

*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  
March 2022

IN THIS ISSUE

## Our Lenten Journey

by Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores

*Rend your heart  
and not your garments.  
~ Joel 2:13a*

With these penetrating words, the prophet Joel invites us to the conversion of the heart which characterizes the season of Lent. This prophetic call constitutes a challenge for all of us. Joel reminds us that conversion is not reduced to external forms or vague purposes. Actually, it involves and transforms one's entire existence starting from the center of the person: the conscience.

We are invited to embark on a path which defies routine. We strive to open our eyes and ears; but, above all, we strive to open our hearts and to go beyond our "small environment".

We live in an increasingly artificial world. In a culture of "doing" and of the "useful", without realizing it, we exclude God from our horizon. Lent calls us to "wake up" and to remind us that we are human beings not God. Well, when I look at some power struggles in the small daily environment, I think that some people are playing at being God the Creator. I think we have not yet realized that we are not God. Also, we run the risk of closing ourselves off from others and of forgetting them. But, when the difficulties and sufferings of our brothers challenge us, only then can we begin our journey of conversion towards Easter. It is an itinerary that includes the cross and renunciation.

Today's Gospel describes the elements of this spiritual path: prayer, fasting and almsgiving (Cf. Mt 6:1-6,16-18). All three involve the need to not be dominated by the appearance of things. The importance of something is not based on appearances. The value of life does not depend on the approval of others or success. It depends upon what we have inside.

With its invitation to conversion, Lent providentially comes to wake us, to wake us from numbness, and to wake us from the risk of moving forward through inertia. The exhortation that the Lord addresses to us through the prophet Joel is loud and clear, "Return to me with all your heart," (Joel 2:12). Why should we return to God?

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Because things are not right in us, in society, and in the Church. We need to change and to make a change. This change is called having to convert!

Once again Lent comes to address this prophetic call. Simply because God is faithful, the call reminds us that it is possible to create something new in ourselves and around us. God is always faithful because He cannot deny Himself. Because He is faithful and remains rich in goodness and mercy, He is always ready to forgive and start over again. With this filial trust, let us set out!



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

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month (11:30 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

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### March Birthdays

March 14 – Sharon Sharratt



### Sunday School News

The Sunday school created 50 Valentines with a Bible verse greeting to share with Norseland residents and church members in other nursing homes. Thank you to the adult crew that helped with this project.

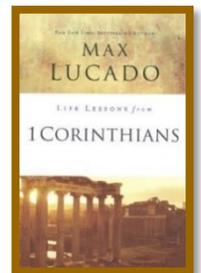
We've spent a few weeks learning about the life of Moses before we focus on the life of Jesus and the events of Holy Week. The older kids are a huge help with the younger kids. They are so appreciated. What a blessing!

As we look forward to warmer weather and healthy kids, always remember how much God loved us to send Jesus into our world.

### Growing in Faith Study Group

As we continue our discussion of 1 Corinthians, this month, we will meet on Wednesday, March 9th at 6:00 PM to discuss Lesson 8 (Spiritual Gifts - 1 Corinthians 12:1-11) and on Wednesday, March 23rd at 6:00 PM to discuss Lesson 9 (The Body of Christ - 1 Corinthians 12:12-26).

Please come and join us for a time of fellowship and thought-provoking discussion, even if you don't have the book.

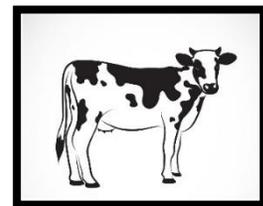


### Ash Wednesday Service

This year we will have a joint Ash Wednesday service with Viroqua UMC, which will be held at Westby. Please come and join us at 6:00 PM on Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> as we begin the season of Lent and examine our hearts and relationship with Jesus.

## Mission of the Month – The Heifer Project

I'm sure most of you have heard of The Heifer Project (<https://www.heifer.org/>). You might even have received a flyer in the mail about it. The idea is that rather than giving a needy family a gift of money that would provide only a short-term lift, by giving them a flock of chickens or an animal they can have a source of nutrition, and in some cases, a source of income as well. Giving an animal gift is like giving someone a small business, providing wool, milk, eggs and more. An animal gift may also mean providing a family with access to medicine, school, food and a sustainable livelihood. A flock of chickens, costs only \$20, a pig, sheep or goat only \$120. An actual heifer costs \$500. Giving to our mission this month will help lift one or more families out of poverty.



### Westby United Methodist Church - Board Meeting ☩ February 16, 2022

**Present:** Pastor Erika Martinez-Flores, Tim Gaskell, Jane Gaskell, Jean Shore, Ardith Hoff, Julie Fargen, Verna Drake and Linda Weilnau

**Opening:** Tim Gaskell opened with prayer.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the January board meeting were emailed to the board and published in the February 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:** Verna Drake provided the financial reports, which included the report for the month of January, profit & loss from Jan. 2010 to Jan. 2022, special accounts, and the credit card statement. These reports were emailed to the board prior to the meeting. We were paying \$2200 a month to Viroqua for our portion of pastoral expenses, but now reducing that to \$2150 a month. We built up extra funds with Viroqua to cover unexpected expenses for Pastor Erika, such as mileage. Lois Gerling completed the Fund Balance Report. We're supposed to have 2 people do this, but Donna Perkins isn't able to do it anymore, so need to find someone to do this with Lois for next year because it is better to have 2 signatures on the report. Jane Gaskell and Ardith Hoff motioned to approve the treasurers 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 and have placed the tables in the fellowship hall to allow us to spread out more.
- ☩ Possible Ways to Reduce Expenses – Follow up to discuss the options that were presented at the January meeting. – Verna Drake talked to Amanda Oney-Siam about reducing her hours and only clean the kitchen and bathrooms. This would reduce her salary to \$50 per month. Amanda agreed to this because vacuuming sometimes causes issues with her health. Several people volunteered to do the vacuuming of the sanctuary, narthex and fellowship hall. This new cleaning plan started the beginning of February. Verna Drake has placed bubble wrap in the windows and on the glass doors to help with insulation. The cold air return filters were changed in the fellowship hall. The timing for the furnaces to turn on was changed so they only turn on about 15 minutes before worship begins on Sunday.
- ☩ Joint Ash Wednesday Service w/Viroqua – Any additional planning needed? – Pastor Erika and Jane will get together to plan the service. The confirmation students will be participating in the service. The service will be at 6:00 PM at Westby.

#### New Business:

- ☩ Snacks for Confirmation in March (2<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> for 9 people at 3:30 PM) – Verna Drake will provide snacks for March 23<sup>rd</sup> and Jane Gaskell will provide snacks for March 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- ☩ Refund Senior Meal Site for Months Not Used in 2020 – Tim Gaskell talked to Trisha and they hope to open the Westby Meal Site in the next few months or so. They need to find someone who is willing to do the serving and clean up afterwards.

- ✚ Review Church Goals? – It was decided to review our church goals on Sunday, Mar. 6 during fellowship.
- ✚ Cemetery – Verna Drake reported that we need to have trees trimmed around the stones and by the road. Crank Tree Service from Iowa estimated that they can do this for no more than \$500. Verna is going to contact this company to have them do the trimming. After this expense, there is still funds to cover the mowing costs for this coming summer.

#### Business from Board Committees:

- ✚ **Trustees** – No report.
- ✚ **SPRC** – No report.
- ✚ **Worship** – Ash Wednesday service planning.
- ✚ **Education** – Attendance has dropped due to sickness. There will be snow tubing on Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> at Fort McCoy. The Sunday school will present a message on Palm Sunday. Sunday school will be doing Lent activities in March.
- ✚ **Lay Leadership** – No report.
- ✚ **Missions** – The March mission of the month will be the Heifer Project.

**Pastor's Report:** Pastor Erika is working on a Lent Journey for the children and the Little Heroes of the Bible article for the newsletters. The Thursday morning prayer group and the Thursday morning Bible study group has started. The Bible study group is studying the book of Psalm. She is also doing other preparations for Lent activities/messages. The confirmation class will be going on a retreat March 4-5 at Lake Lucerne. Confirmation will be on April 24 and there may be a joint service for this at Viroqua. During Lent, Pastor Erika will be giving the message in Viroqua on March 9 and the Ecumenical Lent service will be held at Viroqua UMC on March 16, so Pastor Erika will not be able to join us for the March board meeting or one of the study group evenings. Jean Shore motioned to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Linda Weilnau

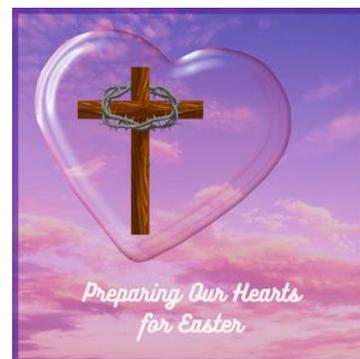
### March Online Studies – Preparing Our Hearts for Easter (Lenten Study)

Ash Wednesday, March 2nd, signals the start of the Lenten season with darkness and ashes as we remember and repent of our sins. We then begin our journey to the cross of Calvary, longing for the light and hope that the empty tomb and the resurrection bring. Together, we mark this period of 40 days (plus Sundays) with spiritual self-reflection through prayer, almsgiving, simple living, and self-denial. Our aim is to grow in deeper understanding and relationship with our Lord.

This Lenten Season, we invite you to join us for an online Lenten study as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Resurrection Sunday. Together, we will anticipate the victory of the light and life of Christ over the darkness of sin and death. We will be reminded of the reality of our frailty and of God's great redeeming grace. This study will begin on Wednesday, March 2nd. To join our study, use the link below or head over to our website: <https://driftlessministry.org/> or click on this link:

<https://bible.com/p/49570107/786d08c8db795e9845048c11172a7eee>

This online study can be accessed through the Bible App or [bible.com](https://www.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](https://www.bible.com).



### Daylight Savings Time Begins – March 13th

Remember to turn your clocks ahead one hour on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup> before you go to bed. Daylight savings time begins on Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup>.



## Thursday Morning Bible Study & Prayer Group

Last month we started two new opportunities for you to grow in your relationship with God by participating in a Prayer Group and a Bible study group. The Prayer Group is unstructured. Everyone who attends can offer up prayer requests, then the group prays for these requests. Praying starts with whoever feels like beginning then anyone can add their prayers. Pastor Erika does the ending prayer. The time commitment can vary from 15-60 minutes. Prayer is powerful, so it's important that we prayer together to combine our prayer strengths. The Thursday Bible Study Group is led by Pastor Erika and the study focuses on Psalms. Last month, we learned about the mechanics and history of Psalms. For instance, there are five books within Psalms and each of these books end with a benediction. We had good discussion and the study was very informative. The study session lasted for an hour.

The Prayer Group will meet on Thursday, Mar. 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 AM and the Bible Study will meet on Thursday, Mar. 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM. Please come and join us as we pray and study God's Word so we can grow closer to Him.

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## LITTLE HEROES FROM THE BIBLE

### **SAMUEL, THE LITTLE CHILD THAT SERVS GOD**

Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel was only four or five years old when his parents took him to live in God's tabernacle\* with Eli and the other priests. Why would Elkhana and Hannah bring someone as young as Samuel to serve God in the tabernacle? Let's see.

A few years before this, Hannah was very sad because she could not have a child, and she very much wanted to have one. So, one day when she was visiting God's tabernacle, Hannah prayed, 'Oh, God, don't forget me! If you give me a son, promise you that I will give him to you, so that he can serve you throughout his life.'

God answered Hannah's prayer, and months later Samuel was born. Hannah loved his little boy and began teaching him about God. One day she told her husband: "As soon as Samuel is old enough and no longer needs my attention, I am going to take him to the tabernacle to serve God there". Samuel was placed under the care of a priest called Eli, who had to children Every year Hannah and Elkhana used to going to the tabernacle to worship and, they visited their son and brought a new suit for little Samuel.

One night while Samuel was sleeping a voice woke him up. He thought that Eli, his tutor, was calling him, but it wasn't. Then there was a second call: Samuel! So, Samuel got up and went back to Eli: You called me, and here I am, but Eli answered: I did not call you, my son. Go back to bed. So, Samuel went back to bed. Samuel! calls the voice for the third time. So, Samuel ran back to Eli: Here I am; this time it should have been you who called me, but Eli knew that it was God who called Samuel. Then Eli said to Samuel: Lie down again, and if he calls, you must say: "Speak, God, because your servant listens." That's what Samuel says when God calls him. What God wanted from Samuel is that he should give a message to Eli that his sons were doing wrong, which Samuel did.

Samuel grows up, and becomes the last judge of Israel, as priest Samuel anointed\*\* Saul, the first King of Israel, and King David.

\* The Tabernacle was the portable sanctuary constructed by Moses as a place of worship for the Hebrew tribes during the period of wandering that preceded their arrival in the Promised Land.

\*\* to apply oil on the head of the person who was chosen by divine choice

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## SAMUEL, THE LITTLE CHILD THAT SERVS GOD

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 3:1-10

**Age:** 4 or 5 years old

**Address:** The Tabernacle

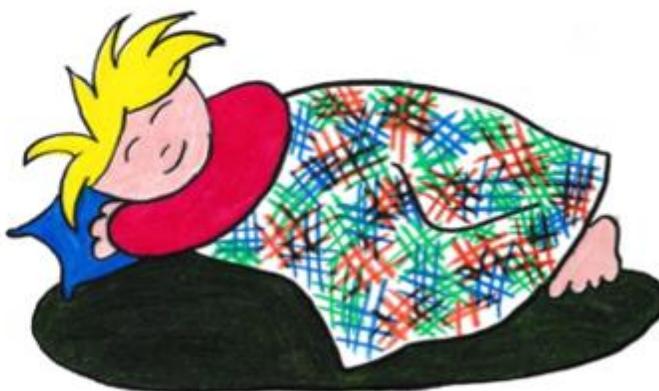
**Family:** Hannah and Elkhana

**Funny facts:**

- His name means: God heard.
- God called him for three times while he slept.

**Interesting facts:**

- He was the last judge of Israel.
- Samuel was also prophet and priest.



March 2022

| Sun  | Mon | Tue | Wed  | Thu  | Fri                              | Sat |
|--|-----|-----|--|--|----------------------------------|-----|
|  |     | 1   | 2 <i>Lent Begins</i><br>3:30 PM – Confirmation Class<br><br>6:00 PM – Joint Ash Wednesday Service @ Westby | 3<br>10:00 AM - Prayer Group               | 4<br>Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day  | 5   |
| 6<br>☩9:00 AM – Worship Service (Communion)<br><br>10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School                         | 7   | 8   | 9<br>6:00 PM – Study Group   | 10   | 11<br>Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day | 12  |
| 13 <i>Daylight Savings Time Begins</i><br>☩9:00 AM –Worship Service<br><br>10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School | 14  | 15  | 16<br>6:00 PM – Church Board Meeting   | 17<br>11:30 AM - Morning Bible Study Group | 18<br>Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day | 19  |
| 20<br>☩9:00 AM – Worship<br><br>10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School  | 21  | 22  | 23<br>3:30 PM – Confirmation Class<br><br>6:00 PM – Study Group  | 24   | 25<br>Pastor Erika's Sabbath Day | 26  |
| 27<br>☩9:00 AM – Worship<br><br>10:00 AM – Fellowship & Sunday School  | 28  | 29  | 30   | 31   |                                  |     |

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)