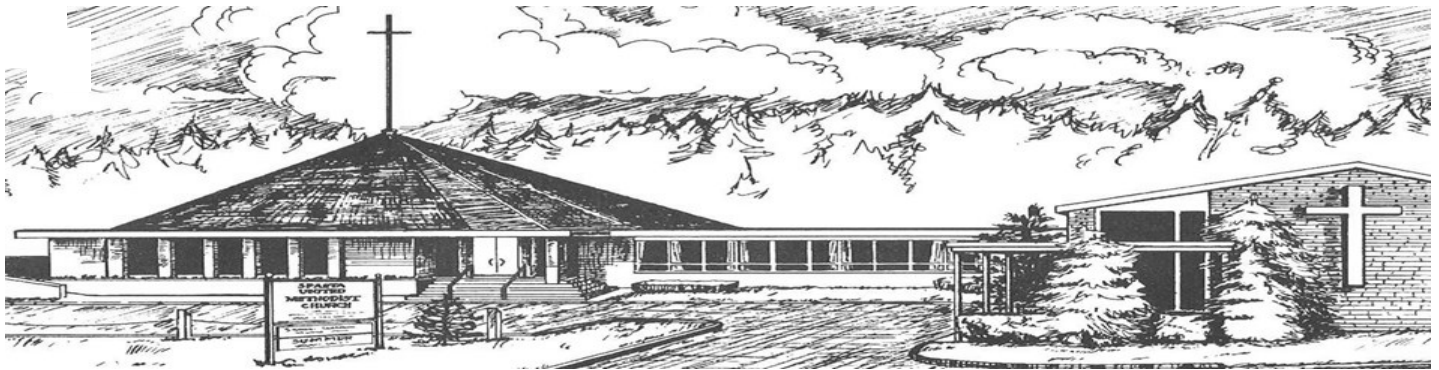


# SPARTA

## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



### NEWSLETTER—MAY 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

One of the books that has had a great deal of meaning for me is *Sabbath Time* by Tilden Edwards, an Episcopal priest and founder of the Shalem Institute, a center for contemplative Christian spirituality. The book focuses on the need for time away for re-creating our spirits, and a time to rest in the presence of God so that we might live a fuller and richer life. While I liked the book a great deal, I am not a good example of someone who knows how to take the sabbath time that I need. Even through my vacation times, I have continued to take phone calls, write daily devotions, work on my sermon schedule, and do other types of work that don't require me to be in the office. That is why I have requested and have been approved to take a renewal leave from mid-May through mid-June.

Though our denomination provides for a renewal leave for pastors once every four years, I have only had two opportunities to do this (2005 and 2016) in my 48 years of ministry to actually take this time apart to renew my spirit so that I can continue to serve with the energy and the hope that I believe is needed to be in effective ministry. I'm a bit overdue, and while the joy of ministry is still vibrant within me, I also find that I need some time away to recharge and renew my spirit. I will be preaching in for the first three Sundays in May, and then travelling to Wildwood for the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference meeting on the afternoon of May 18<sup>th</sup>. As of the adjournment of conference on May 20<sup>th</sup>, I will be on leave. Pastoral coverage will be overseen by several pastors in the area. If you need pastoral care, please call the office and Karen will connect you with someone. I will be on leave until June 14<sup>th</sup>, and return to the pulpit on June 15<sup>th</sup>.

During this time, there will be a few things that will be altered. There will be only one service on May 25<sup>th</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup>, and June 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. The Contemplative Service for June will be postponed from its normal time to June 18<sup>th</sup> at 12:15 p.m. Meetings of various church committees will continue in my absence as we have capable and effective leadership in each of these committees. The Daily Devotions will continue to be sent out each morning and I am working on getting these done ahead of time so that this will not be interrupted. Also, I am making alternate provisions for my voice mail and email to be answered, and the administrative matters that I normally cover will either be assigned to someone else during this period or they will wait until I return.

The Sparta United Methodist Church is already in good hands as it continues to be held in the hands of God. My hope is that during this renewal time, I can take the time I need spiritually to be re-created for the coming years so that together we can be blessing God and our community.

In Christ,

Steve

# 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 May 11, 18. 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.

# PFLAG Meeting

Healthcare & LGBTQ+ Community Discussion Panel  
Wednesday, May 21, 2025  
7:00 PM 9:00 PM  
Sparta United Methodist Church

Join us for our next PFLAG Sussex County Community Support Meeting, where we'll be hosting a special panel discussion focused on healthcare and the LGBTQ+ community. This important conversation will highlight the unique challenges LGBTQ+ individuals face in accessing affirming, inclusive care—and explore ways to advocate for better experiences and outcomes.

Our panel will feature healthcare professionals and community advocates who will share insights, answer questions, and provide helpful resources. Whether you're navigating the healthcare system yourself or supporting a loved one, this discussion is a valuable opportunity to learn, connect, and feel empowered.

As always, our meetings are a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ individuals, families, and allies.

We hope to see you there!



# Feed the Body/Feed the Soul

Feed the Body/Feed the Soul, May 2025, another opportunity to serve God's people!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0D4EAAAE23A3FD0-56554234-feed>

# Church & Society



**The Church and Society Committee  
of the Sparta United Methodist Church  
Pursuing Peace; Seeking Justice; Living Faith**

## Gaza

The war in Gaza continues with many people, including children, being killed each day. Israel has blocked food, fuel, medicine and other supplies for the more than 2 million Palestinians since March. Aid groups are running out of food.

The UMC General Board of Church and Society has provided the following text for a letter United Methodists can use to send to our two senators and House Member:

Dear Senator/Congressman,

At this critical moment, I am asking that you take the following actions:

Request that Israel allow food deliveries into Gaza.

Support an immediate ceasefire.

Ensure immediate and adequate access to and provision of humanitarian needs.

Press all parties to abide by the Geneva Conventions and customary international law.

Demilitarize the conflict by withholding further arms shipments.

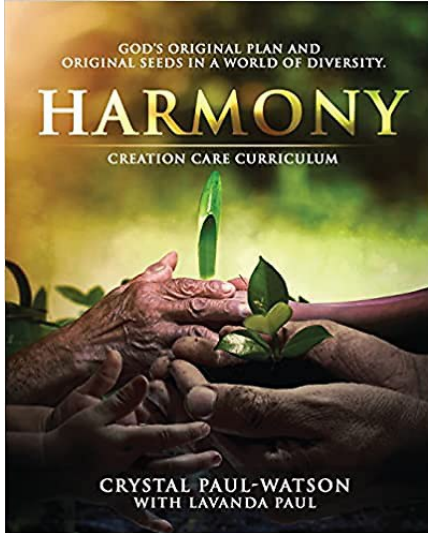
Negotiate the immediate release of all civilians being held hostage and ensure international protection for all civilians, including Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the West Bank.

As United Methodists, our commitment remains to a future in which both Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace, with security and human rights protected for all. "As disciples of Christ, we are called to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. We insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them." (United Methodist Social Principles ¶165.C)

Thank you for considering my views and I pray that you will find the courage to stand for peace.

# Earthkeepers 2025

## 2025 Earthkeeper's Day Camp



**Sparta United Methodist Church**

71 Sparta Ave, Sparta, NJ, 973-729-7773

(in the outside pavilion)

**July 21 - 25, 9 AM - Noon**

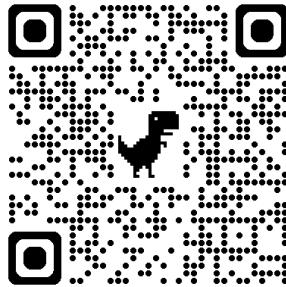
**Ages 4 years - 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

\$25/child (\$50 max per family)

Scholarships Available – ALL are welcome!

Registration forms found at [https://forms.gle/](https://forms.gle/jMQCZHFWoETqVpwz5)

[jMQCZHFWoETqVpwz5](https://forms.gle/jMQCZHFWoETqVpwz5) or



How can you help?

Some ideas:

Help spread the word (take flyers and hang them, tell your neighbors)

Be an extra body (sometimes hugs are needed the most)

Teach a lesson....some past lessons have been

make infused water- why drinking water is important

lesson on flight and career as a pilot

caring for chicks

farm animal fun

We need someone to be our Recreation/Games leader (we also need an assistant)

This year Jeni Moriarty has offered to help us “hatch” eggs!

Share your thoughts and ideas with us by emailing or contacting Pat Schutz, [pat.schutz@yahoo.com](mailto:pat.schutz@yahoo.com) or 201-230-5504

# Mother's & Father's Day

## MOTHER'S and FATHER'S—Remember and Honor

Once again this year at Mother's Day and at Father's Day, the Sparta United Women in Faith are inviting you to honor the mothers and fathers in your lives. In the church bulletin on May 11th we will have a special page listing the mothers you would like to recognize; in the church bulletin on June 15th we will have a special page listing the fathers you want to recognize.

We are asking that for each name you donate \$2.00. This money will go to the World Thank Offering of United Women in Faith and be used for mission programs helping women, children, and families. Please make out any checks to Sparta United Methodist Women.

There are two categories: "In Memory Of" and "In Honor Of". Please fill out the form and put it in an envelope in the United Women in Faith's mailbox in the hallway.

If you choose to wait until closer to Father's Day to list those names, we will run the form again at that time. You will have a chance to recognize fathers closer to Father's Day in June. Or you can recognize both now and we will save the fathers' names until June.

May 4th is the last day we can receive names for Mother's Day.

\*\*\*\*\*

For Mother's Day (please put in United Women in Faith's mailbox by May 4th!)

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

**List names ONLY—extra words will not be used.**

\*\*\*\*\*

For Father's Day (please put in United Women in Faith's mailbox by June 11th!)

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

**List names ONLY—extra words will not be used.**



# Small Group Opportunities

## **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.

*Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor

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

## **HEALTHIER LIVING GROUP**

Every **TUESDAY Morning at 10:30 a.m.**

The Tuesday morning Healthy Living group is now reading:

*The Secrets of Women who Never Give Up* by Dr Katja Lindemann MD

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXqgjh6RlCDFWN93l16\\_aMcguqxF.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXqgjh6RlCDFWN93l16_aMcguqxF.1)

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



# Family Promise~Casino Night



Please see Mike Vrabel for tickets

## Pride Rally

Sussex County Pride Rally will be held on Saturday, June 14 from 1-4:00 at 1 Brooks Plaza, Newton, NJ (Thor Labs property). Sparta UMC has been attending this Rally since 2016, when the rally was first held on the square in the center of Newton. As a community of faith, Sparta UMC has been intentional about showing love to ALL of God's people and feel the message needs to be loud and clear, especially for people who have been wounded by religion and marginalized by society. The afternoon will consist of musical performances, food vendors, merchandise, and FUN people (like us!)



2016



2023

**Come celebrate God's love and diversity and have a great time with all of us!**

# SPARTA

## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

71 Sparta Avenue

Sparta, NJ 07871

973-729-7773

[spartaumc.org](http://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.

