

# HOTLINE

WE ARE ONE IN THE SPIRIT

WE ARE ONE IN THE LORD

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1684 IOWA ST. | DUBUQUE, IA | [firstpresdbq.org](http://firstpresdbq.org)

## WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2155 UNIVERSITY AVE | DUBUQUE, IA | [wpcdbq.org](http://wpcdbq.org)

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## PARTNERSHIP TASK FORCE UPDATE

# Beginning the Journey Together

The FPC-WPC Partnership Task Force has been empowered by the Session to guide our congregations through the unification process. In the interest of transparency, we bring you the first edition of *The Unity Message*. The purpose of this communication is to inform and engage both congregations in the process of unifying into one vibrant community of Christian faith. This will be an ongoing publication and documentation of our journey of unification.

We are excited to embark on this journey of unification together! As we come together as one community, we have a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our history and continue our PC(USA) presence in the Dubuque area, strengthen our bonds, share our diverse gifts, and enrich our worship experience. and to create a welcoming space for everyone.

Your voices and contributions are invaluable in this process, and we encourage you to participate actively as we move forward. Let's celebrate this new chapter in our shared faith journey!

### Our Objective

The Partnership Task Force is dedicated to fostering a vibrant and cohesive community by focusing on four key areas:

**Worship:** Led by Roger Ebertz and Susan Taylor. They will focus on enhancing our worship experiences to reflect our shared Presbyterian faith and values, creating an inclusive and spiritually enriching environment for all. Collaborating with Pastor Stephanie and key committees of both congregations to bring together our worship traditions and foster new ones.

**Care and Culture:** Led by Tom Stovall and Deb Stant. They will be building a supportive culture that nurtures relationships, promotes spiritual growth and aims to ensure that every member feels valued and connected. Collaborating with existing Care Team members to bring together our processes to strengthen our approach to congregational needs.

**Technology and Communication:** Led by Chris Daniels and Kim David. They will be focused on leveraging technology to improve communication and engagement,

ensuring information flows seamlessly and effectively throughout our congregation. Collaboration with those involved in systems, processes, and communication, evaluating, blending and developing new solutions that strengthen our toolbox.

**Finance and Assets:** Led by Lindsey Ward and Rich Henderson. Stewarding our financial resources and assets wisely to support the mission and vision of our unified community, moving us toward long-term sustainability and growth. Working directly with both Finance and Properties committees, understand existing finance practices, analyze ownership of assets and develop blended plans for a unified approach. They will work closely with the John Knox Presbytery Administrative Commission to navigate legal requirements such as new articles of incorporation, church bylaws, etc.

### Process Overview and Updates

The Partnership Task Force is meeting every two weeks. Together and with the help of many, they have started setting goals, activities and timelines that will lead us through the next 12 - 24 months.

### A brief overview of accomplishments to date:

- Initial Assessment – met with leaders and committee members from each church to identify common values, goals, and concerns regarding the unification process. We have engaged with the John Knox Presbytery who will be working with us directly by assigning an Administrative Commission to help move us forward.
- Formation of working groups focused on Worship, Care and Culture, Technology and Communication, and Finances and Assets. We've assigned responsibilities and set objectives.
- Draft of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining specific job responsibilities for Pastor Stephanie leading up to final unification.
- Development of an ongoing communication tool for our congregations.

**Upcoming Objectives Overview:** Congregational engagement including listening sessions, written and

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verbal updates, committee meetings, and planning sessions. Through assistance with the JKP Administrative Commission, develop a final unification plan. This is a complicated, lengthy process that could take between 6–12 months. It will require final approval from the Presbytery.

- Implementation of unification plan. Implementing the plan focusing on key areas as combined worship services, shared events, and integrated communication channels. Implementation is also a complicated, lengthy process, estimated between 6–12 months.
- Ongoing evaluation. Establish a feedback loop to assess the effectiveness and progress of the unification making any necessary adjustments.
- Planned celebration of unity. Date to be determined.

### Engagement Opportunities

We are excited to invite all members of our congregations to engage in a meaningful journey of unification. This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to share their voices, ideas, and talents as we come together to create a reinvigorated Christian church. Your participation is essential in shaping our shared vision and fostering connection.

## Westminster Stewardship Update

Here is where we stand on our Stewardship Campaign. To date, we received 81 pledge cards totaling \$321,050.20.

- 34 pledges increased by \$28,933.20
- 24 pledges stayed the same
- 20 pledges decreased by \$43,886.00
- There were 3 new pledges

Last year we received 92 pledges totaling \$310,249.00.

It's through these pledges that we are able to:

- Operate our church, and pay our pastor as well as other employees.
- Provide the food give away four times a year.
- Purchase seeds to grow food in our church gardens so we can donate produce to the food pantry.
- Provide meals for the seminary students at UD eight times during the year.
- Put on the Trunk or Treat event for kids.
- Offer the Mom's on Fire Group.
- Provide the Sunday night meals that support the youth group, Mom's on Fire, and the adult events.

Your pledge funds allow us to do these and so many other things in our community that make a difference.

We are looking for those who have not returned their pledge cards to take time and return them.

### Address Concerns

We want to assure you that the Partnership Task Force is here to support you every step of the way! If you have questions, concerns or ideas regarding this unification process, please don't hesitate to reach out to any one of us. We value your input and are committed to providing clear communication and guidance. As we embark on this exciting journey of unification, let us embrace the possibilities that lie ahead with open hearts and minds.

### Contact Information

#### Care and Culture Leads:

Tom Stovall – tomstov@aol.com

Deb Stant – madestt@aol.com

#### Worship Leads:

Susan Taylor – setaylor5775@att.net

Roger Ebertz – rebertz@gmail.com

#### Technology and Communication Leads:

Chris Daniels – danielzez83@gmail.com

Kim David – ksmd.thegymbdubue@gmail.com

#### Finance and Asset Leads:

Lindsey Ward – ward.lindsey.m@gmail.com

Richard Henderson – hs3eagles@gmail.com

**WORSHIP LOCATION: Beginning Sun., Jan. 5th,** we will worship at WPC every week through the end of March. The Sessions of both congregations have approved this to provide for optimal safety and ease during our coldest weather. We will continue to distribute the offering to FPC on the 2nd & 4th Sundays, and to WPC on the 1st, 3rd, & 5th Sundays and will have reminders in the bulletin each week for your convenience.

**WEATHER BAD? IS CHURCH CANCELED?** If inclement weather exists, Sunday morning worship may be canceled. This decision will be made no later than 7:00 am Sunday morning and will be posted on the WPC and FPC websites 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.

## Financial Report

### Through December 30th, 2024

Income.....	\$565,400.94
Expenses .....	\$347,352.42
Income over Expenses .....	\$218,048.52

## New Office Hours

**Starting Jan. 6th, Becky Jenkins** will be in the office:  
Mon. and Wed. 9 am – 2 pm, Tues. 12:15 – 2 pm

# FAITH EXPLORATION

FOOD • FAITH • FELLOWSHIP

Sunday Evenings  
5:30pm – Meal provided  
6–7:00pm – Classes for All  
Moms on Fire!  
*Childcare Provided*

## The Whole Church Learning Together! Feasting on the Word

During January and February, children and adults will explore the same Bible passages as are being presented in Sunday morning worship. We are all diving into scripture together, to learn about the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry and what His example means for how we live our lives as his followers.

Each age group will have appropriate learning opportunities, but the lessons will be the same. This is an opportunity to deepen your biblical knowledge

and reflect on how the message applies to our living as disciples of Christ. We hope this helps families and friends alike to foster their faith together.

**Sunday Night Bible Study led by Dan Emmert and Roger Ebertz** – Classes start at 6:00 pm following the Faith Formation meal at 5:30 pm.

**Thursday morning Bible Study led by Shirley Meriwether** – 11:00am – WPC board room.

### BIBLE STUDY TOPICS

#### JANUARY

Jan. 5	Matthew 2:1–12	The Road Isn't Straight
Jan. 12	Luke 3:15–17, 21–22	Baptism of Jesus
Jan. 19	John 2:1–11	The Wedding at Cana
Jan. 26	Luke 4:14–21	Beginning of Jesus' Galilean Ministry

#### FEBRUARY

Feb. 2	Luke 4:21–30	Jesus Announces Good News to the Poor
Feb. 9	Luke 5:1–11	Jesus Calls Disciples to Fish for People
Feb. 16	Luke 6:17–26	Blessings and Woes - Pastor on Vacation
Feb. 23	Luke 6:27–38	Love for Enemies

## Special Presentation – Sunday after Morning Worship

Westminster Fellowship Hall

### The Presbyterians of Dubuque

On Sunday, February 2, join us for a presentation by **Merrill Crawford**. Beginning in 1833 up to the present day we will follow five historical Presbyterian congregations in Dubuque, including the original First, Second, Third (Now Gracepoint) and Westminster Presbyterian Churches, and the original German Evangelical Church (now First Presbyterian Church). Along the way, we'll note the key roles Dubuque Presbyterians played in creation and support of Higher

Education Institutions, (particularly the University of Dubuque and UDTS), as well as Bethany Home.

We're allotting about an hour for this introductory look at our history in Dubuque. If time permits, we will share a few additional stories about present-day First and Westminster churches. We also may find interest in preparing follow-up sessions to further explore details about key individuals and happenings in the interwoven histories of our two congregations over the past 177 years.



## Let's Fill the Care Cart!

Starting this month, First and Westminster will join together to help those in need in our community. Look for the **Care Cart** located in the back of the sanctuary at Westminster. We'll rotate recipients as follows:

**First and Third Week – Dubuque Food Pantry** to help feed local families. (No egg cartons).

**Second Week – Opening Doors.** Items needed are: High efficiency laundry detergent, tall trash bags, Clorox disinfecting wipes, toilet paper, paper towels, Dawn soap, liquid hand soap, and personal items such as toothpaste, tooth brushes, etc.

**Fourth Week – Dubuque Rescue Mission.** Toiletry items: body wash/shampoo (no bars) toothbrushes/toothpaste, deodorant, underwear, granola bars, beef jerky, fruit snacks, Chapstick, first aid supplies, high efficiency laundry detergent (pods).

If you have questions contact Linda Stovall, Mission Chair at [linstov@aol.com](mailto:linstov@aol.com).

## Spreading the Gift of Warmth

We need members who either knit or crochet to kick off the 2025 Season creating hats and scarves for the winter months in November and December. The Mission Team will provide the yarn for your services. **Contact Linda Stovall to get started** [linstov@aol.com](mailto:linstov@aol.com).

In 2024 we gave scarves/hats to the following:

**Maria House:** 20 adult/teen hats and 8 children's hats.

**Teresa Shelter:** 20 adult hats and 1 child's hat.

**Dubuque Rescue Mission:** 20 hats.

**Lantern Center:** 5 hats/scarves for children, 5 hats for men, 5 hats and scarves for women.

**Thanksgiving Dinner:** 12 hats and scarves.

**Hunger Outreach on December 21:** 8 hats/scarves for children, 21 hat and scarves for women, and 14 hats and scarves for men.

## Volunteers Needed

Please consider helping with the following for 2025:

- **Liturgist** – One per Sunday
- **Two greeters** and **two ushers** per service
- **Two families** to serve and provide snacks after the church service each Sunday. Suggested – 3 dozen cookies or mini muffins, and water or juice for the youth.

Please sign up at the Information Table at the back of the Westminster sanctuary.

Thanks for your help!

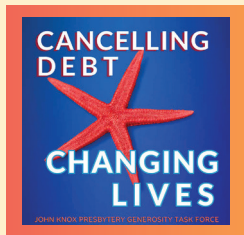
## Thank You From People In Need (PIN)

On behalf of the Board of Directors of People In Need (PIN), please accept our thanks to the members of First and Westminster Presbyterian Churches for their generosity in designating the Christmas Eve offering to the work of PIN. Our mission is to assist families facing emergencies to avoid eviction from housing or the shut off of utilities (electric, gas and water). We are a totally volunteer organization and funded 100% by donations.



PIN also owes a debt of gratitude to Westminster for providing us with a "home" for many years as a place to receive mail, keep records and to hold meetings. This is truly appreciated.

The next meeting of the PIN Board of Directors will be held at Westminster on Wed., Jan. 15 at 5:15 pm. We welcome any guests to attend who might be interested in joining us in our mission and finding out more about us. If you have questions please contact Tom Stovall, President of the PIN Board of Directors, at [tomstov@aol.com](mailto:tomstov@aol.com) or at 563-581-7220.



## Starfish Campaign Shines

The final numbers are in! The churches in the John Knox Presbytery gave a total of **\$36,201.99**, which will eliminate **\$3,620,199.00** of medical debt in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Thank you to everyone who purchased starfish cookies last September.



# A Season of Giving to Our Community

Under the leadership of the Mission Team, it was a very busy holiday season as members of both First and Westminster teamed up to demonstrate God's love in our community through our food ministry to combat hunger and food insecurity. Here are the highlights.



## FREE COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING MEAL

On November 28th our churches teamed up to serve free Thanksgiving Day meals and fellowship to members of the community. Members of both congregations provided lots of pies and the food was prepared by the University of Dubuque. A really great group of 35 volunteers served a total of 102 meals and provided fellowship.



## A BRIGHTER CHRISTMAS IS IN THE BAG

Again, our churches teamed up to provide food and hygiene items for the Dubuque Food Pantry to provide Christmas baskets to needy neighbors in the community. Each member family was asked

to take a tote bag and return it back on December 15th with needed items. The results were 114 bags returned containing 1,242 lbs. of food and other items. It was enough food to provide 1,035 meals.

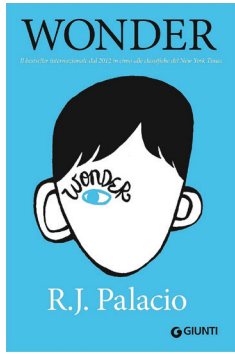


## CHRISTMAS HUNGER OUTREACH

On December 21st about 34 volunteers from First Presbyterian, Westminster Presbyterian and First Baptist Churches, along with volunteers from the community teamed up in frosty single-digit temperatures to provide food to their hungry and food-insecure neighbors at Christmas. A total of 171 families (491 people) received over 6,266 lbs. of food, enough to provide 5,222 meals. Knitted winter hats and scarves provided by church members were also distributed along with candy canes and wishes for a Merry Christmas.



# Like to Read? Join Our Book Group



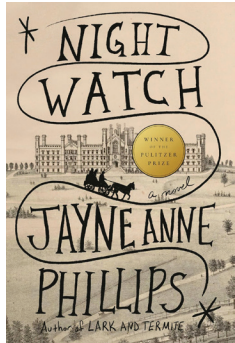
Make new friends and broaden your horizons. Read these books and join us for a time of fellowship, with lively and insightful discussion.

**January 15 at 3:30 pm at Roses and Berries Café**

**Wonder** by R.J. Palacio, Young Adult Book.

August Pullman was born with a facial difference that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting 5th grade at Beecher Prep, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past Auggie's extraordinary face. Read the book that inspired the Choose Kind movement.

RSVP to [debseiffert@gmail.com](mailto:debseiffert@gmail.com) so that appropriate reservations can be made.



**February 19 at 3:30 pm (location to be announced)**

**Night Watch** by Jayne Anne Phillips, Pulitzer Prize Winner.

A mesmerizing story about a mother and daughter seeking refuge in the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in West Virginia after the Civil War,—a brilliant portrait of family endurance against all odds. Epic, enthralling, and meticulously crafted, *Night Watch* is a stunning chronicle of surviving war and its aftermath.

## Hearing Devices Upgraded

Many Thanks to **Arlys Williams** for donating funds to purchase three new headphones and receivers, as well as replacement batteries for the existing seven hearing assistant devices.

Our church appreciates this important donation so everyone can hear God's word!

If you would like to use these hearing devices during worship, please ask any usher for assistance.

WITH DEEPEST  
*Sympathy*

Our entire congregation extends sincere sympathy to the family and friends of these Westminster members who recently passed:

**Mark Thetford**  
**Ann McCaw**

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. – Matthew 5:4*

## GIVE MORE WITHOUT SPENDING MORE Buy Scrip Gift Cards

The concept is simple: Our church purchases gift cards, or scrip, from popular retailers at a discount, which the retailers are happy to give because they're guaranteeing themselves customers and some goodwill advertising. Members and friends then buy the gift cards from the church at face value. The difference in price is kept by the church.

**In 2024, scrip added \$10,000 to our church operating fund.**

Scrip is available to purchase in the WPC narthex after Sunday worship, in the church office, or online.

Scan the QR Code,  
or go to  
[www.raiseright.com](http://www.raiseright.com)  
and use this code  
to sign up:  
858E578L1LL3





# Local Group Works to Bring Family to Dubuque

IA NICE (Iowa Newcomer Integration Community & Exchange) is excited to announce that a Dubuque Chapter of the organization has been launched to support Ukrainian families in the Dubuque area.

Last spring, one of our women's bible study lessons was on Sabbath and hospitality. Biblical hospitality means "love of strangers." The apostle Paul told the early Christians in Rome to "extend hospitality to strangers" (Romans 12:13). This led to talk of our church family hosting the homeless, refugees, and those in need.

Last summer our Christian Formation Team hosted a Westminster Public Witness speaker series. In June we hosted a panel discussion on "Welcoming Migrants to Dubuque." On the panel was Angela Boelens, DeWitt, IA, Founder and President of IaNice, which is an all volunteer organization that has brought 14 Ukrainian refugee families to DeWitt. The Christian Formation Team felt that being part of this humanitarian mission could really make a difference for a family praying for a safe place to live.

A dedicated team of volunteers has organized and is now awaiting the arrival of their first sponsored



family currently sheltering with two young children in Kharkiv City near the Russian border

of Ukraine. The family would like to rebuild in Iowa and return to happier times as seen in the pre-war Christmas photo shown here. Their Christmas wish for 2024 is to settle in Iowa, obtain employment, financial independence, and build new friendships in Dubuque.

The Dubuque task force includes: Shirley Meriwether, WPC Christian Formation team; Dan Emmert, WPC Christian Formation team; Deb Seiffert, WPC Mission Team; Nancy Bickel, Member at large; Megan Ruiz, Presentation Lantern Center, Better Together; Yindra Dixon, Dubuque Forward Group, DBQ Focus on Housing Comm.



**This Ukrainian family celebrates during better times at Christmas in pre-war Kharkiv City, Ukraine. They hope to build a better life for their family in Dubuque.**

Like the DeWitt Chapter, Dubuque will operate with 100% volunteer staff which means that nearly 100% of donated funds will be used for direct support.

## HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please consider a tax-deductible donation to help the Dubuque Chapter of IA NICE provide temporary housing, food, and transportation for one family. Any amount will help

### MAIL a check to

IA NICE, Dubuque Chapter,  
PO Box 73, DeWitt, IA 52742

OR

**ONLINE** at [gofundme.com](https://gofundme.com)  
Scan the QR code, or go to

<https://gofund.me/e66298d3>



If you have questions, please contact Shirley Meriwether at 563-239-4073 or [skmeriwether@hotmail.com](mailto:skmeriwether@hotmail.com), or visit [www.IaNice.org](http://www.IaNice.org) (501c3 charitable organization) or their FB page IA Nice.

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## Opportunities to Care for God's Creation

The next meeting of the Green Team will be held on Thursday, January 23 at 2:00 pm at Westminster.

We would love to have some new members join us. We especially would like to invite members from First Presbyterian to check us out. At this meeting we will be discussing and setting our priorities and activities for 2025.

The mission of the Green Team is to encourage church members and the community to care for God's creation by practicing wise, humble, responsible stewardship of the earth. We aim to care for God's creation by developing and supporting projects and opportunities within the congregation and community that foster greater care of creation as a church and as individuals,

and to call members and friends into Christ's service through these projects and opportunities.

As an Earth Care Congregation of the PC(USA) our activities are focused on worship, education, facilities and outreach.



**The January meeting of the Dubuque Interfaith Green Coalition** will be held on Sunday, January 12th, 2025 at 3:00 pm at the Church of the Resurrection social space, 4300 Asbury Rd. All who are interested in environmental stewardship and environmental justice issues are welcome to attend. Light refreshments will be served. Please join us!



### Go Green in 2025!

Among your New Year's resolutions please consider doing more to care for God's creation by going green this year. You can probably do much more than you think you can. There are many simple and easy things we all can do for our planet.