

## Ministry Minute

# Women's Study Group

### Spreading Support in Many Directions



Sometimes, the work of one Westwood group enhances the mission of another.

Westwood's Caring Response Team members show up to hold a hand, say a prayer, deliver a card, raise a spirit, or share a cup of coffee in some of Westwood members' loneliest or darkest moments.

Earlier this year, a small women's study group from Westwood used their time, talents, and some leftover supplies to make the Caring Response Team's work even more personal. Sheryl Burmaster, a women's study group member, had created greeting cards from old hymn sheets and decorative crosses for sale at Westwood's annual Holiday Fair and as part of a fundraiser for Rise Early Learning Center. They were a hit. "And I just thought, I have supplies yet, so why not make some for the Caring Response Team as some (members) overlap with this group," Burmaster said.

She took the supplies to a meeting and the group assembled 36 care cards decorated with familiar lines and titles from old hymns and ephemera like flowers and crosses. "We had a great time. There were about five or six of us and it only took us a couple of hours," Burmaster said. "We recognized it as a need. We've all helped family members or homebound parents, so we know what it means to be remembered," she added.



The Caring Response Team delivered them as Easter cards to some homebound and elderly in the congregation. "We knew these elders would know these hymns they sang for years and how touching it would be for them to receive a card that connects them to that experience of the church," Burmaster said. "Not only are they receiving a personal note, but the card was made by hand, too, by someone at their church."

The women's study group got its start during a time of congregational emphasis on "vocation." Some people were invited to start groups focused on interests. Burmaster asked a few friends and acquaintances. These days they are more than their origins – more activities, more kinds of people, and more connections. Single and partnered women are part of the 10-member unit that offers strong support for its members.

"Sometimes the women study a recommended book, sometimes they do Bible study, and sometimes they are a social group," said Sara Moran, Westwood's Director of Congregational Care.

"We usually do all the book studies (suggested for the congregation)," said Burmaster. They shared readings from Pastor Sarah's devotional book in a park setting last summer. But it is the strength of the women's connections that keeps it going. "We're a sisterhood. We're so close," Burmaster said. "We recently lost a member, and it was really hard, but we were there to support each other. We text each other about our crises. We have a group text going. We pray for each other."

And, sometimes, they lend a hand to other groups.