

# Ministry Minute

## PRIDE 2024

### “Proud to show PRIDE”



If you painted a portrait of Westwood’s interfaith LGBTQIA+ inclusive rally in late June, it would reflect the laughter, hugs, smiles, friendships, connections, and joy of that evening.

It surely would be a depiction of “God’s love,” according to Pastor Sarah Scherschligt.

Westwood and Adath Jeshurun congregations hosted the evening at Westwood, including a parade along Cedar Lake Road, an offering of blessings affirming faith, welcoming speakers and representatives from a variety of services and organizations, and a shared picnic-style meal. And—not to be forgotten—an ice cream truck!

Westwood’s LGBTQIA+ group took the lead in organizing this year’s event with support from Pastor Sarah, who coordinated speakers and the link with Adath Jeshurun, who offered a blessing on the event and its participants.

“I think it was a public acknowledgment that people of a variety of sexualities and gender are affirmed here,” said Pastor Sarah of the activities. “It was a beautiful image of all of us coming together.”

Westwood is a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, which affirms a commitment to full participation in the church for those who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. It also theologically affirms that God made people with a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities. Its policies support inclusivity. Westwood’s LGBTQIA+ group also helps plan an acknowledgment of that RIC status in a January service, coordinates Westwood’s participation in the Golden Valley Pride Festival, and helps with the Pride worship service in June.

Gavin Berg, Westwood’s organist and facility manager, played a more substantial planning role in this year’s event and spoke at it. “I wanted to get across that it isn’t just about gay, straight, or color. It takes all of us to make these changes and shift the barometer,” Berg said. He was overwhelmed by the show of support.

Turnout for the June 2024 event, estimated at 150 people, was stronger than in past years.

“When we have an event, and I see that it’s showing support for those who might be in the community and also for the allies and all these people around supporting them no matter what they are or grow up to be. We had an impact beyond our two [faith] communities,” he said. “I enjoyed seeing not only Westwood come together and Adath join us, but I met people from the St. Louis Park community and other organizations and services.”

Overall, the event is a crucial effort, supporting two of Westwood’s core values, interfaith relationships and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity.

“I think part of our mission is to have joy when possible. It was a joyful event, and I think that was really evident,” Pastor Sarah said.



Adath Jeshurun & Westwood leadership teams in attendance



Gavin Berg