

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



February 2026

Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, II

In Sermon on the Mount II, John Wesley explains Matthew 5:17–20, where Jesus speaks about the law and true righteousness. Wesley begins with Jesus' words that he did not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them. Wesley explains that this means Jesus came to complete their purpose, not to cancel them.

Wesley describes what is meant by "the law." He explains that it includes the law given through Moses and the teaching of the prophets. He then makes a clear difference between parts of the law. Some laws, such as ceremonies and rituals, were completed in Christ and are no longer required. Other parts, especially the moral law, still remain. According to Wesley, Jesus confirms the importance of the moral law by showing its true meaning.

The sermon then turns to Jesus' statement that a person's righteousness must be greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees. Wesley explains that their righteousness focused mainly on outward actions. They tried to keep the law in ways that could be seen by others. Jesus, however, speaks about a deeper righteousness that includes the heart, thoughts, and intentions, not actions alone.

Wesley also explains Jesus' words about even the smallest part of the law not passing away. He understands this as a strong statement about the seriousness and lasting nature of God's moral will. The law continues to show what God desires from human life.

Throughout the sermon, Wesley treats the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus' clear explanation of the law. It shows what obedience to God truly involves and describes the kind of righteousness expected of those who belong to the kingdom of heaven. Wesley presents Jesus' final warning as a direct statement about who will enter the kingdom, based on the nature of this righteousness.

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FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

SooHo Lee	February 16
Sonja Bjerkos	February 19
Barb Casper	February 20
Stephanie Brown	February 29

God's Blessings on You!



FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARY

Dale & Jolene Gudgeon February 5



And surely I am with you always, to
the very end of the age.

Matthew 28: 20

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.



We have 2 brand new stoves in the kitchen!!

They say they don't want to be mentioned, but THANKS to Peach Hoiland and Sonja Bjerkos for this wonderful gift!



MAKING LEFSE



Peeling Potatoes



Cooking Potatoes



Ricing Potatoes



Baking Lefse





Meatball & Lefse Dinner

**Meatballs
Homemade Lefse
Mashed Potatoes/Gravy
Vegetable
Coleslaw
Homemade Pie**



\$15

CARRY OUTS AVAILABLE

Wednesday, February 11th

4:30—7:00 pm

Viroqua United Methodist Church

221 S. Center Ave., Viroqua, WI

608-637-3551



Ash Wednesday Services

February 18th, 2026

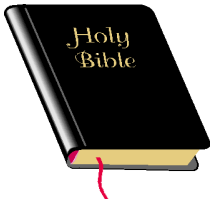
Viroqua Church

1:00 pm Service

Westby Church

**5:30 pm Soup Supper
6:00 pm Worship Service**

Lenten Study



The **Lenten Devotional** this year will be in the form of a workbook focused on the books of Luke & Acts. Opportunity to share our reflections about these books of the Bible will be offered through small groups led by Pastor Paul. If you are interested in meeting with a small group during Lent, sign up on the sheet in the Narthex by February 8th.

Study guides will be available on Sunday, February 15th.

Praise and Lent

February Online Bible Studies



Since Valentine's Day is in February, we usually think about love during this month. What could be a better way to show our love to God than to praise Him. Our first study for this month will help us focus on praise and being positive. We'll see how to take negative situations and find something to smile about, while praising God no matter what the circumstances.

This first study, *14 Days of Praise & Positivity*, will begin on February 1st. Here is the link to this study: <https://bible.com/reading-plans/38028/together/78471378/invitation?token=Z5QwrF0pBXoDZ4SGq0GeJQ&source=share>

The season of Lent begins on February 18th, so the studies for the last part of February will focus on Lent. For our Lenten studies, we'll be reading a 6-part series, which has a new study each week. Hopefully, these studies will help you to pause, reflect and draw closer to God during Lent. The studies for this series includes:

Lent Week 1: Turning Back to God (begins on Feb. 18)

https://bible.com/reading-plans/56570/together/78471444/invitation?token=BGPovPX0_s-KxPCS9A3T-Q&source=share

Lent Week 2: Trusting God for What You Need (begins on Feb. 25)

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/56687/together/78471462/invitation?token=OMx30cYd2uMDyxnVzRNtyA&source=share>

Lent Week 3: Living Out What Jesus Taught (begins on Mar. 4)

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/56870/together/78471476/invitation?token=ldafYmK7N2YwFc5lLsH1Og&source=share>

Lent Week 4: Jesus' Journey to the Cross (begins on Mar. 11)

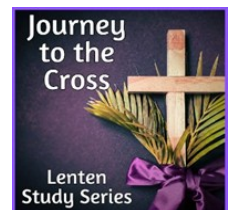
<https://bible.com/reading-plans/61362/together/78471492/invitation?token=C7dl6dfpKUZ6m7Vze5-wYA&source=share>

Lent Week 5: What Jesus Did for You (begins on Mar. 18)

https://bible.com/reading-plans/57206/together/78471508/invitation?token=FmGtWdnY_N5vB2EWh-iztg&source=share

Lent Week 6: A New Beginning (begins on Mar. 25)

https://bible.com/reading-plans/57551/together/78471519/invitation?token=ZPzaGdex73_N-gM1yPSIXA&source=share



Rummage Sale

The committee has decided to postpone the Annual Rummage Sale until fall. As you do your spring clean out, do be looking forward to the opportunity to contribute things for a Rummage Sale in the fall.

Items may be brought to the church any time after Easter.

February Sunday Servants

	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
February 1	Joanne Hornby Cavan Fang	Betty Ross	Phyllis Kalnins Janette Hanson
February 8	Miny Hirschfield Mary Mulvaney Kemp	Alice Sloane	
February 15	Anita Frels Chuck Mulvaney Kemp	Betty Ross	
February 22	Anita Frels Cavan Fang	Peach Hoiland	

Missions Update

Artists, remember to be working on your artistic creations for our annual art silent auction! You have at least another month to get ready. The auction will take place for two weeks in March, during Lent. Each year our church hosts a Wednesday evening ecumenical Lenten worship service, and the silent auction will be held around then. This date has not yet been determined. People from throughout the community will attend the Lenten service at our church, and they will also have the opportunity to make bids on the auction items. Proceeds from the auction will benefit our missionary, Temba Nkomozepi, who works at Mujila Falls Agricultural Centre in Zambia.

Temba sent us a message at Christmas:

Dear Faithful Supporters and Fellow Workers in Christ, Grace and peace to you in this holy Christmas season!

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, my heart is filled with gratitude for you. Your steadfast partnership and incredibly generous gifts throughout 2025 have been nothing short of miraculous. Not only did you meet our annual missionary support goal—you exceeded it! This profound generosity is a testament to your faith and has been our anchor through a challenging year.

Despite prolonged issues with our bank accounts, which tested our perseverance, all our ministry projects are now fully restored and moving forward. I will share more detailed updates soon. I'm also joyful to report that our farming project is thriving—both the maize and sunflower crops are growing well, a hopeful sign of God's provision.

This year, Christmas was made even more special for my family. We watched my son, Lungile, play a shepherd in his school's nativity play, "Honky Tonky Donkey," told from the donkey's perspective. Seeing his excitement and joining believers worldwide in retelling this sacred story was a profound reminder of the hope and joy we celebrate.

Thank you for standing with us in this work. You are vital fellow soldiers in this mission, and your support makes these moments of joy and progress possible.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Christ-filled Christmas and a New Year abundant with His peace and blessings.

In mission together,

Temba Nkomozepi

I welcome and cherish our interaction. Please stay in touch with the Mujila Falls Agriculture Center Team and I on the following platforms:

Email: tnkomozepi@umcmmission.org

Facebook: [@MujilaFallsAgCenter](https://www.facebook.com/MujilaFallsAgCenter)

Book Group



The Book Group is reading *Small Things Like These* by Clare Keegan.

It is 1985 in a small Irish town. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, Bill Furlong, a coal merchant and family man faces into his busiest season. Early one morning, while delivering an order to the local convent, Bill makes a discovery which forces him to confront both his past and the complicit silences of a town controlled by the church.

Discussion of this book will be at 7:00 pm on Monday, February 9th. Everyone is welcome.

United Women of Faith

January 14, 2026

Members present: Ardith Olson, Barb Casper, Janet Welch, Joanne Hornby, and Betty Ross.

President Janet read a meditation from “No Wrinkles on the Soul” called God’s Medicare.

The Bible verse was Proverbs 17:22 - “A cheerful heart is good medicine.”

President Janet read the secretary’s report from the November meeting. Our Christmas luncheon was cancelled due to the weather.

Treasurer Barb gave the treasure’s report of \$2,558.01.

Child Fund sponsors are: January = Betty Ross, February = Hester Nelson, March = Barb Casper.

Sunday morning cookies and coffee: February 1st = Janet Welch, 8th = Barb Casper, 15th = Betty Ross, 22nd = Ardith Olson

March will be Hospitality II – Janice Primmer

A sympathy card was signed for Lorraine Gerdl whose son, Richard, passed away.

The February meeting will be on February 11th at **2:30**, not the usual time, due to the meatball and lefse supper workers who want to go directly to work/dine afterward.

Snacks today were from Barb Casper and none are needed for the February meeting.

The program was presented by Joanne titled “The Legacy of the Little Rock Nine”.

Janet Welch, President



Church Council Meeting With District Superintendent, Amanda Stein

The Church Council met with District Superintendent, Amanda Stein, on Sunday, January 18th. We asked for her input as we grapple with questions about the future of our church. What is the best use of our assets, and what is our mission as a church?

Following are some points discussed and some questions before us.

- ◆ Is our large and aging building taking our energy away from ministry? Is it keeping us focused inward rather than outward?
- ◆ What are our values?
- ◆ What is our vision?
- ◆ Does every group in our congregation both give and receive love—is there back and forth?

We also did some brainstorming about possible mission and vision work:

Mission—Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

Vision (Develop goals under each)

- A. Love Boldly
- B. Serve Joyfully
- C. Lead Courageously`

The Church Council will be continuing to discuss all of this in the coming months. More than likely, input from the congregation will be sought.

Church Council Meeting

January 8, 2026

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

Agenda Item	Notes
<p>Welcome/Review of Mission and Vision Meeting with DS, Amanda Stein</p>	<p>A question to consider over time is “are we committed to this building?”</p>
<p>Financial Discussion</p> <p>Who should sign vouchers in the new system?</p> <p>Auditing Process</p> <p>Meatball Dinner</p> <p>Who is in charge of deciding fundraising ideas? Should it come from the finance committee, ministry team or both?</p> <p>Christmas Eve Offering</p> <p>Who should take offering to the office after church?</p> <p>How will we make up the deficit for next year?</p>	<p>We had a yearly overspend</p> <p>A large factor was that we didn’t bring as much money in as last year.</p> <p>Motion 1 : Gregg C. suggested Pastor and Financial Chair should both sign all vouchers.</p> <p>Motion 2: To move \$20,000 from the foundation to the checkbook</p> <p>Sonia B. finished the 2024 audit and would like to start 2025 asap</p> <p>We don’t have committee chairs to sign vouchers.</p> <p>This will be done at monthly Church Council Meetings.</p> <p>Ministry team should continue to order regular budgeted items. If money is needed for a special purpose/project, they will request approval from Church Council beforehand.</p> <p>Meatball dinner is being planned by Kathy H and committee and will happen on Feb. 11</p> <p>Church Council and Ministry team both have the ability to organize a fundraiser and should communicate with the other group</p> <p>Christmas Eve offering was down considerably. Plates were not passed.</p> <p>Perhaps a special cause should be supported with our Christmas Eve offering</p> <p>We need to develop a better system for getting the offering plates to the</p>
<p>Trustees Discussion</p> <p>Replace AED pads</p> <p>Rummage Sale</p> <p>Prep for Meatball Supper</p> <p>Who will mop the floor?</p> <p>Facilities Use</p> <p>Rental of Space</p> <p>How is it going without a custodian?</p> <p>Facilities Improvement ideas</p>	<p>Motion 1 :</p> <p>Pastor has asked Jane Gaskell to help with ordering AED pads</p> <p>Rummage sale will be led by Kathy H.</p> <p>Layne will take care of the fellowship hall floor</p> <p>Rental of the church needs to be discussed further to be sure it is being done appropriately.</p> <p>A written form/contract must be used for event use</p> <p>Widen door into Fellowship Hall</p> <p>Narthex Wall</p> <p>Remove short back pews</p> <p>Offering Stands</p> <p>Divider Curtain</p>

SPRC Report Background Checks	SS teachers are filling out volunteer forms Background checks are being done through Shepard's Watch Pastor will ask Amanda Stein to address Safe Sanctuary training concerns
Pastor's Report Develop Vision of the future	Be thinking about what a big idea vision for this year should be
Lay Leader Report Lay Leader responsibilities	Let Layne know your thoughts
Announcements/Adjourn Next Meeting Date	Next meeting: Thursday, Feb. 5 @ 6 pm
Closing Prayer	

Ministry Team Meeting

January 19, 2026

Members Present: Layne H, Pastor Paul, Alice S. Elizabeth R. Cavan F., Kristin P., Peach H.

Agenda Item	Notes:
Opening Prayer	
Review of Mission and Vision	Church Council will be developing the vision asap
Worship & Music New Business Lent planning (VMA Wednesday Lent service) Ash Wednesday Service Maundy Thursday Good Friday Easter Planning (Breakfast / Service) Confirmation - No Confirmation this year Liturgist Circuit joint service Exchanging preaching Offering Table	<p>Wednesday lent service Pastor will work with VMA to determine the date</p> <p>Meal? We will finalize the meal plan next month. Peach will plan to lead, Tacos?</p> <p>Ash Wednesday service at 1:00. Pastor will set up the chapel for the service. Ashes are on hand.</p> <p>Maundy Thursday, is it at Westby or here? More discussion next month</p> <p>Good Friday service at 1:00 (Pastor will plan the order of service with the VMA)</p> <p>Easter breakfast (Sonja B. will organize the breakfast)</p> <p>Easter morning service will be in the fellowship hall along with breakfast.</p> <p>10:30 Easter service in the Sanctuary (there may be a baptism during this service)</p> <p>We will start using liturgists again, but only for announcements (Layne and Paul will organize)</p> <p>Paul would like kids/youth to read scripture during the services</p> <p>Discussions about a circuit joint service are beginning.</p> <p>How can we make the offering table more accessible and in-</p>

<p>Missions & Outreach New Business</p> <p>Brochure</p> <p>Mission Sunday - Missionary Temba</p>	<p>Brochures are being developed and will be ready for the Meatball Dinner.</p> <p>Pastor will connect with Temba to get a message from him, and we will spotlight him for a service</p> <p>Art auction is the next Missions project. Kristin is the lead, March 8 & 15 will be the dates.</p> <p>Umcor Sunday is coming (how can we promote it?)</p> <p>Local Missions opportunities? We should explore (Couleecap,</p>
<p>Hospitality New Business</p> <p>Welcoming new folks (Newcomer / Welcoming team)</p> <p>Meatball & Lefse Dinner Feb. 11</p> <p>Rummage Sale</p> <p>Cards are being written by Avis</p>	<p>Welcoming team could be 3-5 people that ensure that visitors are informed and welcomed</p> <p>Kathy H is the lead for the Meatball dinner and has a committee working on it</p> <p>Kathy H. is the lead for the Rummage Sale and will develop a committee</p>
<p>Education Discussion</p> <p>Sunday School teachers</p> <p>Youth group</p> <p>Twice a month</p> <p>Outing</p> <p>Next Generation Sunday</p> <p>Sunday School room</p> <p>Easter Egg Hunt</p>	<p>Kristine Starnes, Janette Hanson, Mary Cheever and Anita Frels are teaching SS</p> <p>Youth group goal will be to meet 2x per month</p> <p>Next Generation is youth leading services</p> <p>Downstairs SS room has been cleaned and is ready for next steps (Amanda Dustin input?)</p> <p>Pastor will organize the Easter Egg Hunt (inside this year)</p>
<p>Lay Leader / Discipleship Discussion</p> <p>Help to define role</p> <p>Help people engage Scripture</p> <p>Prayer as a foundation of the church</p> <p>Small groups - Lent devotion</p> <p>Encourage faith at home</p> <p>Developing future leaders of the church</p> <p>Create a spiritual pathway</p>	<p>The Church Council mentioned that they really would like to have us discuss how to reach teens/young adults. Aaron specifically has ideas that he'd like to share with us.</p> <p>Lent devotional book development small group (Pastor will organize)</p> <p>We'll continue to investigate the ideas of small groups within the church</p>
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p>February 8 @ 11:30</p>

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship w/ Communion 10:30am Youth Sunday School	2	3 10:30am Exercise Group 11am Meatball Supper Committee Mtg	4 8am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice	5 10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Church Council	6	7
8 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 10:30am Youth Sunday School 11:30am Ministry Team Mtg 4pm Bible Study @ Kathy Hanson's	9 7pm Book Group	10 10:30am Exercise Group 1pm Meatball Dinner Prep	11 8am Prayer Group 12pm Meatball Dinner Prep 1:30pm UW/F 4:30pm MEATBALL DINNER 6pm Choir Practice	12 10:30am Exercise Group	13	14
15 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 10:30am Youth Sunday School	16 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	17 10:30am Exercise Group	18 8am Prayer Group 1pm Ash Wednesday Service @ Viroqua 5:30pm Soup Supper @ Westby Church 6pm Ash Wednesday Service @ Westby 6pm Choir Practice	19 10:30am Exercise Group	20	21
22 9am Adult Sunday School 10:30am Worship 10:30am Youth Sunday School	23	24 10:30am Exercise Group	25 8am Prayer Group 5pm Teen Group 6pm Choir Practice	26 10:30am Exercise Group	27	28

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.