

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



May 2026

Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, V

Many people assume that once we become Christians, the Old Testament law no longer applies to us. Grace has come, the argument goes, and so the old demands have been set aside. In his fifth sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, John Wesley pushes back hard against this idea — and his response is more demanding than we might expect.

His text is Matthew 5:17–20, where Jesus says he has come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. For Wesley, this is a foundational statement that cannot be softened or explained away. The moral law — the call to love God and neighbor, to live with honesty, justice, and holiness — does not expire with the coming of Christ. If anything, the gospel raises the bar. Christ did not come to lower God's standard. He came to make it possible for us to actually meet it, through the transforming work of his Spirit.

But Wesley's most challenging point in this sermon concerns the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus tells his listeners that their righteousness must exceed that of these religious leaders. We might expect Wesley to respond by dismissing the Pharisees as frauds or hypocrites — empty performers of religion. He does not take that easy road. Instead, he takes their devotion seriously and honestly. He points to their regular fasting, their disciplined prayer, their careful study of Scripture, their genuine generosity toward others. His point is blunt and uncomfortable: if our spiritual discipline does not even match theirs, we have no business claiming to exceed them. Before we talk about going beyond the Pharisees, Wesley asks, have we kept up with them?

So what does it actually mean to go beyond them? For Wesley, the difference is not simply doing more of the same things. It is going deeper in kind. The Pharisees often kept the letter of the law while missing its spirit entirely. They obeyed outwardly without being changed inwardly. They practiced religion as a set of obligations rather than as a living relationship with God. Christian righteousness, Wesley argues, must hold both together — the full and faithful practice of the commandments, flowing from a heart that has been genuinely transformed by grace.

His final appeal is simple and direct: do not settle for a religion that lives only on the surface. External practice matters — Wesley never dismisses it — but it must grow from something real on the inside. Let your faith be a matter of the heart. That, Wesley says, is what it truly means to fulfill the law of Christ.

Pastor Paul

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MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Rachel & Charles Turben May 27th



MAY BIRTHDAYS

Ramona Abbey	May 4th
Huxley Brown	May 4th
Kathy Porter	May 8th
Hester Nelson	May 10th
Shelly Brenneman	May 12th
Mary Ann Wheeler	May 12th
Paul Lee	May 13th
Marlo Volden	May 13th
Gale Hanson	May 14th
John Huschka	May 20th
Janet Aasen	May 24th

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.

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



The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, **love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously** in local communities and worldwide connections.



Thank You
to all who gave flowers
that helped to celebrate
the Resurrection more
beautifully!



Happy 90th Birthday, Betty Ross!

Thank You

A special thank you to all who have given so faithfully to our church so far this year.

First quarter giving statements have gone out and are a reminder that each and every gift given to God's work through our church is extremely meaningful.

Financial giving is one way to support the church. We are also called to serve with our time and our talents. So many of you that serve in these ways and we are blessed.

As we go forward, let us be grateful and open to serving God as much as we are able.

Thank You For These Memorials

In Memory Of:	Given By:	For The Fund:
Erika Kalnins	Laura Leatherberry	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Marilyn & Wayne Kile	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Joanne Hornby	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Betty Ross	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Avis Marino	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Percy Jackson	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Sherman & Sherry Carney	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Marlo Volden	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Irene Fortney	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Chuck & Mary Mulvaney Kemp	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Janet Welch	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Gregory & Mary Cheever	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Barb Barr	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Linda & Jerry Skoda	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Marcia & Joe Dooley	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Verna Drake	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	The VUMC Exercise Class	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Barb Casper	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Kathy Hanson	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	The Connor Family	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Holly Fanta	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Karen Mack	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Denise Kruckenberg	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Susan Wilke, Burkhardt & Lucy Wilke, Derek Wilke & Raegan Johnson	Undesignated
Erika Kalnins	Cathie Goodenough	Undesignated



FOOD PANTRY

We sent 30 pounds of food to the Food Pantry on April 1st.

Thanks to all who contributed!

Center Street

Center Street (the street in front of our church) will be completely redone this summer. While the work will definitely effect access to our building, the city will work with us to make it as easy as possible. They are planning to meet with us to make plans. We will keep you posted.

May–June Study Programs

This spring, Viroqua and Westby UMC are joining together for a season of study and community. We are offering three programs throughout May and June — exploring the Christian faith, the Methodist tradition, and the Word of God together. All are welcome. Please sign up on the Sign-up Sheet available in the church Narthex.

1. Inquirer's Class – Viroqua UMC

A three-week class for anyone curious about faith, the Methodist tradition, and what it means to follow Jesus.

May 17, 4:00 PM — Week 1: What We Believe

An introduction to the Christian faith: who Jesus is, what the gospel means, and why it changes everything.

May 24, 4:00 PM — Week 2: Who We Are: Methodist

A look at our roots: the story of John Wesley, what makes us Methodist, and what this community is about.

May 31, 4:00 PM — Week 3: How We Live

The practices that shape a life of faith: worship, prayer, Scripture, and giving — Wesley's Means of Grace.

2. Inductive Bible Study – Westby UMC

Inductive Bible Study starts with the text itself — observing what it says, interpreting what it means, and applying it to our lives. Rather than reading the Bible through someone else's conclusions, we learn to listen to Scripture directly and let it speak for itself.

June 14, 4:00 PM — Week 1: Observation

Who, When, Where — and where do we see the Trinity?

June 21, 4:00 PM — Week 2: Interpretation

What is the timeless truth this passage is teaching?

June 28, 4:00 PM — Week 3: Application

How does the Bible come into our everyday lives?

3. Luke & Acts Devotional Workbook — Small Group

During Lent, many of us journeyed through the Luke & Acts devotional workbook on our own. Now we gather to share what we discovered — questions, reflections, and the moments where Scripture met our lives.

Each session is centered on sharing and discussion based on your personal devotional reading. You don't need to have completed every section to join — come as you are, bring your workbook, and share what stood out to you. You are welcome to attend any or all sessions.

	Sunday · 11:45 AM	Tuesday · 6:00 PM
Week 1	May 24	May 26
Week 2	May 31	June 2
Week 3	June 21	June 23
Week 4	June 28	June 30

Haven't started the workbook yet? No problem — start now and join us on May 24 (Sunday) or May 26 (Tuesday).

May Sunday Servants

	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
May 3	Aaron & Angie Hanson	Barb Casper	Phyllis Kalnins Cavan Fang
May 10	Miny Hirschfield Marlo Volden	Betty Ross	
May 17	Janette Hanson Mitchell Hanson	Alice Sloane	
May 24	Joanne Hornby Cavan Fang	Betty Ross	
May 31	Mary & Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Barb Casper	



Sundae Sunday

The last day of Sunday School for the year and a celebration of our kids will occur on Sunday, May 24th when Sundaes with all the trimmings will be enjoyed following the worship service. This has become a popular event over the years—the entire congregation is invited!



Community Dinner

Our church is scheduled to serve the Community Dinner on June 22nd. Alice Sloane is heading up the committee to plan for it, and they will meet on May 12th. Following that meeting, there will be sign up sheets out for workers and any food donations we will need.

Book Group

The Book Group's new read is *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong.

As the daughter of Korean immigrants, Cathy Park Hong grew up steeped in shame, suspicion, and melancholy. She would later understand that these "minor feelings" occur when American optimism contradicts your own reality—when you believe the lies you're told about your own racial identity. Minor feelings are not small, they're dissonant—and in their tension Hong finds the key to the questions that haunt her.



Discussion of this book will be at 7:00 pm on Monday, March 23rd. Everyone is welcome.



Rummage Sale

We have started to collect items for the annual Rummage Sale. Things can be left on the tables along the north wall in the Fellowship Hall.

The sale will be in October, so you have plenty of time, but if you're cleaning out you can bring things early.

United Women of Faith

Those present: Barb Casper, Joanne Hornby, Betty Ross, Ardith Olson, Janet Welch

President, Janet, read a meditation from "God's Little Devotional Book".

Janet also read the secretary's report from the March meeting.

Treasurer reported a balance of \$3,083.55.

Child Fund sponsors are Ardith Olson for April, Pat Matz for May, Betty Ross for June, Joanne Hornby for July.

Church cookies and coffee: April is Hospitality III, Alice Sloane is contact person; May is Hospitality I, Angie Hanson is contact person; June is Lydia Circle.

We've had no reply yet about the cost of a new water fountain for the hallway. Another suggestion was a soup pot for the kitchen.

It was suggested that we do a new handbook in the Fall.

Joanne gave the program on "What do we do about racism?"

Barb Casper furnished the snacks. Betty Ross will serve in May.

We do not meet in June, July or August.

Janet Welch, President



Missions Update

The Missions Committee is planning to create "personal dignity kits" for the Wisconsin Annual Conference's Ingathering, held in early June. These kits contain basic hygiene items and are distributed locally, nationally, and internationally to those in need during times of crisis. Watch for our table in the narthex during the month of May, where we will be collecting contributions toward this project.

If you would like to make a kit, the instructions are below. Please bring your kits to church by Sunday, May 31:

Personal Dignity Kits:

1 Hand Towel - No kitchen towels

1 Washcloth - No dishcloths

1 Adult Toothbrush - No multi-packs

1 Bar Soap - 3 - 4 oz

Shampoo - 12 - 19 oz (tape lid shut)

1 Deodorant - 2-3 oz - stick, roll on, or pump

1 Lotion - 8-10 oz (tape lid shut)

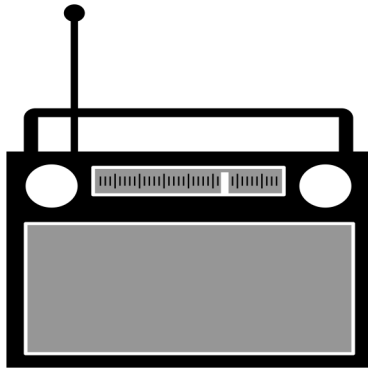
1 One gallon resealable plastic bag (All items must be NEW & placed in the one-gallon resealable plastic bag.)

\$2 donation for toothpaste and carrying bag, per kit.

We will celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday on May 31, the first Sunday after Pentecost. United Methodists seek peaceful solutions, create and support peace-related ministries, and learn about peaceful, just efforts around the world. Our Social Principles call us to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. Half of the funds collected from this Special Sunday offering remain in Wisconsin to strengthen social justice ministries in our state. The other half of the donations fund national and international peacemaking ministries and grants.

Help Support Our Weekly Radio Broadcast Ministry

Each week our church service is shared with the community through our local radio broadcast. This ministry allows homebound members, those traveling, and others in our area to stay connected to worship and hear the message of hope and faith.



The broadcast is funded entirely through donations from sponsors. We welcome sponsorships from church members, families, community friends, and local businesses who would like to support this important outreach.

A broadcast may be sponsored in honor or memory of a loved one, to celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or simply as a way to share the ministry of our church with the wider community.

If you would like to sponsor a broadcast or receive more information, please contact the church office. Your support helps us continue sharing worship and encouragement with listeners throughout our community.

May Online Studies – God’s Purpose

During the past several months of these online studies, we’ve investigated waiting for God’s answers and listening for God’s answers/directions. Now that we’ve learned more about waiting and listening, we’re going to delve into God’s purpose for us and living for the purpose God has for each of us.

Here are the links to the studies about God’s Purpose:

Created on Purpose for Purpose (14 days) – starts on May 1

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/2042/together/80016550/invitation?token=QMG1HBs2eRbLuOfUFZkb2g&source=share>

Understanding Your Purpose (7 days) – start on May 15

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/37791/together/80016688/invitation?token=3xw-S8lzsVP6tzcoifseDw&source=share>

Living with Purpose on Purpose (8 days) – start on May 22

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/33320/together/80016721/invitation?token=HL899f9BkXffGmUQyLqULg&source=share>

Please note that the Bible.com website does not support Plans with Friends. You will need to open the Bible App on your mobile device to use the links to these plans. The Bible App is available in your app store on your mobile device.



Church Council Meeting

April 22, 2026

Attendees: Pastor Paul, Kathy, Gregory C., Layne, Gregg R., Phyllis, Dan

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Opening Prayer	
<p>Old Business/Follow ups</p> <p>1.Christmas Eve Offering (Re-visit in Sept)</p> <p>2.Auditing Process– Greg will get the papers together. Dan will then contact Sonia.</p> <p>3.Replace AED pads</p> <p>4.Cleaning Service quotes</p> <p>5.Facilities Improvement ideas</p>	<p>2. Sonia has the papers and will work on the audit.</p> <p>3. Jane G. is our contact for new pads. Pastor has talked to her about it. None have been received yet.</p>

<p>5.Facilities Improvement ideas</p> <p>6.Update on door locks/camera 7.Small Group Startup Communication Form</p> <p>8. Church Council Bylaws</p> <p>9.Parsonage update</p>	<p>5. Back pews have been removed. Handicap row was installed. Spaeth’s has been contacted to fix the carpet from around the old pews. A signage and redecorating committee is being formed.</p> <p>6. Pastor is going to change the locks so they lock automatically after closing.</p> <p>7. A request for funds form should be included with the Communication form. Layne will develop this.</p> <p>8. Term limits are a question that need to be answered by Charge Conference. A Leadership Recruiter will need to be found.</p> <p>9. The root cellar in the parsonage is causing problems throughout the rest of the house. It was recommended to contact Brent Welch to address these problems. Aaron will contact him.</p>
<p>Financial New Business</p> <p>1.Thank Yous 2. Treasurer Report Actual vs Budget</p> <p>3. Property Billing 4.Financial Secretary’s Report</p>	<p>1. A note was written to Gary Mageland. Pastor is planning to write personalized thank you’s to all givers.</p> <p>2. Treasurer report shows YTD spending \$39,157.74 which is supported by 63% YTD revenue leaving 37% supported by savings. The beginning checkbook balance for March was \$4,590.75. There were deposits of \$44,292.53 that included \$20,000 from savings. Withdrawals were in the amount of \$17,639.36 which left an ending 3/31/2026 balance of \$31,243.92. Note: There was also a deposit of \$15,000 that will be recognized equally over 12 months of revenue. The actual vs budget report is a list of line expense comparisons to show the \$39,157.74 compared to the approved budget.</p> <p>3. Property billing is a billing from the conference to be paid over the next 11 months. The annual cost was reduced 29% from 2025. This is great news!</p>
<p>Trustees New Business</p> <p>There is money from the UWF that may be designated for the bubbler. Connect with Janet Welch for the amount available Marlo has volunteered to fill in low spots in the yard if we get some black dirt.</p>	<p>Waiting for Mike Brudos to give us an estimate on the bubbler. Soup Group is using their own pots for this month.</p> <p>Layne will coordinate with Aaron and Marlo to see if this can happen.</p>
<p>SPRC New Business</p> <p>Sexual Harassment Policy Employee Evaluations Health team?</p>	<p>Avis and Phylis are working on this. Avis and Phylis will do these next.</p> <p>Many churches have these to address health concerns in the church. Do we need one?</p>
<p>Pastor’s Report</p> <p>Pastor thanks all members of the Church Council.</p> <p>3 sections of study groups are being developed. These will include a Newcomer Class, Methods of Bible Study, and the study of the Book of Acts.</p>	
<p>Lay Leader Report</p> <p>1.Welcoming Committee</p> <p>2. Called to Service in Narthex</p>	<p>1. Layne, Cavan and Chuck are working on this committee, more updates to come in the future.</p> <p>2. The welcome, what’s going on, and called to service areas were created in the Narthex to improve communication and information to visitors and members.</p>
<p>Motions for Approval</p> <p>Layne made the motions, Greg seconded. Motions carried.</p>	<p>Motion 1: Approval of March Minutes Motion 2: Approval of the Treasurer’s report Motion 3: Approval of the Financial Secretary’s report</p>

Ministry Team Meeting

April 12, 2026

Members Present: Pastor Paul, Layne, Alice, Kristen, Cavan, Peach

Agenda Item	Notes/Action Items
Opening Prayer	
<p>Worship & Music Old Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wednesday Lenten service March 18 review 2. Taco Dinner review 3. Palm Sunday review 4. Maundy Thursday was at Viroqua on April 2 @ 6:00 with a pot luck meal. 5. Good Friday service 6. Easter morning service in the fellowship hall along with breakfast review 7. We will start using liturgists again, but only for announcements (Layne and Paul will organize for April 12) 8. Paul would like kids/youth to read scripture during the services. He will work with the kids to train them to speak clearly and expressively as time goes on for Apr 12. 9. Church council approved an offering display to be built in the back of the church, inviting a better offering experience. 10. Easter Lilies—Where did we end up buying them? (Layne has contacted Olivia Lulich at school to inquire about next year.) <p>New Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outdoor Worship (July) is this organized with Westby? 2. Hearing may be an issue, we may need to do some education about the loop system 3. Pentecost will be May 24. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seemed to be a smaller attendance than usual. Can we recruit more churches to be involved next year? 2. Thank you for organizing Peach! 3. Outside palm parade didn't happen this year, it's hard to get kids here that early. 4. It was a great turnout, well received. 5. Very nice service, low attendance. Possible thoughts for next year would be to combine with more local Methodist Churches. Radio is a consideration. Do we need to change the time? 6. Thank you to Sonja for organizing the food. Trivia was fun and well received. 7. Paul would like to have congregation members read the gospel. Layne will get a sign up sheet started to recruit readers. The lecturer could be moved down so people don't have to climb the stairs. 8. Kids will also be included in the scripture readings. Paul is meeting with them one on one. 9. Paul and the Church Council are working on developing the display. 10. Easter Lilies were bought from Sparta Floral. Kathy contacted Peachy Petals in Viola, but they get them from Sparta and charge \$3 more per plant. Alice & Kathy worked together to make the decision. We also offered the option to get daffodils, tulips, or hyacinths for a lower cost. Olivia Lulich has not responded. <p>New Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It's Westby's turn to host. 2. Layne will mention this in church next week.
<p>Missions & Outreach Old Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastor will connect with Temba to get a message from him, and we will spotlight him for a service—Tentative date for this message is June 28 2. Keep eyes open for a good opportunity to support any local Missions opportunities? 3. Art auction review 4. Umcor Sunday review 5. Layne will organize the radio ministry advertising (include asking outside donors) 6. Open Door Forum review <p>New Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Native American Sunday April 19 2. Conference In-Gathering coming up 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul will schedule this in coordination with his summer schedule 3. We raised about half of last year, most money has been collected and turned in. 3 Sundays was a good amount of time for people to participate. 4. Videos before offering was a nice touch. 5. Pledge cards have been made more visible in the pews as well as in the Service area in the Narthex. 6. Very well attended. Overall a very successful event. 1. Kristen has been promoting through various ways. Showing a video during the announcements would be a good idea. 2. Emphasizing hospitality kits. Kristen will start advertising for donations soon.

Agenda Item	Notes/Action Items
<p style="text-align: center;">Hospitality Old Business</p> <p>1.Kathy H. is the lead for the Rummage Sale and will develop a committee for late summer/early fall.</p> <p>2.Welcoming team could be 3-5 people that ensure that visitors are informed and welcomed (Layne and Cavan working on this)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Business</p> <p>1.Community Meal</p> <p>2.Quarterly Potlucks</p> <p>3.Homebound Gifts</p> <p>4.Mother's Day - plants?</p> <p>5.Website is being reviewed. What do we think is important to present on the web?</p> <p>6.Encouraging name tags need to be emphasized</p>	<p>2.Work continues (Chuck M-K has thoughts as well)</p> <p>1.June 22. Committee has been formed (Alice, Kathy, Barb and Peach).</p> <p>2.We'd like to keep them going. Next one is May 3. The focus for this pot luck is pre-Mothers day</p> <p>3.Recruit help from the former Hospitality Group?</p> <p>4.Kathy will get plants for Mother's Day. Would we want flowers for next year? Youth group may help with the service that day? Paul will coordinate.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Education</p> <p>1.Youth group goal will be to meet 2x per month. Mitchell and Pastor will start 2x in possibly April.</p> <p>2.Painting SS room update</p> <p>3.Easter Egg Hunt Sat. March 21 review</p> <p>4.Youth group outing being planned.</p> <p>5.VBS Planning begins soon. Will be in Viroqua this year. Pastor will recruit a committee to plan this. Joint program with Westby?</p> <p>6.Sunday School will continue through May. Suggestions for an education lead?</p> <p>7.Sundae Sunday</p>	<p>2. Angie Hanson has painted the SS room. Amanda Dustin has input about the new design of the room.</p> <p>3. 3 families attended (12-14 kids) Paul will follow up with them to promote our Sunday School. Should it be expanded next year?</p> <p>4. 12 kids in the group. Pastor is working on this.</p> <p>5. Layne will ask the current SS teachers if they are interested.</p> <p>6. Last week of SS is May 24.</p> <p>7. Layne will work with Paul to coordinate supplies.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Lay Leader / Discipleship Old Business</p> <p>1.Small Groups</p> <p>2.Soup Group update</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Do we want to develop guidelines for small groups?</p> <p>3.Welcoming Committee update</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Business</p> <p>1.Called to Service area in Narthex</p> <p>2.Lay Leader Minute during announcements</p>	<p>2.Great results from the first soup making session. Recipients were very appreciative!</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Sub-committee to develop guidelines would include Paul and Layne. Church Council members will be invited</p> <p>3. Paul will reschedule for May. Possibly including Westby?</p> <p>1. The pew and displays in the Narthex may need to be moved for funerals.</p> <p>2. Layne will organize.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">United Women of Faith Old Business</p> <p>When do meetings happen and who is currently involved?</p> <p><u>New Business</u></p>	<p>Meet every 2nd Wednesday of the month. There are 3 hospitality groups that furnish the cookies for coffee time. Layne will connect with Verna to see if they want to join with Viroqua.</p> <p>There is extra money that may be designated for the bubbler. Possibly a soup pot for the kitchen?</p> <p>Need to make people aware that UWF is the former UMW.</p>

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

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OFFICE HOURS

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Adult Sunday School Class—9:00 am

Youth Sunday School—10:30 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.