

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



November 2025

The Witness of the Spirit II

In *The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse II*, John Wesley continues to explain the important question of how believers can know they are truly children of God. He begins again with Romans 8:16—“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Wesley’s goal is to show how this inner testimony of the Holy Spirit works, how it can be distinguished from false impressions, and how it unites with the witness of our own spirit to give true assurance of faith.

Wesley first explains that the witness of the Spirit is not a loud voice or an emotional excitement. It is a quiet, deep assurance given by God to the heart of the believer. This assurance brings peace, joy, and confidence in God’s love. The Spirit tells the soul directly, “Your sins are forgiven; you are God’s child.” This is not imagination or self-deception, but a real spiritual experience. However, Wesley warns that this assurance does not mean believers will never doubt or feel weak. Feelings may change, but the Spirit’s witness remains true and steady when grounded in faith.

He then describes the witness of our own spirit as the evidence we see in our lives—our love for God and neighbor, our desire to please God, and our obedience to God’s Word. This human witness is important because it confirms the reality of our faith through our daily actions. Yet, this alone is not enough. Even moral and religious people may live well but lack the inner testimony of God’s Spirit. True assurance comes when both witnesses agree: the Spirit gives inward peace, and our lives show outward fruit.

Wesley next addresses common misunderstandings. Some people believe that this witness is only for strong believers or spiritual leaders. But he insists that it is the right and privilege of every true Christian, no matter how weak in faith. Others fear that this doctrine leads to pride or false confidence. Wesley answers that the Spirit’s witness always leads to humility, gratitude, and greater holiness, not arrogance. Those who truly know they are loved by God are moved to love others more and to walk faithfully before God.

Finally, Wesley shows the purpose of this assurance. The witness of the Spirit is given to strengthen believers against fear, to help them in times of temptation, and to give courage in suffering. It brings comfort in death and joy in eternal hope. Without it, Christians may live uncertain and anxious lives. With it, they stand firm, knowing that nothing can separate them from the love of God.

In conclusion, *The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse II* teaches that the Spirit’s inner testimony and the evidence of a holy life work together to give full assurance of faith. Through both, believers can know—calmly, humbly, and joyfully—that they are indeed children of God.

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NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Wynne Roberts	November 6
Kelli Schulz	November 7
Lorraine Gerdl	November 12
Mary Deters	November 18
Janice Fortney	November 19
AJ Frels	November 22
Finn Brenneman	November 26
Jessica Janzen	November 28
Pat Matz	November 30

God's Blessings on You!

happy
birthday

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARY

Pete & Shirley Gilman November 12



Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
His love endures forever.

Psalm 136: 1

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



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.



Baked Potato Sale

October 9th was a beautiful day for a drive-by Baked Potato Sale. The Hospitality Committee sold 92 potatoes and profited \$820 for the afternoon's work.

Many compliments were received.!



Sunday School for Kids

All Ages

Viroqua United Methodist Church
221 South Center Street

Sunday Mornings

@ 10:30

Bible points & Verses
Object lessons
Music & worship
Games & Crafts

Invite your friends!

All Saints Sunday

Those of our congregation who have gone home to be with the Lord this year:
Their memories will be honored during the worship service on Sunday, November 2nd, All Saints Sunday.



Gloria Freilinger



Margaret Joan Everson

Other loved ones may be memorialized by placing a Luminary Bag.
Let the office know by noon on Thursday, October 30th if you'd like to remember someone in this way.



Veterans will be honored during Worship on November 9th

With love and gratitude we thank members of our current church family for their military service.

Join the Veterans for cake following the service.

Gregory Cheever, Marine Corps

David Peterson, Army

Gerald Schroeder, Air Force

Marlo Volden, Army

Christopher Schultz, Army

Daniel Stalsberg, Army

Charles Turben, Army



(If we have omitted any names, please let us know)

Radio Fund

Viroqua UMC Radio Ministry

The radio ministry is an important ministry that reaches shut-in's, passer-by's, and many others that are unable to attend church in person. Continue reading to understand how you can be a part of sharing God's love with other's.

You can be a part of sharing God's love, too! *Make a pledge today!*
To make a pledge, scan the QR code below, or on Sunday morning offering, or calling the church office (608-637-3551).

The "Radio Ministry" for the Viroqua United Methodist Church is funded with direct contributions from listeners and members of the church. Starting in 2025, the back-up funding comes from a designated fund "Wills & Memorials". Previously the back-up funding came from the general budget of weekly offerings.

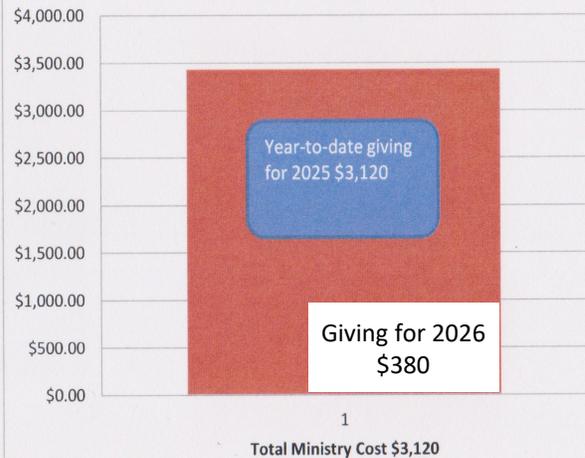
WVRQ
1360 AM

107.3 FM
Sunday Morning
10:30am - 11:30am

***Make
A
Pledge
Today!***



Viroqua UMC Radio Ministry



Make a pledge to announce a 'Birthday', 'Anniversary', or 'In Memory' of a loved one on the Sunday of your choice!

LIVING FAITH FOOD PANTRY

Our church sent 14 lbs of food to the Living Faith Food Pantry on October 13.

Thanks to David & Lorna Peterson for delivering it.

Let's make a special effort to fill and overflow the shopping cart in November!



VOLUNTEERS STILL NEEDED!

Talk to Austin Kropf, assistant manager, or Becky Rider, manager.

Call 608-637-7410.

November Sunday Servants

	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
November 2	Janet Welch- Joanne Hornby	Anita Frels	Phyllis Kalnins Cavan Fang
November 9	Angie & Aaron Hanson	Barb Casper	
November 16	Mary & Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Betty Ross	
November 23	Cavan Fang Janette Hanson	Alice Sloane	
November 30	Miny Hirschfield Mitchell Hanson	Betty Ross	

Book Group

The Book Group's next read is *Insane: America's Criminal Treatment of Mental Illness* by Alissa Roth.

This book takes a look at how our criminal justice system treats mental illness and is described as an urgent expose on the mental health crisis in our courts, jails, and prisons.

The Group will discuss the book on Monday, November 10th at 7:00 pm. All are invited to join the group.





Handbell Concert

The Community Handbell Concert will be held in our sanctuary on
Sunday, November 30th at 2:00 pm.

This is always a wonderful afternoon of great music!

A great way to start the Christmas season!

Charge Conference 2025

Charge Conference for Viroqua and Westby UMCs will be held on Wednesday, December 3rd at the Westby church.

We will start with a potluck meal at 5:00 PM. Please bring a dish to share. Beverages will be provided.

The meeting will start when the meal is finished. This is our annual Business Meeting. The Viroqua congregation in attendance will be asked to approve our new One Committee Structure.

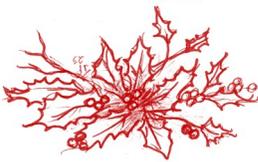
ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

*Viroqua and Westby
United Methodist Churches*

We have been producing Advent and Lenten Devotionals since 2019. They have been a blessing both to those of us who write individual devotionals and to those who read them each day.

This year, Advent begins on November 30th. In order to have the booklets ready by then, we need for people to sign up and get their devotionals in by November 16th. (Everything is coming fast!!)

Sign up sheets may be found on the table in the Narthex. They will also be circulated as much as possible. Please prayerfully consider writing a devotional. It will be a blessing to you and to others.



Westby UMC Christmas Cookie Walk – Saturday, Dec. 6th

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. 6, 2025, 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, but with cookies in place of the salad items. The cost is \$8 per pound, with some items priced separately. Coffee and hot chocolate will be available. Remember to come early for the best selection of cookies.



Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving will be observed during our worship service on November 23rd.

Let's make a special effort to fill up and overflow our Food Pantry shopping cart by Thanksgiving.



Community Thanksgiving Meal



Planning has begun for the Community Thanksgiving Meal. Immanuel Lutheran is in charge, and the meal will be held at St. Mary's Catholic Church on Thanksgiving Day. Plans are being made for an extra large turnout this year due to the economy and the possible end of SNAP benefits.

Each church is asked to help roast turkeys and provide volunteers and pies. A sign up sheet can be found in the Narthex.

Practice Gratitude Daily

November Online Bible Study Series



Our culture today leaves many of us feeling frustrated, anxious, and overwhelmed. We feel like we are constantly in need of more. But it doesn't have to be like this. We don't have to live this way! New habits can be formed and fresh hope can be found. Joy truly is right around the corner!

So how do we get there? Through the transformative nature of gratitude in our lives! As Christians, we are well aware that prayer changes things... both within and around our loved ones. But it also changes us! So while you've got God's ear, why not express your gratitude and thanksgiving for all He's done for YOU!

We invite you to join us as we discover how cultivating a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving can bring joy, peace, and a deeper connection with God. Throughout the month of November, we will dive into God's Word through a series of online studies designed to help you unlock the power of gratitude! Use the links below to join us for these studies!

Choosing Gratitude – begins Saturday, November 1st

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/22647/together/76479926/invitation?token=EeOKS3oEgqmt5IXY7oMk-A&source=share>

Gratitude That Glorifies God – begins Tuesday, November 11th

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/36499/together/76480080/invitation?token=d7NN6UnLmAAQ8dcc4JInWQ&source=share>

5 Prayers of Gratitude – begins Tuesday, November 18th

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/13353/together/76480123/invitation?token=4rVrnPR7uLMqIGR78BPkAQ&source=share>

Thanksgiving and Gratitude – begins Sunday, November 23rd

https://bible.com/reading-plans/45260/together/76480151/invitation?token=m2MoxTPi7dB4iP_Qu8IJ8A&source=share

From Many Committees to One: A New Structure for Our Church

Over the past several months, our church leadership has been in conversation and prayer about how we can best organize ourselves for ministry. Like many United Methodist congregations, we've had a variety of committees—Trustees, Finance, Staff-Parish Relations (SPRC), Church Council, History, Worship, Education, Hospitality—each with separate meetings, minutes, and responsibilities. While these groups have served us faithfully, the reality is that fewer people are available to serve on multiple committees, and the need for greater coordination has become clear.

After thoughtful discernment, the decision has been made for our church to transition to a one-board, or "single committee," model of governance. This structure, which is approved and encouraged by our United Methodist Book of Discipline, allows us to streamline decision-making and focus more of our energy on actual ministry instead of meetings.

Here's what this will look like:

One "Church Council:" Instead of several separate committees, we will have one leadership body that combines the responsibilities of Trustees, Finance, SPRC, and the Administrative Council.

- Fewer Meetings, Better Communication: With all key leaders in the same room, decisions can be made more quickly and with better coordination.
- Focus on Mission: The goal is not simply to change our structure, but to free us up from administration overload so that more time and energy can be spent on growing disciples, serving our community, and strengthening our ministries.
- Shared Responsibility: The new committee will be composed of a carefully selected group of church members who bring a balance of gifts, perspectives, and experience.

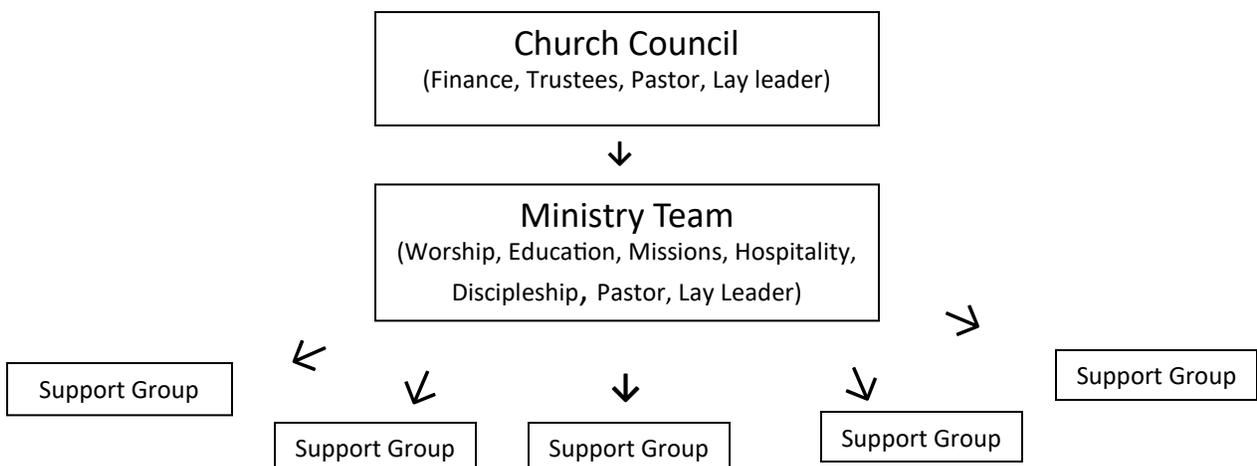
What about the other committees?

While the single board handles administration, we will also have a separate "Ministry Team" that will focus on overseeing more specific ministries—such as worship, hospitality, missions, youth, children, discipleship or care ministries. The Church Council will support the Ministry Team with the resources, guidance, and encouragement they need.

Moving Forward

In the coming weeks, this matter will be voted on at Charge Conference to be implemented beginning January 1st. The most important thing to remember is that this change is designed to help us live more fully into our mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. By moving from many committees to one Church Council—and empowering a Ministry Team—we hope to spend less time in meetings and more time doing what God has called us to do. Most importantly, this change is not about doing "less" but about doing more of what matters most. By simplifying our structure, we believe we can be more faithful and effective in living out our mission. Many other United Methodist congregations have already made this shift and have found it to be a life-giving way of organizing for ministry.

If you have any questions or concerns, please direct them to Layne Hanson, and we encourage you to attend the Charge Conference in December for more information.



Administrative Council Committee

October 19, 2025



Members Present: Pastor Paul Lee, Gregory Cheever, Barb Casper, Dan Brown, Gregg Roberts, Layne Hanson, Kathy Hanson, Aaron Hanson, Cavan Fang, Kristen Parrott, Phyllis Kalnins.

Committee Reports:

Missions Committee: Thanks to Phyllis and Kristine for setting up the World Communion Sunday altar display. The produce table has been going well. The next special offering will be UM Student Sunday in late November.

Worship Committee: All Saints Sunday will be observed on November 2nd. Veterans will be recognized on November 9th. Advent Devotionals are being planned. Sign up sheets are in the Narthex on which folks can sign up to write a devotional.

Education: Sunday School started today. Mary Cheever, Anita Frels, and Janette Hanson have agreed to rotate teaching. We'd like another teacher.

SPRC: Phyllis and Pastor Paul will be attending a Safe Sanctuary training on October 21st. This is put on by the Sheriff's Department. The SPRC committee will meet on November 3rd.

Trustees: The Facilities Usage by Outside Groups fee structure has been changed. See complete minutes elsewhere in the newsletter.

Cavan talked briefly about his experience at the seminar in St. Louis. More to come.

Layne presented drafts of meeting agendas and a recruitment/sign up for support groups in the new structure. Discussion followed. We will do a practice run next month by meeting in the new structure teams.

Phyllis made a motion to adjourn at 1:00 pm. Kristen seconded. Motions passed. We ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Finance Committee

October 19, 2025

Members Present: Pastor Paul Lee, Gregory Cheever, Barb Casper, Dan Brown, Gregg Roberts, Layne Hanson, Kathy Hanson, Aaron Hanson, Cavan Fang, Kristen Parrott, Phyllis Kalnins.

Secretary's Report: We have made a down payment on repairing the brick work on the northwest corner of the church. Vanco fees were up for this period. A dividend check has been received from the Foundation. It will be deposited in the Trustees Account. Gregory made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report. Aaron seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Gregory will get Budget info out to the committees. Phyllis made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Kathy seconded. Motion carried.

Fundraising: The Baked Potato Sale profited \$820. The next event will be the Meatball Dinner in February.

Education Committee

October 13th, 2025

Members Present: Avis, Kathy, Janette, Pastor Paul

Old Business:

Sunday School: Three people have agreed to rotate teaching Sunday School—Anita Frels, Mary Cheever, and Janette Hanson. Class will begin on Sunday, October 19th with Anita as the teacher.

Teen Group: The Teen Group met on September 24th with a group of 7 teens attending. They will plan to rake leaves in November and are also planning to bake cookies to sell as a fund raiser. The next meeting will be either October 26th or 29th.

Cavan attended youth and education sessions at the conference in Kansas City. He will meet with Pastor Paul to relay information and Pastor Paul will bring ideas to the committee as they fit.

New Business:

Christmas Program: A program will be planned for December 14th. Several ideas were suggested. Pastor Paul will follow up.

Next meeting will be held on Monday November 3rd at 6:00 PM at the church.

Trustees Meeting

October 14, 2025

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

The Vernon County Sheriff's Office is offering a workshop on "Protecting Places of Worship" on October 21, 2025. It is a free workshop for people from local churches. Pastor Paul and Phyllis will be attending.

We had no bills to approve this month.

The AED pads are expiring. We will need to get new ones. Pastor Paul said he may be able to get new pads through the hospital. Doing this may not cost us anything. He will look into this possibility and let us know.

Aaron presented the idea that we need to update our policy on building use which would include increasing the amount of money we request from non-members for using the church facilities. A motion was made by Dale and seconded by Jack to increase the prices as follows:

- Sanctuary from \$100 to \$200
- Chapel from \$40 to \$50
- Dining Room only from \$50 to \$100
- Kitchen and dining room to \$150
- Remove custodian charge and add a cleaning fee

Two families have requested to use the church for weddings. One wedding group requested the use of the sanctuary only for about 100 people. This wedding will be on January 3, 2026. The bride's grandmother is Rita Olson, a church member. The trustees voted to approve this use of the church facilities.

The second family requesting to use the church facilities are members of another area church. They are requesting to use the whole church building (all facilities) for one entire day. Both the wedding and reception would be held here. The Trustees decided to meet with this family to get further details about their needs and give them a tour of the available facilities. Neither of these families will be needing a pastor. We will need to determine if they would want music support or any other services.

Aaron mentioned our switching to a single board governance model in January 2026. He told committee members to direct any questions to Layne Hanson or Pastor Paul Lee who will be leading the transition.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 11, 2025.

Missions Update

The next meeting of the Missions Committee will be Sunday, November 2, right after the morning worship service, so around 11:45AM. You are welcome to join us!

The annual Thanksgiving food drive begins on Sunday, November 2, and runs through Sunday, November 23. Please help fill the grocery cart with food and other basic necessities to support our local food pantry.

United Methodist Student Day this year will be Sunday, November 23. Celebrate the day by wearing your school gear to church — sweatshirts, t-shirts, hats, whatever you have from your favorite school. The purpose of Student Day is to support United Methodist students as they prepare for life by adding knowledge to their faith. We will also take a special offering that Sunday to help fund scholarships for United Methodist students.

Hospitality Committee

October 9, 2025

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

The group met informally as they prepared for the Baked Potato Sale.

We are still thinking about starting a welcome basket project in 2026 and looking forward to taking the idea to the Ministry Team.

The new One Committee Structure was discussed. The Hospitality committee will become more of a work group, but we need a representative from our group to serve on the Ministry Team.

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 11th @ 1:00 pm.

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

REV. PAUL LEE

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OFFICE HOURS

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Adult Sunday School Class—9:00 am

Worship—10:30 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.