

Friday, October 4, 2024

Dear East Iowa Presbytery Congregations:

East Iowa is delighted to share that we have been fast tracked to round one of the Plentiful Gifts program in coordination with University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (UDTS) and the Lilly Endowment. Plentiful Gifts is a program to equip lay leadership to better distribute ministry across the body of Christ so that churches can be strengthened without heavy dependency on staff. It is an opportunity for lay leaders in the church to receive training, education, partnerships, and mentorship to equip them for leadership in the church.

Plentiful Gifts IS:

- A two-year program equipping people for practical ministry across the spectrum of educational levels. Over these two years leaders will participate in retreats, a mission study for their congregation, and learning experiences to better equip them to serve.
- Flexible; creating custom curriculum for particular needs.
- Focused on a new way of 'doing church.' Breaking free from the traditional pastor-centric model.
- A partnership. Participating churches will be partnered with a mentor to shepherd them through the process. They might also be partnered with another church for enhanced learning and ministry opportunities.
- Funded by the Lilly Endowment. Participating churches will have no financial cost to them.

Plentiful Gifts IS NOT:

- For churches who already have called pastoral leadership.
- For churches who do not have 4 or more folks who could commit to this model.

Plentiful Gifts Timeline:

- Fall, 2024 Launch program and accept applications from interested churches
- Winter, 2024-25 Kick-off Celebration and Retreat for participants
- Spring, 2025 Context, Identity, Mission, Gifts Discernment Phase - an 'educational menu' or plan of study will be developed by the Catalyst and Mentors working with Forest Walk Consulting and the Program Director from UDTS.
- Summer, 2025 - Spring, 2026 Equipping Phase. Cohort Retreats and Equipping engagement.
- Summer, 2026 Closing Retreat, engagement of trained members in their congregations and communities.

An Invitation: East Iowa is seeking 4-6 churches to participate in this program. Please prayerfully consider as a Session or congregation if this is something you feel God calling you to do. The hope is to have our churches in place by Christmas to begin the kickoff in the new year.

Rev. Sarah Hegar has been hired as the Program Catalyst. She will work to oversee the program in East Iowa and serve as a coordinator between the churches, mentors, consulting, and program director at Dubuque. If you have any questions about the program, or if you'd like an in person visit to talk more about the program, please reach out to Sarah.

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