

# THE WITNESS

*The quarterly newsletter of Westwood Christian Church*



## IN THIS ISSUE

**FOR DANE 2023  
AUGUST 26**

**FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT**

**CAMP NOTES**

**NEW ADDITIONS**

**WHY DO WE DO IT  
THIS WAY?**

**WHY FAMILY  
MINISTRY MATTERS**

**BOOK ENDS**

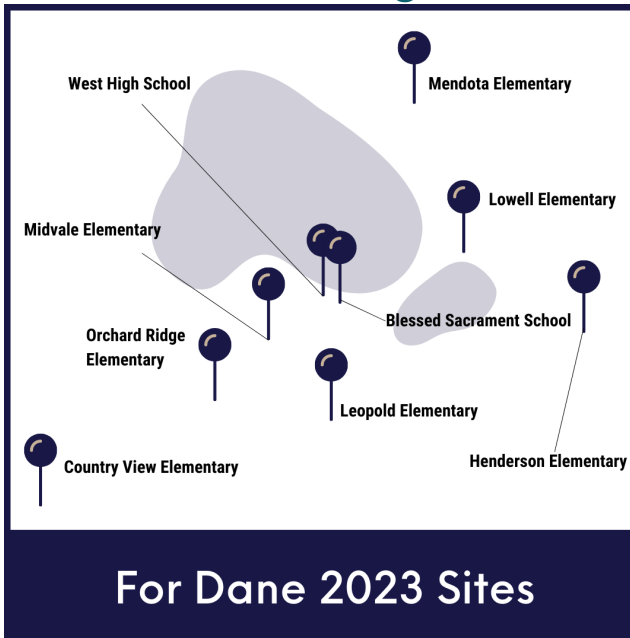
**NEXT 3 MONTHS  
CALENDAR**

## At a Glance

This quarter we have so much to celebrate, and so much to look forward to! In this quarter's *The Witness*, you can learn about our upcoming service event--For Dane and there is a link to sign up. You can see how our finances are looking at the halfway point of the year. You can see pictures of our church at summer camp. You can learn more about our newest additions to the church. I've got an article in this month's issue about why we "do" church the way we do, and that leads into my opinion on why Family Ministry matters.

At the end of *The Witness* you can find 3 books I read this quarter, and my thoughts on them before a calendar for the next 3 months.

## For Dane 2023: August 27 at Midvale Elementary School



One of the simplest ways that we can impact our community is by partnering with the local schools. That is one reason that we helped Collaboration Project launch For Dane, a collaborative weekend of service across the city with churches of all sorts of denominational backgrounds. We will be working with Midvale Community Lutheran to serve Midvale Elementary School. We are going to help with some beautification, by weeding, clearing up a rain garden, doing some grass seed laying.

But we are also going to collect nut-free, individually wrapped snacks for the teachers classrooms, and writing encouraging notes and stuffing envelopes with gift cards for the staff. Through For Dane, we get to live out all 5 of our church values: Evangelism, Discipleship, Fellowship, Service, and Church Unity. I hope you'll join us!

**SIGN UP TO SERVE AT [COLLABORATIONPROJECT.US/FOR-DANE](https://COLLABORATIONPROJECT.US/FOR-DANE)**

### Financial Snapshot

Just like last quarter, our church finances are strong. Our savings are still over \$250,000 across all of our accounts. Our accounts are positive by almost \$7,000, meaning you've given \$7,000 more than we've spent year to date. In fact, your giving more than we budgeted for in November of last year. Thank you. We are still looking to hire a Family Minister, and only having one full-time salary is helping us stay below our projected deficit. We have some large expenses coming up that we anticipate being able to handle without problem. We will be restriping our parking lot to make the parking lines visible and we are going to have a new sign installed on Odana Road as our current sign is broken, and out-of-code.

Our missions team decided to help Ashley Crutcher's interns with their fundraising with some of our undesignated missions funds, and the team has already begun dreaming about who our Christmas Give recipient will be! I love that we can be so comfortable financially that we can give away large amounts multiple times a year.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission to bear witness to God.



## Camp Notes

I'll admit, when I first came to Westwood, I was not sure that spending missions' money on a church camp was the best use of that money. I'm so glad that Rock River has proved me wrong year after year. Hearing our teens talk about how much camp means to them, hearing Nathanael's remorse when we drove home because he didn't want to leave, and getting to be involved myself in deaning a week of camp has shown me just how much God is doing on the 97 acres in Polo, IL. Thanks for helping us support that work with your giving! I am even more excited by dreams I have to spend more time as a church at the camp for retreats, outings, and support. Be on the lookout for a chance to help clean up the camp this fall. I hope you enjoy the pictures of our children (and me!) at camp throughout *The Witness* and you can go to Rock River's Facebook page for more!

**CHRISTINE, CHRISTOPHER,  
EVA, AND EVAN AT EDGE  
(HIGH SCHOOL)**



**RRCC helps  
our kids build  
such rich  
community  
with other  
Christians!**



**CHRISTABEL AND ERIKA AT  
EMBARK (GRADES 4-6)**

## New Additions!

One of the most exciting parts of my job is meeting new people, talking to them about how they feel God inviting them to grow, and sharing with them what I see God doing in our church. It's so much fun when those conversations turn into people joining our church or joining the family of God. This last quarter saw 5 new people join our church through membership transfer, and four people joining the family of God in baptism! What a wonderful season for our church.



When I asked **Erika Quarm** (right) why she wanted to be baptized, she said "because of how my mom handled being sick." Evelyn Quarm battled breast cancer for the last few years, and the way she modelled faith for her family showed Erika the hope that can be found in God. Praise the Lord.

**Heidi Kschey** (left) is not new to church, but had not been baptized. So when she came to Westwood and heard me talk about it, she realized that was a step that God was inviting her to take. "Jesus is in heaven, and he wants me to be there with him," she said when I asked why faith was important.

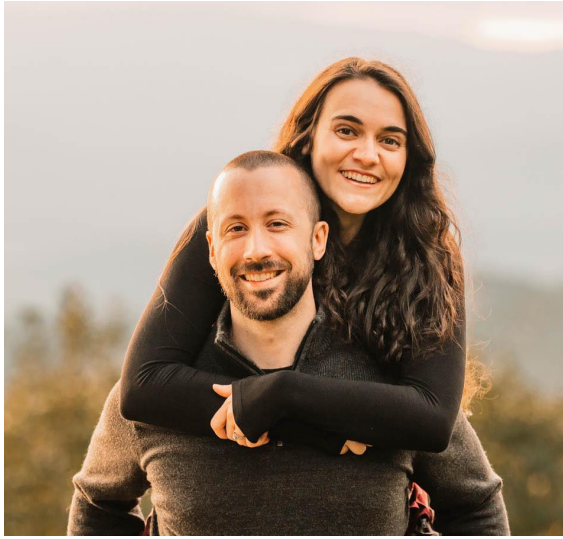


**Quen and Chou** moved back to Madison area a while ago, but Quen first came to Madison as a result of Westwood's sponsoring his family after the Vietnam War. When Quen and his wife, Chou, moved here, Marion Greaser began meeting with him to read the Bible, discuss faith, and pray with him. Eventually, Quen indicated that he wanted to follow Jesus and be baptized. Chou decided that she would be too! I've not seen many baptism responses as touching as Quen's. As he rose from the water, he was overwhelmed, standing there gazing into the heavens.

**"There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." - Luke 15:7**

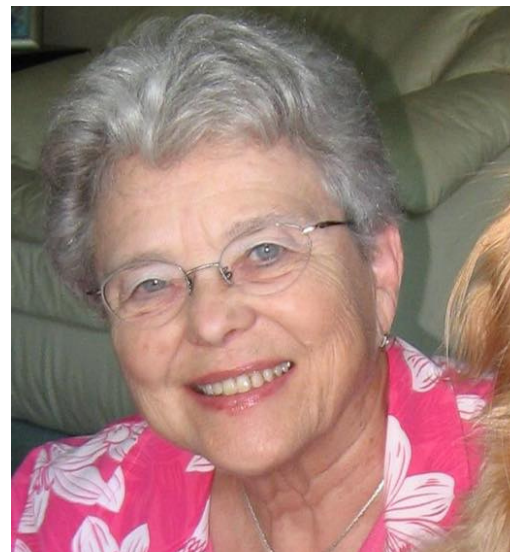


## New Additions! (cont'd)



**Todd and Anna Marie Morra** moved to Madison area last year to work for Epic. They come to us from Clemson, South Carolina where Todd completed his PhD in Mathematics and Anna Marie completed her masters. We've been blessed by Todd's voice on our worship and reading teams, and Anna Marie hopes to help in our garden!

**Lue Sturdevant** has lived in the Madison area for years, where she worked in real estate. She was formerly part of Community Christian Church on the east side, coming to Westwood after CCC unfortunately closed its doors last year. Lue is a graduate of Milligan College, which is part of why she's awesome.



**Sara Sanchez Santana and Stefano Lord** moved to Madison in summer of 2021 so he could begin his PhD in Economics at UW Madison. They are originally from Mexico City, where they hope to return upon graduation. Sara works at Centro Hispano of Dane County--a non-profit serving Latinx people in Dane County. Sara and Stefano serve in our children's, worship, and reading ministries.

## Why Do We Do It This Way?

I have been asked by a number of people why we structure or worship services the way that we do. While those who are new to faith or have only recently come to Westwood may not realize that it's a bit different than "the way it used to be." This article is going to be the first in a series of articles that I hope help to explain both what we are doing, but more importantly, the reason(s) behind those decisions.

First, and the focus of this article, is the decision to follow—to a degree—the Church Calendar. The Church Calendar runs from the First Sunday of Advent (often the first of December) to Christ the King Sunday (often last of November). The rhythms of this calendar impact the other elements of our service almost every week including some of our prayers and what Scripture is read or preached. We have 4 Scripture passages that are typically read in one element of our service or another. These follow a plan known as the Revised Common Lectionary and the texts help to guide us through the calendar. Most of the year there is an Old Testament Reading, a Psalm, a New Testament Writing, and a Gospel text. But more on that in the future.

But why follow a Church Calendar? They are not required to form us; Jesus did not institute them, and never in the New Testament is a kind of Christian Calendar conceived aside from the weekly gathering of small groups to eat and drink at the Lord's Table. And yet, I think there is something helpful here. I believe they can help us pattern our lives after Jesus.

Whether we realize it or not, we are inundated with calendars. There is the federal calendar, with things like Memorial Day, Veterans Day, Labor Day Thanksgiving, etc. which we often participate in, somehow. Whenever we plan our Saturdays or Sundays around Badgers or Packers football, we are participating in a regional calendar. There is the Hallmark calendar, where we focus on moms, dads, and love interests on specific days, as if we don't every other. As a college town, we are subconsciously aware of the school calendar when traffic gets worse and hotels are booked around move-in/out day. But our families also have calendars, full of birthdays, anniversaries, and significant dates pertinent to only us. All of these calendars are orienting our life towards something.

This is why God gave the Israelites a Calendar when he gave them the Torah (Exodus 23): to orient their lives around God and God's work. In Genesis 1:14, God creates lights in the sky to be signs for the seasons. The word "seasons" is the same word that is used for Festivals. This tells us that the Jews see their calendar as part of the created order. Sabbath on Friday night into Saturday was done because God did it. Feasting for the harvest was done because the harvest was God-given. I think this is why Paul softens his stance on calendars in his ministry. In Galatians 4, Paul is critical of any sort of set-apart day. He feels like his "works for [them] have been wasted" (4:11). And then in Romans 14, Paul says "Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it for the Lord" (14:5-6).



## Why Do We Do It This Way? (cont'd)

It seems to me that Paul, over the course of his ministry—Galatians is the 1st or 2nd letter of Paul and Romans one of his last—has learned that festivals can be done “to the Lord” and that if they help us follow Jesus, they can’t be bad. What’s bad is if we do them for the wrong reasons. The goal of the Church Calendar is to pattern our lives after Jesus’ life. The Church Calendar presents the Christian an opportunity to follow Jesus through the “seasons” of his life. Advent anticipates Christ’s coming at Christmas. Epiphany celebrates the revealing of Jesus, beginning with his baptism and going through his Transfiguration. Lent is traditionally a season of fasting patterned after Jesus’ time in the wilderness in preparation for Easter. The Easter season begins with Resurrection day and ends at Pentecost as a celebration of life and new creation. Between Pentecost and Advent is “ordinary time” which focuses on living the life of Jesus in day to day ministry and worship, and correlates to the Church as we experience it now: led by the Spirit in waiting for Christ’s return, which is celebrated on Christ the King Sunday. Then, we do it all over again. Again, calendars are tools. Just as the Packers want their schedule to structure us—that’s why they release it in May, 4 months before any meaningful games are played—following the Christian Calendar can do the same thing if we let it.

You may not see why this matters. You may get nervous when we talk about anything that feels too ritualistic or denominational. I understand. When I was in college, a word like “liturgy” felt like a code word for “Roman Catholic.” But liturgy is just another word for service structure or pattern, and in its original Greek was a word meant for “the work of the people.” Reading the Psalms, praying, singing, and eating communion are works of the people. Using a calendar that is God-focused is one more way that we make worship the work of the people, and not only the work of the clergy. In a church culture that is so pastor-focused and flashy, the reminder that the major elements of our worship are works of the people is a healthy counter to my pride.

In this way, using the Church Calendar to pattern not just our lives individually, but our life corporately, helps us be a church that is focused on God, and not on me, or you, or what is “cool” or “trendy.” If you want more information about the church calendar, or want to know some of what led me to this decision, I would love to talk, give you links and books, or answer questions.



## Why Does Family Ministry Matter?

Over the last few months I have shared the illustration to the right with our families and our family ministry team. The research shows that churches only have about 40 hours of influence on a child's life every year, while parents have 3,000-4,000 hours a year with their child. I use this illustration to remind everyone of three things. First, it's not the church's job to raise your kids because we simply cannot compete with you for influence (and we don't really want to). Second, It's the parent's job to do that. Third, the church is here to help.

Oftentimes, the church feels the unrealistic pressure that it is the job of our ministries and programs to fully develop a child into a person of faith, morals, and service. We get very invested in finding the perfect curriculum and when our kids don't get baptized by 18 we think it's all our fault. But, nearly all of the responsibility to raise children who love Jesus and follow him is on the parents. The church has 1% of the amount of time that parents do.

You may wonder then, why have family ministry at all? Is it just because something is better than nothing? Do we just feel like we 'have to'? Children's Sunday school is younger than the state of Wisconsin, and that means that there are thousands of years of religious education without it, so we shouldn't see it as an absolute.

Family ministry primes the pump for the religious education, formation, and development that can take place at home. This is part of why we moved to a curriculum that uses the church calendar, similar to what we do in adult worship: so that families across age breakdown can be learning and processing the same things. If parents need help with something—how to have a specific conversation, how to get their kids to behave better, etc.—the family ministry team is there to support them and offer resources. Right now, that is primarily me, but this is why we are looking to hire a Family Minister: to better resource and equip parents. The last, and probably the most important thing, that I think family ministry helps with is teaching our kids about the life of the church. It puts children in relationship with people their own age, but it also shows them that there are people in this church who love them, care for them, and want them to thrive.

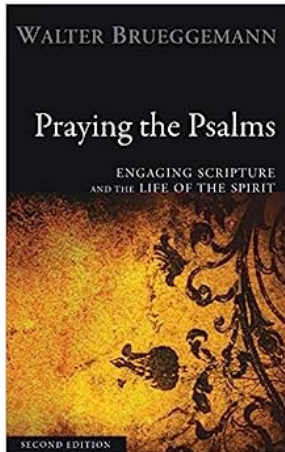
Whether or not you serve in a classroom or nursery at Westwood, you are part of our family ministry. You are helping the children decide if they want to stay a part of a community like this when they leave home. It's my conviction that the reason children leave the church is because they didn't have a compelling church back home for them to find a new one.





## Book Ends

This article will be an overview of the books that are ministry, theology, or spirituality related that I have read in the last quarter. Perhaps you will be inspired to pick one up; hopefully it gives you insight to what I am learning!



*Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* by Walter Brueggemann

I picked up this book at the recommendation of a friend when I told him I was preaching on the Psalms this summer. He said “this book is short, and pretty accessible.” He was right. In my younger years I struggled mightily to read Brueggemann as I found him verbose, deep, and talking about things I didn’t care about. While I have grown older, I think this book was perfect for my preaching this summer, and it was exactly the book I needed while I was on vacation—yes, I

read it while I was supposed to be relaxing. This is how I relax I suppose. What I am most grateful for in this book was the reminder that the Psalms are for people who are on the edge of their lives. It’s too easy to read only the Psalms that make us happy and keep us comfortable, but most of the Psalter is written by people who are “in the pit” or who were recently brought through it. I was also grateful for this chapters on “Christians in Jewish territory” and dealing with all the vengeance we find in the Psalter.

*Son, We Need to Talk: Coping With My Son’s Suicide* by LeRoy Lawson

This was the hardest book to read this quarter, even though I read it the fastest and it is the shortest. But Roy is a mentor, dear friend, and hero of mine. I am familiar with the story of Lane’s death—in fact 6 years ago or so I asked Roy to come up to New Hampshire and preach about his son’s suicide as a part of a sermon series we were doing called “tough stuff.” It’s tough, undoubtedly. And I’ll confess that it was tougher on Roy than I ever knew. This book is a gut-wrenching collection.



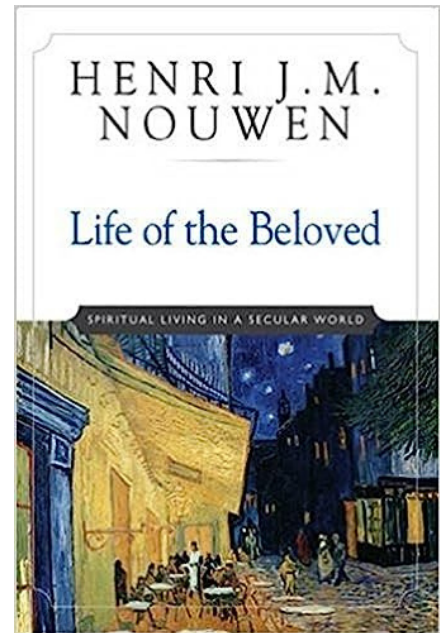
It begins with Lane’s suicide letter both photocopied and transcribed so that we can see what Lane said. Just when you think that’s going to be the hardest part, Roy responds to each line of the letter. Finally, Roy concludes the book by reflecting on the last 29 years—what has he learned? What does he regret? In true Roy fashion, even his answers to these questions are instructive. The pastoral nature of this book makes it required reading in my mind for all ministers, and suggested reading for parents as Roy’s reflection on what does and doesn’t matter as a dad is touching.

## Book Ends, cont'd

*Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* by Henri Nouwen

Yes, for the second quarter in a row I have read another book by Henri Nouwen. This one is interesting because it was intended to be his *raison d'être* (his reason for being) for Christianity. He writes the book as a sort of letter to a friend of his who is ethnically Jewish but religiously agnostic about what is so special about being a Christian. His answer is that being a Christian is about acknowledging, accepting, and living into God's belovedness. He divides his main argument into sections that reminds us of the communion liturgy: taken, blessed, broken, given. Just as Christ took

the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it, so too does God to us. We are chosen (taken). We are blessed by the continual love and presence of God. When we say "yes" to that blessing, we can come to face our own brokenness and see how God is the only answer to the deep suffering and pain that comes from being broken people. And then, we are ready to be given as a gift to the world as the beloved children of God. Ironically, the book was a failure of its intended purpose. Nouwen's friend found the book was still too "Christian" to help him. It was about the Christian life, but it wasn't compelling to him. But where there was failure, God brought success. The book has become a classic for Christians in learning to embrace God's love for them and has encouraged thousands of people since it was written.





## Next Quarter Calendar

Please note: some events may change

## AUGUST

/ 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	1	2 Isaiah Douglas Birthday	3	4	5
6 Adam and Lauren Tomlinson Anniversary	7 Rob and Gloria Jean Ehlers Anniversary	8 Elder's Meeting	9	10	11	12 7:30a Men's Breakfast 9:30a Mug 'n' Muffin
13 Welcome Lunch	14	15 Lyle and Linda Laufenberg Anniversary	16	17	18	19
20 Worship Team Meeting	21	22 Tom and Ann Sippy Anniversary	23	24	25	26 For Dane Service Event
27	28	29 Jim Staniforth Birthday Bill Schaeffer and Meg Schaeffer-Utter Anniversary	30	31	1	2

## SEPTEMBER

/ 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	1	2 Drew Schaeffer-Utter Birthday
3	4 Labor Day	5 Elder's Meeting	6	7 Nadine Miller Birthday	8	9 7:30a Men's Breakfast 9:30a Mug 'n' Muffin
10 Marty Davenport Birthday	11 Jeremiah Douglas Birthday	12 Jim and Sharon Staniforth Anniversary	13	14 Stella Muller Birthday	15	16
17 Martin Shields Birthday Keith and Merrlyn Schoville Anniversary	18 Baby Tomlinson #4 Due Date	19	20 David Hagens Birthday	21	22	23
24 SICOM Interest Meeting	25 Caleb Tomlinson Ashley Crutcher Birthday	26 Eva and Evan Quarm Liam Schaeffer-Utter Birthday	27 Anna Marie Morra Birthday	28	29	30 John Cash Birthday Estate Planning Seminar 7 pm

## Next Quarter Calendar, cont'd.

### OCTOBER

/ 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6 Linda Auer Birthday	7
8 Ed and Jerri Mooberry Anniversary	9	10 Elder's Meeting	11	12	13 Gloria Jean Ehlers Birthday	14 7:30a Men's Breakfast 9:30a Mug 'n' Muffin
15 Welcome Lunch	16	17 Sharon Staniforth Birthday	18	19	20	21
22 Children's Team Meeting	23	24 Grace Odoi Birthday	25 Fall Discipleship Class	26	27	28 Wayne Shockley Birthday Fall Family Event
29	30	31	1	2	3	4



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**Need Something? Let me know!**

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