

SEPTEMBER 2021

# GRACE NOTES

No. 9 [pekingrace.org](http://pekingrace.org)



## highlights

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**Pastor Swanson burns the mortgage!**

**Celebrating God's Grace Fulfilled**

*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8*

# PASTOR'S CORNER

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



## State of the Church—Part 1:

Over the course of the last few years things have sure been moving and changing quickly. In the fall of every year, we begin to get into the mission and vision season. We talk about what it will mean for us to be church in the coming year; and we share what it will take from all of us collectively for our time, talents, and resources to achieve that vision. In preparation for that season, we are going to take a good deal of space to try to share all that has been going on in 2021 that brings us up to this current day.

As we finished 2020, we were able to raise over \$40,000 to finish paying off the mortgage on the 2013 addition. We were able to see our stewardship totals get us to within 2% of the budget, and the use of about \$8,000 from Capital Reserve balanced out the year. (It is important to note that we accomplished this with over \$45,000 in PPP funding for 2020, and we have been granted another \$50,000 in 2021.)

We have learned how to analyze worship statistics to include the mixture of in-person and online worship. The metrics provided us a good understanding that we had succeeded in maintaining a majority of our pre-Covid-19 worshipping body as well as reconnecting with members who had moved away with age or other life changes. Each time we have opened from a phase of Covid-19, we also saw consistent engagement from persons who had found us online.

This year we spent time in our Church Council talking about the needs of the church. Since we had moved from a full-time youth director to part-time, we concluded that it was time to sell the parsonage next to the Mason Building. This parsonage no longer met our Annual Conference guidelines for a clergy person and was deemed not a strong enough attraction piece vs its liabilities for employment. The house sold for just above \$125,000. The proceeds from the sale were intended to build a garage and replace the boiler system in the Mason Building. While investigating the needs to accomplish both of these projects, we engaged Keith Engineering to provide plans that would modernize our heating system and yield good savings on our utility bills from the efficiency improvements of an updated system. The cost of the work was bid by four firms, and the lowest bid came in at \$145,000 with another \$15,000-20,000 in related costs. The Church Council, Trustees and Finance teams gathered and affirmed the acceptance of the lowest bid following careful consideration of the options. The conversation covered changes to the bid documents as well as the possible sale or abandonment of the building; but in the end, the body concluded that it was in the best interest of the congregation to move forward with the work and spend the proceeds from the parsonage sale along with Capital Reserve Funds (balance of \$107,000 at the time of the meeting) to proceed with the

Mason Building boiler system replacement. The garage project has been tabled, and a simple shed is being built to meet our lawn care needs at this time.

In 2021 we have seen our in-person attendance fluctuate between 120-180 with a high of over 230 at our Celebration worship service. Our online worship continues to see 30-60 in live attendance between the two services on Sunday mornings, and typically we see a total reach of double that within the week. Our worship numbers tell us that our overall engagement is steady. This is a positive sign for us given the broader realities of most churches post COVID-19, as well as the number of persons who have moved out of state or passed away in the past two years. We are anticipating the launch of a new online-specific worship service this fall to reach those who will find online to be the primary form of connection to us at Grace. In parallel, we are launching several new small groups and building a process for launching others so we can train more members to meet the needs of new worship participants.

One of the struggles that we are experiencing is a decline in our regular tithes and offerings due to the loss of long-term members. The financial impact of the losses of members due to death since 2020 reflects a decline of more than \$84,000 in yearly budget support. Each year we expect the budget to go through a predictable curve with 1<sup>st</sup> quarter giving to be near need, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter to be below need, and a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter that historically is 1.5 times the average of the other 3 quarters. In 2020 we saw many of our one-time yearly contributions were shared in the middle of the year, and we believe that we saw a slight decline in budget giving that was instead directed to the building payoff or other needs due to families impacted by COVID-19. In 2020 and 2021 we received a grant from the Paycheck Protection Program that helped us bridge the gaps in stewardship. That shared, we are still seeing a slower than normal rate of contributions, especially in one-time-a-year giving.

All is not doom and gloom financially, as with the building payoff and so many of the little projects we have seen this past year. We are finding that God has been providing in the spaces of our needs. Some of this provision is in historic giving that continues to provide for our church. Some of this is in individual grants and partnerships that prove the line “giving on faith” is such a powerful contribution to the church.

We are currently anticipating that our 2022 budget request will see a 7-9% overall reduction. We will accomplish this through a combination of changes that we are proposing so as to not disrupt any one ministry area or terminate any thriving ministries. Some of the shifting will require us to meet needs with our funds that reside outside of the budget process, and others will become fundraiser-based funding. Each choice will be in spaces we truly believe we are equipped to do so with excellence.

We have been engaging a process for moving our Endowment funds from Busey Bank to Morton Community Bank. This is coinciding with proposed changes to the Endowment documents that would allow for us to bring that document into line with modern expectations for the way the Endowment is handled as well as for allowing us to better invest in today's investment tools. The hope is that our Endowment income from interest will allow us to put funds back into the operational budget each year, fund our streaming ministry, equip the Music ministry, and continue to provide higher education scholarships to students who come from Grace.

In our work as a church, we are particularly proud of how our Children/Youth ministries, Music ministries and Missions ministries handled 2020 and 2021. If someone would have said that these ministry areas would see vibrant growth in and through a global pandemic, we would have been skeptical. Yet today the Children's ministry from the work of Emmy Thies has grown in our effectiveness of reach to our direct neighbors as well as our partnership with Pekin First UMC. Greta Long has changed how our Youth ministry functions, and we truly believe we are setting up a new process for forming leaders who can grow the church for generations. Jim Rimington and Sam Neff have shaped our worship teams, kept them safe during the worst of the pandemic and used the time to grow the skills of those involved. Truly remarkable work has been accomplished in all these areas.

We have been actively working on modernizing the church governance model. We are working with a program developed by one of the best in United Methodist Church governance, Kay Kotan, who has written and developed the Simplified Accountable System for church management. In short, it condenses the Church Council, Trustees, Finance, SPRC, Endowment and Memorial teams into one 9-person board to set governance guidelines while setting the remainder of the congregation free to work in these and other areas without the 3+ year commitments, monthly meetings or other business processes that often disengage new persons who seek to join our team. We will maintain the Nominations and Lay Leadership team and build systems around intentional lay leadership development for us to see new generations of church leaders.

Friends, 2021 thus far has been a bit of a wild ride. We have our current struggles, but Jesus never told us that we would be without struggles this side of paradise. We have our current miracles, those that show the success of the church and those that have brought so much healing to our neighborhood. What we will have tomorrow, in this life, is not promised to us. What is promised to us is that Jesus says we have a future with a hope. The redeeming work of Jesus is that hope, and our work is to see that felt by as many people as possible. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of making that happen at Grace and I want to welcome all who would take up the mutual task of bringing in the kingdom of God.

As we get ready for the vision for 2022, I want to offer you these direct things you can be doing:

- **Pray** Pray for our ministry, our church, our city, and God's will to be done in them.
- **Participate** Faithful participation in worship, discipleship and mission helps you and those who are with you. We are in this together.
- **Support financially** It was the collection of the early church that gave so much healing.
- **Lead** Lead someone to faith, lead someone into discipleship and lead someone into the skills that could replace you some day, as we all will at some time join the church triumphant, and we want the church on earth to be equipped to reach each successive generation for Jesus Christ.

Grace + Peace,  
Pastor Eric



# Celebrating God's Grace Fulfilled











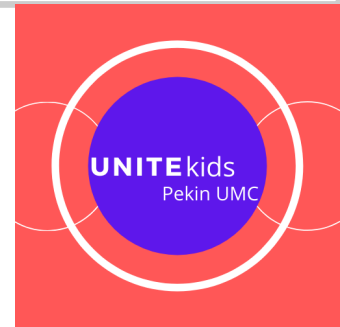
## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

*Emmy Thies*

*Director of Children & Family Ministry*

**Weekly UNITEkids is now back in action. We're meeting every Wednesday night in September from 5:30-6:30 at Pekin First.**

Please have kids meet on the lawn if you'd like to join us; we'll be venturing over to Pekin Park on some Wednesday nights. Invite the children (up to 5th grade) in your life to join UNITEkids this school year. We focus our time on uniting with God, and uniting with each other! **If you feel called to help with Children's Ministry, please contact me: Emmy Thies at [ethies@pekingrace.org](mailto:ethies@pekingrace.org)**



UNITEkids soaked up the last bit of summer break with two swim outings! We had a family night at Dragonland at the beginning of the month. And, we happily invited new friends to join us – youth from Grace UMC and Pekin First joined us, and families from the ROC Kids ministry did too! It was a fun-filled, grace-filled, unifying night. I love having the opportunity to gather larger groups of families for Christian fellowship. At the end of the month, UNITEkids offered a *Parents Night Out*, and the kids swam at Pekin Country Club pool while parents got a couple of hours to themselves. Thank you to Eric and Brittany Wrigley for sponsoring our swim night at Pekin Country Club! It's wonderful to see church family reaching out and providing for Children's Ministry – our youngest followers of Jesus.



Blessing of the Backpacks was held the Sunday night before school started. Kids from UNITEkids, Radical (Grace UMC) youth group, and Breakthrough (Pekin First UMC) youth group all gathered together to spend time in prayer, song, and reflection of the school year ahead. It's a blessing for the kids and youth to have the support of their church and leaders as they begin another atypical school year. Greta, Kara, and I ensured the group that we are ALWAYS here for them, and we will pray for and with them throughout the school year!



Hello Friends and happy September!

It's been a while since I've given an update on the happenings in the Youth Group, and I am excited to share what we've been up to this summer. Each week I am reminded of how supportive this church is of its young members; and I am always touched by your support and prayerful consideration of this group of students.

Starting in August, we moved our weekly meeting times to Sunday evenings. This transition not only allows more students to be involved due to less conflicts with extracurricular activities, but it also allows me (Greta) to be fully present and available to the youth in person once a week since I have a new master's degree schedule and workload.

On July 11, students and five adult leaders journeyed to Alamosa, CO to serve the people of the Alamosa community through a variety of service projects. During our week in Colorado, we were given opportunities to serve multiple different environments, each with community members who were not only excited to get to know us, but extremely appreciative of our work. From weeding to gardening, to moving furniture, to cleaning a rodeo arena, our group engaged in meaningful work in a variety of ways!

Throughout the week, we also grew closer as a group through games, small group discussion times, and evening worship meetings.



In September, we will be serving at the 2021 Marigold Festival Grace UMC Potato Bar. This fundraiser is one of the largest of the year for our group; and I look forward to experiencing my first festival with this group! In October, we'll be meeting regularly and we're also planning a fun Halloween party!

Your prayers, encouragement, support, and enthusiasm for the Youth are always appreciated, and I look forward to sharing what else we accomplish in the 2021-2022 school year!

### **September Altar Flowers:**

**September 5:** In loving memory of Harry and Louise Deakin given by Judy and Marv Brown and Family

**September 19:** In honor of our 56th wedding anniversary from Arlen and Carol Booth

### **Note from Lynne Johnson:**

Here is a list of supplies that we are specifically needing for Pekin students. If Grace friends would like to help with these items, it would be appreciated:

- Large book bags
- Headphones or ear buds
- Kleenex
- Washable and regular markers
- Black Dry Erase Markers
- Pencil Sharpeners
- Glue Sticks
- Scissors
- Highlighters
- Inexpensive Paint Sets

**Until further notice, masks will be required during all church services and activities.**



**Thank you** for the scholarship for this upcoming school year. I will be using it towards my tuition. The money and prayers will help greatly as I enter my senior year. Kristen Hunt

**Thank you** for awarding me with this scholarship for the 2021-2022 school year. I will be using this scholarship to complete my final year at Illinois State University where I will be graduating in May with a Bachelors in Information Technology. Jaclyn Mulvey

I just wanted say **thank you** for all your help at the end of the month with pantries and groceries. My mom and I pray for you daily. We appreciate your love and care. I pray for the churches to be blessed in their ministries. Carla Terry

**Thank you** for your weekly letter and the devotions. May this amount help with the needs for your Children's Church. Shirley Moore

**Bible Presentation Sunday** will be held September 26 at the 9:00 AM service. Recipients will include:

Lucas David Bloom  
Karl Fowler  
Mallory Alice Miller  
Lucia Annabella Nelson  
Hadley Swanson



## September Birthdays:

Carol Weiss	1	Barbara Harper	18
Sue Crowell	1	Jim Stallwitz	18
Ron Robinson	2	Tracy Parkin	18
Grady Nelson	2	Haley Hoffman	18
Alan Comstock	2	Nick Patterson	20
Pastor Swanson	3	Nancy Wherry	20
Tom Patterson	4	Linda Smith	20
Morgan Turner	4	Mallory Miller	20
Laura Swearingen	5	Zach Bruns	21
Ron Garman	5	Cindy Carlton	21
Barbara Wright	6	Vera Byrd	21
Bella Horton	6	Ellie Wilson	22
Joann Alberts	7	John Pfeiffer	22
Matt Behrends	8	Linda Stoner	24
Morgan Dunn	8	Sara Golden	25
Alice Cakora	8	Ann Tunis	25
Jay Zimmerman	10	Chris Onken	25
Barbara Trimble	11	Judy Warner	25
Kevin Stark	12	Tripp Taylor	25
Robyn O'Shaughnessy	12	Lilly Doan	26
Leeah Booth	12	Tammy Denning	26
Ken Bradshaw	13	Shannon Tebben-Sandoval	26
Marv Brown	14	Vicki McKinley	27
Sarah McKenzie	16	Brady O'Shaughnessy	29
David Stone	16	Ryan Trantham	29
Roberta Moussalli	16	Bruce Ripper	30
Ed Mulvey	17	Gerry Zuercher	30



# Connect!

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



Don't forget about our adult Sunday School class that meets at 10:15 every Sunday in the Upper Room. Join us on our **JOURNEY!**

## **Sunday, September 12**

Church Committees at 1:00 PM  
Church Council will follow at 2:30 PM  
Grace Country at 6:30 PM

## **Wednesday, September 15**

Drive-through Food Pantry at 4:00 PM

## **Wednesday, September 22**

Communion at Pekin Estates, 2:00 PM

## **Saturday, September 25**

Drive-through Food Giveaway, 11:00AM—Noon

## **Prayer Concerns**

Bishop Beard  
Arlen Booth  
Kim Carter  
Connie Disney  
Ron Doyle  
Lois Eertmoed  
Tony Fulk  
Linda Garman  
Jack Hall  
Duane and Barb Hill  
Joyce Hill  
Wes Icenogle  
Jerry Klopfenstein  
Roberta Moussalli  
Paul Pearson  
Nancy Ridgeway  
Brittany Sharp  
Willowdean Stone  
Jo Trombini  
Ann Vogt  
Chris Ward  
Marie Zaayenga  
Terri Zimmerman  
The Family of Loree Bergerhouse  
on her passing

