

Dear WPC Congregation,

First, we want to extend our gratitude to you as you continue to show grace and patience as we travel these unknown waters together, trusting the guidance of the Holy Spirit! We have been blessed to have willing and qualified pulpit supply lead us through the Advent and Lenten seasons, and are thankful for them.

We want to make sure we are being supportive during this long period of transition and we are still here, diligently working and trying to meet the needs of our church and congregation. We want to remind you, it is important as we continue on our journey, to strive for regular attendance and to try to meet our stewardship pledges, if possible, to maintain the healthy life of our church. We understand life is busy, but we also want to be there for you if a challenge has come up in your life, so please let us know!

The Elders of Westminster Presbyterian want to communicate with you and let you know that the search for a full-time, installed Pastor is in full swing! The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) created a very detailed and well thought out document, the MIF, outlining the details of our church and what we are looking for in a pastor. (You will find the narrative essays from the document at the end of this letter.) The MIF has been approved by the Commission on Ministry and has been published. There have been several interested candidates. Now the PNC is tasked with going through the process of reviewing all those who are interested, setting up interviews for qualified candidates, praying about them, praying about our church, and praying some more. They could use your prayers during this process, they have a lot of work to do, but it is an exciting time!

If you have any pastoral needs, be sure to reach out to your Elders or Deacons. Our Deacons have done an extraordinary job in the absence of a pastor and are wonderful examples of Jesus's never-ending love, we are blessed by them every day! Please call them personally or call the office if you or a family member have a need that arises!

*Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

With Sincere Love,

WPC Elders Ashwill, Bathory, Bean, Brewer, Mages, McManus

Ministry Information Form-Narrative Questions

1. What is the congregation's or organization's vision for ministry? Additionally, describe how this vision is lived out.

Rather than “do what we’ve always done,” the people of Westminster are seeking new ways in which to do God’s work. There is strong support for action consistent with that of a “sailboat church,” driven more by prayer and the holy spirit than by a committee. An old shell is falling away and revealing something new, the form of which is not yet entirely clear to us.

But as a member of our church recently observed, we shine our brightest when we are outside this church building. As we work together to serve – whether we’re helping neighbors who need a hand with basic home maintenance or supporting families of foster children or providing food to the hungry – we are beginning to see our vision for ministry in a new light, one more consistent with the new world we live in.

We are not yet what we shall be, as Martin Luther writes, but we are growing toward it. As we learn to set down our oars and move in the power of the holy spirit, we are buoyed by a fervent belief that with God, all things are possible – and that is how our vision comes to life.

In this transitional period, Westminster has felt the presence of the holy spirit like never before. God leads, and we follow. Through prayer, through growth in our faith, and through service and fellowship, we are constantly aware of God’s strength and power. Still, we yearn for the arrival of the pastor who will help us navigate the waters of this world, the person who will accompany us on our journey, praying with us and for us.

2. How do you feel called to reach out to address the emerging needs of your community or constituency?

On a crisp Sunday last fall, some 50 people from Westminster came together to worship and support our community. Wearing stocking caps and coats, people of all ages picked up trash and debris at a local park and then settled into bag chairs at a shelter house. Earlier, we’d posted fliers at the park, inviting folks to join us for worship and sack lunches.

Looking more like tailgaters than congregants in worship, we positioned our seats to capture the warmth of the morning sun. Some, wrapped in blankets, resembled our unhoused neighbors who call the park home. On that sabbath morning, we prayed, we sang and we worshipped, sharing the word of God as the sun grew stronger in the autumn sky.

Across town, our church building sat empty while our church family experienced the grace of God with no pews and no pulpit, no choir and no offering. In the process of meeting our neighbors where they are, we were reminded that our church is more than a building. We are learning to listen and engage.

We are committed to supporting and serving our neighbors in every way possible. Recently, we’ve expanded into what we hope are expressions of genuine connection, like worship at the park and a holiday gathering for foster children and their families, offering breakfast, festivities for kids and a respite for parents. In December, Westminster presented a cantata featuring a community choir and rejoiced in the opportunity to celebrate the nativity with folks from the community and other churches.

3. How will this position help you to reach your vision and mission goals?

Guided by the holy spirit, Westminster is moving in remarkable ways. But we remain aware that we are a flock without a shepherd. We are excited to see the one whom God has chosen for us teach and preach, help us understand the word of God and support us as we discern our vision and mission.

As we reach into our community – one blending the energy of a small college town with the rich heritage of farm country – our efforts will be strengthened by a leader with both experience and vision. We have many opportunities to grow – including a wonderful but underutilized building! – and we are prepared to think outside the box, but the involvement of one prepared and equipped to offer guidance could help transform a well-intended but flawed effort into something truly meaningful.

Our mission and vision goals also pertain to members of our church family, and our pastor will play a key role in tending to those who are sick, to the elderly and infirm, to those who grieve, and to those who feel alone. But we are all servants. We expect that our pastor will also work to guide and train those who feel called to such service, underscoring our commitment to discipleship.

With the support and encouragement of a shepherd, we hope that all in our church family might be empowered to do more and be more. All have talents large and small that could be of

benefit to the church and, by extension, the community. And the need to cultivate a new generation of leaders is nearly constant.

4. Provide a description of the characteristics needed by the person who is open to being called to this congregation and/or organization.

The shepherd we seek is loving and compassionate and leads by example. Connecting with children and youth is as important as leading adults and staff. Our church family seeks one who will guide us with honesty and kindness in action and word.

That said, we're not looking for someone who will drive the bus as we sit quietly and look out the windows. Through prayer, through discernment, through hands-on involvement, we are an active and engaged congregation.

We need a pastor who is willing to learn and grow with us, and who will work with us to create a meaningful worship experience. Technology is important, both as a key to the future and a way to strengthen existing connections. Throughout the pandemic, Westminster has made a concerted effort to stay in touch with all in our church family. Ministering to our elderly, offering them support and love, is a top priority.

We are farmers, professionals and self-employed entrepreneurs. We work at family businesses and corporations, schools and colleges, warehouses and hospitals. Many are commuters. Some are students; some are retired. We hope to find someone willing to join us on our walk of faith while being receptive to varying needs and respectful of all.

This is a place where people feel welcome and guided to love the Lord. Westminster is a loving, caring, giving family of people who yearn for a relationship with a pastor in our lives.

5. For what specific tasks, assignments, and programs areas will this person have responsibility?

We understand that there are never enough hours in a pastor's day. The people of Westminster will do all that we can to help carry the load, and it is important to us that our pastor have a healthy work/life balance.

We've also done what we can to build a solid foundation for the church. In the past two years, for instance, the session and various ministry teams have worked hard to update many of the policies and procedures governing church and team operations. That work is ongoing.

We are looking for a pastor who will bring new enthusiasm to Westminster. We are looking for one who will motivate and inspire us, and share our optimism in the future. On a regular basis, the pastor's responsibilities will include:

--Lead worship and preach, conduct sacraments, officiate at baptisms, weddings and funerals; conduct weekly worship for children attending the Small Steps nursery school at Westminster.

--Provide pastoral care, spiritual direction and counseling on request; call on the sick and homebound; pray for the church. Teach; lead confirmation and new member classes.

--Moderate session and congregational meetings, serve as head of staff, provide administrative leadership, work with committee chairs, meet with families establishing memorials and gifts. Arrange for substitute ministers as needed.

--Attend Presbytery and Ottawa Ministerial Alliance meetings; represent the church with external groups and organizations and the media.