

### SUMC Sunday School Program

We have had a wonderful 2009/2010 Sunday School Program. Thanks to our teachers and church members this program continues to flourish and grow. To show our appreciation to our teachers we are having a Teacher Appreciation Breakfast on June 6<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers to facilitate the breakfast and donate food for this event are needed. The breakfast will begin at 9:30 a.m. in Demarest Hall.

Please contact Stephanie Coombs at 973-464-7783 if you would like to

help.

We will be wrapping up our Sunday School on June 13, 2010 with teacher recognition and a year end concert at the 10:30 a.m. service.

I would personally like to thank all my teachers and substitutes for making this year such a wonderful success.

Looking forward to next year!

### YOUTH NEWS

On behalf of the youth, I want to thank everyone who has donated to our mission trip and youth activities through donations, sponsors, and dining out. Truly, your gifts of love are signs of your dedication to their spiritual growth. As the summer months begin, youth group will go on a part-time schedule with one event each month for each group, beginning with our end of Spring pool parties, our mission trip, and a water park day in August. Join us for the fun!

## TRUSTEES NEED HELP!

In this difficult economy, we are trying to accomplish much of our maintenance using church volunteers, instead of hiring outside contractors. If you have the skills, or are just a good helper( like me-Ha! ), here's a sample of some tasks. Please call Tom Ingala, 973-729-9909. Thanks for your support.

- Paint the pastor's office
- Hang window treatment in pastor's office
- Move some cabinets in nursery area
- Assemble Ikea table in youth room
- More to come!!!



### Chuckle-Time

A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?" The son replied, "I do know!" "Okay," said his father. "So, son, what does the Bible mean?" "That's easy Daddy. It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth!'"

## United Methodist Women

### Writing Group Meets Once a Month---Join Us

What do you do in the writing group? Well, Ann Freeman Price, who has led these groups for 15 years, starts out with something of interest to writers. Then three subjects are drawn out of an envelope and everyone writes for ten minutes on the one that most appeals to them. At the end of the time, everyone reads what they wrote. Then we do a second round of reading---something that each person wrote and brought with them to read.

Critiquing is gentle; there is a lot of encouragement. Try it out. There are still a couple of open

spots.

It will meet Saturday, June 5, 9:30am to 11:30am in Room 8. The group is sponsored by United Methodist Women, is open to both women and men, and costs \$5.00 per session which goes to the World Thank Offering for United Methodist Women---which funds mission programs for women and children all over the world.

Tea is available but if you want coffee, bring your own. If you have questions call Ann at 973-383-5014 or email her at

[annfreemaprice@embarqmail.com](mailto:annfreemaprice@embarqmail.com)

### UMW Collecting for Manna House in June and July

Manna House particularly needs the following items. Please place your donations in the big box in the narthex. SUMC volunteers who help at Manna House will deliver them.

- ◇ Paper towels
- ◇ Dish detergent (to do dishes)
- ◇ Plastic forks
- ◇ Napkins
- ◇ Powdered drinks---tea, fruit juice, etc.
- ◇ Packages of pasta
- ◇ Dried mashed potatoes or rice      **THANKYOU!**
- ◇ Canned fruits or vegetables

**PLEASE HELP MANNA  
HOUSE WITH NEEDED  
SUPPLIES**



## UMW Book News

### UMW Book Group Meets June 14 To Discuss Sarah's Key

Sarah's Key by Tatiana DeRosnay is a gripping novel about Occupied France in the summer of 1942, and specifically the great Velodrome d'Hiver roundup which took place July 16 of that year. The author writes: "This is not a historical work and has no intention of being one. It is my tribute to the children of the Vel' d'Hiv'. The children who never came back. And the ones who survived to tell."

Join us at 9:30 am whether you've read the book or not. We will also be selecting books for October, November and December, so be sure to bring your ideas.

The July book is Caring for Mother by Virginia Stern Owens. The July meeting will be on Monday, July 12.

### Five Books Added to Narthex Holder for Library Books

The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles by Clarence Jordan. This is a modern-day translation of Paul's message. In this version Paul is not an aristocratic Pharisee, but a converted Southerner in this country.

The Pathology of Power by Norman Cousins. Though published in 1987, this book may give some fresh insights to 2010. Some chapter headings: Misperception of Power; Visit to Hiroshima; Eisenhower's emphasis on "True" Security; Whistle-Blowers.

Becoming a Woman of Prayer by Cynthia Heald. This book takes anyone through an examination of what the Bible teaches about prayer. Provides exercises for you to do.

The Jubilee Challenge---Utopia or Possibility---Jewish and Christian Insights edited by Hans Ucko. Learn about the Old Testament jubilee laws and how they might apply to today.

Henri Nouwen---In My Own Words compiled by Robert Durbach. This small book will give you selected quotes from various Nouwen books and may help you decide which on a Nouwen book that you want to read in its entirety. The church library has a number of his books.

## PLANTING SUNFLOWERS BY THE PEACE POLE

As Sparta celebrates Peace with Justice Sunday, Susan Pironti of the Church and Society Committee will lead children following the children's sermon out to the Peace Pole to plant sunflowers and to draw pictures of peace with chalk in the parking lot. Those present at the service will also receive a few sunflower seeds to plant at their homes as a sign of peace.

The sunflower took root as a symbol for nuclear disarmament during the 1980s when 14 resisters known as "The Missouri Peace Planters" simulta-

neously entered 10 of their state's 150 nuclear missile silos and planted sunflowers in each of them. Then in 1996 Ukraine officially completed its nuclear disarmament with a scattering of sunflower seeds by the top defense officials of the United States, Russia and Ukraine. Defense Secretary William J. Perry, said sunflowers instead of missiles in the soil would insure peace for future generations.



**Quote for your  
thinking...from Sparta  
Church and Society**

*Look and listen for the  
welfare of the whole  
people and have always  
in view not only the  
present but also the  
coming generations.*



## MOUSE VOLUNTEERS' REFLECTIONS

At a recent annual meeting of the "Mice," the volunteers shared some of their outstanding memories of experiences they have had as they worked in the shop this year. These memories illustrate the varied outreach that occurs as we work there:

- Observing a child find a bicycle that was "just right" and convincing his father that he was big enough to ride it safely.
- Helping a family that lost everything in a fire find items that would help them re-establish their home.
- Finding a welcome and loving place to work and use some of her talents in display and sales
- Meeting a customer who needed medical equipment and supplies for a home-bound, ill husband. (Although we did not have the items then, being able to secure those items – in a God-inspired moment - and deliver them with a new volunteer's assistance directly to the customer's home)
- Discovering an environment that allows her to relax from the worry and stress of caring for a terminally ill spouse and to find friends and meaningful activity.
- Being among persons who can support you in your sorrows and rejoice with you in your happiness—and they are a "listening ear", if you just want to talk.
- Finding items that you did not know existed and trying to figure out what they are and how they are to be used.
- Seeing customers find "just the right item they need" – even a beautiful mother-of-the-bride outfit and matching shoes that all just fit perfectly.
- Seeing some homeless families choose items to use at the present and then come back to select items to furnish their home when they begin their lives in a building again.
- Knowing that God and the Holy Spirit are active in our work together, with the donations we receive, and the time we offer in His service at THE MOUSE.

MISSIONS

### Volunteers in Mission Training Event

**Saturday, June 12, 2010, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm  
at St. John's United Methodist Church  
2000 Florence Ave., Hazlet, NJ**

The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) Invites you to a Volunteers In Mission Team Leadership Training. If you are interested in learning more about being a UMVIM team leader or hosting mission teams this training is designed for you. Team Leader Training is required for all first time United Methodist Volunteers In Mission team leaders, but all interested persons are welcome to attend whether leading a team or not. For more information, [check out the brochure](#) or call Ginny Kaiser at 732-359-1043, fax 732-359-1049 or [gkaiser@gnjumc.org](mailto:gkaiser@gnjumc.org)

### Native American Mission Trip to Washington State June 25 - July 6

Join the annual bridge-building visit to White Swan's 150 year old UMC congregation in the state of Washington. Visit Seattle, interact with Native children in the church's summer program, worship and learn about Native respect for the elders. Meet Native leaders, learn history from an Indian perspective, visit a local artist & the Yakama Museum.

Sponsored by Deaconess Helen McCahill, this is the continuation of trips to the Blackfeet and Yakama tribes begun in 1998. These trips are open to anyone who is interested and is willing to sleep on the floor of the church being visited. Over 70 persons have traveled to these two reservations in these past twelve years. Over 200 congregations in GNJAC have been touched by persons or programs given as a result of these opportunities. Ages 13 & up. Airfare plus \$300. Contact Helen McCahill at 732-988-1151 or [helenmccahill0305@aol.com](mailto:helenmccahill0305@aol.com)

### PLEASE NOTE

NEW LIFE LUCHEON ORIGINALLY  
SCHEDULED ON JUNE 6TH IS TO



BE RESCHEDULED AT A LATER DATE.

PLEASE LOOK FOR INFORMATION IN UPCOMING  
SUNDAY BULLETINS.

### Nationally Known Minister to Visit PFLAG at Sparta UMC

Gil Caldwell will be speaking on Thursday, June 17 at 7:30 p.m. to the PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Chapter that meets at Sparta UMC. Gil Caldwell is a United Methodist minister, a foot soldier with Martin Luther King Jr., a member of the national board of PFLAG, and one of the organizers of Black Methodists for Church Renewal and United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church. More information will be published in our Sunday Bulletins. If you have any questions, please call Tom or Linda Ingala at 973-729-9909.

*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.*

## INSPIRING PEACE MARCH

Sunday, May 2, 2010 is a day I will always remember! 10,000 people from all over the world, were saying with one voice a better world is possible, if only we work collectively to eradicate nuclear weapons and war and we use these resources to feed hungry people, and build schools and hospitals. The occasion was the renewal of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Weapons Treaty** by the Delegates of the United Nations during the month of May. I was ecstatic to be amongst this crowd. Several American groups walked for days, some for weeks, from distant cities to come to the event. We marched across 42 St to the United Nations Plaza. The largest foreign delegation of 1,800 Japanese, including the

Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombing), French, Germans, Koreans, Iraqis, South Americans, the Secretary General of the National Council of Churches, Buddhist monks, all called with one voice: **No More Hiroshimas, No More Nagasakis, One World, One Love, No More War!** What a beautiful sight! No one was stranger in this crowd. Brothers and sisters connected by our common humanity pledging to work for a better world for all of God's children! Litsa Binder



## JUNE IS TORTURE AWARENESS MONTH

Several years ago, religious and human rights organizations in the United States declared the month of June to be **Torture Awareness Month** as a way to provide greater visibility to this issue and provide an opportunity for coordinated actions across the country.

This June, under the theme "ENDING TORTURE IS OUR NATION'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS" the National Religious Coalition Against Torture encourages congregations and people of faith to focus on two primary efforts:

- Passing federal legislation granting the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#) access to all detainees in U.S. [custody](#).
- Securing a comprehensive investigation, a [Commission of Inquiry](#), into the use of torture by the United States since September 11, 2001 - [learning](#) from the past is the best way to build a torture-free future.

Our congregation will participate in this critical effort by:

Displaying outside our church the banner "Torture Is A Moral Issue", and by offering our members the opportunity to sign a petition to our members of Congress calling for legislation that will assure the International Committee of the Red Cross has access to all detainees held by the U.S. and also calling for a Commission of Inquiry.

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE, JUNE 3 - 6

Once a year we gather to worship, study the bible, hear inspirational preachers, honor the deceased, thank the retirees, consecrate provisional pastors and ordain new pastors. We also conduct any and all conference business using parliamentary procedure as led by our Bishop. We vote on resolutions that impact the local churches in our conference (Greater New Jersey) like minimum clergy compensation, health insurance, property matters, social issues. We pass resolutions that can impact the larger denomination at General Conference. The General Conference, the ruling body in the life of our denomination, meets every four years, makes changes in the Discipline (our book of order) as well as our Social Principles and Resolutions. The General Conference directs the movement of the United Methodist Church nationally and internationally just as the Church Conference, represented by the Church Council, directs the life and ministry of the local congregation. Everything is decided by the vote of equal numbers of clergy and lay persons like you. Unfortunately, we do not have a lay member for annual conference this year. I haven't found anyone interested or available. Being a lay member requires someone who is free to attend, wants to learn more about our church functions, meet people from all our sister churches, make friends, represent our congregation and make a difference. You never know when one voice raised at a conference can reveal the movement of the Spirit among us and help determine the outcome of an issue. Please consider.

# SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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## Newsletter - Old and New

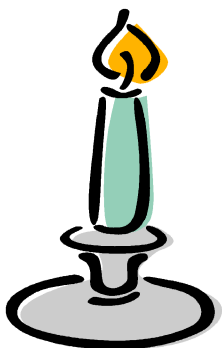
It's called re-vamping---and that's what we're doing with the newsletter. Some things are still old---the name. Some things are new---there's a joke in this issue.

The Communications Committee met with Kristi and Pastor Diane and decided to send it out by U. S. Mail again so that each of you gets it at your home. It will continue to be on the website and there will be copies in the narthex.

Your part is to help us re-design it step by step. Do we need a new name? Is there something that's not in the newsletter that you wish were? Do you have a suggestion or two? Tell or email either Kristi Rowan, church secretary, at 973-729-7773 or [Kristi@spartaumc.org](mailto:Kristi@spartaumc.org); or Ann

Freeman Price, co-editor with Kristi, at 973-383-5014 or at [annfreemaprice@embarqmail.com](mailto:annfreemaprice@embarqmail.com)  
Thanks for your help and keep watching for changes

**August 14th Deadline for September Newsletter---** Deadlines are deadlines and this one is for real. All church leaders will get an email on August 7th reminding them of the deadline. Material not in by that date will not go in the September newsletter. It's tough---but that's the way a newsletter gets out on time. Traditionally we do not do a July newsletter.



### COURAGE

**A candle is a protest at midnight.**

**It is a non-conformist.**

**It says to the darkness,**

**"I beg to differ."**

*Indian Proverb*