

Voice of Westminster



October 2026

In last month's newsletter, I mentioned that I would be attending a workshop on "Cultivating Thriving Churches." The workshop is October 17 in Milan, IL. It is organized by Great Rivers Presbytery and the Presbytery of East Iowa. The featured speaker, Rev. Josh Erickson, is a co-founder of the newly formed PCUSA Church Growth Network (PCGN). I intend to share what I learn from the workshop in the November newsletter.

In the meantime, I have been doing some research on PCGN. Last month I wrote about how Rev. Erickson reframes church growth as *"mission rooted in vitality."* He described four types of vitality that promote growth. But the PCGN not only reframes growth in terms of mission and vitality, it also seeks to foster *"growth in size"* so that more people experience the life-changing love of Christ.

Rev. Erickson describes the day-to-day life of the church as a whirlwind. There is an unending cycle of bulletins and budgets, committee meetings, caring ministries and property repairs. These are all essential. But, he writes, *"if this is all you focus on, then your church is less likely to grow in numbers as well."* The PCGN believes that congregations should grow at a sustainable pace by welcoming and integrating new people into the community.

For this to occur, a local church must adopt *"the wildly important goal of church growth. It then needs to devote 20% of its efforts in pursuit of this goal; 80% of its efforts to the whirlwind."*

Erickson argues that consistent pursuit of the wildly important goal will eventually transform a church. We will learn new skills and incorporate new activities into the daily whirlwind. To achieve different results, we must act differently. Pursuing a wildly important goal will help us do that. He acknowledges that *"asking for 20% is a significant effort, for sure--but the more we decline, the more effort we will need to make to alter our course."*

PCGN wants churches to grow so that they can be the best version of themselves. This happens when we have a faithful growth mindset rooted in the whole congregation.

Pastor Randy



SEPTEMBER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Session met on September 15 for its regular monthly meeting. Below are some of the items discussed.

Elders shared comments on chapter 5, "Small, Aging Congregations," in Allen Stanton's book **The Gift of Small**. Statistics show that churches of all sizes are ageing. Given the active membership at Westminster and the age of our members, we are likely among the 10% of the smallest and most aged congregations. Stanton argues that focusing on recent retirees and younger Senior Citizens offers us a path to sustainability and vitality.

The building use agreement with the Natural Swedish Pentecostal Church was renewed for another year.

Ruling Elder Tom Read agreed to serve as commissioner to the Presbytery meeting at Camp Bear Creek on Sept. 19.

Finance reported that August general contributions were below the monthly budget for the second month in a row. This is not uncommon in the summer months.

The Mission Committee report included several gifts:

1. \$398.60 from PCUSA Special Offerings went to the Willis Dady Shelter.
2. A \$430 scholarship was given to Brian Read from Christian Education funds for an online New Testament class offered by University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.
3. From the Mission budget, \$1,000 gifts were given to His Hands Free Clinic, and the Ecumenical Community Center, and the Boys & Girls club; and a \$2,000 gift to Loaves & Fishes.

A Task Force was formed to review the church's active membership roll. Tom Read will take the lead on this and seek some help.

Pastor Randy shared a brief handout of the Presbyterian Foundation's "Project Regeneration." This is a possible resource for a strategic study/mission plan. He will present two other options in the next two months. In December, Session should appoint a team to select the resource we will use in early 2027.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2026

DEEP ROOTS, NEW GROWTH

A Workshop on Cultivating Thriving Churches

- Date: Saturday, October 17 from 10am - 3pm
- Location: First Presbyterian Church, Milan, IL
1620 1st St. W, Milan, IL 61264
- Cost: Suggested donation up to \$20 for lunch



Keynote Speaker: Rev. Josh Erickson

Leader & Co-Founder of the PCUSA Church Growth Network, which seeks to foster growth in size, vitality, and mission impact for local congregations and new faith communities so that more people experience the life-changing love of Christ.

Jointly organized and hosted by Great Rivers Presbytery and the Presbytery of East Iowa, this event will be an opportunity to share resources and ideas related to fostering church growth. In addition to a presentation and workshop from our keynote speaker, local leaders will offer additional workshops on congregational vitality.



Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/zWeK9r4TunJZkK3L9>

DEEP ROOTS, NEW GROWTH WORKSHOP

Saturday, October 17th from 10am-3pm: Deep Roots, New Growth - a workshop on cultivating thriving churches. Similar to the event in Amana last spring, this will be an opportunity to share resources and ideas for fostering church growth and vitality. In addition to a presentation and workshop from our keynote speaker, local leaders will offer additional workshops on congregational vitality. Click here for registration and more information: <https://forms.gle/zWeK9r4TunJZkK3L9>
Deadlines: Registration ends October 10th

Schedule:

- 9:45am: Informal Gathering
- 10:00am: Worship
- 10:30am: Presentation from Our Keynote Speaker
- 11:45am: Lunch and Tabletop Conversations
- 1:00pm: Workshops
- 2:00pm: Workshops

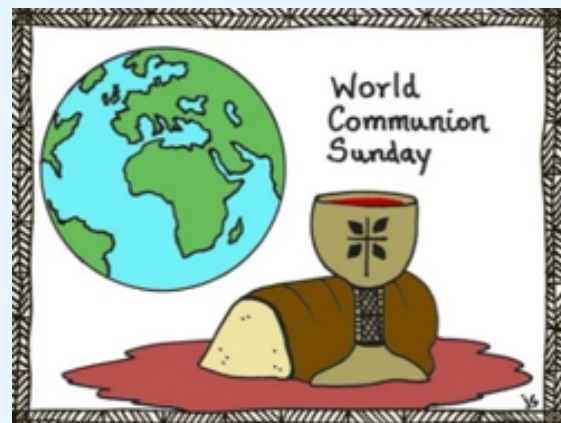
Keynote Speaker: Rev. Josh Erickson

Rev. Josh Erickson is a leader and co-founder of the PCUSA Church Growth Network, which seeks to foster growth in size, vitality, and mission impact for local congregations and new faith communities so that more people experience the life-changing love of Christ. He has served in full-time ministry for 17 years, and currently as the senior pastor of Park Ridge Presbyterian Church (Park Ridge, IL).

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

On October 4, Westminster is having a combined church service with the other 3 churches who also use this beautiful building as their home church. They are Beacon of Light, Evangelical Global Pentecost Church and Natural Swedish Pentecostal Church. This will be a wonderful way to celebrate other traditions together for this one service.

The prelude will consist of praise songs beginning at 9:50am so plan to come early!





DIFFERING ANNIVERSARY OPEN HOUSE

You may recognize the last name Differding. They were members here at Westminster until moving from the immediate area. Sara Differding surprised her parents with a 50th Anniversary Open House here at Westminster. Keith and Brenda Differding got quite the surprise on Saturday,

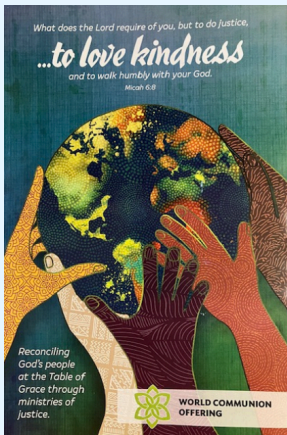
September 19 when their daughter brought them to the church they were married in and told them she had set up a open house for them to celebrate their 50th anniversary. They were so surprised and delighted at the same time. Pictured above is Keith and Brenda with their beautiful 50th Anniversary cake. Picture below is Keith and Brenda with daughter Sara. If you missed the open house and would still like to send them a card you can mail it to Sara's home. **833 Oakland Road NE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402.** Sara will make sure the cards get to her parents.



LOAVES AND FISHES VOLUNTEERS

Pictured are 3 of the Mount Mercy students that volunteer at L & F each week. The gentlemen pictured from left to right are Cyprien, Lucas and Pedro. The woman is Pedro's mother Claudia who was visiting her son from Brazil. Claudia also volunteers at a food pantry in Brazil and is so happy to see her son volunteering at L & F. All the volunteers are amazing and so appreciated but these 3 young men have been a real asset in helping to unload the HACAP truck and get the food downstairs. Thanks guys!





PCUSA WORLD COMMUNION SPECIAL OFFERING

World Communion Offering ends this Sunday, October 4. It is not too late to make a donation. We will be sending the donations at the end of October to ensure everyone who wants to donate still has time to get theirs mailed or dropped off at Westminster. Thank you for all your kindness to such a worthy project.

ABOUT WESTMINSTER

Property Update: In September we signed a contract with "Weeds Lawn Care & Landscaping" they will be trimming trees, shrubs and disposing of all the weeds growing around the church. We were unable to wait for them on the removal of the tree blocking the view of our electronic sign. So our faithful Ed Kosowski to the rescue. Ed came out cut it down and cleaned up the area around the sign. Thank you once again Ed. We always appreciate your assistance.



WEELINGTON HEIGHTS COMMUNITY BLOCK PARTY

Join the St. Paul's & Wellington Heights Block Party on **Sunday, October 4, from 3:00–5:00 p.m.** at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. We're celebrating the fall season, our congregational ties, and **World Communion Sunday**, a day of unity and community! The event will include congregational talent on stage, games

for kids of all ages, a collaborative art project, a social justice project booth, kids' crafts, free fall food treats reflecting our congregation's cultural diversity, and time to chat and catch up with friends old and new! No need to register; just plan to attend and support our beautiful community at St Paul's and our Wellington Heights neighborhood!



Calendar: Special Events

Oct. 4 - World Communion Sunday
(Worshipping with 3 other churches)
Oct. 5 - Deacons Meet - 5pm, Belden
 Community Homeowners Meeting - 6pm
Oct. 12 - Property Meeting - Noon
Oct. 13 - WPC Foundation Meeting - 5pm
Oct. 19 - Finance Meets 4:30pm
Oct. 20 - Session Meets 6:30pm
Oct. 25 - Sunday Supper Fellowship
 5:30pm

Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry will be
 every Tuesday from 2:30 - 5pm at
 Westminster in the Lower Level

Access the updated WPC calendar at
crwpc.org/calendar

Calendar: Regular Events

Sundays

Natural Swedish Pentecostal Church 9am -
 Classroom
 Westminster Worship 10am - Sanctuary
 Beacon of Light 11:30am - Chapel
 EGPC 11:30am - Old Dining
 NA (Face Anything/Fear Nothing) 5pm -
 Atrium

Mondays

Staff Meeting 11am - Pastor's Office
 Bridge 11am-4pm - FLC
 Marion Gospel Hall Youth Group 7pm -
 Atrium

Tuesdays

L&F Pantry 2:30 - 5pm - Downstairs
 Beacon of Light (100 in 24) 6pm



This Month's Birthdays

Truman Johnson	October 3
Heather Wagner	October 7
Beth Allsop	October 12
Shuna Tosa	October 14
Jan Walton	October 19
Jack Evans	October 22
Nancy Haney	October 24
Judy McCracken	October 27
Carl Schuettpelz	October 30



This Month's Anniversaries

Larry & Karol Cooper Oct. 7

ATTENTION - If your birthday or
 anniversary does not appear in the
 specific month please contact the office
 so we can get your information updated.

Liturgist Schedule for October

October 4 - No Liturgist
October 11 - Brian Read
October 18 - David Basler
October 25 - Ed Mumford

Wednesdays

Men's Breakfast 7:30am - Atrium
Prayer Shawl - 1 & 3 Wednesdays 9:30am
WPC Chancel Choir Practice 7pm - Choir
Rm.

Thursdays

NA (Face Anything/Fear Nothing) 5pm -
Atrium
Beacon of Light Life Groups 6pm - Chapel

Fridays

Office Closed
EGPC 8pm First Fri. of mth. Women's
overnight prayer

Saturdays

Office Closed
EGPC 10am to 3pm - Old Dining
Natural Swedish Pentecostal Church 10am
to 4pm
NA (Steps in the Right Direction) 11am -
Atrium
EGPC 7pm last Sat. of mth. Men's overnight
prayer

Greeters

1st Sunday - Jim Fine
2nd Sunday - Terry Perkins
3rd Sunday - Jim Patterson
4th Sunday - Neubauers
5th Sunday -

**If you would like to greet any Sunday
please be in the foyer between
9:30 - 9:45 a.m.
Everyone is encouraged to greet
anytime.**



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