

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



December 2025

Advent

As the Christian year moves into December, the church once again begins the season of Advent. While many people recognize this time with wreaths, candles, calendars, and holiday preparations, Advent calls us to look deeper. It is not just the countdown to Christmas; it is a season of spiritual renewal, reflection, and holy anticipation.

The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning “coming” or “arrival.” For four weeks before Christmas, the church intentionally pauses to remember two important truths: Christ has come, and Christ will come again. This focus defines the heart of the season. We look back with gratitude at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, and at the same time, we look forward with hope to the fulfillment of God’s promises.

Advent is marked by a quiet yet deliberate waiting — not a passive delay, but an active stance of preparedness. It encourages us to pay attention, nurture our spiritual lives, and observe signs of God’s presence in the world and within our hearts. In a culture that quickly moves toward the noise and rush of Christmas, Advent offers a countercultural invitation: slow down, breathe, and seek God’s light.

One of the key symbols of this season is the Advent wreath, with its four candles representing Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Each week, as another candle is lit, we are reminded that the light of Christ grows brighter, pushing back the shadows of fear, division, and despair. On Christmas Eve, the Christ Candle shines at the center, proclaiming the good news that God’s light has entered the world and cannot be overcome.

Advent also challenges us to embody its themes in our daily lives. Hope becomes a commitment to trust God even in uncertainty. Peace becomes the work of reconciliation in our families and communities. Joy becomes gratitude rooted not in circumstances but in God’s presence. Love becomes a choice to serve, forgive, and extend compassion in tangible ways.

In this season, may we open our hearts to the transforming grace of God. As we prepare for the celebration of Christ’s birth, may we also prepare for Christ’s coming again—living with expectation, courage, and faith. May Advent be for each of us a time of renewal, clarity, and deepened discipleship.

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!

happy
birthday

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.

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.

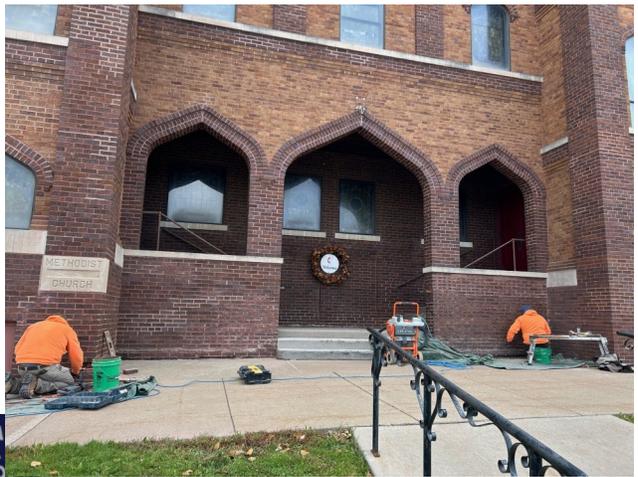
John Wesley



Be the person who encourages others, who chooses to see the good in the world and speak it out loud.

Be frequent in your praise and thoughtful in your criticism.

Joyful, Joyful,
We Adore Thee!



Youth Raking



Dressed for Student Sunday



NOVEMBER FOOD DRIVE

Thanks to all who gave extra for the Food Pantry this month.



Handbell Concert



The Community Handbell Concert will be held in our sanctuary today,
November 30th at 2:00 pm.
Join us for a wonderful afternoon of great music!

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.

Sunday School Schedule

- December 7th: Regular Sunday School
- December 14th: Christmas Program
Party after the cookie reception
- December 21st through January 4th:
No Sunday School—Christmas/New Year Break
- January 11th, 2026:
Sunday School will start again.

Christmas Program

December 14th During Worship
Cookie Reception Following

December Sunday Servants

	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
December 7	Joanne Hornby Cavan Fang	Anita Frels	Phyllis Kalnins Sonja Bjerkos
December 14	Janette Hanson Mitchell Hanson	Betty Ross	
December 21	Miny Hirschfield Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Alice Sloane	
December 24	Angie & Aaron Hanson	Betty Ross	
December 28	Janet Welch	Barb Casper	

Be sure to pick up your Advent Devotional. Readings begin today, November 30th, and continue each day until Christmas.



Christmas Cookie Walk

December 6, 2025
9:00 AM—12:00 PM

Cookies - \$8 per pound
Other Baked Goods will be Available

Westby United Methodist Church
202 East State Street (one block off Main Street)
608-634-3206 or westby@viroquawestbyumc.org

* Cash Only Sales
(no checks)
Coffee will be available



Poinsettias



We will be offering red poinsettias for purchase to decorate the church sanctuary again this year. The cost is \$18 per plant. Please get your order and payment to the church office by Sunday, December 7th.

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

of plants _____

Total Cost _____

You may give the plant in honor of or in memory of someone.

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____



Book Group



The Book Group's next read is *the Sentence* by Louise Erdrich.

This novel takes place in a small independent bookstore in Minneapolis that is haunted from November 2019 to November 2020 by the store's most annoying customer. Flora dies on All Souls' Day, but she simply won't leave the store. Tookie, who has landed a job selling books after years of incarceration that she survived by reading "with murderous attention," must solve the mystery of this haunting while at the same time trying to understand all that occurs in Minneapolis during a year of grief, astonishment, isolation, and furious reckoning. The Group will discuss the book on Monday, January 5th at 7:00 pm. All are invited to join the group.

Youth Group December Schedule

1. Youth Group **Practice** for the Christmas Program on December 14th
December 4th, Thursday, 5:00 pm
December 10th, Wednesday, 5:00 pm
December 13th, Saturday, 10:00 am
2. Youth Group will do **Fundraising** on December 14th, before and after the service.
December 13th, Saturday: Bake and pack cookies after Christmas program practice.
December 14th, Sunday: Sell the Christmas cookies
3. Youth Group **Christmas Party**
The youth group will have a Christmas Party on December 14th, after the service.
There will be games and Christmas gifts for you!



December 2025 Online Study - To Us a Son is Given



As we begin the season of Advent and start counting down the days until the most significant birth in the world, it is good for everyone to take some time to pause and reflect on the happenings that led up to Jesus' birth. We invite you to join us for this month's online study, which is a 25-day journey that will guide us through scripture readings to help us contemplate the glorious truths that lead to the birth of the Messiah.

Here is the link to this month's online study:

♦ **To Us a Son is Given** – begins on Dec. 1st - <https://bible.com/reading-plans/41268/together/77135626/invitation?token=MQXmaQ01-LLcKIXaRJSMKQ&source=share>

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



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!

Worship Committee

November 6, 2025

Attendance: Cavan Fang, Avis Marino, Pastor Paul Lee

Old Business

Work of Liturgists: Need to think about having liturgists again. Reduce their workload to do announcements and Scripture reading.

All Saints Sunday: Showing the pictures on the screen was good.

New Offering: Need to make the offering table more visible. Somebody should be in charge of bringing the offering after the service into the office safe—ask Finance Committee.

New Business

Thanksgiving Decoration: Need to be done by November 22nd.

Advent Decoration: November 25th.

Advent Candle lighting readings: Avis will contact the families.

Thanksgiving Sunday: November 23rd. The pastor will record a Thanksgiving Video to be shown during the service.

Christmas Program: December 14th. Children and youth will do a short drama and cup drumming. The choir will sing two songs. There will be a cookie reception after the service.

Christmas Eve: 9 lessons and nine songs. This year, the pastor will contact some people to sing songs. Should be ready for the candle lighting service.

After Christmas, the pastor will do a Luke & Acts sermon series.



Administrative Council

November 16, 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.

The group split into the Leadership Council and the Ministry Team to practice new structure. Below is the proposed agenda format and notes from the Leadership Council meeting.

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Welcome/Roll Call	Chair	•
Opening Prayer	Pastor	•
Old Business	Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need Link to last months meeting minutes • Who can sign vouchers in the new system?
Financial Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets for next year 	Financial Lead/Secretary/ Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should reports be handled?
Trustees Discussion	Trustees Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow removal–bids are being taken. So far new bids are more than what we are paying now • Brick fixer is going to give us an idea of what needs to be done. • Thermostats and toilet in the parsonage need to be looked at • Possible internet trouble at parsonage
SPRC Report	SPRC Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phyllis and Pastor went to a conference on church safety • Cameras? (possible insurance reduction?) Locked door policy? • Can we get the sheriff’s department to do a presentation and or assessment for our Church Council?
Pastor’s Report	Pastor	•
Lay Leader Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision 	Lay Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on these in January
Review of Ministry Team Action	Chair	• •
New Business / Requests from Ministry Team	Chair	•
Approval of Action Items	Any	Phyllis will contact Sherriff’s department to set up an assessment
Key Dates/ Calendar Review	Chair	•
Prayer Requests/Care Needs		•
Announcements/Adjourn	Chair	• Next Meeting is December 21
Closing Prayer	Pastor	•

Ministry Team

November 16, 2025

Attendance: Barb Casper, Cavan Fang, Kristen Parrott, Pastor Paul Lee

This was a practice meeting in the New Structure. We had some time to talk and explain about how this meeting and team will go. The pastor explained that they will bring agendas and plans for the church ministry, and that all representatives will discuss them together. We expect to be able to do church ministry as one body of Christ.

We will have the meeting once a month, and the first meeting will start on January 18th.

Trustees Meeting

November 11, 2025

Present: Layne Hanson, Aaron Hanson, Dale Gudgeon, Pastor Paul Lee, Phyllis Kalnins

Pastor Paul opened the meeting with prayer.

Layne presented the new format for church governance. He explained the single-board governance system. The new board will be called the Church Council. Trustees were invited to participate in the new board as members at large and/or participate in those activities that would pertain to the maintenance of the church. It was also explained that there would be a Worship Group that would also need participants.

Charge Conference will be December 3, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. in Westby. There will be a potluck before the meeting.

Pastor Paul submitted a bill for thermostats in one room of the parsonage. The bill was from Strang's for \$30.58. Pastor Paul paid the bill so he will need to be reimbursed.

The committee set the budget for 2026 which will be submitted to Gregory Cheever.

Aaron had information on a new snow removal company. He will speak to the company and compare their fees with the charges from our current company.

We received a call from Mike of Great Lakes Roofing which offered a roof inspection for the church. Aaron will see if this inspection is free. He will also check the warranty on the current roof.

Pastor Paul will get information on getting AED pads from the hospital, possibly at no charge.

The committee discussed the damage to the carpeting on the lower front steps of the church entryway.

The next meeting will be on December 9th at 5:30 p.m. at Pacifico because it will be the last meeting for this committee with its current members.

Missions Update

The Missions Committee invites you to contribute to the Mitten Tree in the narthex, decorating it with warm clothes and new toys for children. These will be distributed to local families in need through the Toys for Tots program. Please bring your gifts in by Thursday, December 11.

Artists, now is the time to start working on your creations for the annual art silent auction, which will be held in early spring. Winter is a great time to make art! All types of art are welcome. Proceeds from the auction will benefit our missionary, Temba Nkomozepi, who works at Mujila Falls Agricultural Centre in Zambia. More details to come.

Finance Committee

November 16, 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: Provided by Gregg Roberts. Motion to accept by Kathy Hanson, second by Phyllis Kalnins. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Gregory Cheever presented the report. Phyllis Kalnins made a motion to accept, Cavan Fang seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2026 Budget: Gregory Cheever gave preliminary budget information. It will go up considerably mostly because of an increase in insurance premiums. The percentage of our share of pastor support will also increase to 77%.

Meeting adjourned at 11:50.

Hospitality Committee

November 11, 2025

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

The meeting opened with prayer.

The Homebound list was reviewed. Mary Fox has passed away. We will add Sherry Carney to the list along with a couple of temporary names.

Avis sent 9 birthday cards and 1 anniversary card in November. Suggestions for "thinking of you" and "get well" cards were made.

Budget Discussion: We will request the same budget as we had last year. Joanne made a motion for the Hospitality Committee to pay for the radio broadcast in honor of Veterans. Gregory seconded. Motion carried.

Christmas Gift for Homebound: Plans were made. We'll make individual size fruit baskets at our next meeting. Alice will bring Cuties, Betty—bananas, Kathy—apples, Joanne—grapes. We'll also add some candy.

One Committee Structure was discussed. Alice will be our representative on the Ministry Team.

Outreach: Kathy will ask the Chamber for ideas and put together some ideas for the Welcome Basket.

Meeting adjourned with prayer from Pastor Lee.

United Women of Faith

November 11, 2025

Members present: Avis Marino, Barb Casper, Joanne Hornby, Ardith Olson, Betty Ross and Janet Welch.

President Janet read a poem "Faith". The Bible verse was Mark 4:31, "It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth."

President Janet read the Secretary's report from the September meeting. The October meeting was cancelled.

Treasurer Barb gave the Treasure's report of \$2,551.51.

Child Fund sponsor are:
November, Lorraine Gerdl
December, Betty Ross
January, Janet Welch
February, Hester Nelson

Sunday Morning Coffee and Cookies:

December = Hospitality III, Alice Sloane chair
January = Hospitality I, Angie Hanson chair

We need to sent Christmas donation for Child Fund.

December 10 we will meet at Borgens at 11:30 for lunch.

January meeting Barb will supply snacks.

Janet Welch, Chairperson



December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	6pm Education Committee 1	10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Choir Practice 2	8am Prayer Group 5pm Charge Conference Potluck 6pm Charge Conference Meeting 3	10:30am Exercise Group 5pm Christmas Program Practice 6pm Worship Committee 4		10am Choir Practice 6
9am Adult SS 10:30am Worship w/ Communion 10:30am Youth SS 7pm Caroling of the Choirs 7	8	10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Trustees Meeting 9	8am Prayer Group 11:30am UWF at Borgens 5pm Christmas Program Practice 6pm Choir Practice 10	10:30am Exercise Group 12pm Hospitality Committee 11	12	10:00 am Christmas Program Practice & Cookie Baking 13
9am Adult SS 10:30am Worship with Christmas Program 11:30am Holiday Cookie Reception 12pm Youth Christmas Party 4pm Bible Study @ Kathy Hanson's 14	15	10:30am Exercise Group 16	NEWSLETTER DEADLINE 8am Prayer Group 12pm Meatball Supper Planning 6pm Choir Practice 17	10:30am Exercise Group 18	19	20
9am Adult SS 10:30am Worship 2pm Holiday All Church Open House 21	22	10:30am Exercise Group 23	8am Prayer Group 5pm Christmas Eve Worship 24	CHRISTMAS DAY 25	26	27
9am Adult SS 10:30am Worship 28	29	10:30am Exercise Group 30	8am Prayer Group 31			

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

Check Us Out On Facebook!



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.