

Ministry Minute

Westwood Sailing Trip 2024

“Inspiration and introspection amid the wind and the water”



Pastor Tania Haber offers a playful comparison when she talks to people about Westwood’s Sailing Ministry each summer. She tells sailor wannabes that the annual Lake Superior sailing trips are easier and more fun than Pastor Jason Van Hunnik’s Canoeing Ministry in the Boundary Waters because sailors don’t have to carry their boat. (He, of course, gives it back by tempting paddlers with descriptions of unparalleled days and nights amid the natural beauty of the Northland’s woods and waters.)

Earlier this month, 28 people with Westwood ties boarded four sailboats at Bayfield, Wisconsin, for three days and nights around Lake Superior’s 22 Apostle Islands. Most years the weekend includes a trek to a lighthouse and a talk by a park ranger, hours enjoying the sun and the water, morning and evening devotions created by Pastor Tania and a Sunday morning communion service on an island beach. Weather sometimes drives the agenda.

The boats vary in size from 37 to 43 feet and sleep 6-8 people. Every crew member pitches in, learning how to sail, helping to keep the boat operational, and cleaning and cooking.

Pastor Tania launched Westwood’s sailing excursions about 20 years ago. Over the years, the number of sailors and skippers has ebbed and flowed, but a mix of single, married, young and retired sign on for the trip. Some are novices, others are experienced sailors.

Listening and sharing – both sailing knowledge and personal insight – take the helm for the weekend. Morning devotions sometimes become conversations that last until lunch.

“Conversations are very deep, and people are very vulnerable in an environment like that, which kind of takes you out of everything you know,” Pastor Tania said. “That opens people’s spirits to know God is working in them.”



Josh Edgar and his wife, Erin, joined the sailing group shortly after they became Westwood members in 2011. He’s been on 11 trips and became certified as a skipper six years ago. Erin re-joined the group for this year’s adventure after a few years’ hiatus.

“Every trip is amazing. The Apostle Islands are an incredible place,” Josh said. “Gorgeous scenery. A great connection to God. It’s a great way to enjoy Lake Superior.” He enjoys helping others learn to sail. “Our skippers not only love sailing, but they love teaching. We’ll talk you through what it means and how the boat works and how the wind works the sails,” he said.

He treasures most, though, the deeper conversations and connections he makes with other Westwood members.

“I always feel refreshed (after a trip). I’ve been centered and just connected to the rest of the community by being on the sailboat on a big lake like that,” he said. “One of the most amazing things is that you have time and space to have conversations that are not time bound. ... I feel very connected to several generations at Westwood and have made lifelong friendships.”

At day’s end everyone climbs onto one of the sailboats to share evening devotions.

“Some people say the devotions are key to the trip,” Pastor Tania said.

This year’s theme was Sabbath – connecting to God, nature, each other and one’s inner self. “Three days, six different devotions. It made me realize the whole trip is the Sabbath,” she said.