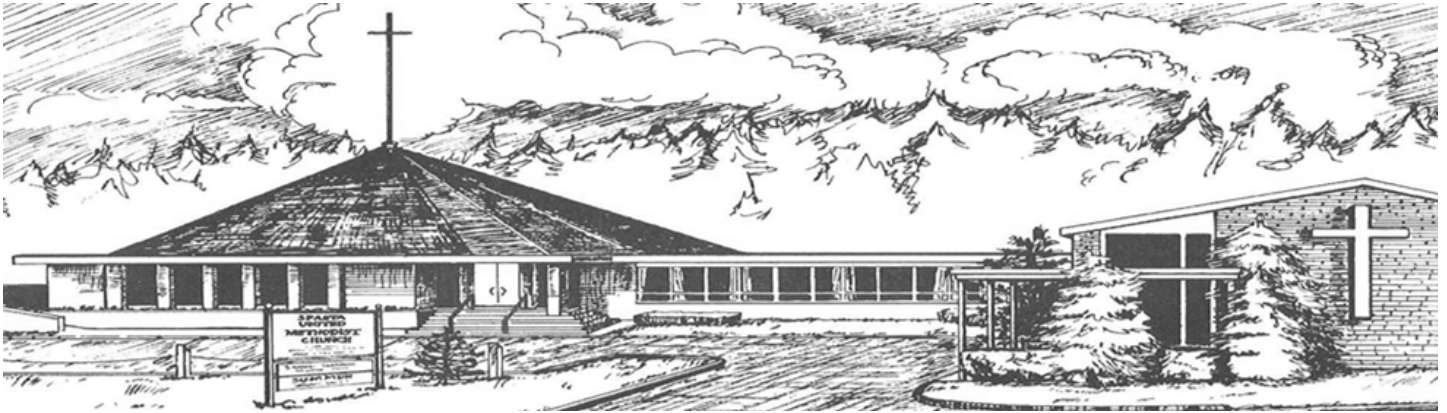


SPARTA

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This month our nation celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It was a momentous occasion in history—not only for the United States but for many nations that followed—because it challenged the accepted understanding of power. Conventional wisdom suggested that the effort should never have succeeded. Yet it did, not because of stronger armies, greater wealth, or superior weapons, but because there were people and leaders who embraced a vision greater than themselves and were willing to speak truth in the face of power and opposition. Holding onto a vision is not exclusively an American or Christian value, but vision is essential whenever people seek to change direction or embrace something new.

Holding a vision is not wishful thinking. It is the disciplined practice of seeing beyond present circumstances to the possibilities God places before us. Throughout Scripture, God continually called ordinary people to imagine a future shaped by faith rather than fear—Abraham leaving his homeland, Moses leading the Israelites to freedom, the prophets calling the people to justice, and Jesus proclaiming the coming reign of God. Vision does not deny the realities or challenges of the present; it gives us the courage to face them with hope and purpose. It invites us to ask not simply, "How do we preserve what we have?" but, "How is God calling us to serve the needs of our community today?"

For the church, vision is indispensable. The world around us is changing rapidly, and the needs of our neighbors are different from those of previous generations. People are longing for authentic community, deeper purpose, compassion, and hope in an increasingly fragmented world. If we are to remain faithful to Christ's mission, we must be willing to see beyond maintaining our traditions and instead embrace God's future for our congregation. A shared vision unites us around our calling, inspires generous hearts, welcomes new people into ministry, and equips us to become the church our community needs today—not simply the church we have always been, but the church God is still creating us to become.

In Christ,

Steve

NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Worship Schedule



Worship Every Sunday at 8:45 and 10:30 a.m.

Communion is celebrated each week at the 8:45 a.m. service, and at the beginning of each month at the 10:30 a.m. service.

Contemplative Services are back to the first Wednesday of the month at 12:15 p.m.

Altar Flowers

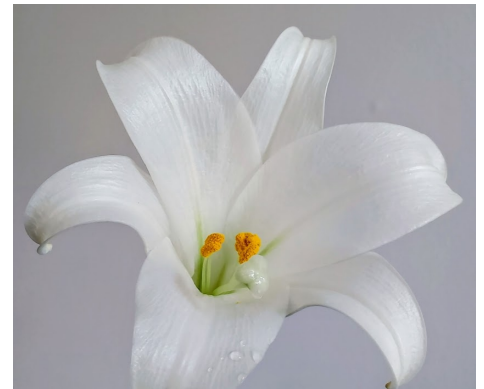
Celebrate with Flowers!

Acknowledge loved ones or a special occasion with an altar flower arrangement. Reservations are being accepted for July 12, August 23, 30, or any date in the Fall.

Arrangements cost \$35.00. Please pay the church directly, including a note that the payment is for altar flowers and the specific date requested.

Use this [link](https://bit.ly/4sUELRO)* to reserve flowers. We need your name, phone number or email address, and the dedication. Please let us know if you plan to take the flowers after the 10:30 service, or if you want them delivered to someone in need of a pick-me-up. Any questions: Contact **Yvonne Roux**, yrouxrings@gmail.com, or 973-534-6129.

*bit.ly/4sUELRO



Scan this QR Code to reserve flowers.



Scan me

Publication Deadlines

The deadline for the Newsletter is on the **15th of the month before.**

For the weekly bulletin and announcements, the deadline is the **Wednesday before.**

NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Feed the Body/Feed the Soul

Love like Jesus and “feed my sheep.”

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.” ~Dali Lama

You can help by signing up using the link below. You can also help by donating to the Thrift Shop, helping in the Shop and by holding all the workers, shoppers, and people needing help, in prayer.

Sign Up Genius

(FTB/FTS) is a ministry of the church. We provide a lunch, give a \$20 Shop Rite gift card, offer communion, and our friends are welcome to take any free items that the Church Mouse doesn't need. We have been doing this ministry since 2002, and it grows and grows. On June 12th, we served 273 families. Check out opportunities to help by going to our Sign Up Genius for **July**. People ages 4-99 are welcome to come help, but please sign up! [Feed the Body/Feed the Soul, July 10, 2026](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0D4EAAAE23A3FD0-64092895-feed#/)

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0D4EAAAE23A3FD0-64092895-feed#/>



New LiveStream

Many Thanks ~~~ From Yvonne

By the time you read this our new livestream service will have been running for about two months. Instead of using FaceBook Live we are now using a YouTube account called **Sparta UMC NJ** (the YouTube account called Sparta United Methodist Church NJ is no longer active).

This new livestreaming service was the result of the efforts of many people, and this is a feeble attempt to acknowledge all of them. Thanks to Pastor Steve Bechtold who found Ricardo Rivera, a consultant who worked with the Branchville UMC's livestream service. Pastor Steve also setup our new YouTube page. Special thanks to an anonymous donor whose generous donation covered all costs!

Nate Noel set up the computer and saved us money by reusing used equipment. Trustees Mike Vrabel and Bob Schutz assisted with the setting up of cameras and other equipment. Cullen Kempson provided guidance regarding the sound system and other technical issues.

Pat Harvey made prompt payments to all and continues to create and run the slides. Davy Foote provided technical expertise and was our test pilot and trainer. Many thanks to the Livestream Team: Davy Foote, Susan Foy, Ruth Fulgenzi, Jen Hutchison, Sue Reynolds, Ashton Voreck and Don Voreck. Not only have they been generous with their time, ideas and talents, but they have been generous in supporting me and each other through this transition. What a great team! Last but not least...Thank you to my husband, Steve, who has put up with me being distracted, at church, and put together the new workstation. Love you!

NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Church Mouse Thrift Shop



Church Mouse Thrift Shop

71 Sparta Ave.

Sparta, NJ 07871

973-729-9121

Hours:

Wed. & Sat.: 10:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.

Thur. & Fri.: 1:00 - 4:00 P.M.



Did you know the Church Mouse Thrift Shop has a Facebook Page? **The Church Mouse Thrift Shop of The Sparta United Methodist Church.**

Did you know the Church Mouse has Gift Certificates?

We're always looking for **new volunteers** to help in the thrift shop, especially on **Thursdays and Fridays.**

What's Happening in the Store This Month:

***** **The Church Mouse will be closed Saturday, July 11th.** *****

Get ready for "Christmas in July" starting **July 8th**! All Christmas merchandise will be 50% off the rest of the month of July!

We will be suspending new volunteer training until August due to vacation absences. Applications will be accepted and put on hold until then. Thank you for your understanding.

Since **June 19th**, the Church Mouse has been having "Freebie Fridays" for June, July, and August. There will be bins of free merchandise at the top of the wheelchair ramp available to everyone. Be advised this is weather permitting! Enjoy!

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61578137110625>

Prayers Around the Peace Pole

Upcoming

Prayers Around the Peace Pole

services:

Starting at 7:00PM.

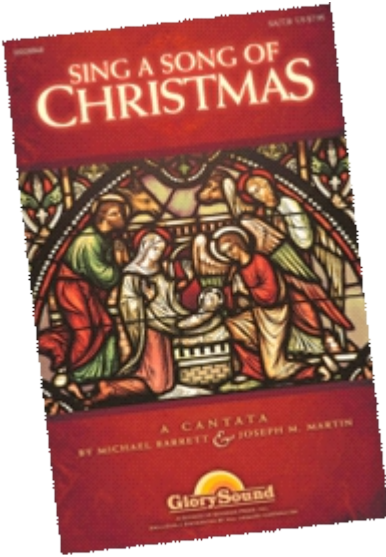
July 26



NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Christmas Cantata

Christmas may be months away, but the Sparta UMC Choir is planning ahead for our 2026 Cantata entitled “Sing a Song of Christmas.” The Cantata will be performed on Saturday, December 12th, and you are invited to be a part of this event that welcomes the community in to celebrate the joy of the season. You are invited to sing with the choir for this event. The cantata will begin rehearsals in September during the first 20+ minutes of weekly choir rehearsals at noon on Sundays. While you are always invited to join the choir and sing each week, you may only be able to do this one event and that is certainly welcome as well. A second way to be involved is to sponsor one of the extra musicians who are hired to enhance the performance. Each musician honorarium is \$250.00, and we already have a commitment for one of four that we will be needing. You are invited to sponsor one, or commit to a partial sponsorship at whatever amount is comfortable to you. Please see our Director of Music, Bonnie Pomeroy, for more information, a copy of the music, or to make a commitment for sponsorship.



The Gratitude Box

Focusing on the Positive: The Gratitude Box

Actively focusing on gratitude helps foster a sense of joy, peace, and abundance, even amidst the challenges we all face. When we deliberately seek out and acknowledge our blessings, it can profoundly improve our outlook and well-being.

Please use the provided forms, which are next to The Gratitude Box, to write down what you are grateful for and anonymously place it in the box. Each month, our Admin, Sue, will collect these notes and share them in the SUMC Newsletter, creating a beautiful collective testament to the goodness we share. Start reflecting and writing today!

Or you could e-mail your submissions to OfficeAdmin@SpartaUMC.org



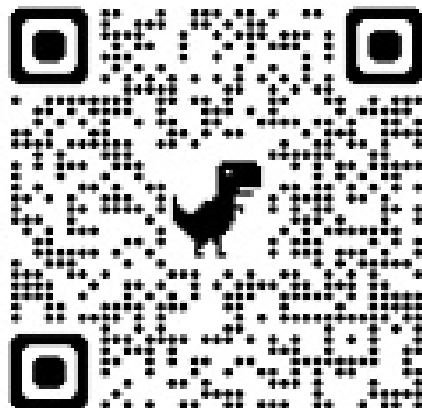
NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Vacation Bible School



Sparta United Methodist Church

July 27-31, 2026 ◆ **9:00 am to Noon**



NEWSLETTER – July 2026

From Tags to Riches

Our Sparta **United Women in Faith** is supported by Soup and Quiche sales and a new ministry called: **From Tags to Riches**. Jill 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, animals, birds, snowmen, landscape, and flowers. Also, **Birthdays and Anniversaries happen all year long!** Grab a selection of 10 tags for just \$1! Every penny supports the amazing work of UWF at our church. If you are interested in supporting UWF through the purchase of gift tags, please see Sue in the office.

Recycling your old cards is easy! Gather your used cards, pop them in a bag labeled “Jill,” and drop the cards off in the Church Secretary mailbox. Let's upcycle and support UWF together! Thank you.

And if you are interested in joining our chapter of **United Women in Faith**, see **Jill Reynolds**, our new president! There are some exciting events coming up: Mission u in at Centenary in Hackettstown later this month and a Skylands District event here in September.

Attention All Pet Lovers!

The Great Sparta Pet Food Drive (July Edition) is Here!

Let's be honest, your cat's primary job is being an adorable roommate who judges your life choices, and your dog's main hobby is barking at plastic bags blowing across the yard. We love them for their quirks, and they always have food in their bowls. Sadly, however, many of our finest furry citizens are facing a very real food shortage right now. Many families in our community are struggling to fill their pets' food dishes, and these important companion animals genuinely need our help.

Pets aren't just pets; they are unpaid therapists, professional couch-warmers, and the only ones who genuinely care that you just walked back into the room after being gone for six minutes. We need to help feed them. All July long.

Your New Grocery Shopping Mission

The next time you are at the store buying things you probably don't need, we would love it if you would toss some pet food into your cart.

- What we need: Dry food, canned food, snacks, feasts fit for a king/queen (dogs and cats only, please—leave the iguanas out of this one).

- Where to drop it: Put it into the giant collection bin located in the Narthex.

“But what if I miss the July deadline?”

Good news: the giving doesn't have to stop when July ends! The Sparta Community Food Pantry welcomes donations all year long. After all, our dogs and cats never take a vacation from breakfast and dinner, so the Food Pantry is always ready to accept a helping hand.

Where to Find the Sparta Community Food Pantry

They are located near the Sparta ShopRite (ideal for a quick donation detour!):
99 Demarest Road, Sparta, NJ 07871

Operation Hours (AKA Delivery Time for Angels):

- Wednesdays: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM and 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM
- Fridays: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Do it for the Karma. Do it for the Tail Wags.

Please help us fill some furry bellies. Your good deed will officially earn you the right to call yourself a local hero! For more info on how to be awesome, check out: www.spartacommunityfoodpantry.org



**SPARTA COMMUNITY
FOOD PANTRY**

NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Meeting Groups

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 the Wesley Room

MONDAY NIGHT BOOK GROUP

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

Currently reading *Being Jesus in Nashville* by Jim Palmer. Feel free to join on any Monday.

For more information, see Pastor Steve.

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

TUESDAY MORNING HEALTHIER LIVING GROUP

Every TUESDAY Morning at 10 A. M. Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85294018790?pwd=bScXqgjh6RICDFWN93l16_aMcguqx.F.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. at Angelo's Franklin Diner

FRIDAY MORNING READING TOGETHER/BIBLE STUDY

Friday's at 10:00 A. M.

What Paul Really Said About Women: The Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and Love by John T. Bristow

Join Zoom Video Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/389284226>

Alternate Phone in #: +1 646 876 9923; Meeting ID: 389 284 226 -- Passcode: 7773

Donations



When you send your pledge payments via cash, check, or Vanco, if you are intending the payment to be split between the Operating Budget and the Capital (Building) Fund, please indicate on your envelope, check, or Vanco payments

how you want it split.

Sometimes we have to guess, but we don't always get it right. So

please tell us.

s through Vanco and have changed your pledge this year from what it was last year, be sure to make those changes to your account **in Vanco**.



NEWSLETTER – July 2026

Volunteering

Here's a list of the various committees and other activities we have going on here at the Sparta United Methodist Church.

Something here might spark an interest to get you involved.

Choir: Every Sunday 9:45 & Noon.

Church Mouse Board: 1st Monday of the month 12:00 PM.

United Women in Faith: One Monday a month 12:30 PM.

Mission Committee: 1st Wednesday of even # months 7:00 PM.

Bell Choir: Every Tuesday 7:00 PM. (September – June)

Church Council: Usually on one Wednesday a month 7:00 PM.

Trustees: Usually on one Thursday a month 7:00 PM.

FTB/FTS Setup: The evening before the 2nd Friday 7:00 PM.

Feed The Body/Feed The Soul: 2nd Friday 10:00 AM.

Church & Society: 1st Saturday 10:00 AM.

Memorial Committee.

Art Show Planning Committee.

Worship Committee.

Sunday School.

Finance Committee.

Earthkeepers.

Lay Leaders.

Church Mouse Volunteers.

Coffee Hour

Join us every Sunday after the 10:30 service

Please join us down the hall in Demarest Hall for light refreshments and beverages and conversation!
All are welcome!

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SPARTA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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