

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



DECEMBER 2024

Advent

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'

Mark 1:3



For most people, December is the end of the year. But for Christians, it is a new start. We open the new season by waiting for Jesus Christ.

Personally, I think the word “waiting” is a very interesting word. Waiting always made me bored. And it was very hard to wait for something that I desired. However, at the end of the wait, I felt great joy that could not be expressed in words.

In December, we will start to wait for the day of incarnation, the day of birth of Jesus Christ.

After Halloween, I was surprised when I went to Walmart to do some grocery shopping. I saw that all the seasonal sections transformed from Halloween goods to Christmas items. The store prepared for Christmas even in November.

I saw that not only Walmart but also other businesses prepared a lot of events and items at the end of November for the Christmas season. But I could not find Jesus in any business stores.

People prepare for Christmas by selling goods and business. But we should prepare for Jesus’s birthday with the heart of waiting. We should celebrate the coming of Christ, who came to us with the human body. We prepare and celebrate Advent and Christmas for Jesus Christ.

In December, I hope we can prepare the way of the Lord. I hope each day can be full of grace and truth during this advent. So, on the day of Jesus’s birthday, we can celebrate the incarnation of our God.

Pastor Paul

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DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Maris & Phyllis Kalnins December 13

Gregg & Elizabeth Roberts December 20



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Ardith Olson	December 3
Joanne Hornby	December 8
Ben Ostrem	December 9
Sawyer Clements	December 12
Rachel Turben	December 15
Josh Garrett	December 18
Maris Kalnins	December 18
Kristine Starnes	December 29

God's Blessings on You!



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.

Long Range Objective *Viroqua UMC*

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

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



For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given....

Isaiah 9: 6

Veterans Day



Our Veterans Marlo, David, Gregory



Enjoying the Cake



Delivering thanks to the Firepeople



Community Bell Choir in Concert



FOOD PANTRY

We donated 16 pounds of food in October. Our Thanksgiving special effort is done, but you can bring in food anytime.

Viroqua UMC October/November 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.

October 20	\$2,434.05
October 27	\$784.05
November 3	\$2,269.05
November 10	\$1,797.05
November 17	\$925.75
November 24	\$930.00

Wills & Memorials Fund

When gifts to the church are given in memory of someone who has passed away, the money goes into a special fund called Wills & Memorials. That money is saved for use in special projects. You may remember that last month it was decided to use memorial money to cover the cost of the radio broadcast for Sundays that weren't donated by current listeners.

\$1,155 was added to the Memorial Fund During 2024. Donations were made in memory of:

Veryl Gerdl	Annabel Mc Garry
Ruth Gilbertson	James McIntosh
Jean Knutson	Patricia Olson

Do note that this is called the Wills & Memorials Fund. Consider including the church in your will and become one of our *Heaven Members*.

<i>December Sunday Servants</i>				
	Liturgist	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
December 1		Joanne Hornby Jerry Brennehan	Betty Ross	Phyllis Kalnins Marlo Volden
December 8	Cavan Fang	Dale Gudgeon Miny Hirschfield	Alice Sloane	
December 15	Tom Lohr	Mary & Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Barb Casper	
December 22		Janet Welch Phyllis Kalnins	Ardith Olson	
December 24		Aaron & Angie Hanson		
December 29		Joanne Hornby Marlo Volden	Avis Marino	

Be sure to pick up your Advent Devotional. Readings begin on December 1st, and continue each day until Christmas.

Thanks to Janice Fortney for the artwork on the cover—The Stump of Jesse



Teen Holiday Party

Pastor Lee invites all youth to stay for a pizza party after the Christmas Pageant and cookie reception on December 15th. Youth, mark your calendar and plan to attend this Holiday Get Together!



Visioning Retreat

The Administrative Council and Finance Committee are planning to have a retreat in January during which they can spend time creating a vision and goals for the future of our church. This is something we have discussed for some time as we strive to deal with declining membership and the age of our building.

An off-site event will be held on Friday night and Saturday, January 10 & 11. Bradley Kalajainen, a retired pastor with experience in this field, will be meeting with us for part of the time.

Members of the congregation not on either the Council or the Finance Committee are also invited to join us as we grapple with planning for our future as a church. Let us know if you'd like to be a part of it.

February Fundraiser

We have been having our largest fundraiser of the year in February for some time now. We started out with The Big Thing and for two years now, have invited other churches to join us for a Chili Cookoff. Neither of those two venues have given us the result we would like. At this point, we're talking about changing the plan again to a plain old church dinner type experience. The Council set the date of Wednesday, February 12th.

Planning will begin early in December. If you'd be willing to help, let us know. We need all the input we can get!

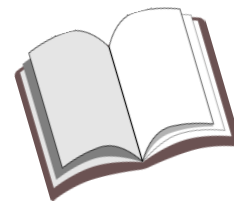
Book Group

The Book Group's next book is *The Seed Keeper* by Diane Wilson.

Rosalie Iron Wing has grown up in the woods with her father, Ray, a former science teacher who tells her stories of plants, of the stars, of the origins of the Dakota people. Until, one morning, Ray doesn't return from checking his traps. Told she has no family, Rosalie is sent to live with a foster family in nearby Mankato - where the reserved, bookish teenager meets rebellious Gaby Makespace, in a friendship that transcends the damaged legacies they've inherited.

On a winter's day many years later, Rosalie returns to her childhood home. A widow and mother, she has spent the previous two decades on her White husband's farm, finding solace in her garden even as the farm is threatened first by drought and then by a predatory chemical company. Now, grieving, Rosalie begins to confront the past, on a search for family, identity, and a community where she can finally belong. In the process, she learns what it means to be descended from women with souls of iron-women who have protected their families, their traditions, and a precious cache of seeds through generations of hardship and loss, through war and the insidious trauma of boarding schools.

The discussion of *The Seed Keeper* will be held on Monday, December 9th at 7 pm.





The Angel's Story

An Advent Pageant, *The Angel's Story* will be presented during the worship service on December 15th. Cavan has written the script for this play, and a crew is working to make it happen. A special Christmas program this year! You won't want to miss it!

Our annual holiday cookie reception will be held following the pageant/service.

O Holy Night: An Advent Devotional December Online Study

"O holy night! the stars are brightly shining;" Can you name this tune? If your answer was "O Holy Night", you were correct. The words to this Christmas carol are very descriptive and give us a glimpse of what it must have felt like to be a witness of our Savior's birth. Can't you imagine a sky filled with multitudes of stars and their beauty, set as a backdrop as angels announce Jesus' birth? This carol continues to describe in detail what happened the night that Jesus was born.



As we journey through the Advent season, we invite you to join us as we experience the birth of Jesus through the Christmas carol, "O Holy Night" in this month's online Bible study. This 25-day study will begin on December 1st. Use the link below to join us on our Advent journey!

O Holy Night: An Advent Devotional – begins on Dec. 1st

<https://bible.com/p/70009119/25ee74fd6162c6fb9a874cc2978d076a>

This online study 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 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 UMC Christmas Cookie Walk – Saturday, Dec. 7th



Start your Christmas baking the easy way, without having to find recipes or dirty any dishes. Come to the Westby UMC Annual Christmas Cookie Walk on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024, from 9:00-12:00. There will be a wide variety of Christmas cookies, homemade candies, and other baked goods available. The cookie walk is like having a salad bar, where you get to choose your own salad toppings, but with cookies in place of the salad items. The cost is \$7 per pound, with some items priced separately. Coffee and hot chocolate will be available. Proceeds from this fundraiser will go towards Westby UMC's outreach and other needs. Remember to come early for the best selection of cookies.

Joy to the World, The Lord is come!

Administrative Council

November 20th, 2024



Members Present: Dan Brown, Phyllis Kalnins, Kathy Hanson, Cavan Fang, Barb Casper, Pastor Paul.

Charge Conference went well. Thank you to everyone who prepared reports for that.

Pastor Paul is working on plans for our visioning retreat in January. Bradley Kalajainen will meet with us for part of the time. He has had lots of experience with this sort of thing. The retreat will be held on January 10 & 11.

The office copier is under repairs. It is so old that repairs have to come from junked copiers. We are fortunate that we could get what's needed, but we need to look at getting something different.

Discussion about the February Fundraiser and January Visioning Retreat in Finance meeting.

Committee Reports

Trustees: A replacement window has been ordered for the worst one in the nursery room. A glass block insert window is missing along the back side of the building. A robot vacuum cleaner will be purchased. See complete minutes elsewhere in this newsletter.

Hospitality Committee: Emergency worker thank you posters and cards were delivered. Our winter potluck—Happy New Year Potluck—will be held on January 5th. See complete minutes elsewhere in this newsletter.

Worship Committee: Preparation for Advent. See complete minutes elsewhere in this newsletter.

Education Committee: We will shop for a needy family at Christmas time again this year. See complete minutes elsewhere in this newsletter.

The meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Next Meeting: December 16th @ 8:00 pm.

Finance Committee

November 20, 2024

Members Present: Kathy Hanson, Cavan Fang, Heidi Garrett, Phyllis Kalnins; Absent—Gregg Roberts (Secretary), Gregory Cheever (Treasurer), Aaron Hanson, Layne Hanson, Pastor Lee

Joys & Concerns, Opening Prayer (Mr. Brown)

Meeting notes from previous meeting:

Treasurer's report (presented by Kathy Hanson):

Monthly offering was up considerably. Perhaps quarterly statement distribution encouraged giving. No transfer of savings required at this point.

Printer is failing, parts are obsolete. Memorial funds may need to be used to get a new printer.

Motion to accept the Treasurer's report: Phyllis, Heidi Second. Motion carried.

Finance committee retreat possibly on January 10-11, 2025

February fundraiser tentatively on Wednesday, 2/12/25

Next meeting: December 18, 7:00 PM

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM



Trustees Meeting

November 12, 2024

Present: Aaron Hanson, Dale Gudgeon, Phyllis Kalnins, Pete Gilman, Jack Deter, Pastor Paul Lee

Pastor Paul opened the meeting with a prayer.

Bills approved for payment were:

Ray Anderson for sump pump repair \$85.00

Strang's for fixing a drain at the parsonage. \$237.50

The faucet is still dripping at the parsonage. The plumber cannot find the parts to repair it. The faucet needs to be replaced. Pastor Paul will try to get a faucet through Amazon and install it himself. We will reimburse him.

The parsonage is still having trouble with the thermostat. The repairman ordered the wrong parts. It will be repaired when the parts arrive.

The parsonage still needs a new garage opener. This has been taking too long. Aaron will check into this.

The radiator in Fellowship Hall seems to be on all of the time. It is an old thermostat and sticks sometimes. Aaron will look into this.

The window in the flower room has a missing glass block. Kathy sealed off the window, but the glass block needs to be replaced. There were some glass blocks in the storage room. We will see if we can find them to see if they fit.

To replace one badly damaged window in the nursery will be \$1250.00 which includes the window and installation.

A community Asian group might like to use our facility next month. The group would also like to be able to use the kitchen. This month the group will meet at the Commons. The Commons charges \$25.00/hour. The Trustees agreed that this would be a good outreach to the community. The Ad Council will also be asked for approval. We would consider doing this at no charge.

It was suggested that we might be able to offer the church facilities for children's birthday parties.

It was suggested that the Trustees look into purchasing a robotic vacuum cleaner. Westby already uses one. We will ask Westby for information on the Vacuum they have. Pastor Paul will see what kind of deals may be available on Black Friday. These vacuums can cost between \$300.00-\$1000.00.

In the new year we will begin changing some of the functions of the rooms in the church. The teens in the church would like a room in the church but don't necessarily want to fix the room up themselves.

Aaron completed the Annual Conference forms.

Our next meeting will be December 10 at 6:00 p.m. Pastor Paul may not be here because of ICD meetings.

Hospitality Committee

November 12, 2024

Members Present: Kathy Hanson, Barb Casper, Gregory Cheever, Joanne Hornby, Jolene Gudgeon, Alice Sloane, Avis Marino, Betty Ross, Pastor Paul

Kathy opened the meeting with prayer.

LOVE

Our Homebound list has not changed this month. Avis reported on the cards she has sent.

LEARN (Old business)

We assembled the posters and cards to go to Emergency Workers at the police, fire, and ambulance centers. Pastor Paul offered to deliver them.

DECIDE/DO (New Business)

We discussed our Christmas gifts for our homebound members. We will assemble them at the next meeting.

Our next event will be the potluck on January 5th. We will call it the "Happy New Year Potluck."

We reviewed our meeting date because we seemed to be unsure whether we meet the 2nd or 3rd week of the month. We decided to settle on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 1:00 pm.

Pastor Paul offered the closing prayer.

Next meeting: December 10th at 1:00 pm.

Worship Committee

November 7, 2024

Members Present: Pastor Paul, Barb Casper, Cavan Fang, Jolene Gudgeon, Phyllis Kalnins, Avis Marino



Pastor Paul began the meeting with a prayer.

There was a review of the All Saints' Day service. All agreed that it had gone well with the exception of a problem with the mike. Cavan will work on getting a replacement for that mike.

There was discussion regarding having parts of the communion service sung rather than read from the hymnal. There had been some unfavorable comments although for the most part it was well received. It was decided to go back to the prior way reading from the hymnal for the time being.

Phyllis will be doing the Power Point presentation for the Veterans Day service. There was discussion as to where she should set up. Previously the computer was set up in the balcony. It was decided that the set up could be anywhere as long as it wasn't a distraction to the service.

Pastor Paul thought it would be helpful to have a tablet for use.

Veterans will be recognized on November 10. Pastor Paul will have a moment during the service to recognize them. Pastor Paul will furnish a cake to be served after the service. Hospitality will help with the set-up and serving.

There will not be an extra Thanksgiving service this year. The entire month will be devoted to our giving thanks for our many blessings. The Christmas tree will be put up early and used as our Thankful tree. Colorful leaves will be placed in the bulletins for those present to write their thankful

notes and place either in the collection plates or hang sometime after the service. It is a tall tree so we will need many leaves.

People should be reminded about bringing food for the Food Pantry cart near the office. It will be displayed before Thanksgiving in the Narthex.

We will meet to trim the tree on Tuesday Nov. 26 at 10:30 a.m.

Two ushers and one greeter will be needed for all services during December, including Christmas Eve.

The Advent Devotional sign-up sheets are on the table in the Narthex. As of today there are six empty slots.

Barb has been contacting florists regarding the poinsettias. She spoke with Viroqua Floral, who will deliver, and Sparta Floral who will not. She will know more about pricing, etc. at our next meeting.-

Cavan is working on the skit for the Christmas Program. He is trying to set up practice times.

The choir will be singing anthems of Thanksgiving during November. Hymns during December will follow the Lectionary.

We will be doing the "Lessons and Carols" service on Christmas Eve. The sanctuary will be decorated. We will be using the Advent candles. Avis will recruit readers. Pastor Paul will provide the script.

Pastor Paul suggested having a drawing where each family will pick a scripture to guide them during the new year. Pastor Paul will provide the scriptures. Barb will look for bookmarks or some kind of memento to go along with the scripture.

Cavan gave a report on an ICD meeting he had attended. There are two types of churches, inward who are in decline and outward who are reaching out to the community and are increasing attendance. We must develop relationships with those outside of our membership in order to begin the task of reaching people for Christ.

Our next meeting will be December 5 at 6 p.m.

Jolene Gudgeon Worship Co-Chair

Education Committee

November 4th, 2024

Members Present: Pastor Paul, Heidi, Avis

Old Business:

Sunday School: Pastor Paul will start contacting potential teachers soon. Teacher training should start in December, with a start date for the children & teens in January.

Nursery Coverage: Nursery coverage is not a priority right now. There have not been any children other than Pastor Paul's kids. His children are attending Sunday School in Westby and are not back to Viroqua in time to play in the nursery now.

Confirmation: Confirmation has its first meet & greet on Wednesday Nov 6th. A makeup date will need to be selected due to confirmation being canceled on Nov 13th due to the Charge Conference. A makeup date of Nov 27th was suggested. Pastor Paul purchased bibles for each of the students.

Christmas Program: The Christmas Program will be Sunday December 15th. Worship Committee is handling the arrangements for the program. We are asked to bring cookies for the reception after church.

New Business:

Needy Family Christmas Shopping: The Sunday School kids & teens will once again participate in the Host-a-Family program. Details will be made for shopping & wrapping the gifts at our December meeting when we have details about the family.

Sanctuary Decorating: Worship committee will be scheduling Sanctuary decorating sometime soon & would like the kids & teens to help.

Other Ideas Discussed: a Youth Fundraiser and perhaps reviving the Youth Fellowship Group. No action was taken, just ideas shared.

Next meeting: Monday December 9th at 6:00 PM in the church lounge.

UWF

November 13, 2024

Members Present: President Janet Welch, Ann Carlow, Barb Casper, Jolene Gudgeon, Joanne Hornby, Phyllis Kalnins, Avis Marino, Ardith Olson, Betty Ross.

The meeting began with a meditation, The Generosity Habit, written by Matthew Kelly, read by Janet.

The secretary's report was read by Janet.

The treasurer's report was given by Barb Casper. Balance as of October 31, 2024 \$2701.51.

Child Fund: Lorraine took care of November. Joanne will take care of December.

Coffee for Church: November 17-Barb, November 24-Jolene

Christmas Lunch: Our Christmas luncheon will be held December 11 at Old Town Inn, Westby. Meet at 12 p.m.

Janet read thank you notes from Northcott House and Legacy Endowment. They both appreciated our support.

Joanne gave a program on Thank Offerings. Members were encouraged to bring their offering to the December meeting.

Joanne closed with a prayer.

Phyllis Kalnins served some tasty snacks.

Our next meeting will be at Old Town Inn December 11 at 12p,m,



December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship w/ Communion	2	3 10:30am Exercise Group	4 8am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice 6pm Pageant Practice	5 10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Worship Committee	6	7
8 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 12pm Birthday Dinner 2pm Pageant Practice 4pm Bible Study @ Kathy Hanson's	9 6pm Education Committee 7pm Book Group	10 10:30am Exercise Group 12pm Hospitality Committee 6pm Trustees Meeting	11 8am Prayer Group 12pm UWF 6pm Choir Practice 6pm Pageant Practice	12 10:30am Exercise Group	13	14 10am Pageant Practice 12pm Shopping for Christmas Family
15 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship with Pageant 11:30am Christmas Cookie Reception 11:30am Youth Christmas Party	16	17 10:30am Exercise Group	18 8am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice 7pm Finance Committee 8pm Administrative Council	19 10:30am Exercise Group	20	21
22 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship	23 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	24 10:30am Exercise Group 5pm Christmas Eve Service	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26 10:30am Exercise Group	27	28
29 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship	30	31 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

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OFFICE HOURS

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

Check Us Out On Facebook!

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Adult Sunday School Class—9:00 am

Worship—10:30 am

Nursery Provided

Broadcast on

WVRQ 1360 AM/107.3 FM or on

Facebook Live

Merry  
Christmas

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

