



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
May 2026**

IN THIS ISSUE

Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, V

by Pastor Paul Lee

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.

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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

Pastor Paul's Schedule:

Westby UMC Office Hours:

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

Contact Information:

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May Birthdays

May 13 – Pastor Paul



May Anniversaries

May 28 – Tim & Jane Gaskell

May 30 – Mike & Julie Fargen



Sunday School News

The last day of Sunday School for this school year will be Sunday, May 3. Weather permitting, we will be doing a community service project, painting the parking area posts at Davidson Park. Afterwards, we'll have lunch at the church.

We hope to have some special youth activities during the summer, so stay tuned for fun things to come!

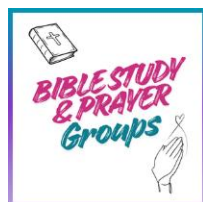
Mission of the Month – Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP)

The Westby church has given to the Vernon County chapter of SHP in the past and we think it is time to donate to the that worthy charity again. Wayne Sherry and Marylin Kile are the local President and Vice

president of the group. Members of the group build beds for children ages 3-17 who might otherwise not have a bed to sleep on. Their moto is “No kid sleeps on the floor in our town.” The local chapter has been in existence for several years and they recently held a bed-building workday on April 18th. The local chapter (<https://shpbeds.org/chapter/wi-vernon-co/>) is part of a national organization, but each chapter needs to raise the funds to purchase their bed-building materials and to provide mattresses and bedding to go with the beds. If you wish to donate, checks should be made out to the church with SHP on the memo line.



**NO KID SLEEPS
ON THE FLOOR
IN OUR TOWN!**



Thursday Morning Prayer Group

Please join our Prayer group on Thursday, May 7th at 9:00 AM. Come and help us to use the power of prayer as we pray for others and our church. Prayer is more powerful when we pray together.

The format of the Bible Study group is changing for May and June. Pastor Paul will be doing joint studies. Please refer to the May-June Study Programs article in this newsletter.

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.

The May study program, Inquirer's Class, will be a 3-week class for anyone curious about faith, the Methodist tradition, and what it means to follow Jesus. This program will be held at Viroqua UMC.

- 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.

The June study program, Inductive Bible Study, will be held at 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?

There will also be a Luke & Acts Devotional Workbook Small Group that will meet in May and June. 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.

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

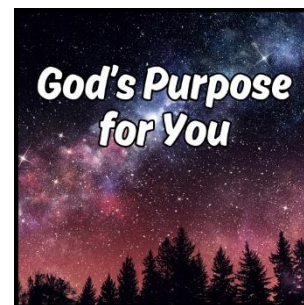
	Sunday – 11:45 AM @ Viroqua UMC	Tuesday – 6:00 PM @ Westby UMC
Week 1	May 24	May 26
Week 2	May 31	June 2
Week 3	June 21	June 23
Week 4	June 28	June 30

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 Spring Cleaning – May 2

We will be doing some spring cleaning around the church on Saturday, May 2. We will start at 9:00 AM. We will be wrapping up the bad fluorescent tubes for disposal in addition to some inside cleaning and possibly a little outside cleaning.

Flowers for Norseland – May 3

On Sunday, May 3, we will continue with our tradition of planting flowers in plastic cups and giving them to the Norseland residents. We will do the planting after fellowship. The residents get to enjoy the flowers all summer. The flowers are put in the residents’ rooms for a few weeks, then they are planted in the flower beds outside.



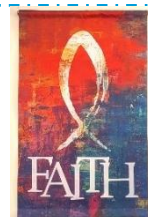
Website Review – May 4

The website review committee met on April 6 and decided that we need to make our website more welcoming to visitors. We decided that it will be easier to create a new website, using a different layout structure instead of attempting to adjust our current website.

We have made a few changes to the current website, and this website will stay active while we develop the new one. The new site will have the same web address, but a new and different look. The committee will be meeting again on May 4, at 6:30 PM at Westby UMC to evaluate the structure of the proposed new website.

New Banners

Thank you to the Tom Sharratt memorial funds for purchasing several new banners! These banners will help to brighten up the church throughout the year, just like Tom’s big heart and kindness brightened up our lives! Thank you!!





Feedback for Pastor's Review – Due May 10

Our SPRC (Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee), would like some feedback for Pastor Paul's 2-year review. As a Church attendee your feedback may improve the worship service and provide our pastor with meaningful information. Please share your thoughts regarding the questions below by Sunday, May 10th.

The questions will be sent out via email and provided as bulletin inserts so you can share your feedback. Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback.

1. What do you value most about our Pastor's sermons and the Church service?
2. A component of our Pastor's role is to become part of our community, (Farr & Kotan, 2016). To what extent is the Pastor developing relationships within our community?
3. Can you offer suggestions that might assist our Pastor in meeting this component?

Door of Hope Bottle Drive – Mother's Day to Father's Day

The Door of Hope will be having another Baby Bottle Drive again this year, starting on Mother's Day, May 10 and ending on Father's Day, June 21. Our church will participate in this fundraiser again. Baby bottles will be available in the narthex on Mother's Day. Please put your loose change in the bottles. The funds raised will go towards building a shed to store lawn mowing equipment and snow removal equipment. They hope to raise \$15,000 for this project.



Westby United Methodist Church – Board Meeting † March 15, 2026

Present: Tim Gaskell, Jane Gaskell, Ardith Hoff, Jean Shore, Julie Fargen, Verna Drake and Linda Weilnau

Opening: Tim Gaskell opened with prayer.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the March board meeting were emailed to the board and published in the April newsletter, so they could be reviewed prior to the meeting. Jean Shore and Ardith Hoff motioned to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: (March checklist: Financial Audit & Insurance update) - Verna Drake provided the financial reports for March and Year-to-Date. These reports were emailed to the board members prior to the meeting. The Financial Audit is finished and has been submitted. We are now paying a percentage of the house and Garage insurance for the parsonage. We are receiving letters from Church Mutual Insurance indicating we owe money, even though we don't have insurance through them anymore. Verna Drake has called them and verified that we are not covered through their insurance company anymore. She will ignore any further letters from Church Mutual. For our current insurance company, the payments have been finalized, and we will be paying \$3,856.35 annually. The March and April payments have been paid from the surplus for last year's payments. We still need to find out what our deductible is with the new insurance company. Verna Drake and Ardith Hoff motioned to move \$7,000 from the checking account to the Money Market account. Motion passed. Jean Shore and Jane Gaskell motioned to approve the treasurer's report. Motion passed.

Old Business:

- † Lenten Food Drive – We collected a little over 400 food items. The items were divided and half were delivered to the Cashton Cupboard and the other half to Bethel Buttikk.

- ✝ Passwords – Offsite Location – It was decided to keep a 2nd key to the church safe at Verna Drake's house. She will store it in the safe at her house.
- ✝ Cemetery clean-up – We need to rake up pinecones and twigs. Verna Drake said the cemetery information is in a folder in the 2nd drawer in the filing cabinet that is in the room next to the kitchen.
 - Cemetery Ownership Follow-up – Tim Gaskell found out that if we would sell the property where the cemetery is located, we would still be responsible for maintaining the cemetery.
- ✝ Spring Cleaning / Outside Flower Beds – Jane Gaskell and Verna Drake have been gradually working in the flower beds. It was decided to have a cleaning day on Saturday, May 2, starting at 9:00 AM.
- ✝ Bethel Buttikk Recognition Dinner – April 13 (Fellowship Hall use request) – The Fellowship Hall Usage form has been submitted by Bethel Buttikk for this event. They will arrive around 2:30 PM to start decorating. We will set up the tables after church on Sunday, April 12.
- ✝ Bible Study Discussion – Thursday Morning / Evening – This group finished their discussion of Galatians. We need to discuss this further with Pastor Paul regarding a different day and time.
- ✝ Vision Discussion – It mentioned that we need to change our prayer for this to ask which group we should serve: older adults, youth or parents. Currently we are feeling the need to serve the youth.

New Business:

- ✝ May Day Flowers for Norseland – It was decided to do this again. Verna Drake will purchase flowers, plastic cups and dirt for this project. Jane Gaskell will make little signs to put in the cups. We will put the flowers in the cups on Sunday, May 3 after church.
- ✝ Syttende Mai Breakfast – Sons of Norway – This group has submitted the Fellowship Hall Usage form. The breakfast will be on Saturday, May 16. They want to come and set up on Friday, May 15.
- ✝ Website Review – April 6 Meeting – A group of people from our church, Viroqua UMC and Pastor Paul meet to discuss the usage of our church website. It was determined that the website is mainly being used as a marketing tool. It was decided to remove a few of the current pages and that we need to make the website easier to navigate and more welcoming. This group will look into using a new design for the website to meet these needs. The next meeting is on May 4.
- ✝ Basket Raffle Fundraiser for Norseland Recreational Therapy Department – April 29 – We have been asked to provide a gift basket for this fundraiser. It was decided to provide a basket. Verna Drake will look into a possible theme for the basket and let us know the theme so everyone has an opportunity to help fill the basket. We need to have the basket to them on Friday, April 24.
- ✝ Safe Sanctuary Policy – to be reviewed for May meeting – We need to add some training items to this policy so it can be reviewed at the May meeting.

- ✝ Burgers in the Park – It was decided to participate in this event again and have a bake sale at it. Verna Drake will let them know we would like to participate on Thursday, July 16.
- ✝ Review Church Usage Policy – We decided to add some information to this policy. We will indicate that it is best to use the church on Thursday afternoon/evening, anytime on Friday, or Saturday. Other additions will be that groups will need to provide their own disposable plates, cups and utensils. The group will be responsible for putting the tables back to their original location. Groups can use our dish towels but should not take them home to be cleaned. We will clean the dish towels.
- ✝ Online Giving – Verna Drake asked if we want to add an online giving option to the website for our church. We need to gather more information about potential options.
- ✝ New Banners – Verna Drake talked to Sharon Sharrott and Sharon decided to use some of Tom's memorial funds to purchase some new banners that are seasonal. Verna will order the banners.

Business from Board Committees:

- ✝ **Trustees** – Disposal of: Fluorescent bulbs and 2 old vacuum cleaners – We need to bundle the bulbs together. Verna Drake will purchase plastic wrap to do this. We will bundle the bulbs on May 2 cleaning day.
- ✝ **SPRC** - Julie Fargen and Verna Drake have been discussing possible questions to use for the annual pastoral review of the congregation. They are going to ask Pastor Paul to include a question.
- ✝ **Worship** – No report.
- ✝ **Youth & Sunday School** – Summer event – May 3 is the last day of Sunday School. The students will do a community service project that day. We're waiting for possible dates from the parents to arrange another youth activity.
- ✝ **Lay Leadership** – Ardith Hoff said she is going to stop writing essays for the website for personal reasons. We are grateful for all of the essays that Ardith has contributed to the website.
- ✝ **Missions** – Ardith Hoff will into a possible mission for May. The Sleep in Heavenly Peace bed project was suggested.

Pastor's Report: No report.

Additional Information: Tim and Jane Gaskell will be attending Annual Conference (June 4-7) this year. Jane is going to assist Pastor Paul with some music during the conference.

- It was suggested to have another group outing and go see a movie, possibly "I Can Only Imagine 2".

Jean Shore motioned to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Linda Weilnau



*She is clothed with strength and dignity,
and she laughs without fear of the future.
26 When she speaks, her words are wise,
and she gives instructions with kindness.
~ Proverbs 31:25-26*

May 2026

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

**** 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)