



Sacred Traditions and Rituals 2026-2027 Services



6:00 p.m. 2nd and 4th Sundays
Fellowship Hall (unless otherwise noted)
233 North Church Street
Spartanburg, SC 29306

Who We Are

For 29 years, our S.T.A.R. Community has been creatively exploring and sharing ways to celebrate the awe, wonder, messiness, and infinite possibilities we encounter in creation—ways meant to awaken and ignite the divine spark within each of us. When our Sacred Circle gathers, S.T.A.R. offers a soul-settling time and space to connect with the divine energy journeying within us.

From its inception, S.T.A.R. has been an all-embracing community that extends spiritual hospitality through the lens of Creation Spirituality. As an inclusive gathering, everyone is encouraged to share their unique creative and spiritual gifts. While an ordained minister leads our services, all members contribute to the planning and are active participants in the experience.

S.T.A.R. participants are creation-centered spiritual artists, dancers, musicians, writers, storytellers, poets, earth stewards, theologians, and celebrators of creation from a wide variety of backgrounds. Each gathering weaves in traditions and rituals rooted in religious and spiritual communities across the centuries.

Meeting in a Circle on the 2nd and 4th Sunday evenings of each month, our services overflow with creative energy and a vibrant awareness of being part of God's creation. These gatherings are not only opportunities for worship but also invitations to soul-rejuvenating retreats.

Welcoming and inclusive, we embrace people of all denominations, spiritual traditions, races, gender identities, and ages. We invite anyone who feels called to embody the sacredness of all creation. So, wherever you find yourself on Sunday mornings—whether sitting in a pew, rocking on a porch, teeing off on the golf course, watching TV, or sipping that third cup of coffee—there's a place for you in our S.T.A.R. Circle on Sunday evenings. Also, watch for our weekly emails on Thursdays.

Affiliated with Creation Spirituality Communities—a loosely-knit network of individuals and groups dedicated to studying and practicing Creation Spirituality—S.T.A.R. is hosted by Central United Methodist Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

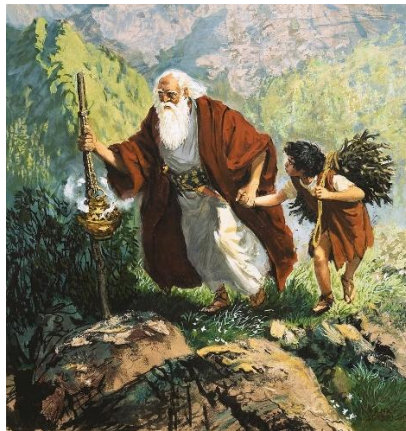
2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

2026

September 13, 2026 – Jewish High Holidays

The Jewish fall holidays take place during the Hebrew month of Tishrei (September/October) and focus on renewal, repentance, and God's protection. They provide an important time for self-reflection, spiritual renewal, and community celebration as the Jewish New Year begins.

Rabbi Yossi Liebowitz, retired rabbi of Spartanburg's Congregation B'nai Israel, will join us to explore the meaning and traditions of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and other High Holy Days. Rabbi Liebowitz has served as an Air Force chaplain, a professor, and a prison counselor, among many other roles, and continues to be an active voice in the Upstate religious community. He is a knowledgeable, engaging, and entertaining speaker.



September 27, 2026 – Abraham

Abraham is one of the Bible's central

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

figures, known for both his great faith and his human flaws. God called him to leave his homeland and promised that he would become the father of a great nation, even though he and his wife, Sarah, had no children.

Abraham trusted God, and that trust became the foundation of his relationship with Him. After many years of waiting, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the son God had promised. Earlier, however, Abraham had tried to fulfill God's promise through Hagar and their son, Ishmael.

This service will examine how Abraham was revered across the religions he founded.



October 11, 2026 - Blessing the Animals and Those Who Love Them: a service devoted to blessing all of God's creatures

One of our most popular services, everyone will find the evening filled with music, singing (howling and meowing, too!), and a Grand March with our animal friends! Everyone receives an annual Blessing Card as we celebrate all of God's creation –

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

especially God's creatures.

Don't have an Animal Friend? Please come along anyway, as joyfulness abounds and a smile is guaranteed as our furry-footed and feathered friends are the Stars of this service...

PLEASE bring any and all of our Animal Friends – dogs, cats, hamsters, rabbits, birds, gerbils, horses, goats, turtles, alpacas, etc., OR a favorite stuffed Animal Friend; OR a photo of an Animal Friend who may no longer be with us or is afraid to 'go for a ride in the car!'

PLEASE keep our Animal Friends contained and restrained – on leashes, in your arms, cages, crates, or trailers.

PLEASE don't forget to bring along a donation of canned dog food only; canned and dry kitten food; kitten replacement milk (KRN); clumping & non-clumping cat litter; paper towels; dish and laundry detergent – specifically, Windex and Clorox bleach.

Central Park at Central UMC or the parking garage in case of rain.

October 25, 2026 – Pink Sunday

Join us for a special service honoring everyone in our community who has been affected by cancer, along with the family members and friends who care for them. This past year, cancer has touched many lives in our congregation, and we want to pause together to acknowledge both the pain and the strength we have witnessed.

This service takes place near Pink Sunday, a national day set aside to remember those affected by cancer. It is a time to bring our burdens to God, lean on one another, and remember that we are never alone, even during life's hardest seasons.

Whether you are living with cancer,

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

supporting someone in treatment, grieving the loss of a loved one, or simply want to stand beside those who are struggling, you are welcome. Together we will spend time in prayer, reflection, and quiet worship, remembering that God sees every tear and walks with us through every burden.

Please come, invite a friend, and share in this evening of comfort, hope, and healing.



November 8, 2026 – Toning the Vowel Sounds

The use of sound for healing and spiritual practice reaches back to ancient times. Historians tell us that Egyptian priestesses used vocal toning—holding specific vowel sounds—as part of their sacred rituals. The stone walls of their temples helped strengthen and carry these sounds.

These vowel tones were believed to be pure vibrations with power beyond spoken words. Sustaining the sounds could quiet the mind, encourage deep states of meditation, comfort the

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

dying, guide souls into the afterlife, and protect mothers during childbirth.

In **Shellie Enteen's** *Revealing the Druid Legacy* series, vowel sounds are connected with each of the body's chakras. Their effects are believed to be strengthened when people tune together, as the Circle of Nine does, to focus a shared intention. Even the surrounding wildlife is described as responding positively.

November 22, 2026 - Gospel Singalong

Gathering together as a community in thanksgiving, we'll enjoy heartfelt and energizing music through old-timey gospel and a little bluegrass. Gospel music is a soul-stirring traditional genre characterized by dominant vocals and a fusion of spirituals, blues, and hymns. Rooted in the rich history of the Deep South, it relies heavily on uplifting, rhythmic expressions of faith, hope, and everyday endurance.

Similarly, bluegrass is a tradition-based, acoustic string-band music that blends elements of Appalachian blues, gospel, and jazz. It has rapid tempos, virtuosic improvisations, and high-pitched emotional harmonies.

Tonight we'll enjoy both, performed by The Saggy Mountain Boys. Their leader is Mr. Bob McEnroe, who also teaches ukulele for Shepherd's Center.

Please mark your calendars for a hand-clapping, foot-stomping evening of gospel and bluegrass music to kick off the Thanksgiving holiday.

December 13, 2026, Christmas Pageant

Who doesn't love a Christmas pageant? It's a time for family and friends to gather in celebration of the season. How many of us have taken part in

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

these presentations as children? Regardless of age, everyone seems filled with joy, excitement, and the uncertain feeling that even in this season of hope, things could turn into a mess.

When these little plays reflect the Christian Christmas story, shared throughout the ages, they become yearly reminders of what we call the Work of Christmas — work not meant for just one day, but for us to carry into our daily lives, making a difference for others. Sometimes things go as planned; other times, our efforts turn into a mess. So it was for Joseph, Mary, and the baby who would "light up the world" in ways no one could have imagined.

Our world isn't so different from that messy world of long ago. This Sunday evening, we'll meet the stars of this age-old drama — with a joy-filled twist — and consider how we might spread our own light in the coming year.



2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

A Very Special Christmas Gathering

December 17: Blue Christmas; a service devoted to when Christmas hurts and the longest night

Thursday Evening * Seven o'clock

By mid-November, stores, media, and advertising shift into high gear to convince us that Christmas is magical, full of joy, and fulfillment – our cares should be banished. For many, the Christmas season is cheer-filled. For those who have lost loved ones, a job, a home, those struggling with financial issues, illness, or who just find themselves over-stressed and overwhelmed, this season of the year is anything but cheer-filled.

Led by **Shellie Enteen**, our service offers a safe and sacred space for those who are not experiencing a very merry Christmas, as well as the Friends who support them... to come together at the manger. We will sit with one another in a special way that speaks to the Divine love, light, and hope. Everyone is invited to join us for a time of solace and a simple moment in the season to experience the very heart of Christmas. *Then, share warm cider and cookies after the service.*

December 27, 2026, Epiphany

For Matthew Fox, epiphany is not merely a liturgical feast or a one-time event. It is an ongoing, cosmological revelation. Creation itself is perpetually epiphanic — the universe is always disclosing the divine. Fox's "Via Positiva" (the first of his four spiritual paths) is essentially an invitation to epiphany: to wake up to the awe, wonder, and beauty saturating existence. Every creature, every moment of genuine delight or gratitude, is an

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

occasion where the divine breaks into conscious awareness.

Fox draws on the mystical tradition's sense that God is not hidden behind creation, but shining through it. Light is a central metaphor — the world is luminous with sacred presence for those with eyes trained to see it. In this sense, epiphany is less a sudden surprise and more a habitual mode of perception that the spiritual life cultivates.

Andy Crosland will explore the meaning of epiphany in Creation Spirituality as we stand on the verge of a new and exciting year.

2027



January 10, 2027, Active Aging

Mark Twain suggested that God got the aging process backwards. He should have started us old and let us grow young. "Think of the joyous prospect of growing young instead of old! Think of looking forward to eighteen instead of eighty! Yes, the Almighty made a poor job of it. I wish He had invited my assistance."

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

But the Almighty did not, and we are all faced with a life of physical decline — hopefully accompanied by spiritual rejuvenation. Let's take a look at what it means to face these powerful crosscurrents of a failing body and a thriving soul. How can we make the best of it all?

The answer is exercise. Aging is not an inevitable path of decline; it's a series of steps down, each brought on by some event that makes us more sedentary. If we resist the urge to sit more and move less, our golden years can be more golden.

January 24, 2027, Celtic Ancestral Ways: Imbolc/Candlemas Festival

As the Celtic Wheel of the Year turns, near February 1st, we arrive at the time of Imbolc, or Candlemas, in the Northern Hemisphere. We notice the days growing longer with light. Green shoots push their way up, buds appear on trees, and lambs are born and nurtured with their mothers' milk. The time of quiet contemplation ends, and invigorating thoughts of new potential begin. For agricultural societies in the Northern Hemisphere, this was known as the beginning of spring, when plant life began its growing cycle above ground.

This service, led by **Shellie Enteen**, will focus on the Celtic festival's rituals, foods, and the major Mother Goddess honored at this time. We will light a votive candle in gratitude for our own renewal and goals for the waxing cycle of the Solar Year

February 14, 2027, PS. I Love You

It is a wonderful way to celebrate Valentine's Day with our speaker this evening from

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

PS I Love You Ministries.

PS I Love You Ministries is a faith-based non-profit organization. It supports the needs of children in foster care and the families who serve them. It has a resource center that provides items free of charge to meet the physical needs of foster children. There is also a training center to support the educational, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of the whole family. If you have worked with foster care in any capacity, you know what a powerful resource this is.

As we learn about PS I Love You, we want to support them by bringing donations to the service to help meet the physical needs of the children. Any new toiletries, underwear, pajamas, or socks from birth to teens would be appreciated. We will announce the drive in December 2026 as a reminder as you begin to shop for the holidays. Thank you in advance for your support and donations.

February 28, 2027, Energize Your Life: An Introduction to Donna Eden's Daily Energy Routine

What if five minutes each morning could shift everything — your mood, your vitality, your health, your sense of being alive?

Join **Catherine Spivey** of Rooted & Woven Wellness for an experiential introduction to the Daily Energy Routine developed by pioneering energy medicine practitioner Donna Eden. This simple yet profound sequence of movements works directly with your body's energy systems — balancing, strengthening, and awakening your natural flow from the inside out. Whether you're new to energy work or deepening an existing practice, you'll leave with a grounded, embodied tool you can return to every day, one that supports clarity, resilience, and a felt sense of wholeness.

Come ready to move, breathe, and

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

experience your energy come alive with a simple daily routine.

March 14, 2027, Hildegard of Bingen

Born in 1098 in Bingen, Germany, in the lush Rhineland, Hildegard was known as the Sibyl of the Rhine. In addition to her mysticism, she was also a prolific writer, musician, composer, theologian, playwright, teacher, herbalist, and healer. Scholars refer to her as a polymath — a person with extensive knowledge and training in several disciplines. She saw the earth as a living organism endowed with the same vital power that animates all life forms. It was a central theme in her life and work. "The earth sustains humanity. It must not be injured; it must not be destroyed," she declared. Please join us for **Shellie Enteen's** exploration of the relevance of her life, music, and vision in our times.



March 28, 2027, Resurrection

The concept of returning from the dead is a cornerstone of human storytelling, appearing across nearly every culture as a way to explore themes of renewal, the seasons, and the conquest of mortality.

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

Osiris, Ishtar, Dionysus, Castor, Lazarus, and Jesus are all figures who rose from the dead. But what meaning, if any, does resurrection have in the lives of ordinary people — of us?

Suicide counselor **Mary Knight** has spent years considering this question. Focusing on Jesus's resurrection, Mary will explain the meaning and impact of a "resurrection frame of mind" in our daily lives. How can we bring the hope symbolized in resurrection to bear on the tragedies each of us faces?

April 11, 2027, *Imago Dei*

The term *Imago Dei* is Latin for "image of God," and it comes from Genesis 1:26–27, where humans are described as being created in God's image. This idea supports the belief that all people deserve dignity, respect, and care. It also suggests that humans have a unique role in creation, reflecting something of God's character through such qualities as love, creativity, reason, and moral awareness.

Another important implication is responsibility. The idea of *Imago Dei* also shapes how people relate to one another: since everyone carries this image, it challenges prejudice, exploitation, and harm. In simple terms, it means that how we treat others really matters, because in a sense, we are encountering something sacred in every person.

April 25, 2027, West African Drumming

*One hand, two hands, drumming on a drum,
Dum ditty, dum ditty, dum dum DUM*

Please join us for the return of One Drum Band and its leader, **Ben Weston**, for an evening of

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

West African drumming, celebrating community and Earth Day with STAR.

West African drumming is a vibrant, communal tradition defined by complex polyrhythms, interlocking patterns, and call-and-response structures. Integral to daily life, ceremonies, and storytelling, it relies on master drummers who lead the ensemble, blending rhythms to create a rich, unified groove.

In West Africa, drumming is inseparable from dance and daily life, usually featuring the djembe goblet drum played alongside cylindrical bass drums called dunun. The djembe produces three main sounds: bass, tone, and slap.

Ben is originally from Jamaica, where hand drumming is central to many cultural traditions and an integral part of Jamaican music. He began drumming around 1990 and has focused on West African drums, rhythms, and culture since 2008. Ben is affiliated with the Peace Center in Greenville, SC.

We invite you to join us for an energetic, fun-filled service. Bring a drum, or make one, to join One Drum Band toward the finale of the service.

May 9, 2027, Mothers in the Bible: A service devoted to honoring the divine mother

On Mother's Day, we will hear the stories of four notable mothers in the Christian Bible: Jochebed, the mother of Aaron, Miriam, and Moses; Mother Mary; Naomi, the mother-in-law; and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.

Each of these women faced a challenge, but also had the qualities needed to fulfill her part in a divine mission. Each has lessons for us in our own time. And we'll learn how some of their stories take on new meaning when we look at earlier translations and more about their culture.

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

May 23, 2027 Sound Bath

Sound baths invite us to return to ourselves. Through the gentle resonance of instruments like crystal singing bowls, chimes, and drums, sound baths create a vibrational field that helps quiet the mind and soften the body. The waves of sound can guide us into deep meditative states, where the layers of thought begin to dissolve and we can reconnect with our truest essence. In this stillness, the body is able to begin to heal itself.

Sound baths offer a beautiful way to engage in spiritual practice through surrender, presence, and deep listening. The vibrations meet us where we are, gently realigning our energy and reminding us that we are already whole. Together, in our Circle, we will experience a Sound Bath and be bathed in healing sound.



June 13, 2027, 99 Names of Allah

Join us for a reflective service centered on the 99 Names of Allah (Asma al-Husna), the beautiful

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

names found throughout the Quran that describe God's nature and character. Each name — such as Ar-Rahman (The Most Merciful), Al-Khaliq (The Creator), and As-Salam (The Source of Peace) — offers a window into a different attribute of the Divine: mercy, justice, wisdom, patience, and love.

This service will walk us through a selection of these names, exploring what they reveal about who God is and how believers are invited to reflect these qualities in their own lives. Expect quiet moments of recitation, brief reflections on the meaning behind each name, and space for personal contemplation or prayer.

Whether you come from an Islamic background or are simply curious to learn, this gathering welcomes all who wish to slow down and consider the many ways the Divine is described and known. No prior knowledge is required — just an open heart and a willingness to listen as **Ibram Hanif** shares his reflection.

June 27, 2027 — Love Your Neighbor

Jesus called us to love our neighbor, but many of us settle for something similar. In a world that often feels lonely or chaotic, people may “love” a musician, a politician, an actor, a favorite YouTuber, a fictional character, or even an AI bot. At its core, this is often about finding a tribe. These relationships are popular because they feel “safe.”

Unlike real-life friendships, these figures are consistent and ask very little in return. They provide a simple blueprint for life, filling the gap where a traditional community once existed.

Is this kind of “one-way love” is a healthy way to find connection, or is it a poor substitute for the real thing? It is certainly a far cry from what Jesus had in mind.

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

July 11, 2027 — Centering Prayer

Contemplative prayer is a form of prayer rooted in stillness, openness, and resting in the presence of God. While many forms of prayer are spoken or focused on petitions, contemplative prayer moves us beyond words into a posture of quietly being with God. The word contemplative comes from the Latin *contemplatio*, meaning to observe or to gaze upon. Centering Prayer is the difference between talking to God and listening to God, between simply visiting and truly abiding.

Susan D'Amato currently leads Centering Prayer groups throughout the Upstate and will guide us through the history, methods, and experience of this ancient practice. Susan is a retired physics professor from Furman University and an engaging speaker.

July 25, 2027 — Celtic Ancestral Ways: The First Harvest



On or near August 1, the cross-quarter festival of Lughnasa celebrates the First Harvest of the Grains. It marks the culmination of the

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

agricultural year and honors the Sun God Lugh and the many gifts of the sun.

While other foods were harvested in the spring, grain was the all-important “staff of life” in agricultural societies throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Before refrigeration and modern storage methods, grain was one of the few harvests that could be preserved and used throughout the long months before the next growing season. This festival marked the beginning of autumn.

In this service, **Shellie Enteen** will explore the foods, rituals, and meanings of this season, along with the story of Lugh and its lasting significance.



August 8, 2027 — Mary Magdalene

This evening, **Wanda Stewart** will share many of the insights found in the book *Mary Magdalene Revealed* by Harvard theologian Meggan Watterson.

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

According to Watterson, “Mary Magdalene’s gospel is as ancient and authentic as any of the gospels in the Christian Bible. It was buried deep in the Egyptian desert after an edict was issued in the fourth century ordering all copies to be destroyed. Fortunately, some courageous monks refused to obey, and thanks to their bravery, we now have several manuscripts of the only gospel written in the name of a woman: The Gospel of Mary Magdalene.”

For many people, Mary Magdalene has become a living symbol of embracing and embodying the Divine Feminine.

August 22, 2027 — Picnic & Qigong

S.T.A.R. is celebrating community, friendship, the end of summer, and the close of our calendar year with a picnic. Before we share our meal, **Simon Cairns** will help “ground us” with gentle Qigong movements that can be done either seated or standing—whatever is most comfortable for you.

Google describes Qigong (pronounced “chee-gong”) as an ancient Chinese mind-body practice that combines gentle, flowing movements, deep rhythmic breathing, and focused meditation. Rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), its purpose is to cultivate and improve the flow of qi, or life energy, throughout the body to support health and vitality. The word Qigong can be translated as “working with energy” or “breath skill.”

Simon studied this practice in China and is also an acupuncturist. He shares his knowledge by leading a Qigong group at Hatcher Garden on Saturdays at 9:00 a.m. He also teaches classes through Wofford University’s Lifelong Learning program.

2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services

Please bring one or two favorite dishes to share at the picnic, and join us as Simon introduces us to Qigong before we enjoy our meal.



2026-2027 S.T.A.R. Services



S.T.A.R. Leaders

Service Creators

Andy Crosland
Donna Horton
Debra Hyatt
Emily Nelson
Bonnie Lee Mizzell
Wanda Stewart

Wisdom Advisors

Andy Crosland, Council
Chair
Al Brumfield
Kay Foster
Gail McCormick
Pat Patterson

Artistic Partners

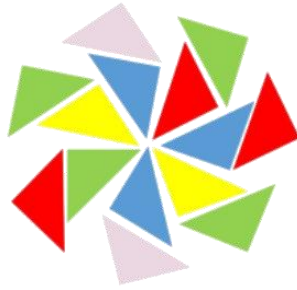
Andy Crosland,
Newsletter
Tammy Eaves,
Publications
Donna Horton
Greeting
Debra Hyatt
Corresponding Secretary
Al Jeter, Bonnie Lee
Mizzell, Peter Moore, Bill
Taylor, Nancy Toms ,
Music Makers
Katherine Wakefield,
Technology

Sue Perrin
Minister Emerita

Shellie Enteen *Minister of*
Ritual and Celebration

Twelve Principles of Creation Spirituality

1. The universe is fundamentally a blessing.
2. In Creation, God is both immanent and transcendent.
3. God is as much Mother as Father, as much Child as Parent, as much God in mystery as the God in history, as much beyond all words and images as in all forms and beings.
4. In our lives, it is through the work of spiritual practice that we find our deep and true selves.
5. Our inner work can be understood as a four-fold journey involving: - awe, delight, amazement (Via Positiva; Be-Friending Creation)- uncertainty, darkness, suffering, letting go (Via Negativa; Be-Friending Darkness)- birthing, creativity, passion (Via Creativa; Be-Friending Creativity)- justice, healing, celebration (Via Transformativa; Be-Friending New Creation).
6. Every one of us is a mystic.
7. Every one of us is an artist.
8. Every one of us is a prophet.
9. Diversity is the nature of the Universe.
10. The basic work of God is compassion, and we, who are all original blessings and sons and daughters of the Divine, are called to compassion.
11. There are many wells of faith and knowledge drawing from one underground river of Divine wisdom. The practice of honoring, learning, and celebrating the wisdom collected from these wells is Deep Ecumenism.
12. Ecological justice is essential for the sustainability of life on Earth.



Sacred Traditions and Rituals

sacredtraditionsandrituals@gmail.com
Website: sacredtraditions-sc.com
Facebook: Sacred Traditions and Rituals
Central UMC Phone: 864-582-7263