

GRACE



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highlights

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Thoughts, dreams and ramblings of someone who just wants to connect you to Jesus



I've learned in the course of my life that the best thing you can do as you come out of a challenge is to embrace a new one. Think about it for a few moments. You finish a degree in school, the career you studied for is a bigger challenge than the schooling. You start a family and poof, kids, bigger challenge. You finish a race or fitness challenge and the next (usually harder) one is on the horizon. The alternative to this is to regress. You finish that degree and get blown up by your debt. You start a family and don't invest in them and poof, they are gone. You finish that race, quit training and you end up unable to do what you could before.

2020 was a challenging year that also allowed us as a church to finish some challenges that were before us. We leaned into the challenge of our building debt and paid it off. We saw the challenge of restrictions on our historic practices and we adapted to keep reaching people. We were stretched by capacity to give, and we met it with abundance. The alternative to this is to fail at being the church Christ calls us to be.

Today, I feel like we are at the day after the race. We must choose today, will we rest and not begin again or will we endeavor to do more? I want to do more, and I feel that Christ compels us to strive ever forward. In 2021 we will continue to adapt to whatever patterns COVID has left behind. We will reach past the need to pay off debt and invest into our future. We will honor every life that accepts Jesus and commits to be his hands and feet for the world.

If you feel as I do, then please consider what ways you can help. Consider helping with any of our worship, hospitality, service, education or other teams. Consider expressing your joy and your resolve to see Pekin Grace be the church God uses for redeeming our city.

Peace + Grace,

Rev. Eric N. Swanson

Multiplying Jesus' Followers Through God's Grace

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies

Director of Children & Family Ministry

December was a month of celebrating Christmas – celebrating the greatest gift ever given to the world - Jesus! Families lit the Advent candles at home throughout the month and continued to enjoy Sunday Family Dinners. Families were able to pick-up Advent candles and wreaths to decorate at home!



Kira and Lila blowing out the Candles of Hope, Faith, and Joy

This is the Price family's Advent wreath.



Lila assisted Miss Emmy with the Online UNITEkids lesson about JOY!



The highlight of the month of December for UNITEkids was the Christmas Celebration Scavenger Hunt! Families received clues that sent them all around Pekin. At each stop, families found Scripture that told of Jesus's birth – and a few treats, of course!



Gina, Landon, Leeah, Roseann and Violet take a break by the lagoon.



Kate and Emma



Brody and Peyton enjoying hot cocoa.



Jane and Matthew at a local business that displays a nativity set



Beth and Madalynn enjoying each other's company.



Benny, Zach, Tonya and Nick enjoying a fun day!



Olivia, Owen, Tommy and Alisha loving our scavenger hunt!



Devin is all smiles!



Heather, James, Lilly and BJ



Deb, Jeff, Jay'sson, John and Jake



Donnie, Kat, Mallory, Dianna and Maegen relax by the lagoon.



Mike, Ben, Miles and Ellie had a blast!



Sisters Grace and Violet having fun on the hunt!



Pastor Eric, Hadley, Lorelei and Cori



Sisters Abbi and Amelia pose at the park.



Sherrie, Chuck, Carter and Mason



Chase and Chloe

RADICAL YOUTH MINISTRY

Greta Long
Youth Ministries Director



Greetings, Friends,

As we look ahead to what 2021 has to offer, RADICAL has eyes set on the 2021 Summer Mission Trip. Participating in mission work is something that brings students of a youth group together and is one of the strongest ways for youth to get a first-hand experience with God's unending love and all-encompassing generosity.

Paying for a mission trip is no small feat, and we would so appreciate any donations you may feel like contributing. Stand-alone donations are always appreciated, but RADICAL also has TWO upcoming fundraisers: The Nelson's Chicken Dinner Fundraiser on January 28 and the Superbowl Sunday Sub-Sandwich fundraiser. Tickets are still available for the Chicken Dinner Fundraiser for \$10, and order forms for the sub sandwich fundraiser will be available this Sunday, January 17th. Chicken orders must be placed by noon on January 25.

If monetary donations are not within your capacity for giving at this time, we also greatly appreciate prayers. Youth Ministry during a pandemic is unlike any other season of Youth Ministry, and RADICAL is so blessed to be a part of the incredible Grace UMC Community.

Thank you all for your support and your prayers!

Grace & Peace,
Greta Long

On behalf of the Outreach Committee and our Church, we want to thank everyone who shopped or made contributions for children and families in need in our community. The Angel Tree program had to take on a different method from past years due to the Covid-19 pandemic and inabilities for many to shop. Thanks to your caring and giving, we were able to provide Christmas gifts for over 90 children this year. Grace United Methodist Church is blessed with such a giving congregation; time and again, when there is a need, so many people step up to help. We appreciate those of you who purchased and wrapped your gifts for 30 children; this really helped to lessen the load for shopping for so many! Many thanks to our volunteers who helped to shop, wrap gifts, or handle the “administrative duties” to make sure each child would be receiving gifts.

When the need was announced for financial contributions so gifts could be purchased for 60 more children, Jesus got to see a miracle that supported His mission for “helping the least of these!” So many generous contributions enabled us to purchase several pieces of clothing and either a jacket or coat for each child or teenager (about 25 of the 60) along with a few toys or toiletries each! Along with new clothes and a few gifts, these families each received a hardback NIV Adventure Bible which is the greatest gift that we could give. God bless all of you for reaching out to help others see the caring love of Jesus!

Altogether, 34 Pekin families were recipients. All the Pekin Public Schools were represented, including HeadStart, Pekin Preschool and PCHS. Included in each family’s bag was a junior Bible, a Max Lucado book about Christmas, and contact information about GUMC.

**This picture shows around
half of the Angel Tree Gifts
this year!
God is Good!**





A special thank-you to Schnuck's for their contribution of many fresh vegetables and bakery items to our December food pantry.

THANK YOU, BRENDA NELSON!

Each month, people in need are blessed to come to our church at least 2 or more times each month to receive much needed food and supplies at no cost to them. For so many years, Brenda Nelson has organized and led the workers for our church's food pantry and Grace Café every month. Additionally, Brenda has networked with Peoria's Midwest Food Bank, the Peoria Area Food Bank, and Pekin's Schnucks to get the tons of food to give away every month. So many people in our community have benefited from our café and pantry programs through the years thanks to Brenda and her team's hard work! Brenda has decided to step down from being in charge of the pantry and café, and we all want to thank her for her tireless efforts to feed so many Pekin families! God bless you always, dear Brenda!

OPENING OF OUTREACH SHELTER: The doors on the new Elizabeth Street Outreach Shelter are scheduled to open in February. Lynne Johnson is scheduling volunteers for February, beginning on Monday, Feb. 8th. They will need at least two people for each shift. Due to COVID, they will open with shorter daytime hours. They are considering 9:00 AM—6:00 PM to start, due to availability of helpers. The shifts will be 9-12, 12-3, and 3-6 requiring at least six volunteers per day. Those that would like to take a 3-hr shift can call Lynne Johnson at 309-613-0014 or mlynnjohnson120@yahoo.com. If you just want to man the front desk, make coffee, or help the guests, let Lynne know.

We are very excited about our **New Sermon Series, The Bible.**

This series will give us all the opportunity to grow through reading the Bible together as a church. Each week we will be covering one or more books. There will be a new PDF document to supplement your study emailed the Tuesday before the weekend we are preaching on that book. We hope that you can follow this study as a group or individually. If you begin individually and would like to move into a small group later, this study will give you the opportunity to do so.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

name date

Journey Woll	1st
Dee Horton	1st
Aidan Sandoval	2nd
Patty Martin	3rd
Haley McClain	4th
David Harrison	4th
Jeffrey Oesch	5th
Toni Evans	5th
Kinsley Dorf	5th
Mallory Dorf	5th
Jim Rimington	6th
Ainsley Sandoval	6th
Alec Brandt	6th
Jo Trombini	7th
Elaine Killus	8th
Chris Poole	9th
Jim McKinzie	9th
Fran Stroemer	10th
Claire Hammond	10th
Rhonda Cakora	11th
Rachel Baughman	11th
Jeff Marsden	11th
Amber Davis	13th
Madalyn O'Shaughnessy	14th
Margarete Hall	14th
Ethan Sandoval	14th
Cindy Bergstrand	16th
Layla Damotte	17th
Stella Mikula	18th
Doug Sassman	18th
Alex Hannan	18th
Lynne Johnson	20th
Arlen Booth	22nd
Ken Johnson	23rd
Brian Behrends	25th
Winnie Klopfenstein	25th
Peggy Russell	25th
Melissa Berkley	25th
Deven Ries	26th
Beverly Potts	27th
Lois Shields	28th
Colin Melloy	28th
George Melloy	28th
Mark DeSchepper	29th
Elyse Anderson	30th
Grant Golden	30th
Dawn Miller	31st
Brittany Wrigley	31st

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

name date

Jack Hall	1st
Don Jackson	2nd
Madalynn Fowler	2nd
Lisa Poole	3rd
Joyce Hill	3rd
Judy Dietrich	4th
Jana Swisher	5th
Joy Wojtas	6th
Alexis Falco-Creech	6th
Bella Couch	6th
Chris Ward	7th
Emily Weyhrich	7th
Kennedi Smith	8th
Theresa Holly	9th
Carla Psinas	10th
Nancy Springer	10th
Owen Dault	11th
Amanda Hannan	11th
Kristy Whitman	11th
Savannah Butler	13th
Maverick Burks	14th
Diane Clark	14th
Lee Weber	14th
Marcia Gazza	14th
Lesley Long	15th
Debra McKinley	17th
Joseph Jacobson	17th
Olivia Dault	19th
Kris Wilson	20th
Willie Fahnstrom	20th
Rachel O'Shaughnessy	21st
Drake Marsden	23rd
Branson Whitman	23rd
Donna Bignell	24th
Elisabeth Sandoval	24th
Mitch O'Shaughnessy	25th
Maryellen Gill	25th
Karl Fowler	25th

The year 2020 has taught us that we can still worship—we just need to be open to trying new things and new looks. Christmas Eve was no different! The worship leaders led by Pastor Eric gave us three 15-minute Christmas Eve services outside, including prayer, scripture, the message and singing Silent Night by votive candles. The cold temperatures did not keep the worshipers away, and altogether 225-250 people attended. The Christmas Eve video was the most viewed video yet!



Connect!

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Worship Times
Saturdays 5:30p
Sundays 9:00a & 11:00a



**Thursday, February 11:
Thursday, March 11:
Drive-Thru Food Pantry at 4:00 PM**

**Saturday, January 30:
Saturday, February 27:
Saturday, March 27:
Drive-Thru Grace Café
11:00—12:30 PM**

Prayer Requests

The Family of Stacy Burks on her passing
Lois Eertmoed
Jane Evans
Tony Fulk, son-in-law of Kathy and Rick Manz
Jack and Margarete Hall
Barb and Duane Hill
Katie & Wes Icenogle
Judy Icenogle's brother, Gary
Judy Icenogle's sister-in-law, BinHoa Roby
Sharon Lohnes' mother-in-law
Marie Zaayenga

