

# Ministry Minute

## Westwood Staff Retreat

### “Teamwork Takes Trust”



It takes a dedicated team of players and coaches to win the World Series, the Stanley Cup, the NBA or WNBA Finals. For nearly a year, Westwood’s team of leaders has put in the hard work of a pro team and has aimed through a series of retreats to strengthen its teamwork dynamic and effectiveness.

The Westwood team wrapped up its fourth “training camp” in late May, following retreats in August and October 2023, and January 2024 facilitated by Sarah Carlsen of Carlsen Coaching and Consulting.

Carlsen specializes in working with leadership teams during transitions and began working with Westwood as the church started living into a new leadership model.

“The goal really was to strengthen and deepen relationships across the team so they could each bring their full gifts to the ministry of Westwood,” Carlsen said. “Continuing a healthy culture during times of change takes intention -- it doesn’t just happen. The aim was for the team to be aligned on how it will work and how it will do that work well.”

“Mission accomplished,” according to Pastor Sarah Scherschligt. “The retreats helped us all grow closer. This team really cares about each other,” she said. “Remembering that and spending time together helps us work well for the good of the church.”

Scherschligt also noted, “We decided to use the Enneagram system as a ‘lens’ through which team members could understand and appreciate the different approaches each brings to their work. We introduced it at the first retreat in August as the foundation for the work.”

“This has been a great tool to help us understand how best to work together,” said Pastor Jason Van Hunnik. “Our time together has also resulted in an even stronger sense of belonging and commitment to one another as a staff.”

In the simplest terms, the system is a detailed form of personality test. Its results can help team members understand their motivations and decision-making process as they make choices and plans within their work subsets – ministry, music, administration, etc. – and in the team as a whole.

Shorter sessions in October 2023 and January 2024 helped team members understand how personality and experience shape the way they and others deal with each other and conflict. Building skills for working across differences is essential. “Conflict often indicates something new is needed. If handled well, conflict can be a generative rather than a destructive force,” Carlsen explained.

“We have a staff that has great gifts. We want everyone to use them, and the vibe is one of celebration, not competition,” said Pastor Sarah.

“Staff retreats allow us to have fun and get to know each other in ways that day-to-day meetings and work don’t. It is a gift to be on this dynamic and dedicated staff,” said Dannica Olsen, Director of Youth Ministries at Westwood.

“The final session gave everyone a chance to reflect on what they’ve learned about working across differences and how to integrate that into the work of the church and its broader mission toward inclusion,” Carlsen said. “Self-awareness, relational awareness, and building trust are key to developing strong, effective, and inclusive teams and missions.”

“I took away a deeper understanding of how I show up as a team member, what motivates me, what are my needs, what pitfalls might show up when I’m not working with a healthy frame of mind,” said Sara Moran, Westwood’s Director of Congregational Care. “I also came away with a greater appreciation of my teammates after learning more about what motivates them, as well as some of their vulnerabilities and how that drives the way they work in our system as Westwood staff.”

Dannica had a similar take on the retreats’ value for the staff. “The more we learn about each other, the more we build trust and work together honoring each other’s stories and points of view,” said Dannica.

