



*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
January 2025

IN THIS ISSUE

Thoughts Upon Methodism

by Pastor Paul Lee

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.

John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Methodism*.

In 2025, I hope to share about Methodism through each month's newsletter article. I received the same question from many people. Why are there so many kinds of churches in the world? My simple answer to this question is that denominations are developed and founded according to the needs of the world.

Many people try to understand the denomination in the context of this present day. However, there is about a 200-year gap between Lutheran/presbyterian churches and Methodists, meaning the historical context was different when each denomination was founded. Therefore, it is very important for us to know about the denomination's history and how each denomination worked for God in its context. Also, we need to apply what we have learned from each denomination in our lives.

Since I am a Methodist pastor, I hope to talk more about Methodism through the articles this year. For the first start, I brought a quote from John Wesley's article, which was written in 1786. Wesley passed away in 1791. He wrote the article, *Thoughts Upon Methodism*, 5 years before he died. At this time, the Methodist movement had dramatically grown up. A lot of people joined the Methodist movement, and they influenced their society a lot. As a founder of the Methodist movement, Wesley wrote the article to review the identity of Methodism in this context.

He mentioned the quote above in the very first part of his article. We can see that he was not worried about the number of people in the movement, but he was worried about Methodists who lost their Doctrine, Spirit, and Discipline.

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Now, the United Methodist Church – probably not only the UMC but also all churches in the United States – is experiencing a sharp decline in the number of church members. We are worried about the decreasing membership of the United Methodist Church. However, when I was concerned about the church’s challenges, I always remembered Wesley’s quote and had a self-question. “Am I worrying about losing Doctrine, Spirit, and Discipline as much as decreasing the numbers of people?”

I believe it is very important for us in this present day to know and learn about Methodism because we are experiencing what Wesley said. So, in 2025, through this newsletter article, I hope to share about Methodism with you. And I hope to find the way that we should walk together as Methodists in this present day. May God give us wisdom and guidance for the blessed 2025 year.

Amen.

Pastor Paul

Pastor Paul’s Schedule:

Westby UMC Office Hours:

- Thursdays (9:00-12:00)
- Anytime by appointment

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January Birthdays

Jan. 31 – Kelly Bjornstad



Let's Pray!

Thursday Morning Prayer Group

Prayer is a powerful tool that God gave to us, and He wants us to use it, individually and as a group. Please continue to exercise your prayer muscles by joining us at 9:00 AM on Thursday, January 2nd for our monthly prayer group time.

Thank you for your continued prayers for our church ministries, church members and our community.

Thursday Morning Bible Study Group

Please join us on Thursday, January 23rd at 9:00 AM for our monthly Bible Study group. Pastor Paul will be guiding us on a new study about the book of Luke and the book of Acts at the same time.

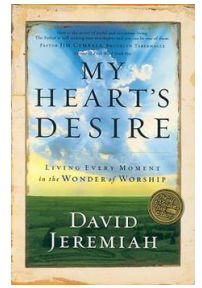
Mission of the Month – Cemetery Lawn Care

In the month of January, in the midst of ice and snow, it is time to renew our hope of the spring to come, and with it, green grass, flowers and yes, even weeds. Along with our longings for an early spring and a summer to follow, we must also accept that vegetation needs tending, and we remember that we have a responsibility to take care of the cemetery that belongs to our church. We want to honor the people buried there, some of whom were involved in building the church we worship in today. To show our gratitude, we must pledge ourselves to keep the sacred grounds under which they lay tidy. During the month of January, we will be accepting donations to pay for the upkeep of those grounds. Please make checks out to the church with “Cemetery Fund” on the memo line or put cash in an envelope labeled “Cemetery Fund”. Thank you!

Growing in Faith Study Group

We will continue with our discussion about the book, *My Heart's Desire* by David Jeremiah. In January, we will only meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:00 PM. We will be discussing chapter 6 on Wednesday, January 15th.

Anyone is welcome to come and join the discussion even if you don't have the book.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School News

The Sunday school kids presented the Christmas message during worship on December 15th. They led the congregation in a Christmas sing-along followed by a jazzy version of This Little Light of Mine. They shared the Christmas story from Luke Chapter 2 and finished with the song "Mary, Did You Know?" in sign language. Thank you for blessing the church family with your message!

We also celebrated with a Game Day during Sunday school.

Sunday school will begin again on January 5th following worship.

January Online Studies – Reset, Refresh & Renew

"Have you tried turning it off and back on again?" If you have ever had issues with technology, this phrase is likely not new to you! Occasionally, pieces of technology get bogged down, stuck, or have other operating issues where a reboot or reset can make a world of difference and solve a problem. Wouldn't it be nice if we could do the same with our everyday lives?

There are times in each of our lives where we want to press the reset button and find refreshment and renewal. Thankfully, our God offers us a kind of rest and refreshment that we could never find in this world! All we need to do is be open to the opportunities for renewal and refreshment that He offers us!

As we enter the new year, we invite you to join us on a journey where we will hit the reset button, rebooting our spiritual journey as we find refreshment and renewal in God's loving embrace. Use the links below to join us as we find the kind of renewal and refreshment that only our Heavenly Father can provide!

- 🕒 **Times of Refreshing** – begins on Jan. 4th
<https://bible.com/p/70726759/5c10eb2e97e2272a52f7c44f4164b3dd>
- 🕒 **The Reset** – begins on Jan. 11th
<https://bible.com/p/70726767/f0b03854422587ed334b1ca31cdfaccf>
- 🕒 **Reset: 7 Ways** – begins on Jan. 18th
<https://bible.com/p/70726784/f2f2ba8affe412c95a854ce3dd9d228f>
- 🕒 **Receiving the Refreshment** – begins on Jan. 25th
<https://bible.com/p/70726789/fc7293282b40a2735e198762bc65ee5f>



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 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.

Christmas Cookie Walk – Update

Thank you very much to everyone who helped with the Christmas Cookie Walk!! It was a very successful fundraiser. We were able to raise \$1,086.

Westby United Methodist Church – Board Meeting †

We did not have a church board meeting in December. The next church board meeting will be on Wednesday, January 8th at 5:45 PM. Please note the time change. We are changing the meeting time so allow Pastor Paul to attend our board meeting and then be in Viroqua by 7:00 PM for Confirmation Class.

The Value of Traditions – by Verna Drake

One of my favorite Christmas traditions (for 45 years) is making the new baby in the family a Christmas stocking. The tradition continues in that I fill them every Christmas with small items and treats to the delight of the stocking owner (child, adult and yes even pets). This small act of giving to others warms my heart not just on Christmas, but all year as I wander the shops of the countries I travel to, looking for the small items that will fit into these stockings. My greatest delight came many Christmases ago when my daughters started filling my Christmas stocking with unique gifts.

The small items found in our stockings have been edible, wearable, playable, sharable, and often hilarious. However, more important than the items is the love we have shared in continuing this tradition. My hope is that my family will continue this tradition for many years to come.

A tradition that we as a church family share is also in giving. For as long as I can remember we have given to a designated monthly mission. Plus give monthly to two service organizations. We give monthly to Bethel Buttik and to the Prayz Network. This giving comes from our general fund which is generated by your tithing. Thank you for your tithes that in 2024 helped us give:

- ** Bethel Buttik \$325 in addition to 200+ food items donated at Easter time and hygiene items donated monthly
- **Prayz Network \$360

Our designated monthly missions sometimes vary year to year, but we try to give locally in addition to a few favorites that help globally. In 2024 our small but mighty church gave:

- **Randon Acts of Kindness \$260
- **Heating Assistance \$275
- **Cemetery Fund \$570
- **VBS \$125 plus items needed for eating or crafts
- **Stuff the Bus \$ 25 plus bags of school supplies
- **Door of Hope \$1350
- **Operation Christmas Child \$310 plus hundreds of small toys/socks/hygiene items
- **Norseland Nursing Home Christmas Gifts for residents
- **Compassion \$175 plus several individuals sponsor a child

In Jesus' words "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts 20:35. I can truly state that as a small church family we are blessed in so many ways. I hope we all find it very humbling, and heart-warming to give to others as we have in 2024. Thank you all for helping to carry on our tradition of giving to others.

January 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <i>Happy New Year!</i>	2 9:00 AM - Prayer Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	3 Pastor Paul’s Sabbath Day	4
5 ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service – Epiphany Sunday (Communion) 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School 12:00 PM – Watch Packers’ Game	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 5:45 PM – Church Board Meeting	9 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	10 Pastor Paul’s Sabbath Day	11
12 ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service – Baptism of the Lord Sunday 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	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 Paul’s Sabbath Day	18 11:00 AM – Tom Sharratt’s Memorial Service
19 ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	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 – Bible Study Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	24 Pastor Paul’s Sabbath Day	25
26 ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	27 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	28 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	29 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	30 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM –Strength Training Class	31 Pastor Paul’s Sabbath Day	

**** Remember to join us at 3:20 PM each day for being unified in prayer to pray for our church and how we can reach and serve others, while serving God ...**

“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)