

THE CROSS & THE FLAME



April 2026

Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, IV

John Wesley's fourth sermon on the Sermon on the Mount focuses on one of Jesus' most well-known images — salt and light. Jesus told his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." Wesley immediately recognized something important: Jesus did not say "try to become" these things someday. He said, "You are." That simple present tense carries the entire message of the sermon. Identity comes first. The calling follows from it.

Wesley's central concern was this: if Christians truly carry the life of God within them, why does so little of that life actually show? He saw two opposite dangers pulling people away from what Jesus described. The first is blending in — living so much like the world around us that no real difference can be seen. Salt in Wesley's day was not just a seasoning; it was how people preserved food and kept it from spoiling. It was essential. But salt that has lost its flavor is completely useless. Wesley applied this directly: when our faith makes no visible difference in how we treat people, how we use our time, how we respond to hardship or injustice, we have lost the very thing we were meant to offer the world.

The second danger moves in the opposite direction — withdrawing from society entirely to protect one's faith. Some in Wesley's time believed that separating from the world was the safest path to holiness. Wesley rejected this just as firmly. You do not protect a lamp by covering it with a bowl. That does not keep the flame safe — it puts the flame out. Christians are called to remain present in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities. Not to be slowly shaped into the image of the world around them, but to engage that world with genuine love, patience, and grace. The difference between the two is not location. It is the condition of the heart.

Wesley also addressed the question of how faith becomes visible. He argued that a truly changed heart cannot stay hidden for long. Humility, kindness, generosity, and a sincere concern for others — these things are noticed. You do not have to announce them. They show up naturally in the ordinary moments of daily life, and people around us begin to take note.

His most important point, though, is about purpose. We do not let our light shine to build a reputation or earn the approval of others. Jesus gives one clear goal: that people may see our good works and glorify our God in heaven. Every small act of kindness, every word of encouragement, every moment of patience under pressure — none of it is meant to draw attention to us. All of it is meant to point toward God. That, Wesley said, is the calling of every Christian in every season of life — not a flashy faith, not a hidden faith, but an honest and visible one.

Pastor Paul

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APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Anita Frels	April 1st
Ann Carlow	April 6th
Colton Dustin	April 9th
Dale Gudgeon	April 15th
Mitchell Hanson	April 15th
Betty Ross	April 23rd
Cavan Fang	April 25th
Joe Dustin	April 26th
Matt Mc Garry	April 26th
Fred Alverson	April 27th
Ansel Brenneman	April 28th
Grady Hanson	April 28th
Janette Hanson	April 28th
Taylor Stalsberg	April 29th

God's Blessings on You!



APRIL ANNIVERSARY

John & Barb Huschka April 8th



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.



Egg Hunt
and
Taco Meal



Holy Week Schedule

April 2—6:00 pm Maundy Thursday Potluck Meal & Worship @ Viroqua

April 3—1:00 pm Ecumenical Good Friday Service @ Viroqua

April 5—7:00 am Easter Sunrise Service followed by Breakfast

April 5—10:30 am Traditional Easter Worship Service

April Sunday Servants

	Ushers	Greeter	Communion Stewards
April 2 Maundy Thursday		Peach Hoiland	
April 3 Good Friday	Cavan Fang Joanne Hornby	Alice Sloane	
April 5 Easter	Mitchell Hanson Joanne Hornby	Betty Ross	Phyllis Kalnins TBD
April 12	Aaron & Angie Hanson	Betty Ross	
April 19	Peach Hoiland Janet Welch	Barb Casper	
April 26	Janette Hanson Mitchell Hanson	Alice Sloane	

Soup Group

The Soup Group met for the first time on March 25th. Five people made 12 quarts of soup and delivered it to people.

The idea is to meet and make soup once a month and deliver it to homebound members, people who are going through a difficult time, or simply someone we'd like to connect with—perhaps a new visitor, someone who lives alone, or people who haven't been attending church for awhile.

2 quarts of soup were delivered to people who are not affiliated with this church, but whose names were given to us. We'd like to expand on this and encourage people to suggest names.

Watch for sign up sheets—both for names to receive soup and for a desire to join the Soup Group.



Kitchen Open House

To celebrate our newly painted kitchen, you are invited to have Sunday morning coffee downstairs in the dining room on April 26th. There will be freshly baked treats that morning and we can celebrate the new look together.

A **HUGE THANK YOU** to Gary Mageland for donating the paint along with supplies and scaffolding—also his expertise.

Thank you also to these people who helped make it happen!

Peach Hoiland (coordinator)	Paul Lee
Layne Hanson	Sunwoo Lee
Sonja Bjerkos	Kathleen Montemrino
Kelli Schultz	Grady Hanson
Cavan Fang	Kathy Hanson
Aaron Hanson	Angie Hanson

Handbell Concert



The Community Handbell Concert will be held in our sanctuary on Sunday, April 26 at 2:00 pm.

This talented group of musicians practices here every week and presents a wonderful afternoon of great music twice a year! Let's show our support!

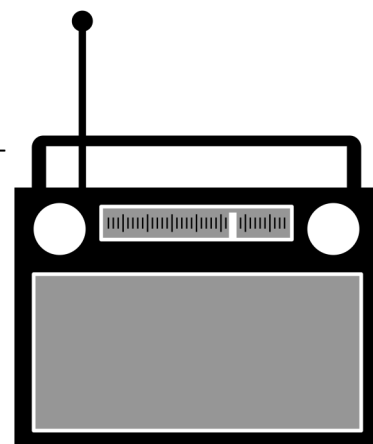
Help Support Our Weekly Radio Broadcast Ministry

Each week our church service is shared with the community through our local radio broadcast. This ministry allows homebound members, those traveling, and others in our area to stay connected to worship and hear the message of hope and faith.

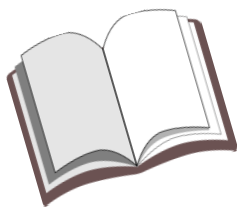
The broadcast is funded entirely through donations from sponsors. We welcome sponsorships from church members, families, community friends, and local businesses who would like to support this important outreach.

A broadcast may be sponsored in honor or memory of a loved one, to celebrate a birthday or anniversary, or simply as a way to share the ministry of our church with the wider community.

If you would like to sponsor a broadcast or receive more information, please contact the church office. Your support helps us continue sharing worship and encouragement with listeners throughout our community.



Book Group



The Book Group's new read is *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong.

As the daughter of Korean immigrants, Cathy Park Hong grew up steeped in shame, suspicion, and melancholy. She would later understand that these "minor feelings" occur when American optimism contradicts your own reality—when you believe the lies you're told about your own racial identity. Minor feelings are not small, they're dissonant—and in their tension Hong finds the key to the questions that haunt her.

Discussion of this book will be at 7:00 pm on Monday, March 23rd. Everyone is welcome.

Rummage Sale

Our annual Rummage sale will be held in the fall this year, but we're ready to start collecting items now. You may bring in things any time after Easter. Leave your items on the table along the north wall in the Fellowship Hall. Thanks for supporting this project.



Community Dinner

Our church is scheduled to serve the Community Dinner on June 22nd.

This dinner is served on the 4th Monday of each month at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

Everyone is invited to attend. Community churches and other groups take turns to serve.

If you are interested in helping to plan for this, let Alice Sloane know.

United Women of Faith

March 11, 2026

Members present: Barb Casper, Joanne Hornby, Betty Ross, Elaine Strait and Debbie Strait.

President Janet read a meditation from "God's Little Devotional Book".

President Janet read the secretary's report from the January 14th meeting. The February meeting was cancelled.

Barb Casper gave the treasurer's report as \$3,103.55.

President Janet read 2 letters received from our Child Fund boy. Child Fund sponsors are; March is Barb Casper; April is Ardith Olson; May is Pat Matz; June is Betty Ross.

Sunday morning cookies and coffee: March is Hospitality II, Janice Primmer; April is Hospitality III, Alice Sloane; May is Hospitality I, Angie Hanson.

President Janet motioned to send \$50.00 for Day of Giving. Joanne seconded it.

President Janet suggested checking a need for the church that we could sponsor. Barb suggested checking on the cost of having the water bubbler in the hallway replaced/fixed.

Snacks: March, Janet Welch, April Barb Casper.

Joanne gave the program on "Day of Giving".

Janet Welch, President



Missions Update



Thank you to everyone who made or purchased art for our art silent auction in March. Together we raised money for our missionary, Temba Nkomozepi in Zambia. We will celebrate Native American Ministries Sunday on April 19. Since 1989, United Methodist congregations have observed this special Sunday. The purpose is to elevate and support the contributions and voices of Native/Indigenous people in our church. A special financial offering on this day goes to support specific ministries in annual conferences.

Thank You For These Memorials

In Memory Of:	Given By:	For The Fund:
Shirley Gilman	Jim & Kathy Griswold	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Cavan Fang/Kristen Parrott	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Lois Gardner	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Sue & Peter Walby	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Janet Welch	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Kathy Hanson	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Gail & Michael Semb	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Priscilla Jackson	Undesignated
Shirley Gilman	Connie Wyas	A Cooking Oriented Group

Hoping and Listening

April Online Bible Study Series



Easter is a season of hope. The grass is greening up. Flowers are preparing to bloom. Animals are waking up from their winter hibernations. New life is springing up around us. Meanwhile, as we gather on Easter, we celebrate the hope of new life that Jesus brings into each of our lives, and even more, into the entire world. The earth-shattering events of that first Easter changed everything and continues to impact our lives and world today! As we wrap up Holy Week, we invite you to join us for a quick four-day study as we consider the life-changing hope of Easter by diving into John’s account of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It’s a great study that will help to spark the hope of Easter in your life!

Easter Hope – begins Wednesday, April 1st

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/24944/together/79451904/invitation?token=6rkDrPGpuPMBn3XEGyS4Ng&source=share>

For the remainder of April, we will be focusing on recognizing and listening to God’s voice in our lives. Hearing God’s voice is far simpler than many believers imagine. Truth is, you may have heard Him yourself but didn’t even realize it. In a world of chaotic and never-ending noise, God’s voice is often overshadowed by fear, ignorance, self-condemnation, busyness, and self-dependence. We invite you to join us as we work to rise above the distractions, identify His voice in our lives, and learn to listen intently to Him. It’s one of the most important parts of our relationship with Him, so let’s become better listeners of God’s wonderful words!



How to Recognize God’s Voice Effortlessly – begins Monday, April 6th

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/67562/together/79451958/invitation?token=zi8kktw4neDKSigtQJKplw&source=share>

Being Attentive to God’s Voice – begins Monday, April 13th

https://bible.com/reading-plans/14814/together/79452185/invitation?token=drx5_C5Rr-RXSLOxjOt5tg&source=share

Listening to God’s Voice – begins Monday, April 20th

<https://bible.com/reading-plans/58766/together/79452202/invitation?>

Church Council Meeting

March 12, 2026

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

Agenda Item	1 Notes
<p>Old Business/Follow ups</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Vision Future considerations: Frustration with rental/non rental policy. Other churches have gone through this in the past, not a new problem. Merge with Westby? Merging churches can be advantageous to both congregations. It was suggested that we have small group input from the congregation regarding the vision of the church and the future of the church. Christmas Eve Offering (Re-visit in September) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none">

<p>4. Auditing Process— Greg will get the papers together. Dan will then contact Sonia.</p> <p>5. How will we make up the deficit for next year? We will continue to evaluate. One idea is to share information with the congregation to raise interest.</p> <p>6. Replace AED pads—Jane Gaskell is working on getting a grant to replace the pads. Paul is working with her.</p> <p>7. How is it going without a custodian? Do we need to Consider hiring a cleaning service once or twice a year?</p> <p>8. Facility Improvement Ideas</p> <p>9. Radio Ministry—The Ministry team will work to drum up sponsors through increased visibility (announcements, newsletter, sign up sheet)</p> <p>10. Front Door locked? It will remain locked, except on Sunday mornings and we'll explore the idea of a ringbell or other options for people to enter the building.</p> <p>11. Open Doors Forum (Kristen and Chuck MK have inquired about hosting this program) –this will happen, no paperwork is necessary</p> <p>12. Teen Court (Chuck MK has inquired about hosting this here) Kathy gave him the facilities use form</p> <p>13. Kitchen clean-up/paint days March 21. The SS room will also be painted if we have enough help. Layne and Peach are organizing.</p> <p>14. Taking off the pew for the offering table</p> <p>15. SPRC is working on a sexual misconduct policy.</p> <p>16. Greg suggested developing an informational sheet about the structure and roles of our Council. We should spend time each month discussing.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Financial New Business</p> <p>1. Treasurer's Report</p> <p>2. Financial Secretary Report</p> <p>We need a communication form for small groups to let the ministry team council know what is happening. Greg will work on developing a form.</p>	<p>5. We will trust in God and our new vision to help address this question in the future.</p> <p>6. Pads are expired and need to be replaced soon.</p> <p>7. Kathy will meet with the professional cleaners to get a quote on possible once or twice a year cleanings.</p> <p>8. Pew removal. Aaron, Layne and Paul will remove the 3 back pews. We will continue to explore a wheelchair area. Kathy will head up a sub-committee on signage. Paul is organizing the offering table. Layne will organize the subcommittee on the welcoming/service area of the Narthex.</p> <p>10. We have a new camera door lock on the front door. The door will be set up to automatically lock when the door closes.</p> <p>11. Scheduled for March 24th</p> <p>12. Teen court will not be here</p> <p>13. Peach has this under control, still looking for more helpers to paint. Gary Mageland donated the paint.</p> <p>14. Will be done before Easter.</p> <p>16. How long are terms? How can we recruit members at large? We need some bylaws for our church council. Layne will head up the subcommittee to develop these. Goal is to have these approved at charge conference.</p> <p>1. Recap: The \$26,711.87 of spending is supported by 63% annual income and 37% savings. The checkbook balance is \$4,590.75. Unpaid bills balance is \$8,174.36. Annual Income to support the budget is down 11% compared to a year ago. This report shows in detail how the \$26,117.87 was spent.</p> <p>2. A request was made for the memorial designated for a cooking ministry might be used for the new Soup Group. A line item called "small group ministry" will be created.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Trustees New Business</p> <p>1. Website review</p> <p>2. The second floor in the parsonage is sagging.</p>	<p>1. Linda W. has scheduled a meeting for April 6 @ 6:30 p.m. Layne and Kathy are attending.</p> <p>2. Aaron will investigate.</p>

Motions for Approval	<p>Motion 1: Approval of February Minutes</p> <p>The date of the above document is January and the next meeting date is February 5. I understand the minutes are from the Feb meeting but may cause confusion for someone outside of the meeting reading the document. Maybe the column of the minutes can be labelled minutes with the actual date. Gregory</p> <p>Motion 2: Approval of the Treasurer's report</p> <p>Motion 3: Approval of the Financial Secretary's report</p>
<p>Announcements/Adjourn</p> <p>Next Meeting Date</p>	<p>Next meeting: Wednesday, April 1 @ 7:00 (Visioning)</p> <p>Wednesday, April 22 @ 6:00 (regular meeting)</p>

Ministry Team Meeting

March 8, 2026

Members Present: Pastor Paul, Layne, Alice, Kristen, Cavan, Peach

Agenda Item	Notes/ Action Items
Opening Prayer	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pastor's Vision & Ministry Discussion 2. Preaching Plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul will update Ascension date 2. Working on Acts to follow Luke
Ideas, and questions from the Church Council	Layne will organize the radio ministry advertising (include asking outside donors)
<p style="text-align: center;">Worship & Music Old Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our Wednesday Lenten service will be March 18. 2. Meal? Taco's are a go. We'll need a final count. Dinner at 5 and Service at 6. Layne and Peach will be the committee to organize. 3. Pastor would like Maundy Thursday always at Westby since Good Friday is here. Pastor will check on this. 4. Good Friday service at 1:00 (Pastor will plan the order of service with the VMA) This is a joint service with Westby 5. Easter breakfast (Sonja B. will organize the breakfast) Layne will coordinate with Sonia. 6. Easter sunrise service will be in the fellowship hall along with breakfast. 7. 10:30 Easter service in the Sanctuary (there may be a baptism during this service) Communion will be served 8. We will start using liturgists again, but only for announcements (Layne and Paul will organize) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No ecumenical service on March 25. Choir may practice on Wednesday that week. 2. Advertising—Cavan will post to Viroqua Area folks. Peach will check with Kathy to see if there is an old poster. 3. Maundy Thursday will be at Viroqua on April 2 @ 6:00. This will be a pot luck meal in the fellowship hall. The service will be the meal combined with a message. Peach will notify Chuck for Ushers and Greeters. Cavan will supply communion bread. Peach will discuss with Kathy regarding details and workers. 4. The radio will broadcast the Good Friday Service. 5. Sonia has the Easter breakfast under control. 7. The Baptism will not be during the Easter Service. 8. Goal to start with liturgists on April 12.

<p>9. Paul would like kids/youth to read scripture during the services. He will work with the kids to train them to speak clearly and expressively as time goes on.</p> <p>10. Church council approved an offering display to be built in the back of the church, inviting a better offering experience</p> <p>11. Palm Sunday Layne will check with Kathy about ordering Palms.</p> <p>12. Joys and Concerns– Layne will develop a Joys/Concerns/Prayer request card.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Business</p> <p>13. Easter Lilies The highlighted one is what we have ordered before. Do you want to get them from Sparta Floral again or do something different? Do you want to mix kinds?</p> <p>14. Do we want to try an outdoor palm parade this year, and if so who will lead it?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Missions & Outreach Old Business</p> <p>1. Pastor will connect with Temba to get a message from him, and we will spotlight him for a service–Goal is April.</p> <p>2. Keep eyes open for a good opportunity to support any local Missions opportunities?</p> <p>3. Art auction is the next Missions project. Kristen is the lead, March 8 -22 will be the dates. Coffee will be moved to the overflow room for these 3 weeks so the art display can be visible. Layne will organize the coffee area. Kristen will organize the art display.</p> <p>4. Umcors Sunday is coming. A promotional video will be shown ahead of time and there will be a special envelope. Kristen also advertises. March 15th is UMCOR Sunday.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">New Business</p> <p>Open Door Forum–Scheduled for Tuesday, March 24. The speaker is Susan Nesbit, who is a “death doula.” Chuck, Kristen and Susan will take care of the setup.</p>	<p>9. Goal is to start on April 12.</p> <p>10. April 12 for the new offering stand.</p> <p>11. Kathy is ordering Palms. Paul will talk to the SS teachers about having the kids march with Palms. Outdoor march and indoor march.</p> <p>12. Layne will rework the joy/concern into a smaller version to put in the pews.</p> <p>13. Alice will coordinate with Kathy to make a decision about where to buy. Layne will connect with FFA at school about possibly growing Lillies for next year.</p> <p>14. Paul will talk to the SS teachers about having the kids march with Palms. Outdoor march and indoor march would be ideal.</p> <p>1. Message will be June 28 tentatively.</p> <p>3. Will continue until March 22.</p> <p>4. New UMCOR envelopes are being developed by Kristen and Cavan.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hospitality Old Business</p> <p>1. Kathy H. is the lead for the Rummage Sale and will develop a committee</p> <p>2. Welcoming team could be 3-5 people that ensure that visitors are informed and welcomed</p>	<p>1. Going to be pushed to late summer/early fall.</p> <p>2. Layne and Cavan will start a sub-committe to discuss. CPR training? Usher Greeter training? Cameras and safety are a great thing to consider. We should continue to develop a welcoming process.</p>



April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 8:30am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice 7pm Visioning Meeting	2 10:30am Exercise Group 6pm Maundy Thursday Potluck & Worship	3 1pm Good Friday Worship	
5 7am Sunrise Service & Breakfast 9am Adult SS 10:30am Easter Worship w/ Communion 10:30am Youth SS	6 6:30pm Website Review	7 10:30am Exercise Group	8 8:30am Prayer Group 1:30pm UWF 5pm Teen Group 6pm Choir Practice	9 10:30am Exercise Group	10	11
12 9am Adult SS 10:30am Worship 10:30am Youth SS 11:45am Ministry Team Meeting 4pm Bible Study @ Kathy Hanson's		14 10:30am Exercise Group	15 8:30am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice	16 10:30am Exercise Group	17	18
19 Native American Ministries Sunday 9am Adult SS 10:30am Worship 10:30am Youth SS	20 NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	21 10:30am Exercise Group	22 8:30am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice 6pm Church Council	23 10:30am Exercise Group 12pm Soup Group	24	25
26 9am Adult SS 10am Kitchen Open House 10:30am Worship 10:30am Youth SS 2pm Bell Choir Concert	27	28 10:30am Exercise Group	29 8:30am Prayer Group 6pm Choir Practice	30 10:30am Exercise Group		

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



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.