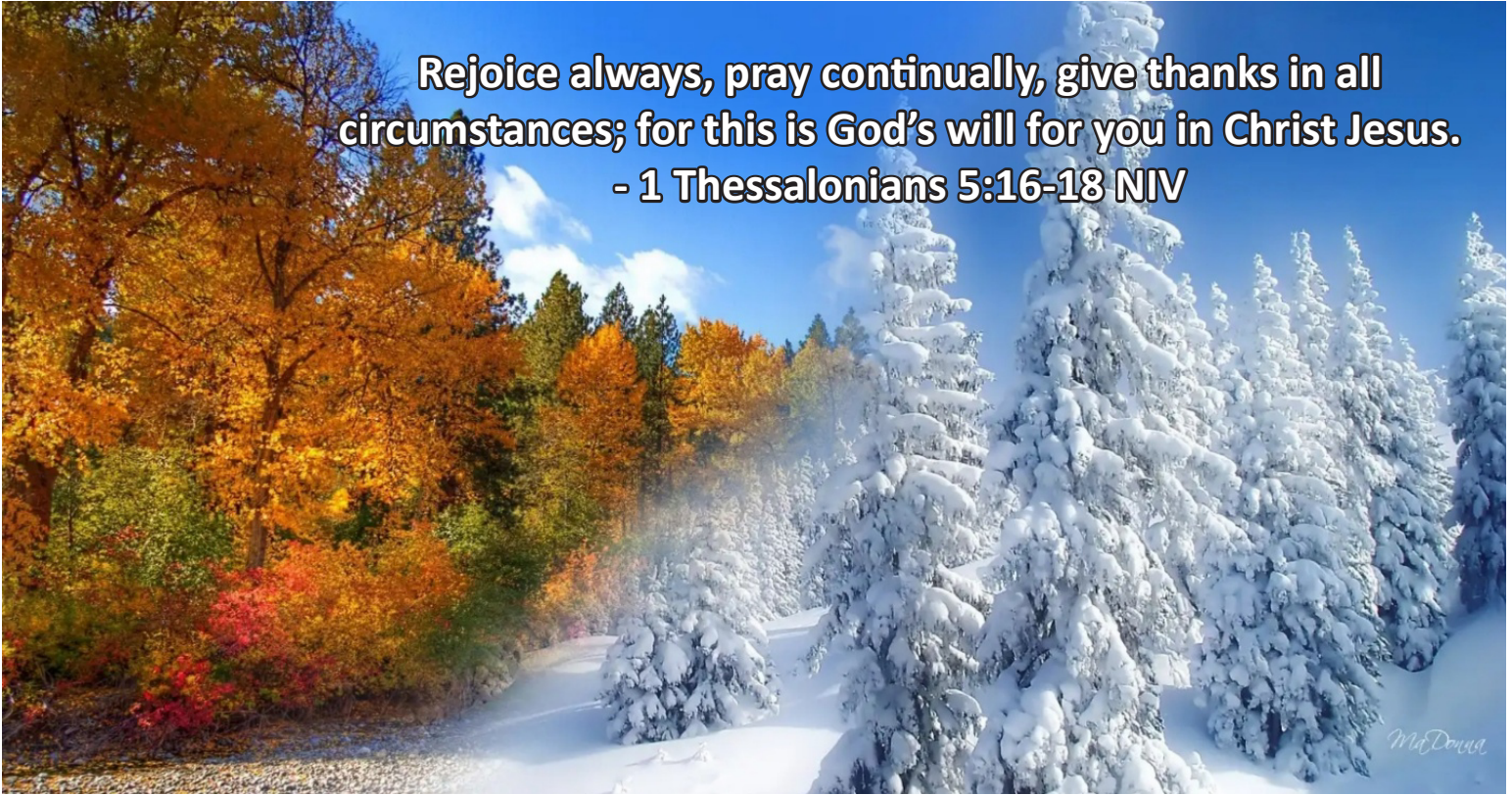


The Spiritual Caregiver

A Newsletter of the Ecumenical Institute for Pastoral Care

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

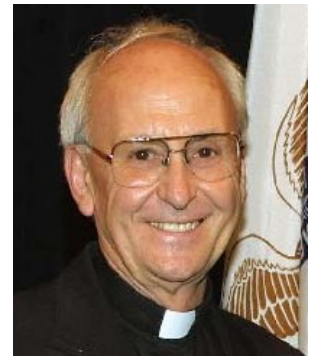


Father Eugene Sitzmann

By Denise Green

On December 20th, Father Eugene Sitzmann passed away following a lengthy illness. Father Sitzmann established the Ecumenical Institute for Clinical Pastoral Education many years ago to provide training to NW Iowa caregivers. Ecumenical Institute is one of only a few accredited clinical pastoral education centers in the United States. It is a nonprofit organization 501(c)3. EI is funded through donations and benefactors. EI has 4 Certified Clinical Pastoral Educators located in Boston, Minneapolis metro, Denver and Arizona. EI offers online CPE units to the students well before Covid 19 shut down many CPE centers. Ecumenical Institute students are plant chaplains, priests, rabbis, pastors, hospice-workers, ministers, rural chaplains, caregivers, laypersons, etc. from all over the United States, Canada, and the world. In the last few years, Father Sitzmann was able to see his dream of expansion from NW Iowa to global training of students. Father was residing in a memory care facility. On one visit I gave him

the Fall/Winter 2024 newsletter. This was one of my last visits with Father Gene when he was able to still communicate, he stated "I think I did good" after reading the newsletter. I assured him he had done very good! The Ecumenical



Institute Board of Directors will continue Father Gene's dream in his honor. A memorial plaque provided by the Ecumenical Institute Board of Directors will be on display at the Maryhill Memorial Chapel on the grounds of the Maryhill Church that was destroyed by straight line winds approximately 10 years ago. Father Sitzmann was the Priest at Maryhill at the time of the destruction. Father was instrumental in building a small museum/chapel attached to the open shelter house located near the cemetery on the Maryhill grounds. Maryhill is located in the country west of Cherokee, Iowa.

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† Robert C. Alexander (1993-2003)

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(1993-2025)



Ivan Wiersema, an EI Board Member, recently passed away following a long, fought battle with cancer. Ivan served several terms on the Ecumenical Board. His strong faith and dedication to the mission of Ecumenical Institute will be greatly missed.

New Board Member Donna Kohn, Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Ecumenical Institute Board. I was first introduced to the Ecumenical Institute through Father Sitzmann. I know how important EI was to Father. When I joined Maryhill, I chose St. Dymphna as my saint – who was revered for her compassion for those with mental health challenges and Father Sitzmann was so pleased – near and dear to his heart. A little more about me:

I grew up in the Primghar area and moved to Cherokee when I married my husband, Gerard Kohn. I currently work at Cherokee State Bank, celebrating 18 years this year. I am Assistant Vice-President of Human Resources. I also prepare all board reports for our bank Board of Directors. I wear many hats within the organization and always say

there is something new to learn.

I also serve on the Northwest Iowa Community College Business Advisory Board. We meet twice a year to work with the college staff and business instructor(s) to discuss the curriculum offered and how this aligns with business needs in the workplace.

My husband and I live on a farm in rural Cherokee where we, with our eldest son, Dylan, row crop and manage a 100 head – cow calf operation. Dylan also works at the Soil and Conservation office as well. Our younger son, Dustin is completing his final year of graduate school at Kansas State University. Being a mom is my favorite job, and I have enjoyed every minute of raising the boys. In my spare time, I love flower gardens and have a little paradise in my backyard.

**Leaving a Legacy
for Your Community**
**Times are
definitely changing.**

**Our nation's future
is unknown.
Our future
with God is known.**

Is there something you can do for EI to continue our legacy of faith based training?

The value of some assets like farm land is high. What planning can you do this year to optimize your taxes and also help your favorite charities including EI?

Contact Denise for more information at 712-225-0202 or denisegreen608@gmail.com

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Excerpt from Our Daily Bread, there will come a day when a gathering needn't be "representative" because all believers will be together. John, in a vision from God, describes it this way: "I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne." – (Revelation 7:9-10) "Our local churches may not always reflect the diversity that exists in God's eternal Kingdom, sometimes that's the result

of factors outside our control-other times we may be drawn to worship with those we perceive to be similar to ourselves culturally, politically, and economically. But we honor God when we embrace-and even seek out the beautiful differences He has endowed to his children. They offer a foretaste of that diverse, heavenly gathering when all those who trust in Jesus's sacrifice will worship Him together". - Kristen Holmberg

Student Comments

Roger Cauthon has provided student comments from the Summer 2025 Unit regarding Video Conferencing (Zoom) and CPE (clinical pastoral education). The distance education model with video conferencing is used through the Ecumenical Institute. The students were asked to comment on the process.

"I have used Zoom for both my seminary classes and CPE unit. I am very comfortable with the use of the platform and feel that it is an adequate method for learning. While there are some drawbacks to being online, such as being a bit less able to pick up on body language and having fewer opportunities for community building outside of actual class conversation, it is the only way that I would have been able to complete this unit. Due to my family situation, work requirements, and the limited options for in-person CPE units, I would have been hard pressed to complete my entire seminary program, as CPE is a requirement. I was still able to form relationships with my peers and supervisor, contribute to conversation, and learn the required content."

"The videoconferencing method would work well for me. I live in a very isolated and rural area. And to try and find a site to travel to would be difficult. It would require me to be gone for days, if not weeks at a time from my parish and be away from my parishioners and community. And my work. The ability to zoom in for classes and be able to interact with my instructor and my classmates while still being in my very rural South Dakota home is wonderful. And to still be able to do my ministry here with my parish. And not having to travel and add extra expenses and time away from home and from work has been a blessing. I would have struggle to find a program that could have accommodated my very, isolated location. If it was not for this type of

format being offered for this program."

"I always prefer meetings in person, because I can see eyes and body language, I like to ask questions and comment on others and sometimes the video call will not show when I would like to join with a comment. The worst time was when my laptop's camera stopped working and I couldn't express that I wanted to share something. Also, I like to express empathy to people through my face features so I couldn't until I used another device that helped in joining completely in the meetings. At the same time video conferencing makes it possible to meet, because we are all far away from each other, and it's hard to travel every time for hours to meet together, and Reverend Roger helped always when he made sure that all of us are sharing our opinion, and he asked us many times if we would like to add anything to the conversation, and inviting us to call after or anytime for any question. The welcoming method that he has made it easier step to use and express what we need."

"Videoconferencing has been a good method for doing CPE. It allows me to join classes and group meetings even when I am far from the site. I can see my group, hear their voices, and share my thoughts in real time. It also makes it easier to meet when travel is not possible. Sometimes, it is harder to feel the same personal connection as in person, and we can miss some body language. But with good listening, patience, and clear communication, videoconferencing still works well for learning, sharing, and supporting each other. It has helped me grow in my pastoral care and stay connected to my CPE group and educator."

"Roger, you continue to bring wisdom and joy to my experience in CPE. This term, you have been especially

vulnerable in a way that feels like a good example of how to be yourself – all of yourself. I am grateful for this! The world has a particular template that men and women try to fit into in a way that supports the continued standards of comfort. You defy those norms in a way that is not self-righteous. It doesn't set a bar so lofty that we cannot reach. This part of you demonstrates a paradigm that would be good for the whole world to shift into. I value your insight, your wisdom and your courage."

Training Faith Based Caregivers



Venmo Donation Option Now Available!

We now offer Venmo on the EI website for easy access when donating.

Check it out at ecumenicalinstitute.org

**Choose friend or family option,
not the business option.**



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Donating

None of this work is possible without the generous support of donors. Since the inception of the Pastoral Education Center in the late 1960's, the number of students participating has now grown well past a thousand. Imagine the countless lives these students have touched with the skills they've learned. With your assistance the number of students will continue to grow.

Please consider supporting the work of the Ecumenical Institute for Clinical Pastoral Education.

- New Gift for Ecumenical Institute
- Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____
- I pledge \$ _____ for _____ years.
- Please send information about a stock transfer.
- Memorial Gift in the name of _____
- A Donation for the Scholarship Fund \$ _____

Please note personal prayer concern below.

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Thanks to those who have helped plan for the longevity of Ecumenical Institute. These fine individuals have given; and their gift will continue after they are gone. If your name was inadvertently missed or you would like to be added, please contact Denise Green.

Thank You

Special thanks to the
Erlandson Foundation for
their continued support.



Ecumenical Institute
1251 West Cedar Loop • Cherokee, IA 51012
denisegreen608@gmail.com • 712-225-0202

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