



Plentiful Gifts

Nourishing Members for the Flourishing of Small Member Congregations

Is your congregation struggling to maintain worship, pastoral care and community life with fewer helping hands? Does your ministry feel less “full” because your church is served by a part-time pastor or maybe no pastor at all? “Plentiful Gifts” is a grant-funded program for John Knox Presbytery churches designed to enhance your congregation's vitality and to help it grow in service to one another. The program, a partnership between JKP and the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, aims to sustain small-but-vital congregations by exploring new ministry models and nurturing the gifts and talents of session led congregations.

This program is *not* about more homework. It is an opportunity for lay people to be fed in a targeted way that will strengthn God’s children where they may feel weak or where they are most committed.

Participating churches will work with the Plentiful Gifts team to explore their identity, community, challenges, and ministry gifts. A small group within each congregation (typically 3-4 people) will then receive training and support in one or more specific areas such as preaching, worship, pastoral care, faith formation, community engagement, and leadership. Consultants will work with UDTs to define a menu of training choices for participating churches. Each church will have a mentor, and participants will support each other through prayer and biannual retreats for worship, fellowship, and encouragement.

The program requires a two-year commitment, starting with a six-month study phase followed by up to 18 months of tailored learning. Thanks to a grant from the Lilly Foundation's "Thriving Congregations Initiative," there is no cost for churches to participate. In the first phase, approximately 4-7 churches will be selected from those that apply.

Fall 2026

Six months

18 months

Recruitment

**“Windows and
Doors”**

“Equipping”

- Discuss with Congregational Leadership
- Complete Application

- Discern identity, mission and gifts
- Work with program director, catalyst and consultants

- Selected members participate in theological education, workshops and mentoring
- Congregation offers support and encouragement



Mirrors & Windows Phase (Six Months)

Looking in the mirror at the congregation's members, spiritual gifts, resources

Looking out the window to the neighborhood and other context

- Explore Relationships, identity, vocation, & mission
- Demographic/contextual study results
- Discover gaps and bridges
- Discernment of individual calls(3-4) for training
- Create the congregation's strengthening/equipping plan

Strengthening the Body of Christ (18 Months)

Participating members grow in faith, wisdom, and calling.

- Cohort style training
 - Individuals from different churches training in common areas together or targeted training limited among several in one church
 - Some training options might allow for broad congregational equipping-for example, a book group on caring
- Seven fields of equipping to strengthen churches
 - Preaching
 - Worship leadership
 - Pastoral Care
 - Community & Service
 - Faith Formation
 - Leadership & Governance
 - Communication & Technology

Wider Support for Success

Fellow churches, the Plentiful Gifts Team, and JKP support the congregation's journey

- Kick-Off/Site visit with Forest Walk Consulting
- Monthly meeting with mentor and catalyst
- Four retreats for the participants

For more information about the Plentiful Gifts program, please contact Doug Denne, JKP Program Catalyst at doug.denne@jknox.org or 479-746-8614.