

*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
February 2022

IN THIS ISSUE

To Learn to Celebrate and to Learn to Lament

by Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

*Your hands made me and formed me;
give me understanding to learn your commands.
Psalm 119:73*

The church camp which I used to attend as a child was on the side of a river. I remember that I loved listening to the flowing water at night which lulled me to sleep. Without a doubt the best time of day was when we went swimming in this river. Collecting stones to paint later and “hunting” tiny frogs was part of the fun. This camp and its river are part of my dearest memories. But one year, the last year we went to that camp, it was impossible to enjoy all the amazing and fun things we used to do. After several months of intense rain, the river had become dangerous and destructive. It was no longer even possible to stay close to it due to the impetuous flow of the water.

The difference between the river that I love, a calm place throbbing with life and vigor which nourishes all the land around it and the destructive river that leaves chaos and terror in its wake, is on its banks. The river becomes dangerous when it rises and overflows its banks; but, within its banks, all the power of its deep underground springs is harnessed to give life and joy.

Our unstable emotional currents of joy, sadness, anger, and longing are like that river. Human emotions are good, necessary, beautiful, and even nurturing, yet the Scriptures make it clear that emotions are vitally important to wholeness and even holiness. However, emotions can be destructive forces if they get out of hand: if they overwhelm everything in their path, if they determine the course of our lives, if they dictate the way we respond to others or if they are placed in the center of our lives as the only true or real thing.

So how can we stay in tune with our inner selves without being swept downstream by what we feel from one moment to the next? And how can we, as Christians, bring our whole being before God, including our emotional life?

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The Scriptures give us a practice: praying the Psalms. As we pray the Psalms, we learn to celebrate, and we learn to lament. We learn to be honest with God about our anger and our sin. We learn to cry and doubt. We learn to admit shame and express gratitude.

Praying the Psalms repeatedly allows us to approach God with emotional honesty, authenticity, and transparency. The Psalms challenge us to tell God our deepest needs, longings, resentments, pains, sorrows, and joys; and by doing so, we learn to admit the truth about ourselves. Praying the Psalms does not only teach us to express our emotions before God, it also shapes our emotions. The Scriptures act within us through prayer and determine what we believe and how we respond to the things we feel. This defines who we are and determines what we worship. In short, praying the Psalms helps us not only name what we feel but also transforms who we are. In the end, God can take all of our emotions and every experience of our lives and use them as the raw material through which he transforms us into people who live life as His children. As we use the Psalms in daily prayer, our own stories, filled with both joy and pain plus hardship and achievement, find direction. We learn to be honest about our reality, our inner selves, and through this practice that shows our vulnerability, we pray the Psalms with Jesus and step into the larger reality of who God is, and what He has done.

Finally, the same thing happens with the bed of a river. Its margins are not primarily a means of control. Its main purpose is not simply to limit or surround. The banks are what make a river flow in a certain direction. The channel of a river is what allows it to reach its end, its final objective. In the same way, these prayers from the Psalms allow our inner being, with all its varied currents, twists and turns, to find its culmination in the infinite sea of God's love.

Every third Thursday of the month at 10:00 am, at Westby Church we will be studying the Psalms, you are welcome to join us.

May God be with all of you,
Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores



Pastor Erika's Schedule:

Thursday at Westby UMC – 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Sunday morning before worship – 8:30 AM – 8:50 AM

Please feel free to call or email Pastor Erika if you'd like to talk to her during the week.

Contact Information:

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February Birthdays

Feb. 12 – Jill Bjornstad
Feb. 22 – Tim Gaskell
 Brian Oney-Siam
Feb. 26 – Ardith Hoff



February Anniversaries

Feb. 25 – Aaron & Sara Berg



Mission of the Month – Living Waters Bible Camp

This mission is new to our mission line up, and like most of our other missions, it is local. The camp is located just outside Westby at E8932 Roe Ave. Living Waters Bible Camp is a Christ centered creation and disciple making ministry. It is not only a summer camp, but there are also events and activities scheduled all year. For example, two January events just wrapped up, including a Father Son Retreat and Snow Day that involved tubing and other winter activities. In February, a Mother Daughter Retreat is planned and a second Snow Day. Other retreats, Christian education, and leadership events, as well as multiple summer camps are planned. Here is a link to their website if you'd like to find out more about this organization: <https://www.lwbc.org/#welcome>.

Since the goals of the camp are aligned with our goals, it seems like a worthy organization for us to support. Thank you in advance for considering donating through our church to this mission of the month. Just note LWBC on the memo line of your check made out to the church.



Sunday School News

Recently, the Sunday school crew learned about the Epiphany and the importance of the three gifts given to Jesus by the Magi. We are also following Pastor Erika's Little Heroes section in the monthly newsletter that highlights young people in the Bible that God used in very important ways. Each Sunday we learn about God's amazing plan for us with object lessons, songs, games and prayers.

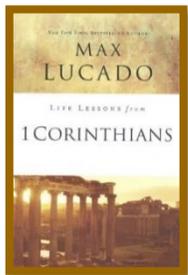
You're Invited! We will be making Valentines for residents of Norseland Nursing Home on February 6th during Sunday school. Supplies will be provided, so bring your creativity and help share God's love. Adults are welcome to join us! This is a long-standing tradition and one of our favorites.

Thursday Morning Bible Study & Prayer Group

This month we will be starting two new opportunities for you to grow in your relationship with God. The first opportunity will be to attend the Thursday Morning Prayer Group on the first Thursday of each month. Come and spend some time in prayer, talking to our Lord and lifting up your joys and concerns to Him. The next opportunity will be to participate in the Thursday Morning Bible Study which will meet on the third Thursday of each month. The Bible Study will start discussing the book of Psalm and will be led by Pastor Erika.



The Prayer Group will meet on Thursday, Feb. 3rd and the Bible Study will meet on Thursday, Feb. 17th. Both groups will meet at 10:00 AM. Please come and join us as we pray and study God's Word so we can grow closer to Him.



Growing in Faith Study Group

As we continue our discussion of 1 Corinthians, this month, we will meet on Wednesday, Feb. 9th at 6:00 PM to discuss Lesson 6 (1 Corinthians 10:1-13) and on Wednesday, Feb. 23rd at 6:00 PM to discuss Lesson 7 (1 Corinthians 10:23-33).

Please come and join us even if you don't have the book.

February Online Studies – A Journey of Love

Since Valentine's Day is in February, we tend to think more about love during this month, so our online studies are going to center around love. There are many aspects to love, especially the love that happens when we are children of God. Our journey of love will start in heaven with the love God has for us and end on earth with extending love to the people we encounter.

Our first study begins the journey of love with the amazing, crazy love God has for us, "The Love of God: Crazy and Compelling Love". This 7-day journey will begin on February 1st. The next step in our journey encourages us to show our love for God every day of the week and not just on Sundays. This 7-day study, "Christian Love", will begin on February 8th. The final part of our journey, "Love is a Person", helps us to take the love that we receive from God and share it with others. This study is 8 days and will begin on February 15th. Here are the links to access this month's online studies:

- [The Love of God] Crazy and Compelling Love – 7 days – begins Feb. 1st
<https://bible.com/p/48860428/2822eeb84fb3808c641b179282398359>
- Christian Love – 7 days – begins Feb. 8th
<https://bible.com/p/48860500/919fa26105bae68646e8d6d832399c84>
- Love Is a Person – 8 days – begins Feb. 15th
<https://bible.com/p/48860546/ca6ca03dc12cac26a838182d74afcfcb>

This online study can be accessed through the Bible App or bible.com website, which are free resources. In addition to wonderful devotional/reading plans, they provide a verse of the day, and you will be able to read the Bible in a wide variety of versions. The Bible App is available in your app store on your mobile device, or accessible online at www.bible.com.



Lenten Devotional Booklet

The devotional booklets that we've created with Viroqua UMC have been well received, so we are going to continue doing this activity with Viroqua UMC. Both churches will be working together to create a devotional booklet for Lent, which begins on Wednesday, March 2nd. Westby UMC will be responsible for writing devotions for 10 Bible verses. We will notify everyone, via email and the bulletins, as to which verses we are assigned. The due date for submitting your devotions will be Wednesday, Feb. 16th.

Please contact Linda Weilmann if you are interested in writing a devotion.



Family Snow Tubing Activity

Last year, there was a joint snow tubing activity with families and youth from Viroqua UMC. It was a fun and well received activity, so we're going to try to do it again this year. We plan on going to Whitetail Ridge Ski Area, near Fort McCoy, like we did last year. The exact details are still be arranged. When we have all of the details, we'll make an announcement during church, add it to the bulletins and send out an email to let everyone know.

Westby United Methodist Church - Board Meeting † January 19, 2022

Present: Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores, Tim Gaskell, Jane Gaskell, Jean Shore, Ardith Hoff and Linda Weilmann

Opening: Tim Gaskell opened with prayer.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November board meeting were emailed to the board and published in the December newsletter, so they could be reviewed prior to the meeting. The board meeting for December was cancelled due to the weather. Jane Gaskell and Ardith Hoff motioned to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

Treasurer's Report: The financial reports, which include the report for the month of December, Year-to-Date for 2021, special accounts, and the credit card statement, were emailed to the board prior to the meeting. Verna Drake also provided a graph to indicate the income/expenses for each month and a pie chart to indicate the expense summary for 2021 to show the percentage of each expense area. In reviewing these charts, the expenses for August and October were greater than the other months. We will ask Verna Drake if she remembers why they are so much higher. Jane Gaskell and Ardith Hoff motioned to approve the treasurer's report. Motion passed.

Old Business:

- ✝ Review COVID Policy – It was decided to continue with wearing masks as optional since we're able to spread out in the sanctuary. We will also try to push some tables together in the fellowship hall to allow us to spread out a little more yet sit at one table together.
- ✝ Cookie Walk – What to do with the funds raised? It was decided to put the funds raised from the Cookie Walk into the general fund this year since some of our regular expenses are increasing.

New Business:

- ✝ Snacks for Confirmation in January (Jan. 26th – for 9 people at 3:30 PM) – Linda Weilnau volunteered to provide the snacks. Jane Gaskell said that she or Verna Drake can come early on the 26th to turn on the heat and set out the snacks.
- ✝ Possible Ways to Reduce Expenses (Building insurance has increased \$41 per month)
 - Reduce heat to 57° when building not in use – Jane Gaskell said that this is not recommended by the furnace company because when the temperature is below 60°, it doesn't allow the condensation to escape.
 - Use back classroom which has its own heat setting for study groups and other small meetings – This is a viable option. We will need to go through some of the items in this room to get it ready to be used. After the room is ready, we should leave the classroom door open when the room isn't in use so it will receive heat from the fellowship hall.
 - Cut janitor position and have people volunteer to clean each week – We need to consider this more and ask others if they would be willing to come and clean periodically.
- ✝ Possible Activity in February? (Saturday game morning for kids, family game night, family movie night, kids' movie night – Pastor Erika said that Viroqua is going to schedule another snow tubing event at Whitetail Ridge Ski Area, near Fort McCoy, so we could join them like we did last year. Jane Gaskell will talk to the Sunday school parents about possible activities they and their children would like to do.
- ✝ Lent Activities – Ash Wednesday is March 2
 - Joint Ash Wednesday Service with Viroqua UMC – This service will be at Westby UMC at 6:00 PM. The confirmation class will help with the service.
 - Lent Devotional Booklet with Viroqua UMC – Yes, we will be doing another Lent Devotional Booklet with Viroqua. Westby will be responsible for writing the devotions for 10 verses.
 - Other Special Activities? – There will be a joint Maundy Thursday service, possibly at Viroqua UMC. The Sunday school class might present on Palm Sunday during worship.

Business from Board Committees:

- ✝ **Trustees** – No report.
- ✝ **SPRC** – No report.
- ✝ **Worship** – Jane Gaskell will be gone on Sunday, Jan. 30th so she will find YouTube videos for the worship songs and Lois Gerling will take care of running the projector and computer for the songs.
- ✝ **Education** – There will not be any Sunday school class on Jan. 30th since Jane will be gone.
- ✝ **Lay Leadership** – No report.
- ✝ **Missions** – Ardith Hoff was asking for suggestions for the mission of the month for February. One suggestion was Living Waters Bible Camp, so she decided this would be a good local mission to support.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Erika reported that the Confirmation Class will be held in Westby on Feb. 23 and on March 2nd. We will need to provide snacks for these times.

- The statistical reports are done online through EZRA. There will be training sessions on submitting these reports on Feb. 2nd at 12:00 PM and 6:00 PM. Verna Drake has been submitting these reports but isn't able to attend the training session. Linda Weilmann volunteered to attend one of the training sessions.

Jean Shore motioned to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Linda Weilmann

LITTLE HEROES FROM THE BIBLE

This year, Pastor Erika will be providing a special article in each month's newsletter for the children. The theme for these articles is "Little Heros from the Bible".

Young in their age, but not in their willingness to be used by God. Sometimes we think that God only uses great leaders and those who are mature in faith, but God can use anyone who has a humble and obedient heart. This is the case of these boys and girls. Despite their young age, they were great heroes in biblical history for God's will to be done. Throughout this year we will be meeting some of these great little heroes.

This is just an aid to encourage you, dear parents, to take time out and sit down with your children and share exciting family Bible stories. Do not forget at the beginning and at the end of each time, to pray to put yourself and your family in God's hands through prayer.

MIRIAM, THE BRAVE SISTER

Exodus 2:1-10

The king of Egypt ordered the killing of all newborn males among the Jews. To save his son, Moses' mother put him in a basket and sent him down the river. Miriam, her older sister, followed the basket to make sure nothing happened to the child. When the Egyptian princess found the basket while she was bathing in the river, Miriam came out from where she was hiding to suggest to the princess that she employ a woman who could nurse the child. It turns out that the wet nurse Miriam looked for was her own mother. In this way God used this girl to take care of the little brother who would one day become the liberator of Israel, and to give her mother the opportunity to raise her son that she had to let go by the river.

Miriam was also a great help when Moses began to gather the Hebrews to leave Egypt, as she gathered all the women of the town, to help her encourage their husbands to decide to leave Egypt and follow Moses. She was called a prophetess, because of her fidelity to God and because when the people of Israel walked through the desert, Miriam and her friends sang, danced, and played tambourines to overcome the difficulties of fatigue.

In the memory of her people, she remained forever united to her brothers Moses and Aaron as a leader of the people: "I sent Moses and Aaron and Mary to lead you" (Micah 6:4)

MIRIAM, THE BRAVE SISTER

Scripture: Exodus 2.1-10

Age: unknown

Address: Egypt

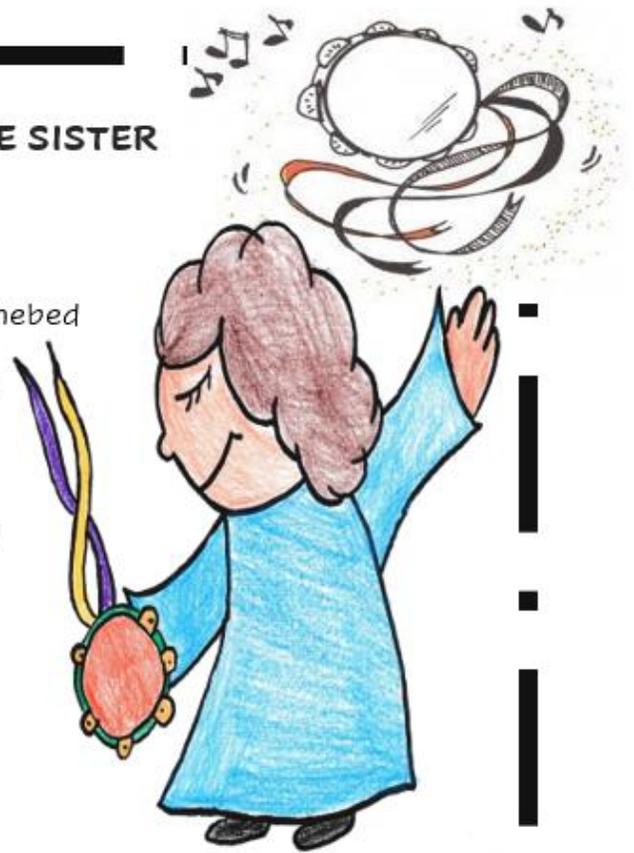
Family: daughter of Amram and Jochebed

Funny facts:

- she used to encourage her people by singing and dancing.
- she had leprosy for seven days

Interesting facts:

- people named her prophetess
- God spoke with her through dreams



February 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 10:00 AM - Prayer Group	4 Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day	5
6 ☩9:00 AM – Worship Service (Communion) 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Valentines for Norseland Residents	7	8	9 6:00 PM – Study Group	10	11 Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day	12
13 ☩9:00 AM –Worship Service 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	14	15	16 6:00 PM – Church Board Meeting	17 10:00 AM - Morning Bible Study Group	18 Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day	19
20 ☩9:00 AM – Worship 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	21	22	23 3:30 PM – Confirmation Class 6:00 PM – Study Group	24	25 Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day	26
27 ☩9:00 AM – Worship 10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School	28					

Remember to join us at 3:20 PM each day for being unified in prayer to pray for our church ...

“God, Give us the courage to dream big dreams. Please open our minds and hearts so we can have new breakthroughs to Your new possibilities. Amen.”

God is able to do much more than we ask, or think, through His power working in us.

~ Ephesians 3:20 (NLV)

