



*Our calling is to reach all people  
with the life-changing power of  
God's Love and Grace available to  
all through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

The Westby United Methodist Church  
welcomes **everyone** with open arms and open  
hearts as indicated in Romans 15:7 (NIV):  
*Accept one another, then, just as Christ  
accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*



Westby United  
Methodist Church  
February 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

## The Journey to the Cross Leads to Freedom

by Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then,  
and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

~ Galatians 5:1

Lent is a call to inner liberation that can touch each person deeply. On Ash Wednesday we begin the journey towards the cross with a call to practice the exercise of prayer, fasting, prayer and generosity. And, although the call to practice these disciplines seems to be very far from being fulfilled; By receiving the ashes we have been invited to humility and conversion: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return", which means to delve deeper into our lives and deepen our faith.

Praying allows us to enter the depth of ourselves to find God again. Fasting is placing oneself freely in the face of spontaneous and apparently insatiable desires. And sharing our gifts helps us understand that we must resist the desire for power and possession in favor of generosity. It is not, therefore, in any way about complying with an external formalism. On the contrary, it is the path that makes us progress in interior freedom and brings us closer to Christ.

The entire Lent is oriented towards freedom as a fruit of the practice of the gospel. Moses' liberation of the people of the Old Alliance is nothing more than a sample of what Christ has prepared for us, freeing all humanity through his cross and resurrection from the slavery of sin and death.

The journey to the cross prepares us to have this experience of faith and forces us to become aware of the obstacles and burdens that chain our freedom. Christ with his light makes us see them, and with his power he lifts us up and makes us walk alongside him. Because although Christ is the one who sets us free; Freedom must be achieved by being willing to do our part as Christians.

We have forty days to train and receive the gift of freedom, to break chains, to update our intimacy with God, to make Jesus Christ occupy the center of our lives, to adjust all levels of faith, hope and charity.

Pastor's Message . . . . .	p. 1
Pastor's Schedule . . . . .	p. 2
Birthday – Anniversary. . . . .	p. 2
Sunday School. . . . .	p. 2
Prayer Group . . . . .	p. 2
Growing in Faith . . . . .	p. 2
Mission of Month. . . . .	p. 3
Online Study . . . . .	p. 3
Bible Study Group . . . . .	p. 4
Other Activities . . . . .	p. 4
Board Minutes . . . . .	p. 6
Calendar . . . . .	p. 9

We have forty days to set ourselves free with the help of God. I encourage you, therefore, to live this time of reflection by participating in the acts of piety of prayer, fasting and generosity. to read the gospel daily; to participate in worship services, to participate in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; I invite you to meet again and reconcile with your Lord.

Celebrating Lent and Easter is an opportunity for each believer to renew his faith and consequently his life. DON'T miss this opportunity and come and rejoice in the Lord.

May God be with all of you,  
Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

### Pastor Erika's Schedule:

Thursday at Westby UMC – 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month (11:30 AM - 1:00 PM)

Sunday morning before worship – 8:30 AM – 8:50 AM

### Contact Information:

Cell Phone: 919-478-3584

Direct Office Phone: 608-638-7627

Parsonage Phone: 608-637-7614

Email: [pastor@virouqawestbyumc.org](mailto:pastor@virouqawestbyumc.org)

### February Birthdays

Feb. 12 – Jill Bjornstad

Feb 22 – Tim Gaskell

Feb. 26 – Ardith Hoff



### Sunday School News

- The Sunday school crew will be finishing up our study on Moses, The Ten Commandments, and the Promise Land. We will also begin planning our special message and music to share during the Palm Sunday / Easter season.
- We will continue the tradition of making Valentines for Norseland Nursing Home residents on February 4th. Adults are welcome to stay for this event. It's a meaningful way to share God's love with others. (We will keep February 11th as a snow date, if needed).
- Are you interested in the Living Waters Snow Days on February 11th this year? Jane will be contacting families regarding interest and availability on this date. Several kids attended last year to skate, ski and go snow tubing. Lunch is typically provided.



### Thursday Morning Prayer Group

Please join us on Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 AM and help us flex our "prayer muscles" by coming to our monthly Prayer Group for a time of fellowship with our Lord through prayer. Prayer is a powerful resource, so it's important that we pray together to combine our prayer strengths. There is a prayer request box in the narthex for prayer requests.

### Growing in Faith Study Group

Since we will be having Lenten Services on Wednesday evenings this month, this group will be meeting during February.

# Bethel Butikk

Food Pantry Thrift Shop Mission

## Mission of the Month – Bethel Butikk

Most of us are familiar with the Bethel Butikk thrift store and food pantry and know that they help families in need by providing food and inexpensive clothing and household items, but some may not be as aware of some of the other things they do. For example, for Operation Christmas, over 1,500 people were served with food, toys and clothing. Other requests filled one year included \$30,603 for housing assistance, \$37,990 to purchase food, \$6,193 in heating assistance, \$6,559 for medical and other assistance, \$30,957 for utilities, and \$12,870 in transportation assistance. 10% of proceeds of the thrift shop, after utilities and maintenance costs are paid, are put in a capital fund for repairs and improvements on the building. All remaining funds go into the Bethel Butikk Foundation to buy food, at a discounted rate, and to help families when no other help is available.

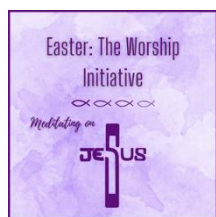
As part of our observance of Lent, we are also planning to collect food for the food pantry (See the newsletter article for more information about this project.) In tandem with the food drive, you may also give monetary donations to Bethel Butikk as our mission of the month. You can make checks out directly to Bethel Butikk or to the church with Bethel Butikk on the memo line, or you can put cash in an envelope with Bethel Butikk on the outside. Thank you for your past support of this worthy mission and please consider donating whatever you can again this year.

## February Online Studies – Love Like Jesus & Lenten Meditation

As we approach February, it may feel as if love is in the air. Stores are filled with heart-shaped boxes of candies, fresh flowers, shiny jewelry, and other fancy gifts enticing us to buy them for our loved ones for Valentine's Day. But does all this stuff merely lend to the appearance of love? What does true love look like?



We know that true love looks like Jesus... and we aspire to live like him every day. But how can we learn to live like Jesus if we don't first love like Him? Join us in the days leading up to Valentine's Day as we learn from the experiences of others and the Scriptures that inspire them to fully live and **Love Like Jesus**.



The arrival of Valentine's Day also marks Ash Wednesday – the beginning of Lent for this year. We will be holding a special online Bible study over the course of the Lenten season during which we will be commemorating and mediating on Christ Jesus in the days leading up to Easter. We invite you to join us on this Lenten journey as we deepen our faith in Jesus and encourage each other as we reflect on His life, death, and resurrection.

Please join us this month as we learn to love like Jesus and then journey through Lent meditating on the days leading up to Easter. The first online study this month will begin on Feb. 1st and the second study will begin on Feb. 14th.

- **Love Like Jesus** (13 days) – begins Feb. 1st  
<https://bible.com/p/64054794/ee319672f2f6a2debe5a16c1bf42decc>
- **Easter: The Worship Initiative** (40 days) – begins Feb. 14th  
<https://bible.com/p/64054829/7ef4faab8152d3bf3fef40ba84a82855>

*These online studies and more can be accessed through the Bible App or [bible.com](https://www.bible.com) website, which are free resources. In addition to wonderful devotional and reading plans, they provide a verse of the day, and you will be able to read the Bible in a wide variety of versions. The Bible App is available in your app store on your mobile device, or accessible online at [www.bible.com](https://www.bible.com).*

## Thursday Morning Bible Study Group

*"I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone" ~ Titus 3.8b*



Timothy and Titus were two young preachers whom Paul had the privilege of leading to the Lord. Paul called them both "sons," his true children; that is, he brought them both to a saving knowledge of Christ. Paul wrote letters to both young men; we have two letters to Timothy and one letter addressed to Titus. These letters were called Pastoral Letters, because in them Paul gave these young preachers instructions about the local church.

Although we know very little about either of these young preachers, Timothy and Titus. Titus, however, appears to have been stronger than Timothy, both physically and spiritually. The Apostle Paul expressed less concern for the well-being of Titus than for that of Timothy. Titus was probably a more mature person.

Timothy was Jew who was circumcised by Paul, but Titus was not Jew and Paul refused to circumcise him. Paul said that he wanted to become equal to everyone to somehow win some to Christ. Among the Jews, he became a Jew, and among the non-Jews, he wanted to be like a non-Jew. He had Timothy circumcised because he was going to the synagogues. But at that great church council held in Jerusalem, the gospel was at stake, and Paul did not allow any element of legalism to creep into the church (Acts 15); therefore, he refused to allow Titus to be circumcised.

In the Epistle to Titus, we have a good picture of a New Testament church in its full realization in the community, as an organization.

According to this epistle, the ideal Church is one that (1) has a well-ordered organization, (2) that has good doctrine, well founded on the Word of God, and (3) is pure in life, and is prepared to do every good work. This is the image of the New Testament Church that this epistle to Titus presents to us. In the letter to Titus, the emphasis is on the importance of God's order for the conduct of the churches.

During the month of February, on the last Thursdays of the month, we will be dedicating our Bible study to this epistle. Through this we want to learn to be the church that our Father expects us to be, and that Jesus has called us to be. We invite you to join our study and together we grow in knowledge of his Word to strengthen our faith and our commitment.



## Ash Wednesday Services

In addition to showing your loved ones that you care for them on Valentine's day, please join us on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14th and show your love for God. There will be two services on Ash Wednesday. The first service will be held at Viroqua UMC at 1:00 PM and the evening Ash Wednesday service will be held at Westby UMC at 6:00 PM.

## Lent Devotional Booklets

Viroqua UMC and Westby UMC worked together again this year to create another devotional booklet for Lent. The booklets will be available on Sunday, Feb. 11th. We will also post the daily Lent devotions on our church's Facebook page. Thank you to everyone who wrote devotionals to make this booklet possible.





### Wednesday Evening Lent Services

We will be having Lent services on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 PM this year. Each service will be centered around a topic relating to Lent. The topics are the wilderness, fasting, solitude, temptation and preparation. The first Lent service will be on Wednesday, Feb. 21st and will go through to Wednesday, March 20th. Please come and join us as we delve into these topics related to Lent.

### Food Drive for Lent – Feb. 18 to March 24

“We give because God gave His Son to us.” Lent is a time to grow closer to God and a time to practice generosity. One good way to show generosity to others is by supporting a local food pantry, so we’re going to have a food drive during Lent this year. We’ve decided our food donations will go towards the Cashton Cupboard & Closet Food Pantry and Bethel Butikk.

To make things more interesting, we’ll be collecting specific groups of food items each week and have a place to stack all the food so we can watch the pile grow each week. Here is what food groups we’d like you to bring on Sunday mornings:

- Sunday, Feb. 18 – Fruits: canned fruits, dried fruits, fruit cups, fruit juice
- Sunday, Feb. 25 – Vegetables: canned vegetables, spaghetti sauce, tomato sauce
- Sunday, Mar. 3 – Proteins: peanut butter, canned meat, canned or dried beans (baked beans, pinto beans, etc.)
- Sunday, Mar. 10 – Pasta/Grains: pasta, noodles, rice, macaroni & cheese
- Sunday, Mar. 17 – Breakfast/Snacks: cereal, oatmeal, pancake mix, granola/snack bars, fruit snacks, trail mix, jelly, pancake syrup
- Sunday, Mar. 24 – Soup: canned soup, dried soup mixes, canned chili



Let’s spread some generosity and work to help others by having overflowing piles of food on March 24th.



### Switching Rooms & Sorting Books

It was decided at a board meeting to switch the pastor’s office and the library since the current pastor’s office isn’t heated very well. Before we begin to move furniture and books, we thought it would be beneficial to begin sorting through the books and videos in the library to determine what would be beneficial to keep and what could be donated. If you’d like to help with this project, we will be sorting on Sunday mornings after fellowship and on Thursday mornings.



~ 1 Corinthians 16:14

## Old Fashioned Lutefisk Dinner – Feb. 3 at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church is having an Old Fashioned Lutefisk Dinner on Feb. 3 in memory Pastor Gary Daines. The meal will be served from 11:00-4:00, or until gone. The cost is \$20 for adults, \$8 for ages 7-12 and free for 6 and under. The menu is lutefisk, lefse, meatballs, mashed potatoes with gravy, rutabagas, carrots, beverage and patries. Carry outs will be available.



## Soup Supper & Auction – Feb. 10 @ Faith UMC

The Women of Faith will be having a Soup Supper and Auction on Saturday, Feb. 10 at Faith UMC. The meal will be served from 4:00 PM-5:45 PM. The auction will begin at 6:00 PM. The meal will include three different kinds of soup, crackers, bread, cheese, sausage, dessert and beverage. It is a freewill offering for the soup supper.

## Big Thing Chili Cook-Off – Feb. 17 @ Viroqua UMC

Viroqua UMC will be having another Chili Cook-Off this year on Saturday, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> from 4:30-7:00 PM. The cost will be \$10 per ticket/vote and \$6 for ages 12 and under. Area churches will be making chili for the coo-off. All proceeds will go towards the participating churches, based on the number of votes received. There will also be other items for sale: baskets, baked goods, pies, dessert of the month, bread of the month, ethnic dinners, and more. The proceeds from these sales will go towards Viroqua UMC.



Our church will be participating in the chili cook-off again this year. Last year we received 2nd place, so please come and support us on Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> because it would be nice to get 1st place this year.

There will be sign-up sheet for donations for our chili ingredients and there will be a chili making time, which will be determined at a later date.

## Westby United Methodist Church – Board Meeting † January 10, 2024

**Present:** Pastor Erika, Tim Gaskell, Jane Gaskell, Ardith Hoff, Jean Shore and Linda Weilnau

**Opening:** Tim Gaskell opened with prayer.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the November board meeting were emailed to the board and published in the December newsletter, so they could be reviewed prior to the meeting. Jane Gaskell and Jean Shore motioned to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Verna Drake provided the unofficial financial reports, which included the report for the month of December, the year to date, special accounts, and the credit card statement. These reports were emailed to the board prior to the meeting. Ardith Hoff and Jean Shore motioned to accept the unofficial financial report. Motion passed.

### Old Business:

- † Review COVID Policy - It was decided to continue with the policy of masks being optional.
- † Meal Site Contract – Tim Gaskell talked to ADRC about the Meal Site Contract. They agreed to pay \$1500 to help cover some of the utility expenses for using our building. They want us to send them a letter indicating the amount and the time period for the meal site. Tim said he will write a letter and give it to them.

- ✝ Safe Sanctuary Policy – Next steps? Tim & Pastor Erika are on this committee. For now, we will continue to have someone stay during Sunday school. This person can be doing other things and doesn't have to be with the Sunday school class.
- ✝ Switch Pastor's Office & Library – Need to create a plan for doing this. – It was decided to start by sorting through the books to determine which ones aren't needed any longer before moving the books to the new library room. We will donate the extra books to the RedLou Mobile Library. An email will be sent out asking people to help sort through the books on Thursday mornings and Sundays after fellowship.
- ✝ Church Directory with Viroqua UMC – Jane Gaskell emailed Viroqua UMC to let them know we would not be doing a church directory with them due to the late notification. Viroqua UMC replied that we would be able to do our own directory with the same company. After some discussion, we're not sure if we want a professional group to come and do the directory. It would probably be beneficial to create our own directory and perhaps just send out a spreadsheet of the contact information.

### **New Business:**

- ✝ Joint Outdoor Worship Service – Jane Gaskell reserved the Davidson Park shelter for this event and it will be on Sunday, July 21, 2024.
- ✝ Quick Books Purchase – We need to investigate purchasing a different accounting program for Verna Drake to use because the version of Quick Books that is being used is reaching its end of life. Linda Weilnau sent Verna a list of possible account programs for churches.
- ✝ Church Usage – Procedures for Requesting Usage – There have been some groups asking to use the church, but they haven't filled out the Building Use form. Ardith Hoff and Jean Shore motioned to require groups to fill out the form. Motion passed. Copies of the form will be placed in one of the kitchen drawers and made available online.
- ✝ Communications with Viroqua UMC – Lately, some of the communications we have received from Viroqua UMC regarding events has been last minute. We want to ask them to contact us sooner regarding joint activities. Pastor Erika said she would relay this message.
- ✝ Lent Devotional Books w/Viroqua UMC – The devotions will be due on Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>. Linda Weilnau will create a sign-up sheet and send out an email about this activity.
- ✝ Begin Documenting Accounts Used for Church Business & Mission of the Month Groups and Contacts for the Groups – It will be beneficial if we create documentation for church accounts and contacts, so that it is available for more than just the current people who are doing or working with these accounts. Verna Drake and Linda Weilnau will start working on this documentation.
- ✝ Studies for Lent – It was decided to have Wednesday evening services during Lent, starting on Wednesday, Feb. 21. The service will be at 6:00 PM. There will be a total of 5 Lenten services. We will not meet on Wednesday during Holy Week.
- ✝ Chili Cook-Off – Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>? – It was decided to participate in this event again this year. Pastor Erika said that it will be on either Feb. 10 or 17. Linda Weilnau brought in some chili to taste, as a possible recipe to use for the cook-off. It was decided to go ahead and use this recipe.

- ✚ How to Reach & Welcome New People Seminar – Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> – This seminar is available via Zoom. Linda Weilnau emailed the organizer to see if the Zoom session would be recorded so others could watch later but hasn't had any replies. It was decided to have a sign-up sheet to see if anyone was interested in this event.
- ✚ February Board Meeting – Since our regularly scheduled board meeting for February would be on Ash Wednesday, it was decided to have the board meeting on Sunday, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> during the fellowship time.

#### Business from Board Committees:

- ✚ **Trustees** – Fred Fronk will create an estimate for painting the triangular area, just below the roof on the west side of the building. Mr. Fronk will provide an estimate for purchasing and installing a dishwasher under the kitchen island. We will be able to hook the dishwasher into the sink on the island but may need to purchase a new faucet for this island sink.
- ✚ **SPRC** – No report.
- ✚ **Worship** – Viroqua UMC will have an Ash Wednesday service at 1:00 PM, so we'll have an Ash Wednesday service at 6:00 PM. During Lent, Pastor Erika will do a sermon series based on topics for Lent.
- ✚ **Education** – Youth will possibly go to the Living Waters Bible Camp on Feb. 11 to participate in Snow Days. Sunday school will make Valentines for Norseland residents again this year. They will be doing some lessons about Lent.
- ✚ **Lay Leadership** – Ardith Hoff reported that she is in the process of writing new articles for the website and has already finished 12 articles. The articles appear on the church website at [https://viroquawestbyumc.org/learn\\_grow/reminders-2/](https://viroquawestbyumc.org/learn_grow/reminders-2/)
- ✚ **Missions** - The mission of the month for February will be Bethel Butikk.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Erika reported that she will be traveling to Green Lake on Feb. 5 & 6 for an Ethnic Ministerial workshop. The sermon series during Lent will be based on The Whole Lent Journey to the Cross. After Easter, there may be a sermons series on the book of Acts.

Jean Shore motioned to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned.  
Minutes submitted by Linda Weilnau

---

**\*\* Remember to join us at 3:20 PM each day for being unified in prayer to pray for our church ...**

*“God, Give us the courage to dream big dreams. Please open our minds and hearts so we can have new breakthroughs to Your new possibilities. Amen.”*

God is able to do much more than we ask or think, through His power working in us.  
~ Ephesians 3:20 (NLV)

---



**February 2024**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<b>3</b>	<b>1</b> 9:00 AM - Prayer Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>2</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>3</b> 11:00-4:00 Lutefish Dinner @ Our Savior’s Lutheran Church
<b>4</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service (Communion) 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	<b>5</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>6</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>7</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>8</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>9</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>10</b> 4:00-6:00 PM Soup Supper & Auction @ Faith UMC
<b>11</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship & Sunday School & Church Board Meeting  1:00 PM – Snow Days @ Living Waters Bible Camp	<b>12</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>13</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>14</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site  1:00 PM -Ash Wednesday Service @ Viroqua UMC 6:00 PM – Ash Wednesday Service	<b>15</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>16</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>17</b> 4:30-7:00 PM Chili Cook-Off @ Viroqua UMC
<b>18</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship & Sunday School  Food Drive Sunday - Fruits	<b>19</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>20</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>21</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site  6:00 PM – Lenten Service	<b>22</b> 9:00 AM - Morning Bible Study Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>23</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship & Sunday School  Food Drive Sunday - Vegetables	<b>26</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>27</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>28</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site  6:00 PM – Lenten Service	<b>29</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class		

