

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



**Viroqua
United Methodist
Church
221 S. Center Ave**

APRIL 2024



“Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Matthew 9.17

On this Easter season, we have been blessed with great opportunities and challenges as we carry out the work that Christ has entrusted to us. Blessed with the gift of faith and the vision that it gives us, we must take an honest look at our past and present circumstances when realistically planning our future.

We have great hope in the future of our Church. As members of the Body of Christ, our desires and dreams are rooted in the life, message, death, and resurrection of Our Lord. This is the rock upon which our plans are based.

How can we, Viroqua and Westby, in the Driftless area, be a sign of unity and an instrument of God's peace? How can we carry out the work that God has given us? An important part of heeding God's call is discerning the invitation of the Holy Spirit on how we can be a sign and instrument of the Kingdom of Christ.

Accepting the call can be overwhelming and that is why I invite you to open your mind and heart to God and allow the Holy Spirit to act with his power in your life.

Throughout time men and women have responded to this call and have been able to renew themselves and with them, renew the church, despite their fears and feelings, for this I invite you to:

Do not be afraid of the life of holiness. Renewing the Church is not primarily about making a change here, a change there. Living a life of holiness begins with the willingness to let God guide our lives. When that happens in our lives, the renewal of the church is a natural result of our living in holiness.

Renew the heart. The heart is the center of life. It is within this uniquely created internal organ that we have physical life. Without it, life is not possible. The heart is also the center of spiritual life. Our heart determines our actions and reflects whether Christ is the center of our lives or not. That is why it is important that we ask God to continually renew our hearts. Take an inventory of your heart now. Is your heart where it needs to be or does it need renewal from God? Ask God to renew your heart and commit to keeping him at the center of your heart.

Pray. To the extent that one draws closer to God and lets the Holy Spirit act, we acquire holy freedom of spirit, which leads us to do things that bear enormous fruit. Prayer is the base, the essence and where the believer's strength comes from. Maintaining a life of prayer opens us to the possibility of receiving God's grace and understanding how to live it.

Dear brothers, if we do not renew ourselves, we run the risk of dying. This is the right time, the perfect time and, this call is not just for a few, this call is for each and every one of us.

May God help us move forward and rediscover God's purpose for our community.

Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pastor's Letter.....	page 1
Birthdays/Anniversary	page 2
Looking Back at March	page 3
Looking Ahead at April	pages 4-6
Committee Reports.....	pages 6-10
April Calendar.....	page 11

APRIL ANNIVERSARY

John & Barb Huschka April 8



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Ann Carlow	April 6th
Colton Dustin	April 9th
Dale Gudgeon	April 15th
Mitchell Hanson	April 15th
Betty Ross	April 23rd
Cavan Fang	April 25th
Joe Dustin	April 26th
Matt Mc Garry	April 26th
Gradyn Hanson	April 28th
Janette Hanson	April 28th
Taylor Stalsberg	April 29th

God's Blessings on You!



Long Range Objective Viroqua UMC

Develop a unique identity by becoming servants of the community and providing Christian opportunities for all people.

OUR PRAYER Viroqua UMC

God, the giver of life, generous giver of gifts and abilities, help us discover our talents and have the courage to use them to serve you and our community with unimagined new purposes and deepening love for Jesus Christ. Amen.

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

John Wesley





Taco Supper



Heading Out for the Neighborhood Palm Parade



Placing the Palms

Viroqua UMC March Giving

Thank you to those who keep up their giving. This is so much appreciated, as we do our best to continue God's work.
 The amount needed each week to meet our 2023 Budget is \$2,952.

March 3	\$2,434.74
March 10	\$2,184.74
March 17	\$959.74

ONCE-A-MONTH WEDNESDAY

April 3rd @ 5:30 pm!
We have a place reserved for you!
Be sure to come!



April Sunday Servants

	Liturgist	Ushers	Greeter	Screen Operator	Communion Stewards
April 7	Gregory Cheever	Cavan Fang Tom Lohr	Avis Marino	Gradyn Hanson	
April 14		Joanne Hornby Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Dale Gudgeon	Finn Brenneman	
April 21		Mary Mulvaney Kemp	Barb Casper		
April 28		Janet Welch Joanne Hornby	Betty Ross	Luke Garrett	

Housekeeping Duties—Sign Up Is Available Each Week

Below are the housekeeping duties that have been identified to keep our building clean. Take a look and consider helping out once in awhile. Sign up on the chart in the Narthex for the weeks you will do it.

Thanks so much! Let's all help to keep our building clean!

Housekeeping Duties (Weeks Start on Sunday and End on Saturday)

<u>Sunday Morning</u>	<u>Sanctuary</u>	<u>Vacuum/Dust</u>	<u>Dry/Wet Mop</u>	<u>Bathrooms</u>	<u>Fellowship Hall</u>
* Open doors @ 8:30	* Dust	* Narthex	* Front & Back	* Clean bathrooms (5)	* Dry mop floor
* Turn on lights	* Dust mop under pews	* Chapel if needed	* Stairs		* Wet mop as needed
* Clear walks in front & back—salt if needed	* Vacuum Carpet	* Lounge if needed	* Front Entryway		
* Ring the bell during worship or get someone else to do it		* Dust all areas as needed	* Hallway to Lounge		
* Turn off lights & lock up after church		* Vacuum outdoor front steps as needed	* Overflow room as needed		

Bell Choir Concert

In case you haven't thought about it lately, a reminder that the Viroqua Community Bell Choir meets here every Tuesday evening to practice. The bells belong to our church. They are housed here, and the community group practices here.

Jeff Woodward is the director of the Bell Choir and they give a concert in our sanctuary twice a year—at Christmas and in the spring. The spring concert is scheduled for Sunday, April 28th at 2:00 pm. Along with the bells, there are always some special musical guests featured at their concerts. This April concert will include a Barbershop Quartet called "The Men With No Hair" (or something close to that). Barb Casper and Kathy Hanson will play a couple of piano/organ duets for the prelude.

Everyone is invited to attend the concert. The group has quite a following, and it is certain that you will enjoy it!

Community Meal

A Community Meal is served on the fourth Monday of every month from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. Folks from the GS church began this effort, but they want it to be a community project. Our church served the meal last year in June and we are planning to serve again this coming June.

Everyone is invited to attend the meal. Take the opportunity to get out and eat with others—your community.

We will be asking for help to serve the meal on June 24th. We will need menu planners, cooks, people to transport the food, and servers. Think about it and be ready to sign up when asked later in April.

Book Group



The Book Group has chosen *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Biblical Truth* by Beth Barr for our next read. The group chooses to read books that make us think about some difficult topics. We welcome others to join us. Our next discussion will be on Monday, April 22nd.

“Indoor” Yard Sale Used Items PLUS Lunch



The “Yard Sale” will be held on April 18th and 19th in the Fellowship Hall.

You may bring items for the sale anytime. Call the office to arrange for dropping off items.

Along with the wonderful used items we will be selling, we’ll also be serving barbeque meals. The Missions Committee will have a bake sale that includes individual treats to enjoy as a dessert with your meal.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) Event

Area RPCVs will gather for a potluck in the fellowship hall on the evening of April 12 or 13. (Date to be determined.)

On Sunday, April 14 any RPCVs in attendance at church will be recognized for their service and one or more of them will briefly share about their experiences.

Contact Chuck Mulvaney-Kemp (608.393.8136) if you know any area RPCVs and he will attempt to notify them about this event.

Birthd**ay** Potluck



We haven’t had a Sunday after church potluck for a long time!

The Hospitality Committee is planning one for Sunday May 5th.

It will be a **Birthd**ay** Potluck** where you’ll sit with people who have birthdays in the same month as you. People will be asked to volunteer to decorate the tables according to the month.

We did this once before Covid, and found it to be a fun time. Watch for sign up sheets to help decorate the tables.

April Online Studies – Taking Time to Reflect



Periodically, it is good to take some time to reflect and think about what is important to us and examine our behaviors to help us determine if we’re on the right track or if we need to make some adjustments. The two online studies we are doing this month will help us with doing this reflection and examination so we can experience God’s grace, mercy and peacefulness more fully.

Please join us for the online studies this month:

Reflections – begins on April 1

<https://bible.com/p/65511207/135401e26c7edb9f1b7cd680a42f5c38>

Sweet Tea for the Soul – begins on April 19

<https://bible.com/p/65511346/858ae9b361b40d4b9388981354fc3328>

These online studies and more can be accessed through the Bible App or 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.

Please note that Bible.com online will no longer support Plans with Friends. You will need to open the Bible App on your mobile device to continue to use this feature.

Institute of Congregational Development (ICD)

Pastor Erika along with lay people from the Viroqua and Westby churches have committed to a ten month learning experience presented by the conference and aimed towards helping us learn how to refresh ourselves and learn new ways to “do church.” Pastor Erika and Verna Drake from Westby attended the first meeting last week.

The Institute consists of 2 day meetings each month—mostly in Sun Prairie, but one is in St. Louis and one is in Kansas City. Verna Drake (Westby) and Kathy Hanson (Viroqua) will share a spot and each attend with Pastor Erika every other month. Cavan Fang will also attend one meeting.

We are just beginning and realize that we have lots to learn. There will be a local gathering each month following the Institute meetings to keep our congregations informed. We will also incorporate discussions about how we might utilize what we’re learning.

Administrative Council

March 20, 2024



Present: Kathy Hanson, Gregory Cheever, Aaron Hanson, Layne Hanson, Cavan Fang, Kristen Parrott, Pastor Ericka Martinez-Flores, Dan Brown.

The meeting was opened with a devotion from our own Lenten Devotional.

Pastor Erika just returned from the first meeting of the Institute of Congregational Development and she told us a bit about it. There will be a more in depth report in Westby next Wednesday evening, March 27th. Verna Drake attended also and the two of them will report.

Chuck Mulvaney Kemp attended for the purpose of continuing the conversation about hosting programs/conversations about topics relevant to our world today. After quite a bit of discussion, Kristen volunteered to head a group to pursue doing this.

Our church will serve the Community Meal on June 24th. Cavan, Kristin, Kathy, and Layne will help. We’re looking for more folks to volunteer.

Committee Reports

Missions: Kristen is working on the paperwork for the Rainbow Covenant. The art sale brought in \$335 for Temba.

Worship Committee: The Maundy Thursday service will be joint with Westby and held in the Fellowship Hall. A baked potato meal will begin the evening before the communion service.

The Ecumenical Good Friday service will be held at our church beginning at 1:00 pm.

Cavin has written a play for the sunrise service and twelve people have been rehearsing for a month to make this a good presentation.

Communion will be served at the 10:30 service on Easter Sunday.

Trustees did not meet in March.

Education: see minutes.

Hospitality will meet tomorrow.

Dan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:03. Gregory seconded. We ended with the Lord’s Prayer.

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,
that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

Psalm 90: 14

Finance Committee

March 20, 2024, 7:00 PM



Members Present: Kathy Hanson, Gregory Cheever (Treasurer), Aaron Hanson, Layne Hanson, Cavan Fang, Kristen Parrott, Pastor Ericka Martinez-Flores, Dan Brown (Chair); Absent, Gregg Roberts (Secretary)

Opening Prayer (Pastor Ericka)

Joys and Concerns (Pastor Ericka)

Treasurer's report (Gregory Cheever) & Secretary's Report (Gregg Roberts absent, report provided): February's revenue was low but an improvement over January. Current activity suggests an annual deficit. Suggestion that income earned from the checking account be allocated equally to the specific line items of the Secretary's Report (excluding VANCO).

Action

Cavan Fang: Motion to accept the Treasurer's report and Secretary's reports as given, Second by Aaron Hanson, Motion carries.

Fundraising: Indoor yard sale in April, Other rental opportunities (meeting space, studio space, weddings, birthday parties)

April 7th, Special Finance Committee Budget Meeting potluck at 12 PM

Meeting adjourned at 8:04 PM

Worship Committee

March 7, 2024

Those present were Kathy Hanson, Avis Marino, Cavan Fang, Pastor Erika, Phyllis Kalnins, and Barb Casper.

Pastor Erika opened the meeting with a prayer.

Easter Lilies will have to be purchased by each person who wants to have one in honor or memory of a loved one. We don't have a way to get them in the same manner that we have in previous years. If someone is buying a plant, they should get in touch with the office or fill out a form that will be provided so that the info will get put into the bulletin.



Palm Sunday was discussed. We are hoping for good weather to do a Palm Parade in the neighborhood. When they return, they will lead others around the sanctuary waving their palms during the first hymn "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna". Heidi Garrett will lead the processions and we thank her for her help.

Maundy Thursday service will be held at Viroqua this year and Westby will join us. It will be held in the fellowship hall with a potato supper at 6:00 PM followed by the service with communion. We will set up the tables in a U-shape for easier serving of communion. It will be a simple menu of baked potatoes, shredded cheese, sour cream, broccoli, bars for dessert with lemonade and coffee.

Phyllis has set up a schedule for decorating and de-decorating the sanctuary in between each of the Holy Week services. This involves four extra meetings to make each day special. Thanks to Phyllis and Pastor Erika for the décor planning and to any of us who can help.

Good Friday service will be an ecumenical at our church at 1:00 PM. No communion.

Pastor Erika's vacation will be for 1 week in April. The 5th through the 12th. She will be back to preach on the 14th.

April 14th will be the Peace Corps recognition service. There will be a meal on Friday the 12th or Saturday the 13th that is being arranged by the Missions Committee.

Liturgists are to be taking the offering to the office with another person and they should each sign the clipboard when the money is put into the box.

The next meeting will be held on 4-4-24

Missions Update

The next meeting of the Missions Committee will be Sunday, April 7, at 11:45am.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Human Relations special Sunday offering in January. Together we raised \$250 to support three national projects: neighborhood ministries (through Community Developers), community advocacy (through United Methodist Voluntary Services), and work with at-risk youth (through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs).

And thank you to everyone who made or purchased art for our art silent auction in February and March. Together we raised \$335 for our missionary, Temba Nkomozepe in Zambia.

The Missions Committee will participate in the church-wide rummage sale on April 18-19. We will have a bake sale table, and the money we raise will go to support our missionary. Please help us to have lots of delicious baked goods to offer the community! In particular, we need some individual desserts available, like cookies and bars, to sell to shoppers who are purchasing the barbecue lunch. Bakers, please bring your baked goods to our table early on Thursday, April 18, and on Friday, April 19.

The April Mission of the Month is Native American Ministries. We will celebrate Native American Ministries Sunday on April 21. Since 1989, United Methodist congregations have observed this special Sunday. The purpose is to elevate and support the contributions and voices of Native/Indigenous people in our church. A special financial offering on this day goes to support specific ministries in annual conferences.

UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

March 13, 2024

The United Women of Faith met in the church lounge with the following members present: Ann Carlow, Joanne Hornby, Phyllis Kalnins, Betty Ross and Janet Welch.

President Janet opened with a meditation from "God's Little Devotional Book".
"Contentment isn't getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have".

Janet read the Secretary's Report from the February meeting. In the absence of the treasurer, Phyllis reported we had \$2,372.52 in our treasury.

Barb Casper wrote the check for the March Child Fund. Ardith has the month of April.

Hospitality III has been furnishing cookies for March Sunday morning coffee. Hospitality II will serve in April.

Janet reported we are registered with the district. She also made changes in the Handbook for 2024.

Betty motioned to send \$25.00 to Northcott House and Joanne motioned to send \$25.00 to the Legacy Fund.

Our next meeting will be May 8th with Betty serving snacks.

Joanne gave an interesting program on the disaffiliation of many churches on the debate of LGBTQ exclusion and inclusion at General Conference.

Janet Welch, President



Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Habakkuk 3: 18

Education Committee

March 4, 2024

Old Business:

Once a Month Wednesday: **OMW's** are going very well. The next one will be held tomorrow Tuesday March 5th, 2024 it was moved to this date to accommodate Wednesday night's Lent Service. We will be having leftovers from the Taco Supper for supper.

Youth Winter Activities: These were all canceled due to lack of snow.

Taco Supper: The Taco Supper income & expenses were reviewed. We took in a total of \$445 in donations, and incurred \$149.80 in expenses. Expenses were down slightly this year because we were able to use leftover cheese, sour cream, and onions from the Chili Cook Off. Total profit was \$295.20. 40 people were served with an average free will offering of \$10.00/person (which was the suggested donation.) Average donation after expenses was \$7.38. Much discussion was had speculating as to why our numbers were so low this year. No obvious or clear reasons were found. We will review this information again next year as we begin the planning stages of next year's Taco Supper.

New Business:

Easter Program: Cavan has written a very nice script for the Easter Sunrise Service program. The skit depicts the Roman Soldiers, the Women who went to Jesus's grave, as well as the Disciples on the first Easter morning. The first rehearsal was yesterday morning after church, all parts have been filled, except for the part of the angel. The Worship Committee will be in charge of details for this service.

Lent Activities for Youth: Youth who wish to be involved in activities during Lent are encouraged to be part of the Easter skit.

2024 Scholarship: At the last meeting we decided to reduce this year's scholarship amount to \$250. After reviewing the applications, Janette suggested that we award this year's scholarship to Rachel Diehl. This passed with unanimous consent.

Summer Camp: Summer Camp brochures and sign-ups are available now. Any youth who would like to attend is welcome to do so. The church will pay 50% of the camping fee. There is also a new Tiered pricing scale for the camps, families can choose what level of pricing they can afford.

Others??? -Missions Trip: Our church will be serving the community meal at Good Shepard Church in June of this year. It was discussed that this would be a good opportunity for our youth to engage in community Missions. Discussion was had about other possible missions ideas, but we will start out with the community meal, review participation, and go from there.

The next meeting will be held Monday April 1st @ 6:00 PM

Hospitality Committee

March 21, 2024

Members Present: Avis Marino, Alice Sloane, Betty Ross, Joanne Hornby, Gregory Cheever, Kathy Hanson, Pastor Erika. The meeting opened with a prayer by Kathy. Our Homebound list has not changed this month. Avis is doing a great job with getting cards sent.

The Birthday Potluck will be held on May 5th after church. Sign up sheets to decorate birthday tables will be put out by April 14th.

We have some tickets for the taxi that we'll make available to those who would like a ride to church. This will be advertised in the newsletter too.

The Indoor Yard Sale will be held April 18 & 19. Rather than do a plant sale this spring, we'll offer some plants at the yard sale.

Consideration was given as to how to honor mothers on Mother's Day – May 12th.

We ended the meeting by putting together Easter gifts for our Homebound members. We attached a greeting card to crocheted eggs that were donated to us. They turned out beautifully.

Since our next meeting time falls during the Yard Sale, we will not meet in April. Next meeting on May 16th at 1:00 pm.

April 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 7am Easter Sunrise Service 8am Easter Breakfast 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Easter Worship	1 6pm Education Committee	2 10:30am Exercise Group	3 8am Prayer Group 5:30pm Once-A-Month Wednesday For All 6pm Choir Practice	4 10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Worship Committee	5	6
7 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 11:45am Finance Committee Budget Meeting 11:45am Missions Committee Meeting	8	9 10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Trustees Meeting	10 8am Prayer Group 1:30pm UWF 6pm Choir Practice	11 10:30am Exercise Group	12	13
14 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 4pm Bible Study @ Kathy Hanson's	15	16 10:30am Exercise Group	17 8am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice 7pm Finance Committee 8pm Administrative Council	18 10:30am Exercise Group Yard Sale	19 Yard Sale	20
21 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship	22 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 7pm Book Group	23 10:30am Exercise Group Pastor @ Institute of Congregational Dev.	24 8am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice Pastor @ Institute of Congregational Dev.	25 10:30am Exercise Group	26	27
28 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 2pm Bell Choir Concert	29	30 10:30am Exercise Group				

The Cross & The Flame is published monthly
for our congregation and friends. *We welcome you
with open hearts, open minds and open doors.*

VIROQUA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PASTOR

REV. ERIKA MARTINEZ-FLORES

(608) - 637-7614 — Parsonage
encadenada100@hotmail.com

CHURCH OFFICE

221 S. Center Ave.
Viroqua, WI 54665

Phone: 608-637-3551

Email: viroqua@viroquawestbyumc.org

Website: www.viroquawestbyumc.org

Office Staff: Kathy Hanson/Barb Casper

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday 9:00am - 12:00pm

Check Us Out On Facebook!

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Worship—10:30 am

Adult Sunday School: 9:00 am

**Broadcast on
WVRQ 1360 AM/107.3 FM or on
Facebook Live**



Viroqua United Methodist Church's Mission Statement

The Viroqua United Methodist Church exists for the purpose of carrying out Christ's Great Commission by enabling all who come to personally know the joy of God's love and forgiveness and to lovingly share this joy in the fellowship of the church and in reaching people throughout the world.

God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.

John Wesley

