

HOTLINE

WE ARE ONE IN THE SPIRIT

WE ARE ONE IN THE LORD

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1684 IOWA ST. | DUBUQUE, IA | firstpresdbq.org

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

2155 UNIVERSITY AVE | DUBUQUE, IA | wpcdbq.org

Volume 26, No. 2 | FEBRUARY 2025

PARTNERSHIP TASK FORCE UPDATE

Merging Our Congregations and Sharing Leadership

As we embark on this exciting journey of merging our congregations, we want to ensure that transparency and clear communication remain at the forefront of our shared mission. This transition represents not just a union of two churches, but a commitment to fostering a vibrant community centered around faith, love, and service.

Sharing Our Pastor: Pastor Stephanie Ells

To facilitate this merger, we are pleased to announce that Pastor Stephanie Ells will serve as our shared pastor. Pastor Stephanie brings a wealth of experience, compassion, and dedication to her ministry, and we are confident that her leadership will guide us as we navigate this new chapter together.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

To provide clarity on the terms of Pastor Stephanie's service, we have established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between First Presbyterian Church (FPC) and Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC). This document outlines the responsibilities, compensation, and limits of her pastoral service, ensuring that both congregations are well-informed and aligned in our mission. It has been approved by both WPC and FPC Session members.

Key Highlights of the MOU

- Pastoral Responsibilities:** Pastor Stephanie will lead worship services for both congregations, moderate session meetings, provide counseling, and coordinate special services. She will also engage with congregational leadership to support our community's spiritual growth.
- Compensation Structure:** The MOU details the financial aspects of Pastor Stephanie's service, including salary, housing allowance, and benefits. FPC will contribute 45%, while WPC will contribute 55% of the total costs associated with her terms of call, ensuring fair distribution of resources as we merge.
- Limits of Service:** While Pastor Stephanie will take on many responsibilities, certain programs and administrative tasks will be managed by designated individuals within each church to ensure that we maintain effective operations during this transition.

Commitment to Transparency

We understand that change can bring questions and concerns. To address this, we will hold informational sessions where members can ask questions, provide feedback, and learn more about our shared vision. We encourage open dialogue and collaboration as we move forward together.

The following dates have been set for our Sunday Church Chats:

•March 30 •June 29 •Sept. 28 •Dec. 14

Looking Ahead

As we merge our congregations, let us embrace the opportunities this new partnership presents. Together, we can create a stronger, more vibrant community that reflects the love of Christ and serves our neighbors with grace and compassion.

Thank you for your continued support, understanding, and dedication to our shared mission. We are excited about what the future holds for both First Presbyterian Church and Westminster Presbyterian Church!

Help Name Our New Congregation

The Partnership Task Force needs your help! One of our tasks is to propose a name for our new Presbyterian congregation in Dubuque. As we go through this process, we want to include your suggestions for our new name.

So far, the Task Force came up with the following suggestions: Unity, Dubuque, New, Community, Faith, and Grace.

So, now you fill in the blank:

" _____ Presbyterian Church."

Every Sunday during February there will be a "**Name Our Church**" box located on the information counter at the back of the sanctuary. Please help us by writing down your suggestions and putting them in the box.

OR email your suggestions to tomstov@aol.com.

At the end of February, the Task Force will review all of the suggestions.

Mission Team Approves Grants, Supports New Missions

The Mission Team has approved the following Mission Grants for our Presbyterian Churches: Mission Garden, Seminary Table (UD Seminary Students), Frontera DeCristo/Just Coffee, Presbyterian Knitters (Crochet), and IANice Dubuque Chapter.

If you would like to apply for a grant please contact: Linda Stovall at linstov@aol.com and she will get you a form. We have liaison members who will work with you.

New Missions

We started supporting two new missions in January along with the Dubuque Food Pantry.

Opening Doors supports women and their children. They have three locations. Teresa Shelter offers emergency and extended stay services to women and children experiencing homelessness. Maria House

offers transitional housing for up to two years. Women continue to work on goals and build skills to become self-sufficient. At Francis Apartments the tenants continue to get support services. This approach has proved to be effective at ending the cycle of homelessness. We collect items every second Sunday of the month. If you forget to bring an item, the Mission Team has a box in the hallway outside of the Work Room for your items.

The Dubuque Rescue Mission is the fourth week. The mission is completely full now. Along with caring for the men who stay there, they average feeding between 200-250 people daily. See page 4 for a list of items needed. They also need #10 cans of vegetables, fruits, etc. They are always looking for groups to bring in a meal to serve. We also have a box in the hallway outside the Work Room for your items.

Spreading the Gift of Warmth



We need church members or friends who either knit or crochet to help in creating hats and scarves for the winter months. These items will be distributed to those in need. The Mission Team will provide the yarn for your services. **Contact Linda Stovall to get started linstov@aol.com.**

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!

Westminster Stewardship Update

Here is where we stand on our Stewardship Campaign. To date, we received 81 pledges totaling \$321,750.00.

The pledge amount for 2025 of \$321,750.00 is 78% of the budget for year 2025 which is \$413,631.20.

Your pledges allow the Hospitality Outreach Team to provide events for the congregation and community such as game nights, a bike safety rodeo, a Farmers Market event, support Sunday night meals, support potlucks, support Moms on Fire, support UD Seminary meals, a hayride at Keller's, Truck or Treat, Christmas caroling, and so much more.

Westminster Financial Report Year End 2024

Income.....	\$597,980.43
Expenses	\$356,608.28
Income over Expenses	\$241,372.15

WORSHIP LOCATION: We will continue to 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.

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

FEBRUARY

Feb. 2 Luke 4:21–30 Jesus Announces Good News to the Poor

Feb. 9 NO SUNDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP

Feb. 16 Luke 6:17–26 Blessings and Woes - Pastor on Vacation

Feb. 23 Luke 6:27–38 Love for Enemies
 POTLUCK – Bring a main dish, side, salad, or dessert

MARCH

Mar. 2 Lent begins Season 3, Episode 1 of "The Chosen"

Mar. 23 NO SUNDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP

March 2 – Adult Class After Worship – Board Room How to Navigate Church Digital Media

Presented by Ann Miller. Join us as we discuss our church website and social media. Find out how you can use them to raise awareness about our church.

Valentines Brunch

The second annual Men's Fellowship Valentines brunch will be served to the entire congregation following worship on **February 9 at 10:45 am**.

Egg casserole, cinnamon rolls, fruit, and more will be on the menu. Come and enjoy the company and the food following worship. All are welcome!



Let's Fill the Care Cart!

Each month, First and Westminster 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.

Local Group Works to Bring Family to Dubuque

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. They hope to settle in Iowa, obtain employment, financial independence, and build new friendships in Dubuque.



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
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, or visit www.IaNice.org (501c3 charitable organization) or their FB page IA Nice.



SAVE THE DATE

Next Hunger Outreach

Sat. March 22

Parking Lot at Westminster

"For I was hungry and you gave me food."

Volunteers will be needed!
Contact Tom Stovall tomstov@aol.com

TACKLE HUNGER CHALLENGE

BE A GAME CHANGER!

Donate just \$1 or 1 can of food to make a difference in your community!

Coming for Kids

Souper Bowl of Caring – Feb. 9th

Young people nationally team up each year around the Super Bowl game to collect dollars and food for local charities.

You can help the FPC/WPC Youth help the Dubuque Food Pantry. Bring non-perishable food items to church or give a monetary donation.

BUY SCRIP GIFT CARDS

Give More Without Spending More

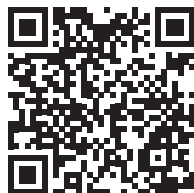
The concept is simple: Our church purchases Scrip gift cards from popular retailers at a discount. Members and friends then buy the gift cards from the church at face value.

Stop by the SCRIP desk on Sunday mornings or in the church office Monday through Thursday and pick up a list of available local retailers and restaurants. You can purchase the cards using check, cash, or online at www.raiseright.com.

Last year \$10,000 (\$1,620 from 2024) was transferred from SCRIP to the operating budget. The more members who participate the more we can all support our church.

Another benefit is the amount each individual earned from Scrip is on church year end statement. You do have to add it the total giving to get the tax credit.

Scan the QR Code,
or go to
www.raiseright.com
and use this code
to sign up:
858E578L1LL3



Help needed for U/D Seminary Table

We are now calling Westminster Table – U/D Seminary Table. We need your help for this on the following dates: **February 17th, March 10th, March 24th, April 7th, and August 7th.**

August 7 is a large event for their intensive training.

The time for helping runs from 9 am to 1 pm. You do not have to be there the whole time, but it does help if you do. We also need treats dropped off for each table.

Please contact **Rich Henderson** at 563-580-6289 or email hs3eagles@gmail.com if you can help on a certain day and if you would like to bring treats (this is important as we do not want to get a lot of treats for just one day and it helps to know if we are short helpers or treats.

St. Luke's Presents Fabulous Fridays Artists Series 2025

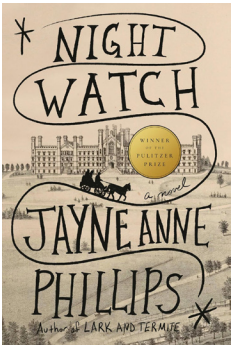
St. Luke's presenting their 33rd season of Fabulous Fridays. St. Luke's United Methodist Church is located at the corner of 12th and Main in Dubuque. Performances are in the sanctuary and begin at noon and end at 12:30 p.m. Many in the audience enjoy time together after the performances in the church's South Hall, where beverages and desserts are available. The performances, beverages, and desserts are free, but baskets are provided for contributions to People In Need (for utilities assistance) and the church's Jesus Fund (for grocery assistance). Performances will be live-streamed, with the performers' permission, and can be found at stlukesdbq.org/fabulousfridays.

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

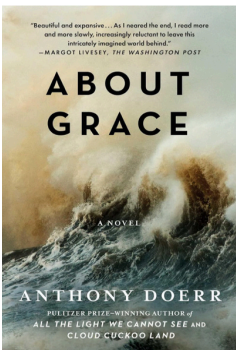
- February 7 Marcus DeJesus, guitar
- February 14 Clarke University Music Department – Drs. Amanda Huntleigh and Rob Stull, directors
- February 21 Addilyn Dolan, bassoon; Dr. Evelyn Dias, piano
- February 28 Dr. Sharon Jensen & Elisa Cooper, piano
- March 7 Potosa Strings - Ann Duchow, director
- March 14 University of Dubuque Choir - Kristen Eby, director
- March 21 Chuck Bregman, piano
- March 28 The Americana Band – David Overby, leader

Like to Read? Join Our Book Group

Join us in lively discussions on a different book each **third Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm**. In February, Arlys Williams will host our group at Mt. Carmel Bluffs. See our list of reads by month:

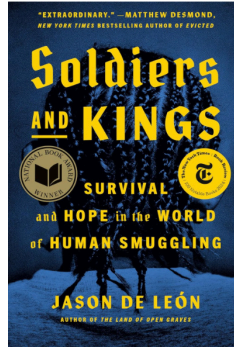


February – *Night Watch* by Jayne Anne Phillips, Pulitzer Prize Winner. A mesmerizing story about a mother and daughter seeking refuge in the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum in West Virginia after the Civil War,—a brilliant portrait of family endurance against all odds. Epic, enthralling, and meticulously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



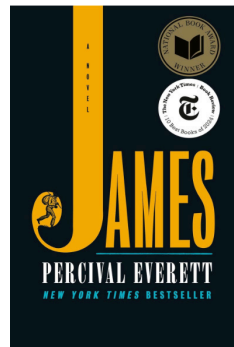
March – *About Grace* by Anthony Doerr. David Winkler begins life in Anchorage, Alaska, a quiet boy drawn to the volatility of weather and obsessed with snow. Sometimes he sees things before they happen—When David dreams that his infant daughter will drown in a flood as he tries to save her, he comes undone. He travels thousands of miles, fleeing

family, home, and the future itself, to deny the dream. Doerr’s characters are full of grief and longing, but also replete with grace. His compassion for human frailty is extraordinarily moving. *About Grace* is heartbreaking, radiant, and astonishingly accomplished.



April – *Soldiers and Kings: Survival and Hope in the World of Human Smuggling* by Jason De León. Winner of the National Book Award for nonfiction plus many best book of 2024 awards. In an effort to better understand this essential yet extralegal billion dollar global industry of human smuggling, internationally recognized anthropologist and expert Jason

De León embedded with a group of smugglers moving migrants across Mexico over the course of seven years. The result is: the first ever in-depth, character-driven look at human smuggling. It is a heart-wrenching and intimate narrative that revolves around the life and death of one coyote who falls in love and tries to leave smuggling behind.



May – *James* by Percival Everett – National Book Award winner, Shortlisted for the Booker Prize, Kirkus Prize plus many best book of the year awards. A brilliant, action-packed reimagining of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, both harrowing and darkly humorous, told from the enslaved Jim’s point of view.

For questions or more information, please contact Deb Sieffert – debseiffert@gmail.com.

WITH DEEPEST
Sympathy

Our entire congregation extends sincere sympathy to the family and friends of church member

Janet Porter
who recently passed.

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

GIVE UP PLASTIC FOR LENT
March 5 to April 13

Watch for more details and prize information!

Café Justo – Coffee with a Conscience

By Dan Emmert

In 2023 I was part of an Iowa Presbyterian delegation that visited our PC/USA mission called Frontera de Cristo (Border of Christ). Frontera de Cristo is one of four bi-national border ministry sites supported by mission partners from our PC/USA and the National Presbyterian church of Mexico. Our delegation learned so much of how God is at work bringing people together in ministry on the U.S. / Mexico border.

Frontera works with many community partners on several different ministries including supporting struggling coffee farmers. In the late 1990s the price coffee companies would pay Mexican coffee farmers fell dramatically. Farmers were no longer able to support their families and the pressure to migrate north increased. By the turn of the century, many coffee farmers now worked in U.S. factories built on the Mexican side of the border. They didn't want to work in factories, but a poorly paying job was better than growing coffee that brought no profit. Others migrated to jobs in the United States.

Early in 2002 one farmer, Eduardo Verdugo, shared a vision with the Frontera staff for forming a coffee cooperative. The vision came together when a delegation (organized by Frontera) went from Agua Prieta, Mexico to Chiapas (2000 miles).

The results have changed the economic conditions of farmers who could now support their families. The cooperative now controls the profits they can make because the cooperative grows, roasts, packages and markets their coffee.

Madelin Ballinas Hernandez is the granddaughter of a coffee farmer and founding member of the Café Justo cooperative, Soraida Santiago. Madelin described how

life has changed for her family with this quote:

“When we were children, we did not lack for the basic material needs because our dad sent my mom money from his work in the United States. But we did not know him, we did not have our dad at home. Now he is at our side supporting us every day.”

Justice sometimes comes in small acts of kindness. Acts like buying a cup of coffee in support of the laborers who grow, roast and market the product we enjoy.

The Mission Team will be providing Café Justo coffee to the congregation in support of Café Justo very soon. In addition to supporting the farmers, Café Justo has a “Do Justice, Love Mercy” initiative that provides free coffee to migrants on their journey while they stay in shelters provided by churches along the border.

I would love to have conversations with members of the congregation on my experience on the U.S./Mexico border and the mission partners working to support Frontera de Cristo's stated mission of “Build Relationships and Understanding Across Borders.”

If you would like to order coffee, scan the QR code or use the link below. If you would like to order along with other church members, please see Dan Emmert.

<https://fronteradecristo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Cafe-Justo-Insert-1pg.pdf>



First Presbyterian serves as overflow shelter



Thanks to the work of our pastor, Stephanie Ells, the basement of First Presbyterian is now being used as an overflow shelter for the Dubuque Rescue Mission when beds are full at its facilities. She worked with Dubuque city and fire departments to ensure the space is safe for overnight guests, and it is now open whenever the mission needs it.

Someone from the mission will be there to staff it overnight when needed. It will be able to welcome up to 10 people at a time.

Individuals seeking shelter will still contact the Rescue Mission or go to its permanent locations. If there are no beds available at its two overnight facilities, staff members will drive them to the church. Our church also donated \$1,500 to the mission for purchasing essentials to stock the basement such as cots, sleeping bags, pillows and toiletries.

California Wildfires Destroy Homes and Churches

Thanks to all for your concern and prayers for those affected by the California wildfires. We know the Presbytery of the Pacific has been affected and fires are also thought to have impacted the presbyteries of San Fernando and San Gabriel. This is a time of great grief and loss, and many are eager to help.

Here are the ways to contribute to the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance U.S. wildfires account, using the **code DR000165**:

To donate by phone, call 800-872-3283.

To send a check, please designate where you want your gift to go on the memo line and mail to:
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643700, Pittsburgh PA 15264-3700

To donate online, go to <https://www.pcusa.org/donate/dr000165-us-wildfires>

Your prayers and support will bring hope and healing.



Save Electricity

Turn off lights when they are not needed or not being used. Turn off or unplug electric appliances and electronics when they are not being used. This alone can greatly reduce energy costs. Turn off computers and other electronics at night. Even when they are on energy saving mode they are using a lot of energy.