



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
May 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

Plan to Rebuild

by Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

"By night I went out through the Valley Gate toward the Jackal Well and the Dung Gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire." ~ Nehemiah 2.13

The story of Nehemiah may not be one of the best known in the Bible, but it is a great story. It's about a man who loved his God, and his people. Nehemiah courageously spoke the truth, stood firm in the face of opposition, and faithfully carried out... an incredible task!

While the book of Nehemiah offers us extremely pragmatic lessons regarding sound leadership principles, God remains clearly visible from the beginning. Before doing anything, Nehemiah, he always prayed. Every step he took, Nehemiah sought the Lord's direction.

Nehemiah, who is cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Babylon, learns how devastated the city of Jerusalem is. So, he has in his heart the desire to go to the city and do what is necessary to rebuild the city. Nehemiah is able to recognize both the problem and the solution, even though he had never been to Jerusalem. He has an incredible vision of what he wants and what he expects.

What is also incredible is that the town only needed 52 days to rebuild the city wall that had been in ruins for over 120 years! And they were able to do it thanks to his determination, but also to the leadership and the clear planning that they had to follow. Nehemiah took the time necessary, so that he and his people were ready.

1. HE IDENTIFIED THE PROBLEM – The first thing Nehemiah did was inquire about the situation of the Jews, and the wall around Jerusalem. When he found out that the wall was still in ruins, and that the name of God was being mocked, he identified with the feelings of the people, with their needs, and committed himself to the cause. The people's problem became his problem.
2. SPENT TIME IN PRAYER – Almost immediately, Nehemiah got on his knees to pray. After praying, he asked God for the favor. Without a doubt, he received the vision and the plan to rebuild the wall, during his times of communion with God.

Pastor's Message	p. 1
Pastor's Schedule	p. 2
Birthday – Anniversary.	p. 2
Sunday School.	p. 3
Prayer Group	p. 3
Bible Study Group	p. 3
Growing in Faith	p. 4
Mission of Month.	p. 4
Other Activities	p. 4
Online Study	p. 5
Board Minutes	p. 5
Calendar	p. 8

3. APPROACH THOSE OF GREAT INFLUENCE – In any leadership endeavor, people of influence “can make or break” the entire project. In this case, it was the Persian king Artaxerxes. Nehemiah received from him not only permission to rebuild the wall, but also the necessary resources and support. No doubt, Nehemiah also chose key people to go with him.
4. EVALUATED THE SITUATION – When Nehemiah finally arrived in Jerusalem, he inspected, for himself, the challenge he was facing. He did it quietly, at night, personally inspecting the damage, and planning the project without interference from anyone.
5. HE MET WITH THE PEOPLE AND PRESENTED THE VISION – He spoke with the people, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the people who did the work. He described to them his vision of rebuilding the wall, and the spiritual ramifications of the project.
6. HE ENCOURAGED THEM WITH PAST SUCCESSES – With such a daunting task as rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah knew he needed to encourage the people. So, he told them the great help which God had given him, and what the king had told him.
7. HE RECEIVED THE APPROVAL OF THE PEOPLE – Once Nehemiah presented his plan, the people committed to being part of the reconstruction process. Each and every one committed to doing their part and without fear, they prepared to work for the good of all.

Once Nehemiah saw the need of his people and the devastation of the city, he could not be calm and live his life indifferently, so he sought to be aware of the situation and prayed to God. While Nehemiah waited for God's response, which took 4 months to arrive, he dedicated himself to designing a plan to be ready when God gave him his answer.

Nothing Nehemiah did was improvised, he had a clear vision and concrete objectives of what he needed to do and each step to take in order to rebuild the city walls. It is true that obstacles were presented during the process and during the reconstruction, but Nehemiah always turned to God in prayer, in addition to always keeping the objective in mind and relying on the people.

At this critical moment, God calls us to be part of the process of reconstruction and renewal of our church, for them we must have a clear and well-defined purpose of what we want for our future. The Book of Nehemiah teaches us about the type of leadership necessary and about the planning and rebuilding process we should consider to be the Church we have been called to be.

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

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

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

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May Anniversaries

May 28 – Tim & Jane Gaskell
May 30 – Mike & Julie Fargen



Sunday School News

The Sunday school year is quickly coming to an end. The last day will be Sunday, May 5th. The kids are planning to serve a special lunch for their parents on that day. We've been learning about serving God and serving others, so this will tie in very well.

Thank you to Ashlyn for leading Sunday school when Jane was out of town. The kids loved having her and this was a perfect example of using your gifts to serve others.

We'd like to acknowledge our Sunday school students for some of their recent achievements:



Congratulations to Julia! Her artwork won 2nd place in the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Poster Contest at school. The theme was "May the Forest be with You."

Adey, Hailee, and Elsa performed in the Sole Expressions Dance recital on April 20 & 21. Congratulations to all on your performances!

As you are out and about during parade season, be sure to give a big wave to Adey, the 2024 Westby Snowflake Ski and Golf Club Attendant.



Planning ahead :

- We're hoping to do a summer get together at church again – details to follow.
- Save the Date : We will be serving at Burgers in the Park on July 18th. We will need volunteers to make bars and help with serving.
- We will partner with Viroqua for VBS, usually in August – details to follow.
- Your suggestions are always welcome!

Thank you for sharing your very wonderful kids this year ~ they are an amazing blessing!!

Thursday Morning Prayer Group

Please join us on Thursday, May 2nd 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.

Make
Time
to Pray



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, May 23rd 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.



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 we’ll be discussing session 2 and session 3 this month. We will meet at 6:00 PM on May 1st and May 15th. 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 – Compassion International Gift

In years past, we have had what we called “Compassion Sunday” where in people who sponsor poor children in other countries talked about our experiences. The idea was to encourage others to sponsor an individual child. This year we also want to encourage people to sponsor a child, but we are suggesting that those who don’t feel they can make a long-term commitment can make a one-time donation to a needy family through a Compassion International Gift. For more information, here is a link to the Compassion International Gift catalog page: <https://www.compassion.com/charitable-gift-catalog.htm>.



There are many options, such as giving a flock of chickens for a \$40-dollar donation up to a \$200 donation to provide a goat and several other options in between including a donation of any amount. Those would be used where most needed, such as to help a family recover after some kind of disaster such as a storm, fire or flood. We welcome donations of any amount and we can put them together for a particular gift or individuals can choose to give a separate gift. There are eight options outlined on cards on the back table that you can choose from. If you choose that option, please write your check to Compassion International and write the name of your specific gift on the memo line. If you just want to give a general donation, you can write your check to the church and we will designate how we would like to have the lump sum distributed. Anyone who wishes to sponsor an individual child, please see Ardith for information about how to do that. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this project.



Flowerpot Workshop – May 9th

April showers always bring May flowers 🌸 and now you can be ready to have beautiful flowers 🌻 in beautiful pots. Join us on Thursday, May 9th at 5pm for a creative craft workshop and light meal. We will be decorating Terra cotta pots in 2 ways: painting or using printed napkins to adhere a design to the pot. Bring your own pot (please clean off all debris and must be dry) or they will be available for a nominal cost. If you have a printed paper napkin you love and want to use that design on your pot, please bring 2 napkins. Happy birthday napkins change a simple pot into a great birthday gift with or without flowers. Please RSVP to Verna Drake (608-632-4100) by May 6th. 🌸

Church Cleaning – May 4th

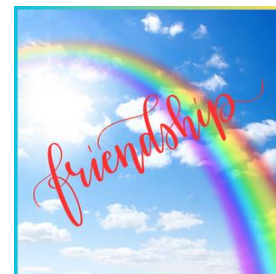
On Saturday, May 4th at 9:00 AM, we’re going to have a church cleaning time during the morning. We will concentrate on cleaning the inside of the church, but depending on the timing, the weather and how many people are able to help, we may do a little outside cleaning also.



Please come and help with this project if you are able. Many hands make light work. Thank you!

May Online Studies – Developing Deeper Friendships

Friendships – Relationships – Community. God created us to be in community with each other **and** with Him. We see this desire throughout the stories within the Bible and we see it around us today. However, due to the recent isolation caused by a global pandemic, our society is more isolated and fragmented than ever! That time of isolation has led to an epidemic of loneliness and a mental health crisis around the world. It has revealed the importance of being connected with people and the God who loves us, yet often we do not enjoy these connections like we could or as God intended.



We invite you to join us in our May Online Bible Studies as we are inspired, challenged, and offered practical wisdom about developing and maintaining deeper and more meaningful friendships. We will also look at what it means to be a friend of Jesus, taking a glimpse at the privileges and responsibilities that come with such a relationship! Use the links below to join the studies and come along with us as we grow in our relationships with each other and with Jesus!

- 21 Days to Sweeter Friendships – starting May 1st
<https://bible.com/p/66196602/f6864af7c3f9e55d645820e53e687af7>
- Friendship With Jesus – starting May 22nd
<https://bible.com/p/66196630/a5304f9526189411f6336459f3a0eec6>

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.

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

Westby United Methodist Church – Board Meeting ☩ April 10, 2024

Present: Ardith Hoff, Julie Fargen, Jean Shore, Jane Gaskell, Tim Gaskell and Linda Weilnau

Opening: Jane Gaskell opened with prayer.

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

Treasurer's Report: Verna Drake provided the financial reports for March. These reports were emailed to the board members prior to the meeting. Verna Drake asked if we should pay \$349 or 10% of the March offering for the March apportionments. Ardith Hoff and Jean Shore motioned to pay \$349 for the March apportionments. Motion passed. We will discuss the apportionment payments more at the May board meeting when Verna will be available to provide more information. Ardith Hoff and Jean Shore motioned to approve the treasurer's report. Motion passed.

Old Business:

- ☩ Switch Pastor's Office & Library – Progress? – Verna Drake moved a computer into the corner of the new office so she can do the financial tasks at the church. Bethel Butikk was able to take most of the books that we didn't need and they will give the Bibles away. The sorting of books from the library is

finished. The next step will be to sort items in the old office. Pastor Erika could start using the new office now.

- ✝ Dishwasher – Update? – Jane Gaskell reported that the dishwasher may be installed by the end of April.
- ✝ West Entrance Modification – Update? – Verna talked with Paul Bjerkos about this. He is going to try and work us in with another job he has in Westby. He needs to look into the costs because the cost will be determined by how the entrance is adjusted to change it into a sloped approach.

New Business:

- ✝ Church Cleaning – Possible date of May 4th after 10:30 AM? – It was decided to do the church cleaning on Saturday, May 4th and start at 9:00 AM.
- ✝ Congregational Development – Set a meeting date to discuss with our congregation? – The next joint meeting with Viroqua is April 29th at 6:00 PM at Viroqua UMC. We will set a date at the May board meeting to discuss the information we have received about congregational development with our congregation. It was decided to do this during fellowship time one Sunday.
- ✝ May Day Flowers for Norseland – It was decided to plant the flowers in plastic cups on Sunday, April 28th during fellowship time. We will need at least 48 marigolds. Julie Fargen will purchase the flowers. Jane Gaskell will purchase the plastic cups and Linda Weilmann will provide the dirt.
- ✝ Craft Workshop in May – Possibly making steppingstones and/or make decorated clay flowerpots. Possible dates are May 6, 9 or 22 with a start time of 5:00 PM. – It was decided to do the decorated clay flowerpot workshop on Thursday, May 9th at 5:00 PM.
- ✝ Raise the Payment for Mowing Church Yard – Raise from \$25 to \$30 since Connor also whacks the weeds? – Jane Gaskell and Ardith Hoff motioned to increase the payment for mowing to \$30. Motion passed.
- ✝ Self-Guided Scripture Tour during Burgers in the Park – If we do this, it may be helpful to offer a buddy system for some people who may not feel comfortable walking on the hilly areas and bumpy ground of the park. We decided that this would be a good activity to add to our Burgers in the Park event. Verna Drake will oversee organizing this activity.
- ✝ Use of Old Heavy Tables on May 1-5 by Verna – Jane Gaskell and Jean Shore motioned to allow Verna Drake to use the tables on May 1-5. Motion passed.
- ✝ Community Worship Service – July 7 at Davidson Park at 11:00 AM, followed by a potluck. – Verna Drake provided information via email about this. We would join the other churches in the Westby community for a worship service centered around Christian patriotism. This community worship service used to be done annually many years ago. Verna asked several pastors from the Westby churches about starting this event again and they responded favorably. Verna said she would be willing to organize this event. The Bethesda church has reserved the shelter for the community worship service. It was decided that this would be a good activity to participate in.

Business from Board Committees:

- ✝ **Trustees** – Handicap Door – The cover came off the door mechanism and the motor was starting to fall out. Jane Gaskell contacted Fred Fronk and he came and fixed it.
 - Men's Urinal – Tom Sharratt received an estimate of \$412 from Harold Olson (plumber) to fix the urinal. There was also an estimate from Grant Johnson of \$100 to fix the drywall around the urinal. This would be done after the urinal is repaired. Ardith Hoff and Julie Fargen motioned to have the urinal fixed. Motion passed.
 - Midwest Asphalt – We received a letter from this company with an estimate to have the parking lots resealed. It has been 2 years since the parking lots were resealed and painted. It was

decided to put this on the May agenda so we can determine the amount of funds that will be available after the west entrance has been modified.

- ✚ **SPRC** – Julie Fargen reported that she and Verna Drake will be meeting with Pastor Erika sometime to discuss how Pastor Erika is doing. Julie and Verna had asked for feedback from the congregation, but they haven't received hardly any replies. Julie is going to create a questionnaire to give the congregation so they can hopefully have more feedback information to give to Pastor Erika when they meet with her, possibly in May.
- ✚ **Worship** – Jane Gaskell reported that we finished with the Holy Week and Easter services, which went well. Thank you to Tim Gaskell who was the guest speaker on April 7 while Pastor Erika was on vacation.
- ✚ **Education** – The Sunday school class went bowling after Sunday school on Palm Sunday. Everyone had a good time bowling and eating pizza. This even took the place of the Winter Fun Day which was cancelled. The last day of Sunday school will be May 5. After Sunday school that day, there will be a Mystery Lunch for the Sunday school parents. The children will serve the meal to their parents. Jane Gaskell will be organizing this activity.
- ✚ **Lay Leadership** – Ardith Hoff continues to write more short articles for the website.
- ✚ **Missions** – After some discussion, it was decided to do Compassion Gift item for the May mission of the month. This is through Compassion International. The donations collected will be used to purchase an item from the Compassion Gift catalog.

Pastor's Report: No report at this time because Pastor Erika is on vacation.

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

Memorial Day Dinner – May 27th

On Monday, May 27th, Faith UMC will be hosting their annual Memorial Day Dinner from 11:00-1:00. The proceeds from this event will go towards Faith UMCs Women of Faith local mission fund. The menu will be chicken & noodles, beef & noodles, salads, dinner rolls, beans, desserts and a beverage. The cost is \$14 for adults, \$8 for children ages 7-12, and children ages 6 and under are free. Carry out dinners are available.



There will also be a raffle. The prizes are a fire pit with a grill, tabletop and weather covering; firewood with carrier; and 20 lbs. of ground beef. Raffle tickets are \$5 each or 5 tickets for \$20. The winning tickets will be drawn at 1:00 PM on Memorial Day.



A Prayer for Mother's Day

God, today, we celebrate mothers and those who are like mothers to us, but the truth is, we ought to celebrate them every day. Their love manifests in small, subtle ways each day—in the mundane that sometimes we can take for granted. We thank you for their sacrificial love and ask you to uplift them today. Thank you for the gift they are in our lives. In Your name we pray. Amen.

May 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Growing in Faith Study Group	2 9:00 AM - Prayer Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	3 Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	4 9:00 AM – Church Cleaning
5 9:00 AM – Worship Service (Communion) 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School (Last Day)	6 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	7 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	8 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Church Board Meeting	9 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class 5:00 PM – Flower Pot Workshop	10 Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	11
12 <i>Mother’s Day</i> 9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship	13 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	14 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	15 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Growing in Faith Study Group	16 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	17 Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	18
19 9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship	20 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	21 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	22 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	23 9:00 AM - Morning Bible Study Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	24 Pastor Erika’s Sabbath Day	25
26 9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM - Fellowship	27 <i>Memorial Day</i>	28 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	29	30	31	

**** 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)