

# Ministry Minute

## Ethical Wills

### “Sharing My Legacy”



Westwood’s Ethical Will sessions are helping people identify and share their ideals and beliefs, both for their sense of clarity and as a legacy gift to family and friends. “I find much value in being intentional in life. This process is another way to live with intention, to be thoughtful about priorities and values of life,” said Randy Romsdahl. He and his wife, Diana, are crafting ethical wills and share the experience with the small group of Westwood members they meet with monthly. “In this last third of life (intention) becomes paramount, Romsdahl said.

Westwood’s program, organized and adapted by Pastor Tania Haber, is structured around Dr. Barry K. Baine’s book and workbook, “Ethical Wills, Putting Your Values on Paper.” Initially, it brought together about 50 people. Others asked later for access to the materials. The in-person sessions, weekly writing prompts, and at-home work provide pathways to answers for those interested in defining what is important to them, the lessons that shaped them, and the beliefs and standards they value. “Four small groups are meeting to encourage each other and share their writing as they go,” Pastor Tania said. Others work independently. She emails the larger group two questions or writing prompts weekly. “Our ‘bookend’ to this will be a Legacy Sunday on May 5, where a few people will be sharing a little of their work,” she said.

For Karoline Pierson, a 20-year-plus member of Westwood, the process has been enlightening. “I thought I would do this for my family and my son, however...It turns out I’m doing it for me. What I’m choosing to include is what I’m interested in and how it aligns with my values. I plan to read it and record it so my family has my voice for the future. I really like that idea.” People often work to create a financial or estate plan, a funeral plan, and a health care plan for later years, Pastor Tania noted. But many don’t consider a written legacy of values and priorities. Pierson said she plans to pair her work with other late-life planning.

Romsdahl said he has thought about his values and priorities before, but through this process, he’s been forced to think about them in a way they can be delineated. “This process has a way of introducing some accountability.” He also values the peripheral benefits of the search. “The monthly sharing of this process will be another way of deepening our friendships and relationships,” said Romsdahl. He is the father of two grown sons and also grandparents nine children.

