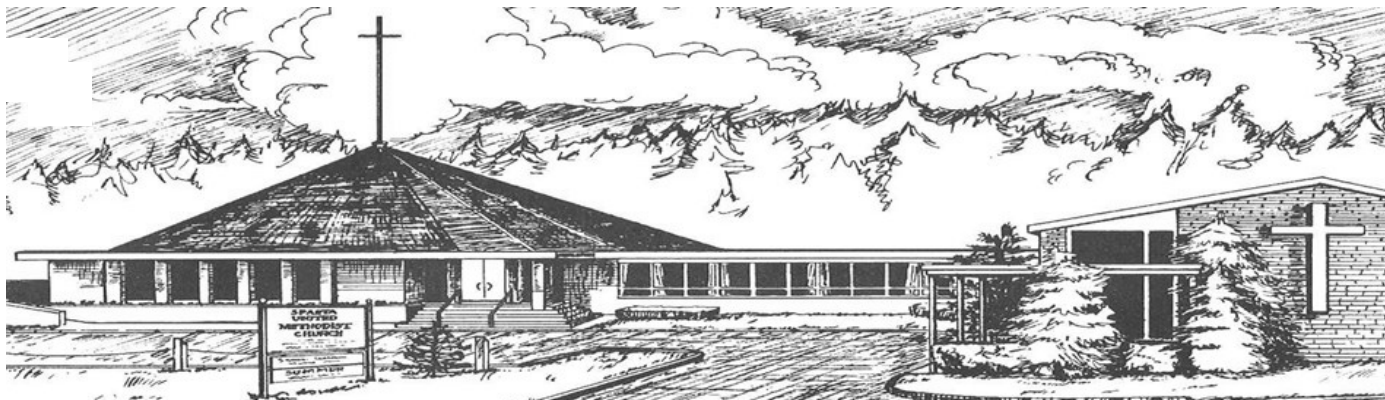


SPARTA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



NEWSLETTER September 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

For many years, summer has been a season to travel. For me and my family it has often been to somewhere in New England such as Cape Cod, Acadia National Park, Vermont, New Hampshire, or the Adirondacks. Even when we have returned to a familiar place, the journey proves to bring newness in discovery and experiences.

Our spiritual life is a journey as well, a pathway to newness even when outwardly the surroundings look strangely familiar. Many great spiritual awakenings in the scriptures are described as being somewhere on a journey such as Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, two of his followers on the road to Emmaus, Paul on the Damascus Road or his three missionary journeys where thousands of persons opened their eyes to the amazing gift of God's love in Christ. In the Hebrew scriptures, Abraham's journey from Ur to Canaan, the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt and their 40-year journey of formation through the wilderness, or the journey to and from exile are all significant spiritual journeys that brought new understandings of God's grace and love.

Like the Biblical saga, we are on a journey individually and as a church. Through the next 9 months, our worship will be focused on creating a path for discipleship, a journey of how we can grow in our faith. We will start in September with a preaching series on the foundations of our Wesleyan heritage and a way of living that gives direction and wholeness. From there, we will be looking at the different ways we can respond to God's amazing gifts by living a life consistent with the generosity of God's abundant grace taking us up to a two-week celebration of Thanksgiving, including marking the 50th anniversary of the Church Mouse. With Advent and Christmas, our focus will be on the surprises that God gives to us along the way, followed by an exploration of the meaning of the sacraments as a radical expression of inclusion and welcome. Lent will focus on Spiritual disciplines that help us to grow in our faith to be more faithful disciples who live as resurrection people. We will conclude the preaching year with a series of sermons on the Questions Jesus Asked, as the great teacher utilized questions as a means of helping his followers to grow in their understanding and commitment to faithfulness.

The spiritual journey needs intentionality. We don't grow in our faith without a purposeful decision to walk with other followers to grow in our faith. Maybe you are already on that pathway. Since COVID, our church like most others, have seen people get out of the habit of worshipping and sharing in the community of faith. If that is your situation, I would love to see you back in church – no questions asked, just a warm welcome to see you again. We really do need each other on this pathway so that each of us may grow in our faith and our commitment to living the life that Jesus intends for us.

In Christ,

Pastor Steve

Altar Flowers

Celebrate with Flowers!

Celebrate loved ones or special occasions with an Altar flower arrangement. Arrangements only cost \$30.00 (A great value! We keep costs low by reusing containers.) Please pay the church directly, including a note that the payment is for altar flowers for a specific date.

Reservations are being taken for September 28, October 5, October 12, October 19 and November 2. Use this [link](#) to reserve flowers. We need your name, phone number or email address and what the dedication should say. We also need to 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, or 973-534-6129.

Contemplative Worship



Contemplative Worship for September will be on
Wednesday, September 3rd
at 12:15 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Music

I Heard the Bells!

Heavenly Metal Ringers will resume rehearsals on September 2. All rehearsals are on Tuesdays, from 7 to 8:30 pm. High school students and adults who can read music are welcome!

A bell group (name to be determined) is being formed for students, ages 10-14. Rehearsals will begin the week of September 15. Day and time to be determined.

The Children's Chime Choir for ages 4-10 will begin meeting in late October. Day and time to be determined.

If interested in any of these, or other ringing opportunities, please contact Yvonne Roux, 973-534-6129, yrouxrings@gmail.com

SPRC COMMITTEE

Dear Friends of the Sparta United Methodist Church,

After eight years of faithful service, Karen Shaw, our office administrator, is stepping down to take a different full time position effective September 10th. We are saddened to see her leave as she has been such an effective staff member and an important part of our congregation, but we wish her well as she begins this next chapter in her journey. I am sure that you join with the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) in wishing her well in this new time in her life, and we will have an opportunity to offer our thanks to her at our worship on Sunday, September 7th. Karen has already committed to do all she can to help with a smooth transition to a new person in the office.

The SPRC has begun the process of seeking a replacement for this vital position on our church staff. In the interim, plans have been made to cover essential operations of the church. Some of these will require volunteers for limited responsibilities and time. Please consider how you can help in this transition. More information will be available shortly.

Blessings

The Staff Parish Relations Committee

Meeting Groups

BEYOND THE BASICS - (ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL)

Sunday Mornings at 9:30 a.m. in Room 8

MONDAY NIGHT BOOK GROUP-

The Book Group meets by ZOOM at 7:00 P.M.

Zoom Link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/771970415?pwd=bFdUQk9YQUlyZXRhYUZnNVhRVEZvUT09>

HEALTHIER LIVING GROUP

The Tuesday morning Healthy Living book club is taking a summer break and will resume Tuesday
September 9, 2025

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

Church & Society



The Church and Society Committee of the Sparta United Methodist Church

Pursuing Peace; Seeking Justice; Living Faith

A Pastoral Response to Federal Intervention in D.C. Foundry United Methodist Church

Love God. Love each other. Change the world.

Let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. - Amos 5:24

We serve a God of liberation and hope. Through Christ, we are set free to live as people of hope, joining God's work of healing, restoring, and reconciling the world. True liberation breaks chains, dismantles systems of harm, and opens the way for abundant life.

The so-called "liberation" claimed in the federal takeover of D.C.'s police force and the deployment of the National Guard in our neighborhoods is no liberation at all. It reinforces systemic racism, deepens mistrust, and cultivates an atmosphere of fear. Over-policing has never been the path to true safety. Instead, it drives wedges between neighbors, criminalizes poverty, and further marginalizes the vulnerable. We reject this doubling down on policies that have failed generations for generations.

At Foundry United Methodist Church, we believe that the security of our communities cannot be built through force. True safety is born of justice, compassion, and the meeting of human needs. It is rooted in affordable housing, equitable opportunity, and the unshakable dignity of every person regardless of race, ethnicity, age, ability, immigration status, housing status, gender identity and expression, or sexual orientation.

We reject laws, policies, and practices that punish those who sleep outside. We support policies and programs that rapidly, supportively, and permanently house neighbors in need. We call for a surge in resources that would eradicate poverty rather than the impoverished. We renew at this moment our call for deeply affordable housing to be included in any projects involving the RFK campus.

We reaffirm our call for home rule and D.C. statehood. We stand alongside all who are working for a city where safety is grounded in fairness, opportunity, and mutual care.

We pray for police and national guard members who have offered themselves in service but now find themselves caught in a widening gap of distrust, standing between communities in pain and leadership bent on compounding harm against the vulnerable.

We pray with grief and urgency for those being harmed: unhoused neighbors treated without dignity, families torn apart by force, protestors met with fear instead of listening, and whole communities targeted by policy rather than protected by law.

We pray for all for whom an increased police presence is retraumatizing—those whose memories are stirred by the sight of uniforms, who carry wounds from unjust systems, and communities that have endured surveillance, brutality, and systemic neglect, whether recent or long-endured.

May the God of mercy guide our leaders with wisdom, strengthen our communities with love, and protect the most vulnerable among us with tender care. May the God of justice equip us with courage to speak truth, persistence to confront systems of harm, and hope to keep building a city where every person can live free, safe, and whole.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Church & Society



Book Discussion "The Savvy Ally"

Join us for a welcoming and engaging community book discussion on *The Savvy Ally* by Jeannie Gainsburg on Wednesday September 17th, 2025 at 7:00PM – a friendly, practical guide to becoming a more informed and effective LGBTQ+ ally.

Whether you've read the whole book, a few pages, or haven't had a chance to dive in yet, you are encouraged to attend! This conversation is open to all – no reading required. We'll explore meaningful insights, share personal reflections, and discuss real-life ways to practice allyship in our daily lives.

Come connect, learn, and grow in a supportive and inclusive space. All are welcome!

Church Picnic



Date: Sunday, September 7 at 11:30 AM, after church

Where: behind the church, in the pavilion

Please bring a salad, vegetable platter, fruit, or a dessert to share. Hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided.

Games will be set up. Try your hand at disk golf! Bring your friends!

Missions



UNITED METHODISTS
OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
& GREATER NEW JERSEY

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

-Galatians 6:2 NRSV

Dear Beloved,

I write today with deep gratitude and joy: thanks to your overwhelming generosity and faithful partnership, we have exceeded our goal for the Tanzania Pastor Salary Campaign! Together, we have raised \$77,842 for the Pastors of Tanzania Annual Conference. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

What a powerful testimony to the power of our connection that defines United Methodism. Your compassion and commitment have once again shown that when we join together, by God's grace, we can move mountains. As many of you know, pastors in the Tanzania Annual Conference often earn as little as \$67 per year—an amount that makes it nearly impossible to care for their families, maintain their health, or lead their congregations with the strength and focus their ministry deserves.

Now, because of your gifts, that story is changing. Every pastor in the Tanzania Annual Conference will now receive a living wage. Thanks to you, these faithful leaders will be able to serve their congregations and communities with renewed energy, peace of mind, and hope for the future. In return, the Pastors of Tanzania are teaching us about faithful evangelism, lived discipleship and missional mindset. As we build our partnership, we grow and learn together and strengthen our worldwide connection.

Again, thank you for your missional giving locally and globally. May we continue to love boldly, serve joyfully and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

With Gratitude,

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
The United Methodists of
Eastern Pennsylvania & Greater New Jersey
BishopMoore-Koikoi@epagnj.org
EPA: 484-474-0939 | GNJ: 732-359-1010

Sparta United Methodist Church has given \$2000 for this in 2025 this is one program where our mission money is going

Art Show

Be An Art Show Ambassador

2nd Annual Art Show & Sale

Saturday, November 22, 2025 10am-4pm

Last year's Art Show & Sale was created to expand our outreach, encourage residents to visit the church and learn of the many ways we enrich the community. Nineteen artists were able to showcase their talent as residents enjoyed talking with the artists, viewing a wide variety of styles and purchasing art. 20% of the sales were donated to the church to support the youth program. Our 2nd Annual Art Show & Sale is being held just in time for the holiday season....a great time to purchase gifts.

You can help:

Spread the word with friends, social media, work and organizations

Volunteer to help

Secure donations from local businesses

Add your note of good wishes to Artist Booklet - \$25

For additional information contact any member of the Planning Committee: Steve Bechtold, Steve Magnotta, Lori Price, Laura Pomeisl, Dave Johnson or call, text or email Carolyn Hartley 973-222-9751 carolynhartley60@gmail.com or officeadmin@spartaumc.org



SPARTA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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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.

