

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



July 2026

Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VII

Having just warned against turning prayer into performance, Jesus moves to another practice easily twisted by the same temptation: fasting. In John Wesley's *Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse 7*, he takes up Matthew 6:16-18 and asks a question that runs through the whole Sermon — not whether we do the right religious things, but why we do them.

Wesley opens with a diagnosis of a very old problem. From the beginning, he says, the devil has worked to pull apart what God joined together — outward religion and inward religion — setting one against the other. Some Christians have made fasting nearly everything, as if the act itself carried saving power. Others, recoiling from that excess, have dropped it altogether. Wesley wants to recover the original, balanced practice.

His first concern is the heart's direction. Like almsgiving and prayer in the previous discourse, fasting must be aimed at God alone, not at an audience. The hypocrites Jesus describes disfigure their faces precisely so others will notice their suffering — and that notice is the only reward they will ever receive. True fasting happens before "your Father who is in secret," with no need for anyone else to know.

Wesley is equally clear that fasting earns nothing on its own. The bare outward act — going without food — carries no automatic blessing. It is not a transaction with God. What gives fasting its value is what happens inside a person during it: a broken and contrite heart, honest sorrow over sin, self-examination, and a renewed hunger to obey God's will. Wesley also adds a note of practical wisdom — fasting should never be so severe that it damages the body God has given us to steward.

Two companions complete the practice. First, fervent prayer: fasting empties the body so the soul can pour itself out more fully before God, confessing sin and laying bare its needs. Second, and just as essential, works of mercy. Wesley points to Cornelius, whose prayers and acts of charity rose together before God as one offering, and to Isaiah 58, where the fast God truly desires is one that loosens the bonds of injustice and feeds the hungry.

For Wesley, fasting is never just self-denial for its own sake. It is self-denial joined to prayer and joined to love of neighbor — three threads woven into a single act of devotion before God.

Fasting is not an easy practice to find in today's church. Even Wesley himself once included Friday fasting in the early Methodist guidelines, only to remove it later — a reminder of just how difficult this discipline is for creatures of flesh and blood. Today, fasting takes new forms as well: alongside abstaining from food, many practice fasting from media, sugar, or other things that constantly stimulate us. Whatever shape it takes, the lesson we can draw from Wesley's sermon remains the same — everything we do should begin and end with God, and should serve as a means of deepening our relationship with him. This July, I encourage us to set aside time at least once — whether through fasting or simply letting go of something we love for a while — to turn our attention more fully toward God.

Pastor Paul

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pastor's Letter	page 1
Birthdays/Anniversaries	page 2
Looking Back at June	page 3-5
Looking Forward	pages 5-7
Reports.....	pages 7-10
July Calendar	page 11

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

Randal & Deanna Fortney	July 2nd
Nick & Amanda Clements	July 7th
J.R. & Jackie Maly	July 18th
Jim & Kathy Porter	July 31st



JULY BIRTHDAYS

Dustin Stalsberg	July 3rd
Lana Dustin	July 4th
Mary Cheever	July 10th
Kathy Hanson	July 10th
Brandon Hall	July 14th
Randal Fortney	July 15th
Colton Brown	July 18th
Diane Warren	July 19th
Debbie Strait	July 21st
Kyle Schultz	July 23rd
Mackenzie Stalsberg	July 25th
Carolyn Schroeder	July 31st

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.

Graduate Recognition



Missions Update

Thank you to everyone who made “personal dignity kits” for the Wisconsin Annual Conference’s Ingathering in early June, and/or who contributed money for the project. Together we contributed 15 kits, which will be stored at the Midwest Mission station in Illinois until they are needed.

And thank you to everyone who has contributed to the offerings during our Special Sundays so far this year. Together we raised \$240 for Human Relations Sunday in January, and \$345 for UMCOR Sunday in March, and \$245 for Native American Sunday in April.

And thank you to all who have contributed toward our support of missionary Temba Nkomozepi in Zambia. We raised \$334 in our art silent auction in March, and this summer we have opportunities to raise more with the garden produce sale table in the narthex. Our commitment to Temba is \$1000 per year.

Together we are sharing God’s love all around the world!



...ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Ephesians 1: 15-16

Annual Conference

Pastor Paul, Cavan, and Kristen attended the Wisconsin Annual Conference the first weekend of June. Cavan gave a report to the congregation the following Sunday June 14, and you can watch his report on our Facebook video of that worship service; the report starts a little after the video's 30-minute mark.

The theme of this year's Annual Conference is "Practicing Hope". Hope takes effort and intention to practice, especially when we struggle or face challenges. But the hope we strive to practice is different from a naïve optimism that things will turn out well, or a good feeling about our current situation. Our hope is not based on our circumstances, but Christian hope comes from the fact that God's love is poured out into each of us, and God's love never fails, and we held to this hope throughout the weekend.

Much of the business conducted by the Conference was routine, but two of the more noteworthy resolutions that came before the Conference were: adopting a new formula for calculating Conference apportionment payments, and updating the Conference's policy against sexual misconduct, which had not been revised since 2002.

Apart from conducting business, we also spent time learning. The two morning sessions began with Bible study presentations, based on Acts 27 & 28, that examined "Making Room for Young Faith" and "Forming a New Sacred Imagination". These thought-provoking presentations are available on the WisconsinUMC.org website, and our church will be planning watch parties (with pizza!) so we can all view them together.

Of course, we worshipped God early and often, with spirited singing to open each session and several inspiring worship services over the three days. And we also took the opportunity to celebrate: We celebrated the 70th anniversary of women being granted full clergy rights in the Methodist tradition. We celebrated the faithful service of retiring clergy, including our former pastor Jean Waldron. We celebrated the stories of some startup ministries working with the Conference's Congregational Development program. We celebrated ways that the church is making a difference in people's lives, in Wisconsin and around the world. And we celebrated the commissioning of new pastors, new Lay Servant Ministers, and new elders—in particular, it was a joy to witness and participate in Pastor Paul's commissioning as a new Provisional Elder.

Talk to Cavan if you want to find out more about the Wisconsin Annual Conference.

Center Street

As of today, June 28th, construction has not reached our doors. We still have full access to parking on the street and

the parking lot.

*Lord, **revive** and
renew me again.*

I'm reminded that revival starts with surrender—letting go of my plans, my worries, my pride, and trusting God to take control.

Psalms 23:3 "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Psalms 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Thanks!

Thanks to everyone who helped in any way with the Community Dinner. We served 111 people and provided 20 take out dinners.

I takes all of us working together to make something like this important mission happen!!

July Sunday Servants

	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
July 5	Mary & Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Avis Marino	
July 12	Janette Hanson Jerry Brenneman	Betty Ross	Phyllis Kalnins
July 19	Anita Frels Joanne Hornby	Alice Sloane	
July 26	Outdoor Worship @ Westby		

Declaration Book Club

The second meeting of the Declaration Book Club fast forwards to 1826. It's the 50th anniversary of the Declaration and the discussion centers on how Americans—including Jefferson and Adams—looked back on the Declaration.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 7th at 7:00 pm in the Chapel.

The third and final meeting of the Declaration Book Club project will be held on Monday, August 10th and will look at the legacy and influence of the Declaration throughout history.

Folks are invited to join the group at any time.

For more information go to www.monticello.org



The United States is the only country with a known birthday. - James G. Blaine

Outdoor Worship

Our annual Outdoor Worship and Picnic in the Park is scheduled for July 26th at Davidson Park in Westby. We look forward to both churches worshipping together in the outdoors.

Be sure to bring your lawn chair, a dish to pass, plates and dinnerware. Coffee/cups, napkins, salt & pepper will be supplied. If you are unable to make something to bring, don't let it stop you from attending. We always have plenty of food.

In case of rain, we will move to the church.



July Online Study 30 Days to Confident Faith

Do you long for bold, unshakable faith? In this 30-day journey, you'll discover what true confidence looks like—not in yourself, but in Christ. Each day features a powerful Scripture, a short devotional packed with real-life application, a thought-provoking reflection question, and a prayer to strengthen your trust in God's promises. Whether you're facing fear, uncertainty, or the impossible, this plan will equip you to walk with courage, clarity, and confidence, rooted in God's Word.

Faith. It can be a wonderful and powerful tool when we're facing challenges. Our faith in Jesus helps to give us confidence, clarity and courage, and needs to be based in God's Word. But sometimes we feel that our faith isn't strong enough. If you've ever felt this way, please join us on a journey to build our faith so we can have the faith of a mustard seed, so we can move mountains.

Our journey to having confident faith starts on July 1st.

30 Days to Confident Faith – https://bible.com/reading-plans/62320/together/80923817/invitation?token=WL1Nrl_adJcnknVbYlsAQ&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 this link to the plan.**

If you don't have the Bible app on your phone, you can use this link to begin the study:

<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/62320-30-days-to-confident-faith>



Rummage Sale

Please keep the church Rummage Sale in mind when cleaning out. Things can be left on the tables along the north wall in the Fellowship Hall.

The sale will be in the fall, so you have plenty of time, but don't wait till the last minute!

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be
burdened by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5: 1

IF THE SON
Sets you FREE
YOU will be FREE
indeed - John 8:36



4th of July

Word Search



F	R	E	V	O	L	U	T	I	O	N	N
P	I	C	N	I	C	S	U	E	M	M	A
F	E	R	E	D	O	F	U	M	O	E	T
R	A	F	E	D	W	L	U	M	E	N	I
E	W	C	D	W	B	A	R	D	M	U	O
E	H	O	T	D	O	G	A	H	I	E	N
D	I	O	F	O	U	R	T	H	O	D	R
O	T	K	U	O	A	R	K	O	T	D	O
M	E	O	S	P	A	I	T	S	U	M	E
A	E	U	S	P	A	R	K	L	E	R	S
P	A	T	E	A	G	L	E	L	R	A	G



FIREWORKS
HOT DOG
PARADE
FLAG



COOKOUT
RED
WHITE
BLUE



SUMMER
PICNIC
REVOLUTION
SPARKLERS



FREEDOM
NATION
FOURTH
EAGLE

Church Council Meeting

May 17, 2026

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

Absent: Gregg R.

Opening Prayer	
Old Business/Follow ups 1. Christmas Eve Offering (Re-visit in September) 2. Signage and redecorating committee update	2. Phyllis is going to get quotes for the floor by the main entry. Kathy has been painting doors. Peach is going to contact a mural artist about ideas for our building. A banner making group is being formed. Kathy will talk to Pro-line about sign making. Kathy will talk to Cyndi Hubbard about possible grant opportunities.

3. Church Council Bylaws 4. Parsonage update 5. Use of UWF funds update 6. Sexual Harassment Policy 7. Health team? 8. Center Avenue Construction update 9. Lift Repairs 10. Parking lot windows 11. Sanctuary Carpet 12. AED Pads	3. Questions on term limits: Can a person serve more than 2 consecutive terms if in a different position? Yes, they can. The 2 consecutive terms applies to each individual position on the church council. A Leadership Development Representative will need to be found. We will also need a chair for next year, and will need to set up a rotation for positions going off. 4. Brent Welch is going to look at the parsonage and give his opinion. Phyllis will talk to Dan Kiedinger to do a market analysis. 5. UWF has approved \$1000 for a new drinking fountain. Aaron will look into options to purchase. Grady H will work with Tom Brudos to get an approximate quote. They also approved \$50 for a new soup pot for the kitchen. 6. Phyllis has a policy written and is working on review. 8. Will begin in a couple of weeks. Rain has slowed progress. We will announce to the congregation when the construction will be a concern. Paul B will evaluate how much work it would be to replace sidewalk sections close to the church. 9. Elevator is down and needs to be fixed. Estimated repair cost is \$1840 for the lock on the gate. Aaron will call to inquire about why this is so high. 10. The plexiglass keeps coming down. We'll try to have Jerry Breneman give an opinion. 11. Spaeth's said they would finish off spots, but have been dragging their feet. 12. Pads have been purchased and updated!
Financial New Business 1. Treasurer's Report 2. Simple Financial Report 3. Detailed Financial Report 4. Balance Sheet 5. Financial Secretary's Report 6. Verna Drake Donation 7. Newsletter Financial suggestion	1. Budget Summary....The budget spent YTD \$59,372.36 is 38.82% of the approved budget. Deposits for the year total \$39,312.62 Used savings of \$20,059.74 to cover shortfall \$753.78 used from Trustee Fund to cover General Fund expenses EOM checkbook balance \$21,464.08. Westby UMC has an A+++ rating. Deposits for budget are down 15% compared to the same time last year. Rental donations and delaying the rummage sale account for about 12% of the 15%. 5. A line item should be added for signage. 6. Verna Drake has provided us with an opportunity for a fund raising event. Verna is offering to donate a week at her timeshare in Cabo San Lucas, a resort city on the southern tip of Mexico's Baja California peninsula. The week would be in 2027 and has a cash value of about \$4500.00. The \$4500.00 is for lodgings only. You may purchase an all inclusive package which offers meals, drinks, transportation, etc. for about an additional \$1300.00. We could have a raffle, silent auction or...? Layne and Kathy will form a committee to get this started. 7. Motion proposed for approval. Kathy will develop a communication form between her and Dan.
Pastor's Report 1. Pastor Paul was commissioned at Annual Conference 2. Pastor Paul has a retreat from July 12-14.	1. Congratulations!
Lay Leader Report 1. Annual Conference Report by Cavan	The most important attribute for churches to be able to turn things around is open-mindedness. The most failing attribute is lack of women members (especially women over 60) There is a new formula that the conference is using to calculate apportionments. \$80 per member (excluding the first 25,) and 11% of programming. This will exclude capital expenses. This should make it easier to anticipate what our apportionments will be and help us plan our budget better.

	All churches are encourage to do community outreach and small groups. Revive Corp.(created by the conference) gave a report. They studied some churches and gave some general recommendations. We could request them to come to study our church. The conference voted on a new sexual conduct policy. Phyllis will get a copy. There was a resolution that passed regarding gender equity. A group called Earth-Keepers gave a report about saving energy. They also gave some resources to help study energy savings in the church. It was suggested to do an annual environmental review. It is also required to do an annual accessibility review. There is a video presentation available (stemming from a Bible study used at Conference) that Cavan would provide pizza for if we are interested in hosting a watch party.
Motions for Approval—3 motions carried.	Motion 1: Approval of May minutes Motion 2: Approval of the Treasurer’s report Motion 3: Approval of the Monroe format of financial reporting for the newsletter. Motion 4: Approval of the Financial Secretary’s report with one correction
Next Meeting	Wednesday, July 22nd @ 6:00 pm
Closing Prayer	

Ministry Team Meeting

June 14, 2026

Members Present: Alice, Elizabeth, Cavan, Kristin, Layne

Absent: Paul, Janet, Peach

Worship & Music Old Business 1. Outdoor Worship (July) This is Westby’s year to host. 2. Graduate Recognition Review New Business 5. Lay people ideas for filling the pulpit 6. Use of videos for ministry. Using technology in services might be something we could explore if we can find someone to manage it.	1. July 26 in Davidson Park. Layne will talk to Aaron about using his UTV to help transport people. The pavilion is close, should we do the service right in the pavilion? Cavan will coordinate the recording for the radio. 2. Gus will be graduating next year. Could we have the graduates say something while in front about their past/future? 5. When Tim is here we should have a liturgist. Let’s promote others to help fill the pulpit as well. 6. Cavan attended a session on using videos in messages. There are resources available for use in church. Ruby might be a resource to help with this?
Missions & Outreach Old Business 1. Pastor will connect with Temba to get a message from him, and we will spotlight him for a service. Paul will schedule this in coordination with his summer schedule 2. Conference In-Gathering review	1. Have not gotten a response from Temba yet 2. Participation was good this year, 15 kits were given, along with \$30. Note that think towels don’t work well as they don’t fit in the bag. Buy the cheap thin towels.

Hospitality Old Business 1. Kathy H. is the lead for the Rummage Sale and will develop a committee for October. 2. Welcoming team could be 3-5 people that ensure that visitors are informed and welcomed (Layne and Cavan and Chuck M-K working on this) 3. Community Meal is June 22. Committee has been formed (Alice, Kathy, Barb and Peach). 4. Quarterly Potlucks will continue. We'll plan to set dates ahead at ministry team meetings. Next one is September 13. Fall theme. 5. Baked potato fundraiser in August? New Business 6. Shut ins 7. Fathers Day	3. Church members have been very willing to donate and help with the dinner. Everything is very much under control 5. Layne will talk to Kathy about organizing. 6. Alice will coordinate. 7. Layne will organize slips of paper for people to write down appreciations for fathers. Elizabeth will help read the papers with her kids.
Education Old Business 1. Youth group update 2. VBS Planning update 3. Fall Sunday School Planning New Business 4. Library/Chapel 5. Annual Conference—Cavan attended a session on “Making Room For Young Faith”	1. Groups are continuing. 2. August 16th is suggested date. Paul is working on coordinating and will be recruiting help. May need to purchase a curriculum. 3. SS will start September 13. 4. Paul would like to move his office into the library. The library will be moved into the chapel. We need to coordinate with redecorating committee and trustees to set a moving date. 5. Three takeaways a. What does it mean to be a congregation in a world where people don't congregate? b. Young People are religious in different ways than they used to be. c. Imagine what a new church might look like? There is a video that Cavan would like us to watch at the joint meeting regarding vision.
Lay Leader / Discipleship Old Business 1. Welcoming Committee update 2. Men's breakfast? New Business 3. Laity session at Annual Conference 4. Mission trips for kids and adults? 5. The Laity is responsible for the future of the church.	1. None at this time. 2. Layne is considering a small group for this. No organization yet. 3. We need to promote Lay leadership in our church with the congregation. (Using online resources and classes for interested people) 4. 5. Joint meeting discussion

July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 8:30am Prayer Group	2 10:30am Exercise Group	3	4
5 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship	6 6:30pm Website Meeting	7 10:30am Exercise Group 7pm Declaration Book Club	8 8:30am Prayer Group 1pm Banner Making	9 10:30am Exercise Group	10 10am Redecorating Committee	11
12 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship w/ Communion 4pm Bible Study @ Kathy Hanson's	13	14 10:30am Exercise Group	15 8:30am Prayer Group	16 10:30am Exercise Group	17	18
19 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship	20 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	21 10:30am Exercise Group	22 8:30am Prayer Group 12pm Soup Group 6pm Church Council	23 10:30am Exercise Group	24	25
26 9am Adult Sunday School 9am Outdoor Worship @ Westby	27	28 10:30am Exercise Group	29 8:30am Prayer Group	30 10:30am Exercise Group	31	1

*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

(262) 393-8416

pastor.dplee@gmail.com

CHURCH OFFICE

221 S. Center Ave.

Viroqua, WI 54665

Phone: 608-637-3551

Email: viroqua@viroquawestbyumc.org

Website: www.viroquawestbyumc.org

Office Staff: Kathy Hanson/Barb Casper

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.