

**Mission Study Report**  
**for**  
**Westminster Presbyterian Church**  
**submitted as the**  
**Initial Report from the Noah Team**  
**October 19, 2009**  
(supplemented December 2009)

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**I. Introduction**

In the past two years Westminster Presbyterian Church has experienced several significant staff changes. Christian Education Director Sandi Stuckey left in spring 2008. In fall 2008 Senior Pastor Amy Miracle accepted a call to serve a church near her parents' home in Ohio. Later that fall Pastor Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy took another call and her position is not being filled. Minister of Music Randy Buikema departed in May 2009 for a teaching position in Thailand. Each of these losses was stressful for the congregation. These transitions also created opportunities. Kellie Johnson joined Westminster as Christian Education Director in spring 2009. In April 2009 W. Stuart Ritter became Interim Pastor and Head of Staff.

Another opportunity was to assess where Westminster has been and where its members think it should go. As a means to help do so church members were asked in the summer of 2009 to "name five to seven people who, in your opinion, embody the best attributes of Westminster Presbyterian Church." Those who were named by the greatest number of members were invited to serve, and everyone who was invited agreed to serve to form a team of seven.

Based on his experience with other churches, Pastor Stu Ritter suggested the group be called the Noah Team. Most will recall that the story of Noah in Genesis talks about the stress and hardships that occur as God leads us through a period of transformation. That story also demonstrates the promise and opportunity for new beginnings. The Noah Team was charged with pursuing that promise to help lead Westminster in self-assessment and reflection on God's will for our future. A key part of that process was to provide the Session and ultimately the Presbytery with a Report articulating the mission

of the church which is needed as it seeks a new Senior Pastor. Beyond this initial report the Noah Team expects to develop specific proposals to assist the Session and Congregation in this transition and the future.

The Noah Team began meeting on a weekly basis over the summer as schedules permitted. During the initial meetings the team conducted team-building exercises, selected leaders, and established a purpose and a plan. Soliciting and encouraging feedback from the entire congregation was an important goal.

## **II. Congregational Input**

The next step for the Noah Team was to determine how best to obtain feedback from the congregation. That input would be essential to ensure that the process and the team's report reflected the concerns and dreams of Westminster members and friends. Several approaches were considered but the team selected one suggested by Interim Pastor Stu Ritter. That approach was "appreciative inquiry" and was outlined in a book reviewed by team members, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversation: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* by Mark Lau Branson (Alban, 2004). Branson thought the best description came from the work of Jane Watkins and Bernard Mohr:

Appreciative Inquiry is a collaborative and highly participative, system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the "life-giving forces" when a system is performing optimally in human, economic, and organization terms. It is a journey during which profound knowledge of a human system at its moments of wonder is uncovered and used to co-construct the best and highest future of that system.

These life forces are evident in the stories and imagination of the congregation, which the team hoped to elicit through the appreciative inquiry process. By collecting stories about the past and hopes and visions for the future the team hoped to gain the understanding needed to report on future steps for Westminster.

Although different approaches may be used in appreciative inquiry, the Noah Team opted to utilize one-on-one conversations between members under the team's guidance at what were advertised as "gatherings." The questions to be asked included:

1. Reflecting on your time at Westminster, try to remember when you felt most excited and engaged in church life. (e.g., What was happening? Who else was involved? What made this time so memorable for you? Talk about how you felt.)
2. What do you value most about Westminster? (e.g., What first attracted you to Westminster? What inspired you to join? What would you tell your friends about Westminster? What activities, programs, or aspects of Westminster are most important to you?)
3. What are your dreams for Westminster? (e.g., What would make this a more dynamic church? What should our top priority be for the next five years?)

Following development of the questions the team focused on the format for the gatherings. An agenda that could be completed in 90 minutes was prepared and tested in a meeting with elders and deacons. That session was successful and helped fine tune the process for the gatherings with the congregation, which followed this format:

1. Attendees were provided nametags and invited to enjoy refreshments as they arrived. Once the attendees were seated an opening prayer was followed by an overview of the purpose of the Noah Team, an introduction of the members, and an explanation of the purpose of the gathering.
2. Participants were divided into random groups. Facilitators then formed pairs from the groups. In assigning the groups an effort was made to separate spouses and partners to help diversify the groups.
3. The paired participants then asked their partner the three questions noted above and recorded the answers, taking about 12 minutes to complete that task. Those roles were then reversed for the next 12 minutes. The Noah Team member that served as the group's facilitator then pulled the group together to discuss what had been learned, with each person reporting the highlights of what was heard from the partner. That information was recorded by the facilitator and then summarized for the group to make sure it accurately reflected their discussion.
4. Everyone then gathered together to hear the key themes collected by each of the group facilitators. As the same theme began appearing from multiple groups that theme was recorded on poster paper and hung on the wall. All of those comments were digitally recorded for the Noah Team to review.
5. Following the final group's report everyone was thanked for their participation. Those that wanted to discuss further any of the key themes posted were invited to do so and those additional comments were written on the wall sheets and distributed to the Noah Team. In preparing the report the Noah Team reviewed all the interview forms, the facilitators' notes, the wall sheets, and communications from members who may not have been able to attend a gathering.

Publicity for the gatherings was communicated through various means, including the church newsletter (*Westminster Express...*), the bulletin, Minute for Mission messages, general pastoral announcements, mention in sermons, signs, etc. Colorful forms were provided at various locations in Church and on the web so that members could RSVP so the team would have some idea of how many to expect. The form also asked about the need for childcare and transportation so those needs could be met.

The Noah Team initially selected six dates in August following the session with the Elders and Deacons for the gatherings. These included times on Sunday mornings following the service as well as evening and daytime hours during the week. The Saturday evening session attracted few reservations so that session was rescheduled for the first Wednesday evening in September and was well attended. Most of the sessions

included attendance by members who had not made reservations so that additional participation was appreciated.

During the seven gatherings the Noah Team heard from 184 people and received comments from those unable to attend. Feedback from participants and teams members was very positive as to the process and desire to help support Westminster. Although additional sessions could have been added it appeared that those that desired to provide input attended the gatherings or independently provided their comments. The demographics of the participants were compared with those of the congregation and the levels were parallel across most age groups. The highest level of participation was from those in the 45-54, 65-74, and 75-84 age groups. Although the under 35 adult age group was not as well represented, a common theme throughout the gatherings was the need to ensure that programming and resources be devoted to that group.

### **III. Noah Gathering Outcomes**

In reporting these initial findings the Noah Team wants to emphasize that this is not seen as the fulfillment of its duties but is the impetus for what is yet to come. From these results the Noah Team hopes to work with Session to help develop an action plan to help provide direction for Westminster's future. The Team's vision is for that document to be the stimulus for additional discussions on where we need to go. That said, the analysis thus far does provide some insights into some of the issues that lie ahead:

Question 1 asked about when members felt most *excited* and *engaged* in church life:

Two areas emerged as creating the most compelling memories of the Westminster experience. One was activities that helped develop *personal relationships*, whether it was through small groups, service, or other connection that helped create that bond. The other was through programs for *youth* and for *families*. Comments about life-long relationships being created through friends at Westminster were quite common. The importance of youth programming was consistent across the generations. Related and closely aligned with those responses was the significance of *Christian Education* and *music* and the *arts*. Strong *pastoral leadership* and opportunities for *community involvement* and *service* were especially meaningful for many members.

Question 2 asked about what members *value* most about Westminster:

Our congregation values *spiritually engaging preaching* from the pulpit. Many participants also indicated they appreciate a *high quality music program* for all ages and a *vibrant fine arts series* which brings to the church and community a variety of arts experiences. A *strong Christian Education* program brings its participants many opportunities for Bible Study, Adult Education, Youth Groups, Westminster Wednesday programming, Vacation Bible School, and Children's Sunday school experiences that challenge us to think. In addition, the congregation values their *relationships* with other parishioners as they participate in our many activities within the church and in *mission* projects serving the Des Moines community and beyond.

All of these valued aspects have provided our members with opportunities to make connections with one another and to *grow spiritually* in becoming closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Question 3 asked about *dreams* for Westminster:

The core value of *Christian Education* for everyone was named as the highest priority. In order to sustain this ministry and to share it with others, growth, especially in *young families*, is vital. A *strong music program* with a variety of traditional and contemporary music would enhance the worship experience. Emphasis on a visible *mission* program with recognizable and attainable goals for Westminster is essential to the life of our church. The importance of *dynamic leadership* from the pastor, with sermons applicable to our lives and able to address difficult issues is key. All this is desired to undergird every individual to be an effective *witness for Jesus Christ*. As someone said during one of our meetings, we must light the fire and stir our hearts and souls as we determine our future....Westminster's future!

The appendices include detailed information gleaned from the gatherings. Appendix A provides a summary of the comments from the interview forms. Themes that emerged during the sessions and the additional comments generated are found in Appendix B.

#### **IV. Westminster's Service Area**

As Westminster looks towards its future it is important to look at its location, where it draws members, and where potential members may be. Westminster is located northwest of downtown Des Moines in a quiet neighborhood known as Beaverdale. Well-built charming brick homes, tree-lined streets, and community spirit characterize the Beaverdale area. The neighborhood is considered one of the most desirable locations within the city of Des Moines. Westminster is the site of hundreds of community events throughout the year bringing many non-members into the church for the first time. Having been prominently at the corner of Beaver and Franklin for more than 80 years, the church is a recognized location.

Still considered a large church by Presbyterian standards, the 1,250 members now on the rolls compare to more than 3,800 back in the 1960's. As is the case with most mainline denominations, church attendance and membership has declined over the decades. One of the challenges for Westminster is to attract and retain new members who can continue God's work through the church. As the results of the Noah Team gatherings indicate, no one action will make that possible but it will require a concerted plan which should be the next step in the Noah Team's work.

To look at where Westminster might draw new members it may be helpful to review the population surrounding it and the areas from where current members come. Fortunately for Westminster, members are attracted from throughout the metropolitan area. Only 46 percent of members have Des Moines zip codes so surrounding communities are well

represented by the remaining 54 percent, such as Urbandale (18%), West Des Moines (13%), Johnston (5%), Windsor Heights (4%), Clive (3%), Ankeny (3%), and Grimes (2%). Almost every city in the area is represented on Westminster's roles. It is a tribute to the strength of Westminster that many of the suburban residents drive past a number of Presbyterian and other churches on the way to services and programs here.

To aid in the review of the population surrounding Westminster the church engaged the Percept Group to complete a census analysis within a three-mile radius of the church. Excerpts from that Ministry Area Profile for 2009 are included in Appendix C with the complete report being available from the church office. Some of the highlights of the data include:

*Population* – Decreased by 1.5% since 1990 but is expected to remain stable through 2014.

*Diversity* – Anglos represent 75.4% of the population with racial/ethnic groups the remainder, especially on the eastern side of the radius. Polk County is nearly 90% Anglo and Iowa is 94%.

*Generations* – Ages 28-48 (termed Survivors) made up nearly one-third of the population area. The most over-represented group was age 85 and up at 2.5%.

*Families* – Somewhat non-traditional due to below average number of married persons (44%) and family households (73%).

*Education* – Very high with 88% high school graduates and one-third college graduates.

*Faith* – Somewhat high for faith receptivity; religious preference was highest with Catholics (27%), Lutherans (19%), and Methodists (11%). Presbyterians were at 4.5%.

*Giving Potential* – Average household income at \$59,624 but potential was considered somewhat low.

Comparing the ages of the population of Des Moines with Westminster membership reveals what is evident in worship services and in feedback from the Noah Team gatherings. Westminster is underrepresented in the ages 20-54 and overrepresented in ages 55 and above. A recurrent theme in all of the gatherings was the need to meet the needs of the younger generations.

The data provided by the Percept Group should be invaluable as the Noah Team looks into how to help chart Westminster's future. The reports not only provide informative demographics but also cover areas essential for growth, such as questions on spiritual and personal development, worship style, music, mission, and means of communication that are most and least effective with potential members.

## **V. Future Plans**

The Noah Team hopes this initial report will serve as the Mission Study that Session can review and, if viewed favorably, submit to the Presbytery. That step would help move the vital process forward to select a pastor nominating committee to fill the Senior Pastor

position. As noted earlier, the Noah Team views submission of this report not as the conclusion of its work but as the first step in the process. By working with Session to assess and analyze the data from the Noah Team gatherings, the Percept reports, and additional feedback, the next steps for Westminster should be charted in the form of an action plan. That plan should provide specific recommendations to address Westminster's challenges and opportunities for the future.

## **VI. Recommendations** (added Dec. 2009)

***Spiritual Development* should be one of the core values in all of our undertakings. From the Sunday services and sermon to programs found on every day of the week we should focus on the critical need for engaged and inspirational faith development. How that growth can be nurtured should be a consideration as each of these recommendations is reviewed.**

**1. *Mission.* Session should develop a Mission Statement that embraces the values and aspirations of Westminster Presbyterian Church as a community of faith.**

A concise mission statement is often found in Church bulletins, websites, etc. so that everyone – from members to first-time visitors – knows the purpose of the church and how we live our faith. Trying to move the Church forward without a clear sense of our shared mission may be difficult.

**2. *Structure.* Session should review the effectiveness of church boards, units, committees, and programs (taking into consideration areas such as structure, composition, size, and need) in relationship to Westminster's mission. One initial goal would be to improve collaboration and communication between these entities.**

Improving communication between groups within the Church should help entities function more effectively to further Westminster's mission. A common concern is that groups do not communicate what they are doing. For example, an action as simple as taking and distributing minutes may help other groups better understand how they could collaborate and achieve more than they could separately. The current structure has not been reviewed with an eye toward what is needed to meet today's needs.

**3. *Christian Education* – Session should take the steps necessary to ensure that:**  
**(a) Christian Education is an acknowledged priority for Westminster,**  
**(b) the CE Unit has the requisite support to deliver programs that appeal to and inspire members and prospective members,**  
**(c) an integrated CE program providing periodic intergenerational activities can be explored, and**  
**(d) some programs and groups be structured to give members the opportunity to interact and become connected with others.**

Christian Education programs should challenge participants to think and discuss tough theological/political/ethical/moral/contemporary issues in an atmosphere of respect and love for one another. Opportunities for enhancement of biblical literacy, theological understanding, spiritual growth, and denominational knowledge should be offered. Intergenerational activities several times a year could be used to cover similar theological/biblical or spiritual themes and connect age groups that may not often interact.

Each member of Westminster should be encouraged to become actively involved in some aspect of Christian Education. Session through the CE Unit could support a range of opportunities such as: participating in or leading a class, serving on the CE Unit or Adult Education Committee and helping plan classes, developing a special class outside the Sunday or Wednesday time slots, helping with Vacation Bible School.

**4. *Worship, Music and the Arts* – Session should encourage and facilitate the active engagement of the Worship and Music Unit along with other units, such as Christian Education, to provide a more integrated approach to worship planning.**

Fulfilling Worship and Music's goal to help provide interactive, high quality, creative and innovative worship and arts experiences require more input into the worship planning process. That involvement may include consideration of how children and young people could contribute to and benefit from each worship experience. Dialog on how to create a sense of community in worship (vs. just individuals in pews) may help create ideas for integrating traditional and newer methods to provide inspirational and more meaningful worship experiences.

**5. *Outreach and Service* – Session should ensure that programs giving members the opportunity to serve others are encouraged and supported through the Outreach Unit.**

Christians welcome the chance to serve others and in doing so develop wonderful feelings of fulfillment in following the teachings of the scriptures when helping those in need. Enabling more members to engage in hands-on assistance may help them see a passion and purpose that is central to our mission outreach.

**6. *Foundation* – Session and the Foundation should:**  
**(a) develop a plan to address the balloon payment due in 2011,**  
**(b) initiate a dialogue that would result in a better understanding of the relationship of the Foundation to Westminster, and**  
**(c) facilitate further efforts to expand participation in the Westminster Society.**

Resolution of the balloon payment should include issues such as refinancing from within and/or outside the structure of the church, special dedicated fundraising, dedicating revenue sources, etc. Increased communication between the Foundation and Session would help in understanding each other's roles. Further

efforts are needed to expand the Westminster Society through lifetime and testamentary gifts to benefit the church's mission. This recommendation should be considered in concert with any from the Sustainability Task Force regarding the Foundation.

Prayerfully yours,

The Noah Team  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Des Moines, Iowa

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## **Appendix A: Summary of Responses from Noah Team Gatherings** (total responses in parens)

### **1. When did you feel most *excited* and *engaged* in church life?**

**Personal Relationships/Small Groups/Connections (65).** Deacons, Anchor Coffee House, Supper for Seven (2), Parenting Class, Session, Committees, Elders, Mom's Group, Bible Study, Beaverdale Fall Fest, Trips (to Monastery), Socializing, Basketball, Pot Lucks. Became a support group; meetings were fun. Member interaction.

**Children/Youth/Family Activities and Programs (57).** Confirmation class for son. Children made life-long friends, as did parents. Place for our family. Choirs (5). Westminster Wednesday (3). Youth Club. Car washes. Great fulfillment in working with young people and children. Felt a part of something special. Opportunities for young families.

**Christian Education/Classes (45).** Stimulating. All Things Considered, Sunday School, Religious Education, Christian Education, Vacation Bible School, Bible Study, Adult Classes. Teaching Sunday School (22). Seeing children learn and grow in their faith.

**Music/Arts (36).** Participating in strong program, especially as youth. Choirs (6). Bells (3). Arrival of new minister of music (Randy). Drama and dance. Upbeat music with involvement and participation of congregation. Congregation singing. Christmas Caroling.

**Pastor's Participation and Leadership (37).** Sermons: enlightening, short and engaging, inspiring. Leadership: charismatic, flamboyant, knows your name, promotes the church, dynamic. Former Pastor Sam Massey often mentioned.

**Community Involvement/Service Activities (36).** Utilizing my talents. Feeling valued. Making a contribution. Felt great helping people. Sense of purpose. Great opportunities for service, such as Habitat, Churches United Shelter (for Homeless), Food baskets, Shut-ins, Ushering, Mission work, Hungary trip, SUMMIT.

**Friendly/Comfortable Congregation (16).** Sense of community. Friends invited us to church. Friends invited us to programs and activities. Diversity/inclusiveness.

**Worship (14).** Exciting, especially during Lent and Advent. Candlelight services. Chapel services with small group. Saturday and Sunday evening services.

**Support (6).** Appreciated when most needed: following birth of child, when ill, when struggling with health issues. Visits by elders. Weddings. Funerals. Visitations.

**Faith Development (4).** Spurred by minister (Sam Massey). Visit to different churches as part of youth program. New member sessions.

**Teamwork (1).** Seeing ministers, CE, Music and staff work as a team.

## **2. What do you *value* most about Westminster?**

**Spiritually engaging preaching (135).** Pastoral Leadership. High quality sermons. Traditional Worship. Diversity of opinions. Chapel Service/Alternative Worship Opportunities.

**High quality music program (106).** Fine Arts Series. CACTUS (Fine Arts summer camp). Vocal & Bell Choirs.

**Strong Christian Education Program (104).** Westminster on Wednesday (WOW). Youth Groups. Children's Sunday School. Adult Education. Vacation Bible School (VBS). Bible Study. Challenges us to think.

**Relationships with all ages (103).** Fellowship opportunities. Open and welcoming. Small Groups. Presbyterian Women (PW). Stephen Ministry. Stable congregation. Being a part of a church community. Feels like home. Friends attend

**Mission (51).** Involvement in local community. Senior High mission trips. Relationships with El Salvador & Hungary.

## **3. What are your *dreams* for Westminster?**

### **I. Christian Education (108 total)**

- a. Importance of active and empowering youth ministry. (18)
- b. Intergenerational opportunities. (17)
- c. Expand adult classes and small groups. (24)
- d. Importance of spiritual growth, Bible study and contemporary issues. (17)
- e. Energy into new areas. (14)

### **II. Growth (67)**

- a. More young families and young adults. (34)
- b. Other new member growth. (23)
- c. Contact members not attending. (5)
- d. Follow up on new member involvement. (5)

### **III. Music (44)**

- a. More contemporary. (11)
- b. Stay with traditional. (11)
- c. Strong minister of music. (9)

- d. Continue fine arts program. (6)
- e. More involvement of youth and adult vocal and instrumental. (5)
- f. Rock & roll. (2)

**IV. Mission (33)**

- a. To community - Drake and Beaverdale. (17)
- b. Expand national and world mission.
- c. More visibility about mission in church and community.

**V. Senior Pastor (28) and Worship (10)**

- a. Characteristics needed: dynamic, charismatic, loving, strong leadership and sermons applicable to life, address difficult issues.
- b. Creativity in worship.
- c. Diversity in worship.
- d. Alternative to traditional.
- e. Involve more people – youth to older.

*Mentioned numerous times but not in the top five:*

**VI. Financial (15)**

- a. Budget responsibility.
- b. Address salaries of staff.
- c. Fiscal responsibility.
- d. Prioritize what we can accomplish with the resources we have.

**VII. Qualities of a Vibrant Congregation (13)**

- a. Welcoming and Friendly
- b. Inclusive
- c. Connecting all ages
- d. Member care
- e. More fellowship
- f. More volunteering
- g. A positive attitude
- h. Bible-based

***OTHER COMMENTS – DREAMS***

What would make our church a more dynamic community of faith?

- Focus on a loving God and Jesus Christ
- Respect for creeds, confessions, Scripture – true to tenets of the church
- Care of present membership
- Visibility in community
- Pledge time as well as money
- Follow up on new member involvement
- Growth in membership and spirituality

- More excitement in programming
- Mission – expand program

Top priority for next five years.....

- Identify short- and long-term goals
- Re-evaluate as we proceed
- New mission statement (put in newsletter & bulletin)
- Be able to accept change
- Care of property
- Expand use of building

## **Appendix B: Themes Emerging from Noah Gatherings**

The themes below are ones that emerged as facilitators reported from their groups. Comments included following the themes are those provided by members who were interested in commenting further on the topic following the end of the scheduled program. The lack of comments following a theme should not be read as a lack of interest in the topic but likely a reflection that the theme discussed was fully covered in the initial 90 minutes.

### ***1. Tuesday, August 4, 2009 at 7 p.m.***

#### **Family & Children's Programs**

##### **Involvement in the Life of the Church**

Match groups with others needs, e.g., need to help elderly with computers. We want to attract young people – ask young people in local schools to help elderly with computers.

Continue to expand outreach programs, both community and world; build a stronger tradition of service. There are more needs than solutions or helpers. I liked the idea of all (100%) of the small groups adopting a mission project.

Process for connecting with those who are homebound or, for some reason, aren't getting to church – It's easy to be "forgotten" if not regular in attendance.

More volunteerism!

##### **Small Groups**

- Come up with a variety of small groups. Forms in Sunday bulletin so they can indicate interests.

##### **Bible Study**

- Strong women's group.
- Guided Bible study/short term (6-8 weeks)
- Prayer groups.
- Tell people about the Library.
- Book studies.
- Research group.
- Bill Maher – Religious (documentary) – Class that would look at it and discuss it.

##### **Music**

##### **Younger Families**

2. *Wednesday, August 5, 2009 at 10 a.m.*

**Intergenerational**

Birth and Death

Team teaching

Retired can support young parents

Meals to couples with newborn

Teens interview nursing home members and report in newsletter

Confirmation class goes on communion calls

3<sup>rd</sup> graders get Bibles – need to follow up by reading it in fourth grade

Older members teach Bible study to younger members

Younger generation teach to older generation

**Music & Arts**

Music Director that is compatible and overseer with all ages and all choirs

Continuation of Fine Arts Series

More use of member talent

More use of traditional hymns

Seasonal hymn singing for total of the season

Usual of visual member artists works

Teaching traditional hymns to children

**Connect...**

More adult classes/Bible study, spiritual problems, growth, read/discuss books

Small groups need to be broader in topic

Koinonia groups

Suppers for six/seven

Intergenerational activities at all levels

**Friends/Fellowship**

3. *Sunday, August 9, 2009 at 10:45 a.m.*

**Welcoming, Inclusive, Diversity (outreach to people**

God Outside the Box Group

Open-minded

Willingness to discuss all kinds of topics

Social/Moral/Ethical/Spiritual Discussions

Wide variety of programming

**Pastoral Support**

**Small Groups**

## Youth

20s and 30<sup>th</sup> need to be not just more involved, but have more “presence” in the church.

We (church) need to be more important in the lives of the youth

Choir should be a part of church life for all the youth. Bells is a “special interest” and shouldn’t be forced on the kids leading to animosity. Bell leader too militant.

## Participation & Fellowship

Let staff do the work and need more volunteering

Need “older” member ministry

Need improved structure for getting more people involved in all aspects of church – when people are involved is most meaningful to church membership.

## Music & Art

Participation/sharing

- More special music – solos, quartets, in lieu of choir at some services.
- Spiritual music-gospel more invigorating than tradition. More diversity in music.
- Perhaps some for men and women
- Blend classical with modern
- ARTS – theater, music – more diversity – contemporary service and instruments – different night of week? Or different area of church?
- Some choose Westminster based on traditional music
- BALANCE
- Worship – more creativity (e.g. dramatic/musical presentation of Scripture)
- Create sense of community for choirs

## **4. *Wednesday, August 19, 2009 at 7 p.m.***

### Worship

- Sermon series: Topic delved into over several weeks
- Adult Ed, Christian Ed, Music are integrated
- More Involvement for older children in general worship
- Bible Study – but different – focus on Christianity, not the stories of the Bible
- More background; deeper: the service is not creative – boring readings, songs are not inspiring
- Minimalize the front of the church
  - highlight the simple beauty
  - reduce clutter
- Cross at Lent
- More inclusion of variety of worship styles
- Drama

### **Spiritual Growth Bible Study**

- Women's retreat – all age groups, intergenerational
- Better organization of S.G. groups. Perhaps a pastor/manager/leader that provides direction and support of groups and programs.

### **Hands-On Involvement**

Be more involved in community and social justice issues in a more political way in addition to hands-on methods.

I would like to see more involvement in welcoming of GLBT persons.

Need a volunteer coordinator to keep members active and involved – not just in small groups; would assist staff members responsibilities in certain areas, i.e., outreach, CE, etc.

Make an effort to include new people on each committee – not just the same familiar names.

### **Youth & Young Adults**

- Tie-in between mission/outreach and young adults
- Be able to see results
- Not witnessing outreach only, but have hands-on activities.
- Visiting homebound with families
- Christmas caroling with families
- Christian Education program
- Promote our mission programs to the congregation
- Spiritual “Buddy” ala workout buddy, accountable to for prayer life – relationships

### **Music**

## **5. *Sunday, August 23, 2009 at 10:45 a.m.***

### **Dynamic Leadership**

- Personable
- Humorous
- Speaks from the heart
- Short sermons
- Sermons with “call to action”
- Good ability to remember names
- Inspiring and inspires small groups
- Open to new ideas
- Strong leader/facilitator
- Team player
- Inspires and empowers and enables member to be active

### **Personal Involvement**

- 1.) Have/Involve members in “work” or needs of church – landscaping, maintenance, etc.
- 2.) Develop a service directory so members can call on and support talents and work of members

(dental, medical, legal, maintenance, music lessons, carpentry, lawn care, etc.)

- Potlucks, picnic, talent show
- Get people to feel like they belong and are important, and they will keep coming back and get more involved. (I realize this is a tough task!)
- Recruit people to head-up (or co-lead) small group activities.
- Provide service opportunities for all members (more Christmas caroling, taking dinners to homeless, volunteering to hand out water, make balloon animals).
- Movie nights in theater
- More babysitting nights.
- Craft retreats/make projects for the needy.

### **Music & Arts**

Love the idea of bringing kids into worship using music and arts – very successful in the past. But remember that there are other talents being overlooked – computer/audio/video and writing reflections are other ways to involve youth.

Mix up music and inclusion of audio, visual and vocal arts in services. Incorporate acoustic music (small guitar group, etc...) and liturgical dance. Mix in more contemporary music offerings. Classics are great, but so is some of the newer music.

Perhaps there are really no words to describe the tremendous impact that Ruth Harris has provided to the music department. She is a nationally known organist with the AGO. While it is so easy to dilute, the exceptional music that Ruth and Randy provided for 19 years was always potent with musical craftsmanship. We need to seek the advice of Ruth for the search of a new choir master.

If music is so important we need to explore more ways to experience it, even for those who can't sing or play an instrument, or keep a beat.

Same with art – enough wall/paint photo hangings – maybe we should hang a video or computer-drawn image or live experience scene.

Provide new music minister the support and encouragement to create, innovate and experiment.

### **Small Groups**

- Families with young children group. Staplins could help with this.
- Like the idea of a church-wide potluck/picnic.
- Have existing small groups put short articles in the newsletter about their activities.
- Groups to discuss tough theological/political issues.

## ***6. Wednesday, September 2, 2009 at 7 p.m.***

### **Mission & Service**

Cards to inform really make a difference.  
Special Funds of mission  
Hands dirty  
Mission – local, foreign culture  
Support other churches: Presbyterian, inner city  
Parish nurse  
Support Group, Screenings  
Mentoring (?)  
Encourage through example

### **Accepting/Caring & Welcoming**

Don't stop shaking of hands – H1N1 concern with elderly – encourage hand washing & use of hand sanitizer  
Don't stop intinction – passing of germs – encourage hand washing & use of hand sanitizer  
Volunteer coordination to connect people  
Don't expect Staff to do what we can do.  
We need to be involved and give service to our congregation.  
Staff appreciation

### **Small Groups**

Consider designating the group that cooks for the homeless as a “small group” and publicize it as such.  
Connection with Adult CE and Small Groups

### **Music & Arts**

Rhythm-instruments for kids who don't like to sing  
CACTUS every Wednesday night

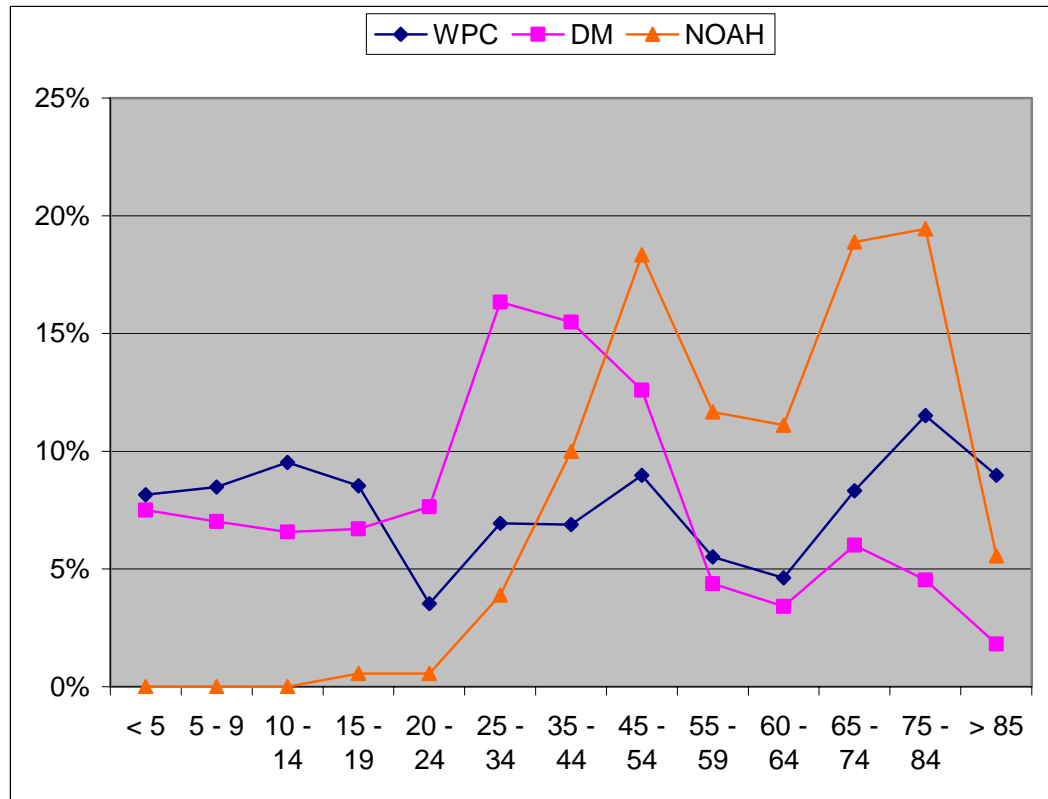
### **Children & Youth**

Dinner Theater (Singing waiters) Kids serve food  
Kids that don't sing/Mandatory Lay Readers – Mandatory Choir – Expectation to serve the church.  
Bushwhack – involvement in service.  
Making a joyful noise – sometime is a “noise”☺  
Sunday School and WOW all year.  
Community of Parents, responsibility of all parents to help rain the youth of the church, emphasizing what we say at baptisms  
Create jobs for youth in service  
Youth mission inside the church – pew clean-up; pencils sharpened; WW table clean up;  
Communion help. Not in choir? We'll find you something to do!  
Youth involved in the worship service.  
Everyone attends Youth Sunday – not just parents!

## Appendix C: Demographic Data

Ages of Westminster Members  
vs.  
Ages of Des Moines Population - 2009  
vs.  
Ages of Noah Team Participants

<u>AGE</u>	<u>WPC</u>	<u>DM</u>	<u>NOAH</u>
< 5	8%	7%	0%
5 - 9	8%	7%	0%
10 - 14	10%	7%	0%
15 - 19	9%	7%	1%
20 - 24	4%	8%	1%
25 - 34	7%	16%	4%
35 - 44	7%	15%	10%
45 - 54	9%	13%	18%
55 - 59	6%	4%	12%
60 - 64	5%	3%	11%
65 - 74	8%	6%	19%
75 - 84	12%	5%	19%
> 85	<u>9%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>6%</u>
	100%	100%	100%



Coordinates: 41:36.72 93:40.43  
Date: 9/28/2009

Prepared For:  
Westminster Presbyterian Church  
4114 Allison Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50310

Study Area Definition:  
3.0 Mile Radius



### How many people live in the defined study area?

Currently, there are 104,037 persons residing in the defined study area. This represents a decrease of 1,581 or 1.5% since 1990. During the same period of time, the U.S. as a whole grew by 22.3%. (see page 4)



### Is the population in this area projected to grow?

No, between 2009 and 2014, the population is projected to remain stable. During the same period, the U.S. population is projected to grow by 4.9%. (see page 4)



### How much lifestyle diversity is represented?

The lifestyle diversity in the area is *extremely high* with a considerable 38 of the 50 U.S. Lifestyles segments represented. The top individual segment is *Suburban Mid-Life Families* representing 18.0% of all households. (see pages 13 and 14)



### How do racial or ethnic groups contribute to diversity in this area?

Based upon the total number of different groups present, the racial/ethnic diversity in the area is *very high*. Among individual groups, *Anglos* represent 75.4% of the population and all other racial/ethnic groups make up just 24.7% which is well below the national average of 35%. The largest of these groups, *African-Americans*, accounts for 9.7% of the total population. *Hispanics/Latinos* are projected to be the fastest growing group increasing by 23.1% between 2009 and 2014. (see pages 4 and 7)



### What are the major generational groups represented?

The largest age group in terms of numbers is *Survivors* (age 28 to 48) comprised of 33,396 persons or 32.1% of the total population in the area. *Builders* (age 85 and up) make up 2.5% of the population which compared to a national average of 1.8% makes them the most over-represented group in the area. (see page 4)



### Overall, how traditional are the family structures?

The area can be described as *somewhat non-traditional* due to the below average presence of married persons and two-parent families. (see page 6)



### How educated are the adults?

Based upon the number of years completed and college enrollment, the overall education level in the area is *very high*. While 88.4% of the population aged 25 and over have graduated from high school as compared to the national average of 80.4%, college graduates account for 33.9% of those over 25 in the area versus 24.4% in the U.S. (see page 8)



### Which household concerns are unusually high in the area?

Concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Satisfying Job/Career*, *Retirement Opportunities*, *Social Injustice*, *Divorce*, *Finding Companionship* and *Time for Recreation/Leisure*. (see page 16)



### What is the likely faith receptivity?

Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is *somewhat high* when compared to national averages. (see page 15)



### What is the likely giving potential in the area?

Based upon the average household income of \$59,624 per year and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as *somewhat low*. (see page 4 and 17)

## Supplemental Appendix D: Responses from Session Units and Committees

### 1. What do you *value* most about Westminster?

#### *Christian Education:*

The relationships we form with other people & families  
Having a safe place to explore your faith and learn without fear of judgment.  
That WP is committed to providing mission opportunities for children and adults.  
The opportunities to teach others about God and his plan for us.  
Having a faith community where children and adults feel that WP is a safe place where they can be supported and valued.

#### *Worship and Music:*

The integration of a variety of mediums into worship (drama, visual arts, music, etc.)  
Quality preaching  
A focus on active worship that draws more from the congregation into the process.  
A focus on excellence and shared expectations for a worship experience ... quality, creativity, innovation.  
The value of music as part of the worship experience.  
Connectivity of theme throughout worship (songs, sermons, hymns)  
Opportunity to explore more creative means to quality worship and acceptance of the exploration by the congregation.  
Acceptance by the congregation of new experiences within the context of worship.  
Value lay people's contributions to worship.  
Children's participation in worship with a focus on them as worship leaders.  
Choir is open to new members  
Inclusivity statement is more prominent (front of the bulletin)

#### *Outreach:*

We value the reputation of Westminster of providing support to community groups and those individuals in our community who are most in need. We value the financial and human resources that the congregation and foundation provide to support outreach and mission initiatives.

\*Please note—we found it difficult to rank importance or choose to value one area of church activity over another. Our hope is that there is less perception of competition among units, programs and initiatives, and that we can be a church that equally supports the many different ways of fulfilling our mission.

#### *God Outside the Box:*

Acceptance of diverse ideas  
Friendships  
Opportunity to express yourself and not be shot down  
Chances to be involved

Ability to start new groups  
Music and arts as vehicles for worship, as an offering to the community and to draw people in

*Foundation:*

Congregational care in times of need is also a matter highly valued.

2. What are your *dreams* for Westminster?

*Christian Education:*

More intergenerational activities

We would hope that children involved with CE programs would continue to be involved with WP as young adults.

That Sunday and Wednesday night programs will become 'must attends' for all families.

That our kids will be 'bugging' us to go to church.

*Worship and Music:*

Members value the current participation of youth in worship (instead of asking for "more youth participation in worship") - many competing activities for youth. Focus less on what we *don't* have and build on what we *do* have – remain authentic to who we are. Innovation is part of the fiber of Westminster - we can try new things, but still stay true to ourselves.

Exploration of differences in the two services.

Figure out what the church can provide to people that they are missing in other parts of their life.

Enthusiasm, creative ideas, marketing.

Build more of a community worship (less disconnect between people).

Recognize birthdays with parties or cards (Deacon's cards) - values individuals as well as the long term commitment of members.

Recognition of more people (recognizing new choir members, especially children).

*Outreach:*

While mission and outreach activities have support within the church we would like to see more involvement—more people doing hands-on work. This may include wielding hammers for Habitat or serving on an outreach committee.

We would like to see the church take more "ownership" of outreach initiatives and raise the level of awareness to that of other areas, such as fine arts. Again this is not in competition, but that we integrate and support all of our mission, outreach, and evangelistic activities on an equal level. And that we might be able to see more activity in mission by more integration between our programs, instead of operating in our "silos" of units. For example, one member said "I believe outreach is Christian education for my children—we are teaching them to do the work of Christ hands on."

*Fellowship:*

The Fellowship Committee is in accordance with all of the “dreams” listed in Section 3 except “staying with traditional music.” It is so refreshing when the choir sings uplifting “jazzy” songs which if you notice, are the ones that tend to get applause, leaving the congregation energized and unable to get out of our head for the rest of the day.

*God Outside the Box:*

Survival  
Enjoy coming to church again  
More positive thinking and outlook  
More silence during worship  
More joy  
Address present day prophets and ideas  
Messages (sermons) that spark conversation  
Deeper theology  
Intellectual stimulation  
Transparency, honesty - honest discussions  
(Fear is not good)

*Foundation:*

In addition, increased participation in all aspects of the church by members, including support of mission projects and gifts to the Foundation.

3. What do you see as the primary *mission* for your committee or unit?

*Christian Education:*

To provide opportunities that will meet the spiritual (and emotional) needs of the Westminster family and community while deepening their relationships with God and each other.

Major short-term goal - Expand on the core group of families currently actively involved in CE programs by providing opportunities that meet their needs and actively inviting them to participate. Also to encourage the Westminster Church family to actively invite others to join them to worship and other activities in the church.

Major-long term goal – To continually look at the effectiveness of the programming we’re offering to make sure it is relevant and meeting the needs of our families, which would result in increased participation.

What, if anything, is needed to help you achieve those goals?

More adults willing to take on a leadership or support role in CE.

Volunteers (or volunteer coordinator) to contact people who have participated in CE programs in the past to reconnect with them, share what’s new and invite them to come back.

More integration between units (improving unit structure)  
A commitment from current leaders to lead by example, making participating in programs and worship a priority.

Any challenges or issues that might make achieving those goals more difficult.  
The departmentalization of the units...should be everyone working towards the same purpose, not just their own committee agenda  
Time, volunteer availability, equipment challenges.  
Accessing restricted funds that could be used for CE  
Not having access to kitchen facilities when we would like to use it.  
Website is hard to use to promote events

### *Worship and Music:*

Worship and Music's mission is to facilitate a interactive, high quality, creative and innovative worship and arts experience at Westminster that enables the congregation to grow in their faith, strengthens their relationships with God and provides leadership opportunities for both children and adults.

#### Short Term Goals

Explore the possibility of differentiating the two services.  
Explore ways to integrate Cactus concepts (integrating creative arts) into the life of Westminster (worship, education)  
Stronger connection to and communication with CE Unit  
A focus on advanced planning to allow staff and volunteers the opportunity to better use their skills and deliver an excellent worship experience on a weekly basis.  
A focus on open communications and a team approach.

#### Long Term Goals

Build on the sense of community in worship – a community of worship, not just individuals worshipping in the same room.  
Create a focus on active worship experiences that more strongly draw from the congregation into the experience (active vs. passive worship).

#### What, if anything, is needed to help you achieve those goals.

Belief in our goals  
Faith  
Hard work  
Excitement about faith  
Commitment by church members and staff

Any challenges or issues that might make achieving those goals more difficult.  
Resistance to change

### *Outreach:*

Outreach means:

- Breaking down walls
- Community focus
- Ministering to community
- Reaching those in need/reaching beyond congregation
- Knowing that others are being helped
- Gods concern for others
- Being a servant

We believe that Westminster is able to reach many people and programs that need our support, but that there will never be enough resources to reach all the needs of the community. As such, we will strive to maintain adequate flow of financial resources to outreach and mission programs and initiatives.

#### Goals:

- Increase awareness among Westminster members of the "reach" of outreach
- Increase involvement in outreach programs and initiatives by Westminster members

Tactics:

- Host an "Outreach Sunday" regularly to highlight programs and services
- Use social media to connect (ie: Facebook page for Outreach)
- Host event where members can interact in an intergenerational way to complete on outreach project
- Reach out personally to members who may have the time and talent

What, if anything, is needed to help you achieve those goals.

- More people involved and committed to our mission programs
- More financial resources
- Someone to help recruit people to projects

Any challenges or issues that might make achieving those goals more difficult.

The church is distracted at present by the need for a new head pastor and many don't want to act on anything until the new person steps in to his/her role

### *Fellowship:*

The primary mission of our committee is providing refreshments for the congregation during social hours such as Sunday mornings and receptions for Fine Arts events. Our short-term goal is to keep doing what we're doing, but hopefully getting new members who want to get more involved the opportunity to take this over. Long-term goals would be to bring back Supper for Seven and church picnics providing there is enough interest. Entertainment provided by

members of the congregation tend to make events like the picnic and Shrove Tuesday something that everyone looks forward to attending.

*Foundation:*

To advance, support and assist in the mission of Westminster Presbyterian Church as set forth in the incorporation documents for the Westminster Presbyterian Church Foundation.

Short term goal: Address the balloon payment due April 1, 2011 by Westminster Presbyterian Church to the Foundation.

Long term goals:

Honoring the request of donors to the Foundation regarding restricted gifts and unrestricted gifts;  
Manage the Foundation assets productively for the ultimate benefit of the mission of Westminster Presbyterian Church;  
Increase assets under management by encouraging lifetime and testamentary gifts through our development program.

What, if anything, is needed to help you achieve your goals?

Substantive communication with Session representatives regarding refinancing of loan or payment thereof. Continued support and cooperation with the Session and pastoral staff.

Any challenges or issues that might make achieving those goals more difficult?

Economic challenges caused by the recession and declining church membership. In addition, the church faces financial challenges due to diminishing stewardship support of the church's financial needs.