



Who Are We?

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In September 2020, the Presbytery voted to claim its identity as a Matthew 25 Presbytery. Focusing on the verses from Matthew 25:31-46, we began reorienting our programs and thinking to live intentionally as people who welcome the stranger, feed those who hunger, prevent exploitation of our workers, ensure access to housing and medical care for all in need, and care for those who are incarcerated. We haven't perfected that orientation by any stretch, but we're committed to working toward that vision. The [denominational invitation](#) to claim our Matthew 25 identity has three focus points: eradicating systemic poverty, building ministry vitality, and dismantling structural racism. As a presbytery, you committed us to this vision and work. Thank you for that bold decision.

The Matthew 25 call extends to all our congregations, and several have already accepted the invitation: Forest Park, Tippecanoe, Calvary, Covenant, Heritage, Southminster, and Living Hope. Last week, two more Presbyterian congregations made this formal commitment: Sun Valley (Beloit) and North Lima (Whitewater). We celebrate their decision to prioritize the difficult, but necessary work that comes from claiming a Matthew 25 identity.

Rev. David Ewing, Sun Valley pastor, shared about the Session's study and discernment process that resulted in a pledge to the Matthew 25 vision: "The reality is, Sun Valley has been working to eradicate poverty in the Beloit area for many years. Over 40 years ago, Rev. Ian Stirrat founded the Caritas Food Pantry with several of his area colleagues. We continue to support the pantry with board members & volunteers, food drives, and this year's extra gift of \$431 for holiday meals." They regularly support three or four other benevolences, applying proceeds from their re-birthed Strawberry Fest. This year, Sun Valley raised \$9000 for these groups.

As the Sun Valley Session approved the motion, one elder said, "Matthew 25 puts a name on what we have already been doing."

North Lima, with 24 members, has also claimed the Matthew 25 identity. Clerk of Session Terri Shepherd explains that the church still has the resources needed to help the community. "We don't always give a lot, but we do like to help others. Having the Matthew 25 incentives has broadened our thinking and outreach on different organizations." With this focus, they are more intentional about facing the needs and injustices of their community.

For 2022-23, the Presbytery will emphasize the third prong of Matthew 25: building ministry vitality. Sun Valley is eager for this emphasis. "As we look toward 2022, I know that we face several challenges including this meandering pandemic that will not go away," remarked Rev. Ewing. "We lament over the violence that grips our world as we pray for our sisters and brothers in Waukesha and other places. We wish that our pews were full once again, though our building is getting pretty good use these days. We pray that this Matthew 25 pledge will give us the symbol we need before us and the energy we need within us to move through challenges and opportunities all around us, in conjunction with our partners at the Presbytery of Milwaukee."

Amen! Will you [join us](#)?