

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 2026**

IN THIS ISSUE

Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I

by Pastor Paul Lee

As the Methodist movement grew, John Wesley trained preachers and encouraged them to proclaim God's word within each Methodist gathering and community. In order to communicate a consistent theological message that had been shaped and discussed within the Methodist movement, Wesley selected certain sermons and established them as Standard Sermons, recommending that Methodist preachers preach within the framework of these sermons.

Wesley initially chose forty-four sermons and designated them as the Standard Sermons. Later, he added nine more, bringing the total to fifty-three, and then removed nine, returning the number to forty-four. As a result, the Methodist tradition in Britain has maintained the forty-four Standard Sermons, while the Methodist tradition in the United States has continued to uphold the collection of fifty-three.

One particularly interesting fact that emerges from this list of Standard Sermons is that Wesley wrote no fewer than thirteen sermons based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew chapters 5 through 7—the Sermon on the Mount—and all thirteen are included among the Standard Sermons. This reflects how central the Beatitudes and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are to Christian faith. Through these passages, Wesley articulated the spiritual and practical journey of Methodist believers.

Wesley regarded the Sermon on the Mount and his series of sermons on it as deeply significant, devoting a substantial portion of the Standard Sermons to these teachings. Through this sermon series, Methodists are able to learn essential elements of the Methodist understanding of faith and Christian living. As we enter the new year of 2026, it is my hope that we may take time together to read, study, and reflect on Wesley's sermons on the Sermon on the Mount. Now we will start this journey with the first sermon, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I."

In "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I," John Wesley presents the Sermon on the Mount as a complete description of true Christian life and character. Wesley explains that Jesus is not merely giving moral advice but revealing what genuine holiness looks like in the hearts and lives of God's people.

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Wesley focuses especially on the Beatitudes, showing that they describe the inward dispositions of those who belong to the kingdom of God. The poor in spirit recognize their complete dependence on God and do not trust in their own righteousness. Those who mourn grieve not only over suffering but also over sin—both their own and the sin of the world. The meek are gentle and humble, submitting themselves to God’s will rather than insisting on their own way.

Wesley emphasizes that hungering and thirsting for righteousness reflects a deep desire to be fully shaped by God’s will. This righteousness is not outward behavior alone but inward holiness that transforms thoughts, intentions, and desires. The merciful show compassion because they themselves have received mercy from God. The pure in heart seek God with undivided devotion, and the peacemakers actively reflect God’s reconciling love in the world.

Wesley also stresses that persecution is not a sign of failure but often a mark of faithfulness. Those who live according to Christ’s teaching may face rejection, yet they are assured of God’s blessing and future reward.

Throughout the sermon, Wesley makes clear that Christian holiness is both inward and outward, personal and social. The Sermon on the Mount calls believers not to a lower standard but to a life made possible by God’s grace. True Christianity, Wesley argues, is a living faith that reshapes the whole person to reflect the love and character of God.

~ Pastor Paul

Pastor Paul’s Schedule:

Westby UMC Office Hours:

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

Contact Information:

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January Birthdays

Jan. 31 – Kelly Bjornstad

Happy Birthday

Sunday School News

Happy New Year 2026! We hope that all Sunday School students and their families had a joyful Christmas. The students gave a wonderful performance of the skit and bucket drumming. As we begin 2026, we pray that God’s grace and love will richly fill our Sunday School throughout the year.

This month, we’ll learn about the various ways in which Jesus loves us.

2026 January Sunday School Schedule:

January 4 – No Sunday School (New Year Break)

January 11 – Sunday School will resume

2026 Confirmation Class Schedule:

January 7: New Year Break – No Confirmation Class

January 14: Confirmation Class will resume



Save the Date for Sunday School Outing – Sunday, Feb. 8th (1:00-5:00 PM)

– Snow Days at Living Waters Bible Camp

Mission of the Month – Soles 4 Souls

SOLES 4 SOULS

It has been several years since we have collected gently used shoes for people who need them. Soles4Souls (<https://soles4souls.org/>) is a C3 charitable organization and they provide shoes directly to homeless families, provide shoes to be sold to provide families with an income and send shoes to families who have experienced losses from fires, floods and other disastrous situations. New and used tennis shoes for both children and adults are most needed. Other kinds of practical shoes are also welcome, even flip flops, sandals and boots can be donated. High-heeled shoes may be accepted but are often less practical. Put shoes together as pairs in bags and bring them to the church by the end of January. We can deliver the shoes we collect to Sparta Methodist by calling 608-269-6949 or emailing office@spartamethodist.com for an appointment. Other drop-off or mailing options might also be available. Let's kick up our heels and find those shoes we no longer need.



January Online Studies – Waiting...

For many, January is seen as a month of waiting. With the holiday rush behind us and the cold snow of winter keeping many indoors, we long for the warmth of spring and the chance to get outside and enjoy life comfortably. We try to fill our time, keeping busy until those green blades of grass appear. However, we get a little stir crazy. Our anxiety naturally peaks when we are faced with the unknown and as a result, we become restless. The truth is, waiting for something can be hard!

We face plenty of times of waiting on our faith journeys as well! We often see waiting as being a state of inactivity, however it is one of the most active periods on a Christian's journey! Just look outside... even in the bleak winter the birds are flying, moving from tree to tree. Deer frolic in freshly fallen snow. There is still life in these times of waiting! It's time to open your eyes and see these waiting times in a whole new light! We invite you to join us throughout the month of January as we explore what it means to faithfully wait and the challenges we face in waiting patiently on God. We will also learn how to embrace the necessary mind shift to benefit from our waiting seasons. It is a lesson we can all learn from!

- **Faithful Waiting** – begins Thursday, January 1st

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/48193/together/77659324/invitation?token=hBkblBtjWN-sys8FwcRiPw&source=share>

- **Waiting by the Brook: Learning to Wait Patiently on God** – begins Thursday, January 8th

https://bible.com/reading-plans/31096/together/77659496/invitation?token=RgTlQFjneLZhydd50u_RA&source=share

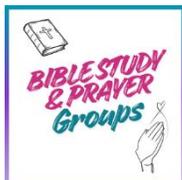
- **The Waiting Room** – begins Sunday, January 18th

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/37302/together/77659520/invitation?token=np4CVoltR8PxEXK1ey-abQ&source=share>

- **What Are You Waiting For?** – begins Sunday, January 25th

https://bible.com/reading-plans/14164/together/77659602/invitation?token=XvpvJNWfB93Nv_y-jfJLsA&source=share

These online studies and more can be accessed through the Bible App on your mobile device or the bible.com website, which are free resources.



Thursday Morning Groups

Our monthly prayer group will not meet in January, so everyone can enjoy New Year's Day with their families.

The Thursday morning Bible Study Group will meet on Thursday, January 22nd at 9:00 AM. We will begin studying the book of Galatians this month.

Christmas Cookie Walk – Results

A big THANK YOU to everyone who baked cookies, helped with the event and everyone who made purchases and gave donations!! Through your generosity, we were able to raise \$1,200. Thank you for being a part of God's blessing through this event.



Vision Planning Discussion – Jan. 10th

Hopefully everyone has been praying about what God wants our church to do as a main mission focus. We are going to get together on Saturday, January 10th at 10:00 AM to discuss what thoughts and ideas God has placed on our hearts. This discussion will probably only be a few hours.

Please continue to pray and ask God for direction regarding what He wants us to do so we're following His plans for our church.

New Year Meetings with Pastor Paul

Pastor Paul wants to meet our church members in small groups. He wants to take some time to talk with our church members about 2025 and hear our wishes and thoughts about our church for 2026. These meetings will be at our church.

Here are the meeting times:

- January 16th, Friday 10:00 am or 5:00 pm
- January 23rd, Friday 10:00 am or 5:00 pm

Pastor Paul will provide brunch for the morning group and dinner for the evening group.

Please let pastor Paul know what time you want to join. Send him a text message, email, or give him a phone call.



Snow Days – February 8th

Save the Date – On Sunday, Feb. 8th, Living Waters Bible Camp in Westby, is having one of their Snow Days from 1:00-5:00 PM. There will be a hot dog lunch and hot chocolate, served from 1:00-3:00 PM. Activities included in this event are tubing, ice skating, cross-country skiing and broomball. The cost is \$7 per person, children 3 and under are free. The camp provides tubes, ice skates, and cross-country skis.

We'll have a sign-up sheet available in the narthex, the last part of January so we can determine how many people will be going and carpool together.

Westby United Methodist Church – Board Meeting †

We did not have a church board meeting in December. The next church board meeting will be at 6:00 PM on Wednesday, January 14th. Everyone is welcome to attend this meeting.

Watch Out for Scams

Scammers are sending text messages and emails with the pastor's name and a big money offering. Our pastor and our church will never ask you about any money, gift card, or anything related to finances via an email or text message. Here are some samples of scam messages:

1. Asking for a gift card. This message asks you to buy some gift cards (Apple or Walmart, etc). It says, "I am Pastor Paul, I am too busy to buy the gift cards, can you buy them for me and send them to me? I need it for the church member visitation."

They change and twist the message, so if you receive messages about a gift card, just ignore them.

2. Donate, offering money. Now, in some African countries, some groups are sending emails to the church to phish people. This is one email Pastor Paul received from a scammer:

Dear Rev. Paul Lee,

Thank you for your response to my email.

I know that this message may come to you as a surprise. Nevertheless, I humbly ask you to give me your attention and hear me. I am writing this message to you with heavy sorrow in my heart; I have chosen to reach you through the internet because it still remains the best medium of communication for me.

My name is Mrs Roselyn Morgan. I am 75 years old and a British citizen. I am currently hospitalized in a private hospital here in Abidjan, the capital city of Cote d'Ivoire as a result of cancer. I was diagnosed with cancer about 4 years ago. Now, it is clear that I'm approaching the last-days of my life because my doctor told me that I would not last for the next 3 Months.

I have some funds inherited from my late husband, the sum of US\$ 4,700,000 which he deposited with a bank in Abidjan. I am looking for an honest and God fearing person that can use these funds for charity and God's work and 15% out of the total funds will be for your compensation for doing this work.

Please let me know if you are able to do this work so that I will give you more detail on how it could be done.

*Best wishes,
Roselyn Morgan.*

This is a type of scam and phishing email going around now. This email often comes from Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. If we answer this email, they ask us to send some money for the document fee and the transfer money fee from Africa to the US. They change the name and amount of money. So, if you receive any emails about those types of offerings from an African country, please ignore this.

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 <i>Happy New Year!</i> 	2 Pastor Paul's Sabbath Day	3
4 9:00 AM – Worship Service (Communion) 10:00 AM – Fellowship	5 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	6 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	7 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	8 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	9 Pastor Paul's Sabbath Day	10 10:00 AM – Vision Planning Discussion
11 9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	12 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	13 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	14 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 6:00 PM – Church Board Meeting	15 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	16 Pastor Paul's Sabbath Day 10:00 AM or 5:00 PM – Meet w/Pastor	17
18 9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	19 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	20 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	21 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	22 9:00 AM – Bible Study Group 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	23 Pastor Paul's Sabbath Day 10:00 AM or 5:00 PM – Meet w/Pastor	24
25 9:00 AM – Worship Service 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	26 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	27 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	28 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site	29 11:30 AM – Senior Meal Site 12:30 PM – Strength Training Class	30 Pastor Paul's Sabbath Day	31

**** 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 courage to dream Your dreams for our church. Please open our minds and hearts and ears so we can hear Your voice to know what Your purpose is for our church. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

God is able to do much more than we ask or think, through His power working in us.
 ~ Ephesians 3:20 (NLV)

