

# Ministry Minute

## A Simple Experiment

### Westwood Women's Retreat



The hypothesis: Relaxation, grace, a deeper faith life, a sense of community, and strong friendships will result from women spending time apart from their busy lives and together in reflection and introspection.

The ingredients: Westwood women, 1 1/2 days in a comfortable setting minus the typical daily distractions.

The chemistry: Psalm 139's "I Am Wonderfully Made" message and a little bit of "Barbie" magic.



Westwood's Women's Retreat at Mount Olivet Retreat Center in Farmington used that formula to bring some spiritual refreshment to an intergenerational group of 55 women in March. "We had women from their 20s up through their 80s," said Pastor Sarah Scherschligt. "It was a time of renewal and a time to focus on their life with God."

Led by Westwood member and Spiritual Advisor Anna Martinez and Pastors Sarah Scherschligt and Tania Haber, the program used the lens of the recent "Barbie" movie and Psalm 139 to examine what it means to navigate today's world as a woman of faith.

Women who chose to arrive at the retreat center on Friday night for an additional day had time for fellowship, games, and relaxation in the hot tub—Saturday morning offered time for hikes or yoga.

Saturday afternoon, evening, and Sunday morning were dedicated to sessions on self-compassion, life's journey, what mold you think you have to fit into, and on breaking that mold. Sessions combined time for learning, self-reflection, group work, and shared insights. "There was a lot of 'downtime' for people to do what they needed to do," Pastor Scherschligt said. "The aim was to connect them with formal programming but give them space to be renewed and step outside the hectic rhythm of life." Tricia Goede reflected, "It was the perfect balance to feel God's peace upon me, strengthen my faith through a fun and unique lens, and build stronger connections with wonderful women."

If the reviews are any indication, the chemistry was just right. "It was really fun, and there was so much laughter," Scherschligt said. Other women offered these reflections:

- ♦♦ One thing that stays with me is the realization of how many great women are around me at church. ...The "Barbie" theme gave a positive light-heartedness to this self-exploration activity.
- ♦♦ As women who are often critical of ourselves, I believe the time spent learning (or re-learning) how to treat ourselves with love and compassion is always a worthy reminder.
- ♦♦ I especially enjoyed the focus on mindfulness and self-compassion and would love it if there were options to continue this focus in a small group format.
- ♦♦ Give yourself grace.

While the Westwood Women's Retreat has a long history, this was only the second year of the retreat since COVID restrictions ended.