



# Sparta United Methodist Church

DECEMBER 2016 ~ THE CIRCUIT RIDER

## Memo

written by: Pratt Davis

To: All Employees

From: Department of Peace and Joy

Date: December 24, 2016

Re: Initiative to Spread Peace and Joy

In an effort to improve our Company's performance in the Peace and Joy Department, we ask those gathering for the annual celebration at the Manger to participate in a new and improved celebration. We know there may be some resistance to our proposal as we have observed the present tradition since the founding of the company. The modern world is in need of more Peace and Joy, but the old traditions are not meeting the needs of our customers. We are in danger of closing the Department altogether if ratings don't improve.

Please follow the directions below:

This year when you come to the Manger

Walk past those who have come to worship and adore,

Step around the ones here to sing praise,

Move ahead of the people who bring this Baby gifts.

Instead of joining the crowd, go one at a time and stand beside the Mother.

Look closely at This Child,

Pick This Child up,

Carry the Christ Child with you when you leave the Manger.

May you move with Joy, deeper and deeper still into the heart of God.

May you find and follow the rhythms that bring life and trace the pathways of Peace.

Peace and Joy unto you, dear friends.

## Sparta United Methodist Church Chancel Choir

Presents

### THE WONDROUS STORY A CHRISTMAS CANTATA

Sunday December 11  
10:00 am

There will be one Sunday Morning Worship Service on this special day with Sunday School At 9:00am

A Mission Meal will follow.

### A WONDROUS STORY

Please join the choir as they deliver the Christmas message through song on Sunday, December 11th, 2016 at the 10:00am together worship service. Through the words of a narrator, the prophet Isaiah, a shepherd, an angel, the Innkeeper, Mary, and a king, in addition to the sung Christmas message delivered by the Sparta choir and children, the Christmas story will come alive.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of the singing story of Jesus' birth as we anticipate God with us and Christ's second coming!

Thank you to the choir, readers, nativity participants and instrumentalists for their commitment and hard work to deliver God's word through song. We hope to see you here!

Merry Christmas,

Rev. Jacqueline E. Tookey

Sparta Choir Director and Executive Director of Big Sigh Ministries, Inc.

### Upcoming Events

Mondays	1:00pm	Prayer Group
Mon/Thurs	2:45pm	FUSION After School
Wednesdays	10:00am	Ladies Bible Study
Wednesdays	12:00pm	Advent Service

Wednesdays	5:30pm	ROCK
Wednesdays	6:30pm	FUSION
December 5	10:00am	UMW Workday
December 11	10:00am	Cantata & Mission Meal
December 24	6:00pm	Christmas Eve Service
December 25	10:00am	Christmas Day Worship

## *The What and Why of Chrismons*

The use of Chrismons to decorate Christmas trees is popular in many churches today. Chrismons were first developed in 1957 by Frances Kipp Spencer of Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia. In an effort to create appropriate decorations for her church Christmas tree, Spencer fash-

ioned centuries-old symbols into white and gold tree decorations. She also was the creator of the term Chrismons, which is a combined word created from *Christ* and *monogram* and means *symbol of Christ*.

Symbols of Christianity have been passed down through the

ages. Many times early Christians had to worship in secret to avoid possible persecution and death. Because of this threat, they developed symbols that were used to communicate with fellow believers and direct Christians to secret places of worship.

The traditional colors of Chris-

mons are white and gold. White is the liturgical (or church) color for Christmas and symbolizes that Jesus was pure and perfect. Gold symbolizes His Majesty and Glory.

Below are some examples of Chrismons and what they represent to Christians.

 <p><i>The Cross symbolizes that Christians believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for everyone.</i></p>	
 <p><i>The Irish or Celtic Cross is a regular cross with a circle in the middle to symbolize eternity.</i></p>	<p><i>The fish is the oldest of Christian symbols. The letters for the Greek word for fish, ichthus, stand for Jesus (I), Christ (X), God (Q), Son (Y), Savior (S). Some of Jesus' disciples were fisherman.</i></p>
 <p><i>The Anchor Cross reminds Christians that Jesus is the anchor of their faith.</i></p>	 <p><i>The five pointed star represents the five wounds of Jesus on the cross.</i></p>
 <p><i>The Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They symbolize the Christian belief that Jesus is the beginning and end of all things.</i></p>	 <p><i>The Nativity Star is the symbol of the Star of Bethlehem or Epiphany, when the Wise men visited Jesus.</i></p>
 <p><i>Chi Rho are the first two letters of the word Christos which means Christ.</i></p>	 <p><i>The Crown is the symbol that Jesus is King, ruler over heaven and Earth.</i></p>
	 <p><i>The triquetra symbol represents the Christian "Trinity" of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.</i></p>

***During the upcoming rush of activities and celebrations, may we pause and look at the Chrismons on our tree and reflect upon their meaning.***



### ***Outreach Center Update***

We are making good progress on the construction of the Pugh Outreach Center, yet there is still much to be done in the final stages. The latest projection is mid-January for occupancy, however, the elevator will not be delivered until the end of February.

Wiring connections for lighting and outlets are being worked on this week. Lighting and ceiling has been completed on

the second floor, insulation and ceiling tiles will be next. The ceiling grid is finished in the kitchen and the wiring is being completed. We are meeting this week to finalize the size for the sinks and tables for the kitchen. Bracing and handrails for the walking track should be completed by next week.

We have had an insert in the Sunday Bulletin for items needed for the new building. If you remember, we stated in the beginning of this project that we had enough money to build

the new facility as a result of Charlie Pugh's generous gift that was designated for new building only. At that time, we stated that we would come back to you and ask for donations to purchase items needed in the new facility. The list contained the needed items that have been identified. The prices listed were on the high side. We will shop to find the best quality and the best deal possible. Our reason for listing it as we did was to give you a chance to contribute this year if you choose to do so for a tax advantage. If your contribution for a particular item is greater than what is needed for that item, we will let you

know. Then you can choose what you would like to have done with the remainder of your contribution.

This is our facility and it's up to us to use it for the glory of God. We live by faith. We have done everything possible in upgrades to make the building as energy efficient as possible. Stepping out in faith does not always look logical, but if we are committed to outreach and growing our church we must be willing to do what is necessary for that to happen.

In Christ's Love,  
Larry Prince



Spotlight on  
**Connie Amburn**



An adventure that was supposed to last only two years changed Connie Amburn's life. Oh what falling in love will do!

Being the daughter of an employee of the US Forest Service, Connie would call several states home as a child. Ending up near the border of Idaho and Montana is where she would begin her career as a Physical Therapy Assistant. That is how she met her friend Donna, who would offer her

## Getting to Know Our Church Family

the adventure she accepted.

Connie and her friend had worked together for a few years when her friend's career took her from Idaho to the small town of Elkin, North Carolina. Shortly after arriving in Elkin in 1980, Donna called her friend Connie and asked if she would come to Elkin and help her with her Physical Therapy practice. Connie thought this would be an interesting prospect, "a little something different." She had no serious ties in Idaho and agreed to come. In her mind, she would stay for a couple of years and then return to Idaho.

But a year after moving to Elkin, she met Jim and they fell in love. Before long they would marry. A two-year adventure turned into thirty plus years for Connie.

Jim's home had always been in Elkin. His family was there and he had developed a successful insurance business. When he met Connie, they would go on dates on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Connie loved camping and she taught Jim how to "rough it."

In 1990, they became aware of some property on Brown Road in Alleghany County. On the property was an old house. They purchased the property and used the house for summers and weekends. They would eventually build a new house there and would tear the old one down. In 2004, when Jim retired at an early age, they moved from Elkin to their property on Brown Road in Alleghany County permanently.

Connie and Jim would visit her family in Idaho yearly, and because they enjoyed traveling they would incorporate a trip out west into these visits.

In 2011, Jim died quite unexpectedly. As happens when a loved one is lost, Connie had to learn to do a lot of things that Jim had done. In the ensuing five years she's had a lot of "firsts," like buying a car and managing property. She bought a condo in Idaho and returns to see her family twice yearly, staying a month at a time.

Connie says one thing she has learned with Jim's death is to never put off doing what you want to do. "When someone says to me that we need to have lunch sometime, I get out my calendar and ask when." What good advice for everyone!

Today Connie's life is busy, active both with the church and in the community. She is a member of the United Methodist Women, she does sewing for the Sharon Sewing Circle, attends the Ladies Bible Study and recently completed the Disciple Bible Study. She also is a member of the Wildflowers of Alleghany Garden Club, the Women's Club and the Blue Ridge Book Club. She is a volunteer at the Solid Rock Food Closet.

Connie believes that volunteering is vital. "It's so easy for us to live within our own bubble, but it's so important to see what the needs are in our community."

Connie loves Sparta UMC. "There's just something special about this church." There's just something special about Connie Amburn! If you haven't already gotten to know her, it would be a delightful experience to do so.



### *Daily Devotionals for Advent*

Pastor Bob and Ben have prepared daily devotionals for Advent. These are short, thought provoking articles accompanied by Scripture. What a wonderful way to prepare ourselves daily for the coming of our Lord!

These devotionals will be delivered each morning to your email Inbox. Be sure the office has your email address. You can call the church office or email your address to [info@umcsparta.com](mailto:info@umcsparta.com) and just say "add me."

For those of you who prefer a paper copy of the devotionals just let the church office or Ben know and we'll see that you get a printed copy.

## Lunch With the Pastor



We will not be meeting during Advent but will resume in the new year. Please join us for our weekly Advent services on Wednesdays at noon.



# Sparta United Methodist Church

## UNITED METHODIST MEN HAPPENINGS

*By Alan Sears*

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We had a great turnout for our November Breakfast! 37 individuals braved the cold and wind to hear the heartwarming experiences from the Kilmartin's mission trip to Guatemala.

A special thank you is extended to all who supported the November Mission Meal. Due to your generosity, additional curriculum will be purchased for the Blue Ridge Christian School.

Wood deliveries have started. With deliveries underway, comes the need for increased cutting, splitting and loading. If you're available to help let Larry Prince or Ken Lewis know and they'll add you to their notification list.

We will not have a Men's Breakfast in December but rest assured, we'll be back in January! Have a Blessed Christmas and a Safe and Happy New Year.

## SECRET ORIGAMIST!

There are secret admirers that send caring letters and gifts to unsuspecting recipients and there are Secret Santas that spread the joy of giving at Christmas time. Sparta has a Secret "Origamist" who has spread joy to the Sparta United Methodist Church staff with their Origami creations.

Origami is a folding paper practice of Japanese origin. Today, the word origami is used for most all folded paper art forms with no specific cultural background. The Sparta paper cranes showed up a couple of months ago all over the offices, the choir room, and some classrooms.

To the creator of these little cranes I say, THANK YOU! You have given us something to talk about and put a smile on our faces.

Thank you and blessings,  
Rev. Jacqueline E. Tookey  
Sparta Choir Director and Executive Director of Big Sigh Ministries, Inc.



## Our Worker Bees

*A Thank You to Our  
Behind-the-Scenes Workers*

Today We Thank  
Gayle Cobb

To have someone staffing the children's nursery on Sunday mornings is something we all expect will be the case. We bring our children

and grandchildren, take them to the nursery and off we go to enjoy Sunday School and Worship Service. But that doesn't "just happen."

SUMC has been without someone to staff the nursery for more than a year. **Gayle Cobb, seeing the need, stepped up and volunteered.** Every Sunday, for more than a year, she would come for the 9:00 service, the Sunday school hour and the 11:00 service so those with small children could worship, knowing their child would be loved and well cared for. This is a ministry that she believes is vital to our church's future, saying, "These children are the promise of our church. It's such an important ministry."

Gayle is also the Sunday School teacher for the preschool children, something she's done for more than two years.

Please take a moment to thank Gayle for doing this important work for our church!

*Please welcome Mikayla Edwards as SUMC's nursery worker. She is a college student, a life guard and is active in 4-H. She is here to welcome your children for both worship services and Sunday school.*



## ROCK has been very busy this fall!

We are finishing learning the books of the New Testament and will start on the Old Testament in January. We visited Genesis Nursing home to share some Thanksgiving cards and have been invited back to sing some carols in December.

As we prepare for our move to the new building we will be requesting some help in furnishing some room essentials. We will have a wish list posted in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your continued support in this growing ministry. If you would like to be a part of this ministry, please contact Talina for details.

**A Big Thanks** to all who contributed items, helped prepare, serve or clean up, and to everyone who attended and donated to our annual community Thanksgiving dinner. There were 181 meals served and \$1,407 in donations received to go to the Alleghany Ministerium Fund.

## UNITED METHODIST WOMEN HAPPENINGS

*By Beverlee Scott*

**U  
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Sparta UMW members voted at the November meeting on distribution of funds as we do at the end of every year to 'empty the treasury'.

For 2016, the UMW raised \$5,943; we gave \$6,097 in donations of items and money and sent \$3,410 in pledges and undesignated giving to the Appalachian District. In addition, the Sparta UMW set aside \$1,500 toward the 2017 scholar-

ship fund. From previous sales of cookbooks, we have on hand \$3,741 which will be used to purchase additional tables for the new Outreach Center and any other items needed to furnish the kitchen.

We have two remaining events for 2016. The first one will be held on Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the Sharon Sewing Circle. We will assemble Holiday Baskets filled with personal items and fruit and deliver them to nursing home residents and shut-ins.

The second event will be a Holiday Celebration in lieu of a regular meeting to be held on Wednesday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at the

## *Communications.....*

*from the Communications Committee*

*By Alan Sears*

We continue to enhance the delivery of Information and inspirational messages to our church family and community. Following are the different methods used:

- Newsletter
- Sunday bulletin
- Phone tree
- Pre-service announcements scrolling on the screen
- Last minute announcements from the pulpit or lectern
- Emailed announcements via MailChimp
- Electronic sign at the bottom of our parking lot, along US 21
- Events published in the Alleghany News
- Events posted on the Chamber of Commerce website
- Words for the Journey from Ben via WordPress, sent daily via email
- Facebook
- Sparta UMC Blog [www.sumcblog.com](http://www.sumcblog.com)
- Sparta UMC website [www.umcsparta.com](http://www.umcsparta.com)
  - ◇ On the website you can see the latest calendar of events
  - ◇ Sunday bulletins, posted prior to the service
  - ◇ The Circuit Rider newsletter. See it before it arrives in your mail box and check out the great color photos

After we transition to our new Outreach Building, TV screens will be utilized to constantly scroll events and opportunities for Christian Growth and Outreach.

Let me know what needs to be changed, enhanced or added to better share the Good News about our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ and how our Community of Faith can reach those that need to hear it.

## *Alleghany Ministerium*

*Advent Service/Lunch*

Each Wednesday 12 Noon  
through December 21

Take a mid-week break during this Advent season to join others in our community for a time of worship, light lunch and fellowship as we prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

December 7 - Message by Rev. Bruce Benton,  
Sparta Presbyterian

December 14 - Message by Rev. David Felts  
Shiloh/Mt Zion UMC

December 21 - Message by Rev. John McCray  
First Baptist of Sparta

## *HURRICANE MATTHEW Lumberton, NC Mission Trip December 12 - 14*

Please prayerfully consider this great opportunity to help others in need.

We will be going to Lumberton, NC to help with cleaning and rebuilding. We will depart from Sparta UMC on Monday, December 12 at 5am and return Wednesday, December 14 at 9pm.

All meals, beds, showers are provided. You will need to provide your own personal items, bath towel, sleeping bag, sheets and blanket for a twin bed.

Call Tom Miller at 336-372-2276 or the church office at 336-372-4441 if you can help.

## *News From The Church Council Meeting on November 14*

- ◆ The Council heard a report from Ben regarding FUSION. It continues to grow in numbers and participation. He is hearing excitement in the community regarding the new Outreach Center and various ways to utilize this to minister to the community. He also reported that R.O.C.K. continues to grow with increasing numbers attending.
- ◆ Bob and Ben are working on an Advent Devotional booklet similar to the one they did for Lent. These devotionals will be sent via email. Paper copies will be available upon request.
- ◆ On the recommendation of Staff Parish Committee, Ben's title will be changed to Assistant Pastor which more accurately reflects what he does. He will continue to do the duties as Director of Discipleship.
- ◆ A nursery worker for Sunday mornings has been hired and will begin her duties in December.
- ◆ The office computers are at maximum capacity and cannot be upgraded any further. In order to prevent loss of data, new computers are needed. Donna will get several prices and present to the council for consideration.
- ◆ There will be a Vision Planning Workday February 4<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am . Pastor Bob asked that in preparation for this day thought be given to what we see as our church's mission.
- ◆ Various End-of-the-years reports were given and are available in the church office upon request.

### *Prayers Offered for Vets*

At Sparta United Methodist Church, we are always in prayer for our military personnel. We would like to go one step further and we need your help.

If you have a family member on active duty, we want to assign him/her a prayer warrior. This is someone who would pray for your loved one every day by name.

If you are interested in this offering, please email the name, branch of the military, and any other information you want to share to the church at [info@umcsparta.com](mailto:info@umcsparta.com).

We appreciate the sacrifice these men and women are making and want to honor them with prayer.

### *From Sparta UMC Blog*

*God be in my head,  
and in my understanding;  
God be in mine eyes,  
and in my looking;  
God be in my mouth,  
and in my speaking;  
God be in my heart,  
and in my thinking;  
God be at mine end,  
and at my departing.*

-Sarum Primer, 16th century

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

Ed Adams	December 4	Lisa Turnmyre	December 12	Vickie R. Scott	December 24
Lance Hart	December 4	Jim Connor	December 14	Micah Miller	December 25
Emily Andrews	December 5	Samuel Gaton	December 18	Rob Vaughan	December 25
Helen Zak	December 6	Thomas Roy Myers	December 18	Burton Edwards	December 27
Tara Coughlin Walker	December 7	Disa Wishon	December 18	Faye Lemmond	December 27
Colette Nester	December 10	Sam Carlan	December 20	Martha Allred	December 29
Jonathan Scott Nester	December 11	Kristen Raisner	December 21	Gary Smith	December 30
Joshua Nester	December 11	Beverlee Scott	December 23		
Paul Cooper	December 12	Dwayne Beasley	December 24		

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO...

Gray & Jane Sloop	December 1	Charles & Sarah Rudy	December 22
Tom & Maureen Miller	December 8	Larry & Mary Setzer	December 24
Scott & Lisa Turnmyre	December 18	Duane & Pratt Davis	December 25
David & Eleanor Carpenter	December 19	Zachary & Lauren Barricklow	December 29



## Alleghany County Ministerium

### What is it?

Third of a three Part Series

Area churches working together to help our neighbors. The vision is to create a viable and active ecumenical faith community where congregations cross denominational and theological barriers to work together for the common good of Alleghany County.

The mission of the Alleghany County Ministerium is achieved through three programs: *The Solid Rock Building Ministry*, *The Solid Rock Food Closet*, and *The Solid Rock Relief Fund*. Last month we looked at the Solid Rock Building Fund. This month we'll learn about *The Solid Rock Food Closet*.

*The Solid Rock Food Closet* began as its name suggests, in a church closet. The ministry grew in need and out-grew the space so *The Solid Rock Food Closet* began on Macedonia Church Road. Again, the need grew and so did the need for room to house the donated foods. Twelve churches

were sought to donate \$100 a month to support the ministry as well as serve on the *Food Closet* board.

In 2008 a new building was built across from Alleghany CARES thrift store. It has continued to grow every year. Church volunteers staff the *Food Closet* each month along with a few employees to keep it all organized.

Today the *Food Closet* assists at least 350 families representing about 900 people each month. Each month these 360 families receive a box of food items. In addition, they receive a hen and extra food for the special holiday meals of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The Backpack Program, which began more that 12 years ago now stays ac-

tive through the school year and into the summer. Backpacks are filled with foods a child in need can fix for himself during the weekend. They are sent home with the children from school on Friday each week.

This summer a new program will begin that will teach our youngest neighbors about fruits and vegetables.

If you would like to help at the *Food Closet*, please call their office @ 336.372.6560 and speak with either Linnea Miller or Larry Myers. Should you like to make a monetary donation, make checks payable to Alleghany Co. Ministerium and memo Food Closet. The address is P. O. Box 1166, Sparta, NC.

### Backpack Program Specifics

- Every Friday 175 children receive enough food for four meals over the weekend, a breakfast meal and lunch or supper meal for each of the two weekend days.
- During the summer months, food is provided for 350 children. The food is picked up at the food closet when school is not in.
- Foods that are child friendly to prepare include protein foods like beef stew and chili mac, fruits such as applesauce, fruit juices and milk.
- The food is purchased through the Second Harvest with donations, grants and proceeds from the Empty Bowls fundraiser.

### Local Churches involved in Alleghany County Ministerium

Bellview Baptist Church	Little Pine Liberty Baptist Church	Saddle Mountain Baptist Church
Blue Ridge Faith Chapel	Little Pine Church of the Brethren	Savannah United Methodist Church
Christ Episcopal Church	New Hope Baptist Church	Shiloh United Methodist Church
Cornerstone Christian Fellowship	Mt. Zion United Methodist Church	Sparta Church of God
First Baptist Church	New Haven Church of the Brethren	Sparta Presbyterian Church
Grace Community Church	Mt. Carmel Church of the Brethren	Sparta United Methodist Church
Laurel Springs Baptist Church	Osborne Memorial Baptist Church	St. Frances of Rome Catholic Church
Laurel Fork Presbyterian	Piney Creek United Methodist Church	



**Sparta**  
**United Methodist Church**

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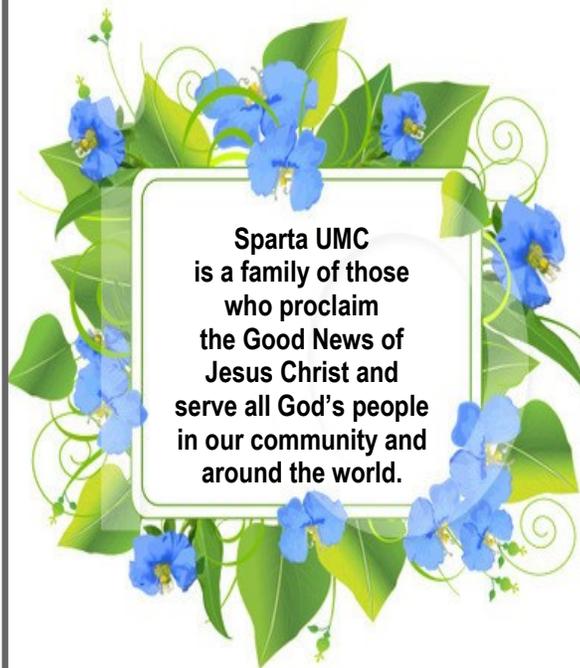
Rev. Bob Miller  
Pastor

Church Office Hours  
Monday-Thursday  
8:30 am to 3:30 pm

Phone: 336-372-4441  
FAX: 336-372-1534

Sunday Services  
9:00 am and 11:00 am

Sunday School  
10:00 am



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Newsletter Deadline  
15th of each month

Bulletin Deadline  
Weekly by Tuesday