

*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 Witness*



Sharing  
God's Love



Westby United  
Methodist Church  
April 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

## A Message from Our Pastor

by Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

*"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

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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 his heart now. Is your heart where it needs to be or does it need renewal from God? Ask God to renew his heart and commit to keeping him at the center of your heart.

**To 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

### 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

*\*\* Pastor Erika will be on vacation from April 5-12 \*\**

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### April Birthdays

April 17 – Roger Zogg



### Sunday School News



Thank you to the Sunday school kids for all of their hard work and good attitudes while getting ready for Palm Sunday. They presented “The Trashman”, a skit adapted from the author Max Lucado. It was a different way to look at why Jesus died on the cross and how much he loves each of us. They also shared in sign language “Let Go, Let God”, a song based on Matthew 11:28-30. Afterwards the kids took a “surprise” field trip to Nordic Lanes for bowling, pizza and fun. The parents were exceptional secret keepers!

Sunday school resumes on April 7, following church.

Planning ahead: The last day of Sunday school for the school year will be May 5th.

### Thursday Morning Prayer Group

Please join us on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</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

With the concern about growing our church and finding ways to reach out to the community, this study group will be doing a study, "Untapped: Discover the God-Size Potential of Your Small Church". This study is from the Small Church Ministry website and contains 6 sessions. We will try to do 1-2 sessions each month. We will meet at 6:00 PM on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup>. Please come and join the discussion and hopefully we'll be inspired to increase our impact and grow in unity through these studies.

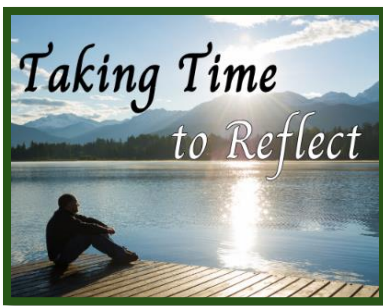
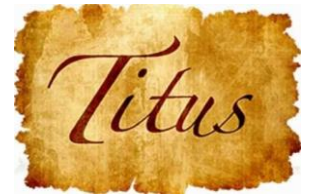


## Mission of the Month – Random Acts of Kindness

The mission for which we are asking the congregation to donate to is a mission that was started at the Westby Area District Elementary School. The school has been encouraging students and staff to do random act of kindness for years. They turned it into a broader project to help raise money to assist the family of a school employee who has been dealing with cancer treatments, but that is just one of the things the project has undertaken. According to the school web site, "The distributions are anonymous...none of our donors know "what families are struggling" or "what child needs support." They keep a special fund for all kinds of emergency situations. They welcome donations from the public and especially from the community. We would like to encourage members of the congregation to donate to this fund through the church. Write checks to WUMC with Westby School's RAOK on the memo line or on the envelope containing cash. Thank you in advance for supporting yet another worthy cause.

## Thursday Morning Bible Study Group

We will continue studying the Epistle of Titus during our morning Bible study group. Please join us at 9:00 AM on Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup> as we 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.



## 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](https://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).*

*Please note that [Bible.com](https://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.*



## Food Drive for Lent – Thank you!

“We give because God gave His Son to us.” Thank you very much for helping to show generosity to others with our Food Drive for Lent. Through your generous donations, we collected 290 cans/boxes/containers of food that have been donated to the Bethel Butikk and the Cashton Cupboard.

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

**Present:** Richard & Imgrad Allen, Tim Gaskell, Tom & Sharon Sharratt, Lois Gerling, Jean Shore, Donna Perkins, Julie Fargen, Pastor Erika, Kelly & Jill Bjornstad, Verna Drake and Linda Weilnau

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

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the February board meeting were emailed to the board and published in the March newsletter, so they could be reviewed prior to the meeting. Jean Shore and Kelly Bjornstad motioned to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Verna Drake provided the financial reports for February. These reports were emailed to the board members prior to the meeting. We are now paying quarterly for the multiperil insurance. Jean Shore and Kelly Bjornstad motioned to approve the treasurer’s report. Motion passed.

#### Old Business:

- † Review COVID Policy - It was decided to continue with the policy of masks being optional. We will remove this item from the future agendas and add it back if we feel there is a need.
- † Meal Site Contract – Received payment? – We have not received the payment yet. Tim Gaskell will inquire as to when we can expect the payment.
- † Safe Sanctuary Policy – Progress? – Tim Gaskell said it is still in progress.
- † Switch Pastor’s Office & Library – Progress? – Lois Gerling, Jane Gaskell and Verna Drake have sorted through most of the items in the library. The books we feel aren’t needed anymore will be given away.
- † Food Drive – Need people to take the food to the Cashton Cupboard and Bethel Butikk after Easter. – Verna Drake volunteered to take the food donations to Bethel Butikk. Kelly and Jill Bjornstad volunteered to take the food donations to the Cashton Cupboard.
- † Dishwasher & Possible Grant – We will not need a grant, due to receiving donations for this project. Fred Fronk will be able to install a Bosch dishwasher, a new faucet for the island sink, and make some adjustments to the island so the dishwasher can be installed there. The cost for this project, which includes the cost of the dishwasher will be about \$1540. Mr. Fronk estimated that he could get this project completed in about a month.
- † West Entrance Modification – Update? – B&W Concrete will be doing this project. We are waiting for them to come and review what we would like to have done. Verna Drake will contact them for an update.

#### New Business:

- † Statistical Report – Has it been submitted? – Verna Drake submitted this report.
- † Chili Cook-Off Prize – Do we want to do anything special with this money? We received \$332 for 1<sup>st</sup> place. It was decided to have this money go towards the west entrance ramp modification.

- ✚ Burgers in the Park – We will do this again as a fundraiser and to be out in the community. Verna Drake signed our church up to do Burgers in the Park on Thursday, July 18, 2024. Verna will see if she can find someone to perform during this time.
- ✚ Financial Audit & Property Tax Exempt Form – The financial audit is in process. Verna Drake gave the information to Lois Gerling. Lois will work with Maranda Oliver to complete the audit. Verna has the property tax exempt form ready and will submit it by the end of March.
- ✚ Youth – Verna Drake suggested that we start attending events our high school youth are in, so we can be more visible in their lives and show them that we care about them.
- ✚ BSF (Bible Study Fellowship) – Verna Drake was wondering if we might be interested in having our church as a satellite location for this group. They would provide the leader and the group usually meets 1 day/night a week. They meet between September-May. They are currently studying the book of Revelations. Verna will check into this for more details.
- ✚ Computer in the Office – Verna Drake plans on putting a small desk in the new pastor's office and put her old desktop computer in there. This computer is used for the church financials, so it makes sense to have it at the church.

#### Business from Board Committees:

- ✚ **Trustees** – Urinal repair for men's restroom? – Tom Sharratt talked to a plumber and is getting an estimate. Verna Drake said that Fred Fronk is going to fix the drawer that is stuck in the kitchen. Mr. Fronk said he could change the lighting in the kitchen to LEDs for about \$1000. We still need to paint the peaks outside on the west side, above the kitchen/storage rooms. Kelly Bjornstad will replace the bad tubes in the kitchen lights.
- ✚ **SPRC** – Pastor Erika has requested to take a vacation April 5-12. We will need a substitute speaker for April 7<sup>th</sup>. Verna Drake and Julie Fargen will be meeting with Pastor Erika for review of how things are going.
- ✚ **Worship** – The joint Maudy Thursday service will be at Viroqua UMC. They will serve a loaded baked potato meal at 6:00 PM with the service following the meal. They would like Westby UMC to provide cubed ham for this meal. Verna Drake will take care of this and use church funds to purchase the ham.
- ✚ **Education** – Ashlynn Davidson substituted for Jane Gaskell during Sunday school on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was suggested to possibly have Ashlynn teach once a month. This would give Jane a break and provide a way for Ashlynn to help.
- ✚ **Lay Leadership** – No report available.
- ✚ **Missions** – No report available.

**Pastor's Report:** On March 19 & 20, Pastor Erika and Verna Drake will go to Sun Prairie to participate in classes for the Institute of Congregational Development. Pastor Erika is busy preparing for these classes as they have to read several books, in addition to her preparations for the activities during Holy Week.

It was suggested to have the board meetings on Sunday, after worship once a quarter (June, September and December).

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

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April 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>2</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>3</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Growing in Faith Study Group	<b>4</b> 9:00 AM - Prayer Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	<b>5</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service (Communion) 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	<b>8</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>9</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>10</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Church Board Meeting	<b>11</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	<b>12</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship & Sunday School	<b>15</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>16</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>17</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Growing in Faith Study Group	<b>18</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	<b>19</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship & Sunday School	<b>22</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>23</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	<b>24</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>25</b> 9:00 AM - Morning Bible Study Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	<b>26</b> Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship & Sunday School	<b>29</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	<b>30</b> 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class				

**\*\* 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)