

# HOTLINE



Volume XXIV, Issue 11 & 12

Holiday 2024

## "Unification Process Update"

We have all been on quite the journey this summer and fall, as we have followed the winds of the Holy Spirits leading for our congregations. As of October 20th, both congregations voted to continue to pursue official unification. We are going to become one community of Presbyterian's in Dubuque!

This process will take time, and we appreciate your patience as we navigate new waters together. The leadership of both congregations and I are learning with you. I understand there are many questions, joys, and concerns about how the transition will happen; and can assure you the Partnership Taskforce will be working to make appropriate plans so space is held for ministry to continue to flourish. In the meantime, if someone is slower to respond or if we miss a beat -- we appreciate your grace.

### What are the next steps?

While "official/legal" unification will likely not take place until late into 2025 or early 2026, there are many ways our congregations can begin functioning as one body in Christ. The hope of the Partnership Taskforce is to engage these areas both organically and systematically. On Sunday, November 10th, the Partnership Taskforce met to prioritize actions that support our unification as a Christian community seeking to further the love and justice of Jesus Christ within and around us. **Your Partnership Taskforce members** appreciate your faithful prayers and encouragement: Chris Daniels (FPC), Kim David (WPC), Roger Ebertz (FPC), Rev. Stephanie Ells, Rev. Dan Emmert, Rich Henderson (WPC), Deb Stant (FPC), Tom Stovall (WPC), Sue Taylor (WPC), and Lindsey Ward (WPC). Additionally:

- John Knox Presbytery will affirm our desire to ministerially and legally unify at their quarterly meeting on November 19th, 2024.
- On November 19th, 2024, John Knox Presbytery will appoint an *Administrative Commission* to work with the *Partnership Taskforce*. The *Administrative Commission* = a small group of Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders from JKP, along with a representative from each unifying congregation.
- Beginning in January, I will function as the pastor of our budding combined congregation, except for the moderation of the WPC Session, which must be kept separate until the legal merger has progressed. A "memorandum of understanding", or MOU, is being drafted by the Partnership Taskforce to outline my job description, which will be shared widely when it has become available. My pastoral "call" will remain under the direction, supervision, and support of the FPC congregation, and effectively, WPC will "rent" my services through a Session contract until we are a single congregation, which can then consider calling & installing me as pastor together.
- A "plan of union" will be developed by *Partnership Taskforce* and *Administrative Commission*; addressing items such as new articles of incorporation, new congregational bylaws, real and personal property, etc.

The "plan of union" will be communicated and affirmed by congregational input, and vote as appropriate.

Here is the prayer I shared on behalf of our community at the recent Unity Celebration Meal. I invite you to hold this prayer closely, speaking it with your mouth and heart as often as is possible in the days and months ahead of us on this sacred journey God leads us on:

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"Creator God, our very present help, we who are engaged in the good works that you have prepared for us are aware that our way is often fraught with uncertainty, and even grief. Keep watch, therefore, over FPC and WPC, who now labor in a creative work of unification, through which we seek to birth into this broken world, a new community that might be representative of your redemptive movements -- awakening hearts with beauty and wonder, naming with is true and holy, giving voice to worldless yearnings, salving wounds, foreshadowing glory, and echoing what is eternal. As we set about this task together, root us in relational wellness and strong community. Where there are faultlines already existent in fears, insecurities, relationships, emotions, or particular besetting temptations, give extra grace and send swift aid, O Lord. Secure and protect these vulnerable places where the enemy is likely to focus pressure. Upon the steps that lie ahead for us, scatter wellsprings of delight and well-timed moments of inspiration. As we wait and work, bestow upon us a deep knowledge of, and love for, the God we serve. Shape this church, Holy Spirit, to be excellent and beautiful, that we might become more than the sum of our parts. Bless, break, and multiply the fruitfulness of it for the nurturing of many. In the name of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, we pray. So be it. Amen."

(adapted from "Every Moment Holy, Volume III")

In humble gratitude for the gift of serving and following Jesus alongside you all,

Pastor Stephanie Ells

### Stewardship Update for the 2025 Ministry Year

In October 2024, 180 pledge cards were mailed. To date, 58 pledge cards have been returned to the church office.

Of the 58 pledge cards that have been received, 20 pledges were increased (by \$22,312) and 18 pledges were decreased (by \$41,886).

As of November 7<sup>th</sup>, the total amount pledged for the 2025 Ministry Year is \$266,084.

God has inspired us with an ever-developing vision of the future of Westminster, but the road ahead will depend upon each of us. Where we have been does not necessarily determine where we are going. Your commitment in this season and in the year ahead helps make the way forward for Westminster.

To those of you who have made a financial pledge, the Stewardship team and Session thank you for your commitment.

While Session will begin its budget deliberations based on the amount pledged to date, **it is not too late to submit your financial pledge for the 2025 Ministry Year.**

### Serving Our Neighbors at Thanksgiving



Members of the First and Westminster family of faith will join together on Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 28) to provide a place at the table, a free traditional holiday meal and fellowship for anyone in our community who wants to join us. Our volunteers will serve 100 or more of our neighbors between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. No reservations are needed.

Thanks to all those who have volunteered to serve that day. The response has been overwhelming and we have 36 volunteers which will be plenty.

**We Need Pies for Thanksgiving!** We would appreciate donated pies for the Thanksgiving meal. While pumpkin is the Thanksgiving traditional pie, fruit and other pies are okay too. Pies can be delivered to church by 10:30 AM on Thanksgiving Day.

## Sunday Nights...Food Faith & Fellowship

BRING YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO WESTMINSTER ON SUNDAY NIGHTS  
ENJOY A MEAL, ACTIVITIES AND CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

### NOVEMBER 17

5:30 Meal and Fellowship

6:00 – 7:00 INTERGENERATIONAL CHRISTMAS WORKSHOP

Come join the fun! We will be making Christmas wreaths for decorating the church and Advent centerpiece wreaths with weekly scripture and prayers for families to take home. All ages will be working together. With some guidance let's get creative and meaningful.



NO SUNDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP ON NOVEMBER 24

## ADVENT SUNDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP

### DECEMBER 1

2:30 Meet at Church

2:45 – 4:30 ALL CHURCH CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Via the Dubuque Trolley

5:00 Hot Chocolate, Light Meal, decorate Christmas Cookies



### DECEMBER 8

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT at First Presbyterian Church during morning worship

*A Christmas Program is in the works!* If you would like to join in the planning, preparing, or performing -- please contact Sara Blair at [bryansarablair@gmail.com](mailto:bryansarablair@gmail.com). The Christmas Program is a long-standing tradition for FPC, and a special way to hear the message of what the birth of Christ meant for the world during the Advent season. Sara welcomes your questions and support!

5:30 Meal and Fellowship at Westminster

6:00 – 7:00 The movie "The Shepherd" A special Christmas presentation for all ages

A take on the birth of Jesus through the eyes of some local shepherds

### DECEMBER 15

5:30 Meal and Fellowship

6:00 – 7:00 Childcare, 3- 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade

Mom's on Fire

Adult Class: Come and meet Micheal Zoughbi,



an Arab Christian Palestinian residing in the historic city of Bethlehem, Jerusalem. For the past 40 years, he and his wife Carmen, have traveled to the USA, carrying with them the voices and needs of the Christian community in Bethlehem. Through speaking engagements in churches and sharing exquisite olive wood products crafted by local Christian families, they strive to support those facing immense challenges.

Due to ongoing conflict, tourism in Bethlehem has plummeted, leaving many families without a reliable income. For over a year, these families have depended on selling beautiful olive wood carvings but now struggle to provide basic necessities for their loved ones.

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Micheal, emphasizes that we can make a difference. Even if we can't visit Bethlehem in person, our support can change lives. They offer a selection of stunning olive wood carvings available in the US, traveling with these meaningful crafts in their van.

Micheal, will share his experiences of living in the Christmas city, where celebrating it can be challenging and difficult, relating it to the Advent season.

Olive wood carvings will be on display, Sunday morning, December 15<sup>th</sup> for the congregation to view and may be purchased in Fellowship Hall at Sunday night fellowship.



**NO SUNDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP ON DECEMBER 22 OR 29**

## CHECK OUT THIS GREAT FAMILY WINTER GET AWAY about 1 hour from Dubuque

**DECEMBER 20-22**

**BEAR CREEK (CAMP WYOMING) YOUTH WINTER RETREAT**

### **Wintertainment**

This is the perfect chance for kids to get away while parents do their last-minute Christmas shopping! Wintertainment is the ultimate winter camp experience. It might only be a 48-hour retreat, but there is enough fun, games, laughter, and enjoyment to last a week! Snow or no snow, we're turning Winter into a season to celebrate. Break out the hot chocolate and snowballs. Gear up for the Winter Olympics and trips down the sledding hill. Invite your friends and come ready to play games, compete in silly challenges, and make some of your best memories this year.

Grades 2-6

Friday, December 20 at 5pm – Sunday, December 22 at 5pm

Early Bird Rate: \$150 (register before December 1)

Regular Rate: \$175 (registration deadline is December 8)

### **Teen Bash**

This retreat is filled with plenty of excitement, a little bit of crazy, and a whole lot of fun! Just for middle and high schoolers, we're making sure this is a retreat to remember! Go fire spinning, sled down the tubing hill, meet new friends, have a late night pizza party, and compete in a game of Organized Chaos. With or without snow, Teen Bash is everything anyone could want at Winter Camp. Bring your friends, grab your sleeping bag, and leave the homework at home. We're ending the year in the best way possible with 48-hours of camp, crazy, worship, friends, and adventure.

Grades 7-12

Friday, December 20 at 5pm – Sunday, December 22 at 5pm

Early Bird Rate: \$150 (register before December 1)

Regular Rate: \$175 (registration deadline is December 8)

## Westminster's Rummage Sale Report So Much More Than Just a Sale!

Thank you again to all who donated items and worked many long hours to make Westminster's rummage sale another huge success. To date our sales total just over \$2000, however we still have a few more items to sell. But honestly, to me, our sale is about "*so much more*" than how much money is raised. It's about "**building relationships with our community and helping those in need.**" Each year we see more and more familiar faces and are told many times over about how this is their favorite sale and how much they look forward to it every year! We had conversations that were faith driven and then some with shoppers who just needed an impartial listening ear. Then at the end of the sale when all of the shoppers were gone, the remaining items were shared through donations of clothing & bedding to The Open Closet; small treasures for Bingo prizes to Sunnycrest Manor; and t-shirts, blankets & sheets to a group of women who turn them into diapers and quilts to be sent to those in need. The Cheevers took all unsold books to St. Anthony's for their book sale. The remainder of your donated items went to St. Vincent DePaul. **It's incredible to me the outreach of mission and goodwill that occurs in those few days!** All due to your generous donations.

Thank you so much!! Sue Case

## Mission Team News

The Mission Team approved the following donations to care for God's people in need: \$1,000 to PCUSA Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to help those affected by the recent hurricanes Helene and Milton. We also approved \$1,156 to the Dubuque Rescue Mission to help with the men they work with. We gave \$1,000 to People In Need to help those facing eviction or the threat of loss of utility service. We gave a donation to of \$2,000 to St. Stephen's via River Bend Food Bank for the Dubuque County Food Program that we participate in. We donated \$500 for the PCUSA Hunger Program which we are a part of. We gave \$100 to Bread for the World.

Mission Team is always looking for new members. Now with the combining of our two churches lets have a truly combined Mission Team. The next meeting is December 9th at 5:30 pm in the Work Room. If you have any questions, please contact: Linda Stovall at [LinStov@aol.com](mailto:LinStov@aol.com).



***Save the date!***

**NEXT HUNGER OUTREACH**

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21st**

***"For I was hungry and you gave me food!"***

***Volunteers will be needed!***



## It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas



### Wreaths for Church Decorations

Would you like to donate a Christmas wreath in honor of or in memory of a special someone? Fill out an envelope on the counter in church or email Mary Kay at [marykay@wpcdbq.org](mailto:marykay@wpcdbq.org) and mail your check for **\$23**. Include the name of who your wreath is in memory of. Donations accepted through Dec. 15.

### A Brighter Christmas is in the Bag!

The members of First and Westminster are teaming up to help the Dubuque Food Pantry by providing donations of food and other items to fill the Christmas Baskets for our needy family neighbors.

Here's how it works and how you can help. On Sundays, December 1st or December 8<sup>th</sup>, pick up a reusable tote bag before or after worship (or from the WPC church office during the week). A list of needed items will be provided. Take the bag home and fill it up with some of the food and other items from the needs list.

Bring the filled bag back to church on Sundays, December 8<sup>th</sup> or December 15<sup>th</sup>. All the food will be blessed during worship on December 15<sup>th</sup> and delivered to the Dubuque Food Pantry the next morning. Thanks for helping with this Mission Team project.

### Decking the Halls

On **Sunday, November 24th**, immediately following worship, you are encouraged to stay and decorate the FPC sanctuary for advent and Christmas; then on **Sunday, December 1**, do the same in the WPC sanctuary! Each year, we enjoy doing the decorating together as a church, and there are jobs for all ages.

A few strong bodies are needed (since the decorations are stored in the basement) and **MANY HANDS** can lighten the load. 30 - 60 minutes of your time can really help!



Soon...we will receive a list from Bethany Home for some Residents who will be on the Angel Tree. Their wrapped gifts will be due by December 11th.



### Deacons Fund:

### Memorial Poinsettias for Church Decorations

*Donations accepted through Dec. 15.*

Email [marykay@wpcdbq.org](mailto:marykay@wpcdbq.org) or call the office at 583-1729 and mail your \$15 or \$25 memorial donation. Include who your Poinsettia is in memory of or in honor of.



### SCRIP "Give more without spending more!"

You can help support our operating budget by purchasing gift cards at the Scrip table in the NARTHEX, ON SUNDAYS or in the office. Get information on the new RaiseRight pilot program for online shopping or pick up pamphlets on how to join or scan the QR CODE.

Buy Scrip Online  
(scan code)



The more participants the more we earn for Westminster.

## Sunday Morning Advent Worship

Every Sunday at 9:30am



**Words For the Beginning:** Advent is a season of endings and beginnings. As the calendar year comes to an end, a new church year begins. Christ's birth ushers us into new ways of living and loving, and yet, the world as we know it spins madly on. When we experience seasons filled with endings and beginnings, we need reminders, words that feel like steady ground, like a path for our feet as we step forward into the unknown. May we experience these familiar words anew as we consider Scriptural words spoken in the story of Christmas. You won't want to miss Sunday mornings! There will also be Advent Devotionals available to guide you through this season.



## Blue Christmas Worship Service

Wednesday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Our annual **Community Blue Christmas Service** will be held at First Congregational United Church of Christ (255 W 10th St, Dubuque) on **Wednesday, December 18th at 6:30pm**. Childcare will be available. This gentle, contemplative service offers space for the complex feelings we may be carrying during this holiday season. Come and be reminded God walks with us in the valleys and in our pain, as well as in our joy and celebration.

## Christmas Eve Worship

Saturday, December 24th at 7:00pm



Our Lessons & Carols **Christmas Eve Worship** will be held at **First Presbyterian Church** on Tuesday, December 24th at 7:00pm. Communion will be shared as we celebrate our newborn king, Jesus the Christ!

## Christmas Joy Offering

When Jesus was born among us, he came as helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace and salvation to his people. In all our vulnerabilities, struggles and triumphs, Jesus became one of us – leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal life. The perfect gift.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to use, with generous support of church leaders among us – past, present and future – who have pointed us to God. We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much. Through the Christmas Joy Offering we support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect to us, Jesus Christ.

In December, more information will be shared regarding this annual Offering during worship at First and Westminster. You will also see Christmas Joy Offering envelopes in the pews. Please prayerfully consider a financial gift to support the Christmas Joy Offering. If we each give a little, it will add up to a lot. **Donations are due by Dec. 29th.**



**WEATHER BAD? IS CHURCH CANCELED?**

If inclement weather exists, **Sunday morning worship** may be moved from FPC to WPC OR canceled. Such a decision will be made no later than 7am Sunday morning and will be posted on the WPC and FPC website and emailed to both congregations. If Sunday morning worship is canceled, there will be no Sunday evening activities. **During the week**, we will follow the Dubuque Community Schools closings and/or delays. Please be diligent in planning for winter weather circumstances.

*The Sympathy of the Congregation is extended to the family and friends of:*

- Bill Brittain, member
- Gladys Porter, member

**MISSION GARDEN WRAP UP**

We have harvested & cleaned 1752.6 pounds of produce this year in our Mission Garden. We could not have done this without the help of all our volunteers who planted, weeded, watered, harvested, cleaned and taken the produce to the Dubuque Food Pantry. We also want to thank all those who helped clean up the garden sites and getting them ready for next year.

A big thank you goes out to those that have their own garden & brought in their extra produce to go to the Food Pantry. Their is still a need for food!

Again -- thanks you for all the support this year.

Marsha & Rich



*Care Notes* are available in the narthex.

These 10 page leaflets cover subjects such as grief, depression, and prayer.

Take a look!

**Financial Stewardship through October 31, 2024**

(numbers rounded to the nearest 1,000)

2024 Income	\$494,930.30
2024 Expenses	294,944.50
Income Over Expenses	199,985.80

The overage includes \$52,539 of pre-paid pledges and not paying a full time pastor's salary for a half of year along with an open Faith Formation position and other positions that were open in the beginning of the year.

**Year End Giving**

December is traditionally a generous month at Westminster & First Presbyterian. Many people complete their pledges before the end of the year, and many people give extra so we finish the year in the black.

Thank you for your financial support of First and Westminster Presbyterian Churches.

In order to have your contribution included on your 2024 **Contribution Statement**, please make sure it arrives at the office by December 29th.

Becky Jenkins, Financial Secretary

**WPC Holiday Office Hours**

For Thanksgiving, the office will close at NOON Wed., Nov. 27th and ALL DAY Thurs., & Friday, Nov. 28th & 29th .



For Christmas, since the Holiday is on a Wednesday, the office will close at NOON on Christmas Eve and ALL DAY Wed. & Thurs. Dec. 25 & 26. The office will also be closed Wed., January 1st for New Year's Day.



**Snowbirds...**

Help us to save on postage! Please notify the office when you leave for a period of time, so we can send important mail to your temporary address. Thank you!



**THE DUBUQUE CHORALE CHILDREN'S CHOIR**  
 DIRECTED BY KARMELLA SELLERS  
**DR. CHARLES BARLAND**  
 ORGANIST  
**JOHN EBY, Ph.D**  
 LORAS COLLEGE

**STILL  
 GRATEFUL**

**42ND ANNUAL INTERFAITH  
 THANKSGIVING SERVICE**

**4:00 PM SUNDAY, NOV. 24, 2024**  
**CHURCH OF THE  
 RESURRECTION**  
**4300 ASBURY RD.**

STREAMING AVAILABLE: [HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/RESDBQ/LIVE-IDEO](http://www.facebook.com/RESDBQ/LIVE-IDEO)

**HOSTED BY DUBUQUE AREA CONGREGATIONS UNITED**  
**OFFERINGS OF NON-PERISHABLE FOOD & PAPER  
 GOODS FOR THE DUBUQUE FOOD PANTRY AND/OR MONEY  
 FOR PEOPLE IN NEED (PIN) WELCOMED**



**UD HONORS JON!**

Westminster member Jon Davison was recently awarded the 2024 University of Dubuque Distinguished Teaching and Service Award. Jon is a 1961 UD graduate.

In 1966, Jon began his coaching career at UD, where he would dedicate 40 years of service to UD and its student-athletes. He has served an Elder and Deacon at WPC. Thank you, Jon, for being a faithful and caring servant.

Children of Abraham is holding its next community Conversation on the topic of "Holy Curiosity" at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Nov. 21 at 7 p.m. This session will be oriented toward practices of generous listening, active engagement in fruitful dialogue with people who disagree or see differently from us.

Children of Abraham is an inter-faith peacebuilding effort involving people from many congregations and faith and non-faith perspectives in the city of Dubuque and beyond. This multi-generational, multi-worldview community is oriented around learning about and from perspectives other than one's own and practices "generous listening" as a core feature of civil dialogue.

2024-2025  
**Children of Abraham**

Children of Abraham creates an atmosphere of civic life that builds inter-religious solidarity, cooperation and friendship. We do this through careful listening and generous sharing of ideas and traditions. Normally, we're in person.

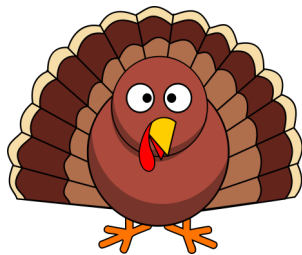
[www.cofabraham.org](http://www.cofabraham.org)

<b>September 26:</b> Religion and Politics - Loras College Ballroom (Alumni Campus Center)	<b>January 16:</b> Intra-Faith Diversity: Jesus - Emmaus Bible College
<b>October 17:</b> What's in a Name? - Temple Beth El Sukkot celebration (6:30pm)	<b>February 20:</b> Artificial Intelligence: Human and Divine? - Tri-State Islamic Center
<b>November 21:</b> Holy Curiosity - Lord of Life Lutheran Church	<b>March 20:</b> Prosperity: Good, Bad, or Ugly? - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
	<b>April 10:</b> Interfaith Marriage - Shalom Center

We like to be in person, but we do offer Zoom from time-to-time. Just email John to get the Zoom link: [john.eby@loras.edu](mailto:john.eby@loras.edu). Or, just view our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/cofabraham>.



Westminster Presbyterian Church  
2155 University Ave  
Dubuque IA 52001



To watch the live stream of Sunday Worship please go to our Website at [wpcdbq.org](http://wpcdbq.org) or watch on Facebook.

Westminster has a shiny new dishwasher that is a much-needed item since our old one was coming to the end of its days. It was made possible by gifts to the capital campaign fund a few years ago.

Thank you!



**Join Us for Worship  
9:30 a.m. Sundays**

Contact Information:

**2155 University Ave.  
Dubuque, IA 52001  
563-583-1729**

**CONNECT WITH US**

[www.wpcdbq.org](http://www.wpcdbq.org)

[firstpresdbq.org](http://firstpresdbq.org)

**Join us for  
Communion at  
Bethany Home**

**Nov. 17 & 24**

**Dec. 15 & 22**