

DECEMBER 2021

GRACE NOTES

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highlights

December 2021

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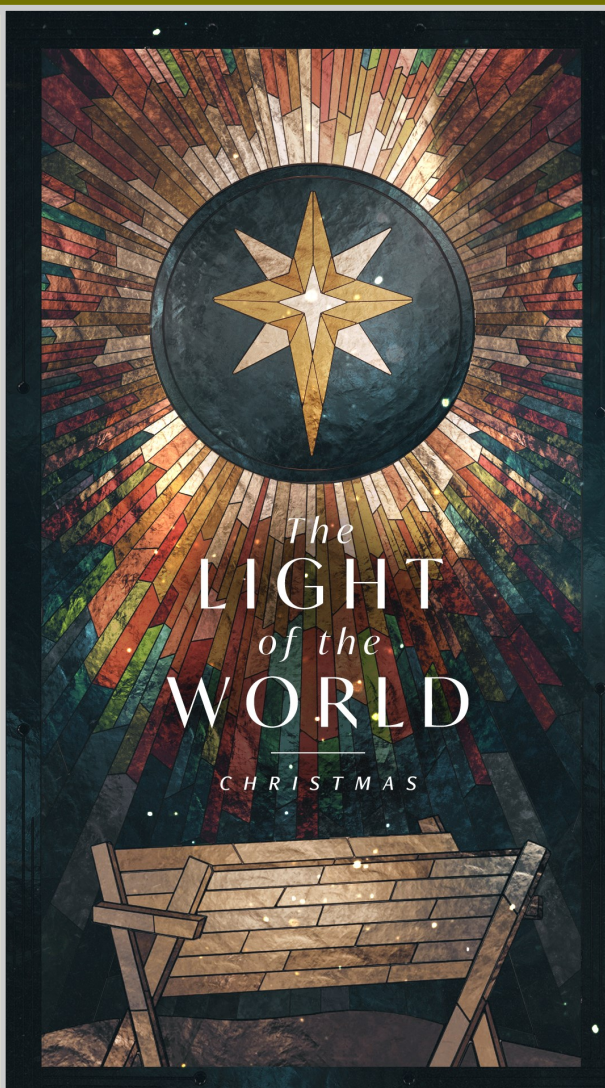
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PASTOR'S CORNER

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



Pete Seeger is likely one of the most famous persons to quote Ecclesiastes chapter 3 in his song “Turn, Turn, Turn.” The song is a reminder that there are seasons for our lives and for the things in it. There are many seasons that are turning right now and in some ways that is very exciting and in other ways that is very exhausting.

Right now, I am writing this as we are focusing on Advent and the traditional Christmas season. This is a season of anticipation for something we know that we desire. This desire is for hope, freedom, and to be lifted from where we have found ourselves. Yet, if the truth is told, we want this change and at the same time we fear it. We don't like what we have today and yet we are afraid of the unknown and for most, Jesus is still an unknown future. Advent is beautiful in the tension that it holds for us.

In the midst of church, we are in an Advent season for understanding ourselves. Like the community that Jesus was born into, we desire God to move and work in a powerful way around us. We desire God to clean out the injustice, establish the church in a powerful way and elevate his people. But we know this world that we currently have. We know how to invest in our own futures, make things that make us feel good. Largely we feel as if it doesn't cause harm along the way, then it must be good. We believe that this is how it is to be. But what does an Advent season for a church truly look like?

Advent for a church looks like awe, wonder, fear, and sacrifice. There is the miracle of new life that was to be the baby Jesus. Mary knew, Wisemen knew, Shepherds knew. The baby is a joyous gift. There was wonder at the miracles that it took to make that moment. Some of them were God sized while others were the ordinary miracles of faithfulness from Joseph, Elizabeth, and the other common people of the narrative. There was fear of the judgement of the community that knew Mary and Joseph were not married, from the Romans, and from the importance of caring for the son of God. There was sacrifice in moving from security to make right for this new family, in giving up a “normal” life for this new faithful one. To be a church living in a season of Advent is to be a church that is faithful in all these steps and any other steps that God is calling us into.

We are in a season where the risks are high. We are in a season when people will judge us as doing wrong when God has asked us to do something bold and new. We are in a season where the world we once knew will be altered permanently. Yet, we are

in a season when the ultimate faithfulness of God is seen, felt, and shared in ways that lead to life.

Blessed Advent my friends and co-workers in the work of the church.

Church Leadership Updates:

In our Charge Conference session this November we voted to formally begin the transition into a new leadership model. This model is referred to as the Simplified Accountable Leadership (SAS) model and it has been developed for United Methodist churches. This model moves the authority of the Trustees, Finance, SPRC, Church Council & Memorial/Endowment teams into one nine-person board. This board has three, three-person classes and has representation from across the church as a whole. The purpose of this group merging is to allow for a group that holds the vision of the church, to then make more quickly the decisions, policies and leadership practices that enable the church to be faithful to the mission and yet still accountable to the congregation. This system removes previous barriers to approvals for ministry and ministry changes and when done well, it frees more persons for serving in ministry producing areas.

Alongside this Leadership Board is the Nominations and Lay Leadership board and volunteer teams. The Nominations and Lay Leadership board keeps the larger board healthy by removing self-nominations as well as providing a way to recognize and empower new leaders in the congregation. The leadership teams will function in some ways like some of the previous committees in that there will be people serving in Outreach, Education, Trustees etc. roles but they will do so without the multi-year commitments and under the guiding principles that the Leadership Board will establish. The goal is to still utilize volunteers to get ministry accomplished but to do so in a more organic way. One way to think of this is that the Leadership Board will set governance while the ministry teams will serve in the governance to accomplish ministry they are most passionate about and equipped for.

As we make these moves, I want to remind the church of a few things that all United Methodist Churches practice. First, we have open meetings outside of closed sessions of Staff Parish (SPRC) that deal with personnel issues and rare issues that are of legal matters that impact Trustees work. This means that if you want to come and watch a meeting, you are welcome. We welcome comments as participation makes the work of the church become the fruits of the Kingdom. We also have a policy of open information for all church members. If you ever want to know what the budget is, how we have spent it, who our leaders or team members are, etc... that information is readily available from our office. The information that we do not share are personnel files and personal giving information. This is in line with the accountable aspects of SAS leadership. Also, as your Pastor I want you to know that I am always more than open to a conversation with any church participant about what

we are doing and why. We may not agree always but the reasons of why we are doing what we are doing will always be shared when asked of us.

New Worship Service:

With the start of the new year, we are going to be launching an online specific worship experience. This is a growing trend among some of the healthiest churches. They are embracing the digital experience of people in their reachable areas through podcasting, video streams and other such movements. We are going to keep our current in person and live streaming worship experiences, but we will add to that a new format service. To accomplish this, we have been renovating one of the double rooms on the third floor of the Mason Building. This room is nearly finished and the first worship produced in it will be the online Christmas service for this year.

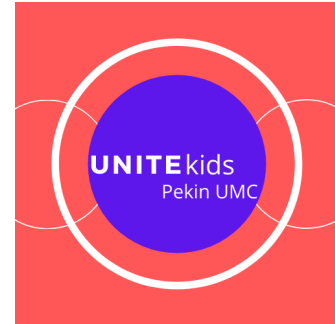
We are still working on some of the details but know that with the start of the new year, will be this new worship experience. We pray that God uses this for helping us reach new persons with the message of Jesus and that it helps us lean into more ways that we can faithfully offer discipleship and evangelism into the future. As we begin this ministry, we will also be looking for persons who wish to learn about how we use these tools and volunteer their time and talents in producing these services. If you have a passion for learning more about this, please email Pastor Eric eswan-son@pekinggrace.org.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies

Director of Children & Family Ministry

UNITEkids Camp In was a success!



The UNITEkids Camp In was well attended and a few new friends joined – it was a night of prayer, fun, sugar, and screams (the kids decided the church at night can be a bit scary!) The kids completed prayer stations that focused on asking God to help us show more love to others, be more patient, and share the Good News with others. They also enjoyed making s'mores, playing hide & seek, and watching the movie *Soul*. Five youth volunteered to run the prayer stations, and they did a fantastic job of teaching and mentoring the younger kiddos!



Mission Project

We will be collecting new, unwrapped toys for local families in need. Contact Emmy Thies at ethies@pekingrace.org if you would like specific gift ideas.



Activities Include:

- Sing-Along and Prayer
- Grinch Photo-Op
- Contests
- Crafts
- Giveaways
- Jesus Birthday
Cake Cupcakes

Save the date for the Christmas event, “Where Are You Christmas? Celebrating the True Gift.” We know that Jesus is the true gift of Christmas. Like The Whos in Who-ville, we know that even if the gifts, treats, and decorations are stolen, Christmas STILL goes on. Christmas is in our souls because that is where we’ve invited Jesus to live.

Come celebrate the birth of our Savior at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court St. This event is open to the public and tailored to kids up through 5th grade. Bring along friends!

Upcoming UNITEkids Events

December 1 UNITEkids 5:30 PM
 December 8 UNITEkids 5:30 PM
 December 11 UNITEkids Christmas 4:00PM
 December 15 UNITEkids 5:30 PM
 December 22 UNITEkids 5:30 PM
 December 29 Cancelled
 January 5 UNITEkids Resumes





Radical Lock-In

It's a time to spend with friends and enjoy the togetherness while also taking time to focus on God. The prayer is that this time will help forge the bonds of friendship that these teens need to help them be a force for God.

Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3:2 NIV

Please pray for them and this activity!

When: December 29th

Time: 5PM-8AM

Where: At Grace United Methodist Church

Upcoming Event: January 7 –9: Winter X-treme Retreat (Camp Timber-Lee)

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

United Methodist Women
Barb Berardi

Who are the Miriam Circle Grace Readers?

In 2010, a group of women from Grace United Methodist Church decided to find a service project. Since many of them were retired teachers and several had taught at C.B. Smith they contacted the school principal there to find ways to help students. It was decided to focus on kindergarten students and encourage reading.

The women met with the teachers for suggestions. From that meeting came the idea to make a colorful child-like fabric bookbag for each child in kindergarten. It was also decided to have a fundraiser at the church annually to make money to provide each teacher with a check for Scholastic books in the fall and again in the spring. The teachers would use it to get books for each child both times.

We also were invited to come and read individually with kindergarten students with books provided by the teachers. We went once a month. Since COVID, we have not been able to go and read or listen to the kindergarteners but we continue to make the book bags and provide funds for a fall and spring book for each child. We miss reading with the children, so this year we are trying something new. We will write a card to each student. Someday, we hope to resume reading with the students. We all love to read and hope the students will as well.



CHURCH NEWS

Sanctuary Choir

We invite the Grace Church congregation to consider joining the Sanctuary Choir. We rehearse on Wednesdays, in the Sanctuary at 6pm. We rehearse for an hour.

This is a wonderful group of dedicated singers and you will be welcomed no matter what your level of experience with singing or music reading. There are leaders in every section who will welcome you and assist you. **We will practice social distancing in rehearsing and if you are unvaccinated, we ask that you wear masks during rehearsals.**

We sing 3-4 times each month and present a cantata at Christmas and Easter. We are off on the 2nd Sunday of the month to accommodate the Grace Brass. If you have questions: email Dr. Rimington at rimingtonj@yahoo.com

Grace Bells

Grace Bells rehearse on Mondays at 4:45 p.m. They rehearse for 1 hour. If you have never played bells, no problem. It is challenging but fun. Given the choice of bells, we can accommodate ALL levels of expertise. Even reading music is not a total pre-requisite but, of course, helpful. We especially invite 8th through 12th graders to come and be a part of the group. You can use the time spent as a way to accumulate community service hours! The bells play at the 11am service on the first Sunday of every month. They will continue to rehearse and perform in the sanctuary balcony.



Grace Brass

Calling all brass players!!! Especially trombones!!! Please consider joining our Grace Brass group. This is a wild and crazy bunch of instrumentalists that play every 2nd Sunday of the month. Mr. Rich Kriegsman is the coordinator of the group. If you play any of these instruments, you will find the group to quite interesting and a way to help the church. You can use the time spent in rehearsals and performances as community service if you are in high school. The brass rehearsals are from 5-6 on the Wednesday before the 2nd Sunday in each month.

Financial Envelopes

2022 Offering Envelopes are available on the countertop in Hospitality for pick-up. If you would prefer to have your envelopes mailed, please contact the office.

If you do not see your name and you would like envelopes, please call the office and ask for Nanette.

Financial Commitment Card

Please turn in your financial commitment card. It helps in making plans for the next year. We appreciate your willingness to give and ask that you let us know what those giving plans are. Thank you!

Calendar

Make sure the office is aware of the activities your group plans that will be held at the church. It helps for planning ahead and eliminates some facility usage conflicts.

Blanket Ministry

The blanket ladies have 10+ lap blankets which need to be tied. You use a needle and yarn to tie knots in blankets spaced apart to keep it together. Anyone willing to try, we would appreciate the help.

The blanket ladies were given several pieces of counted cross stitch fabric (18ct, 14ct, 11ct, & one piece of vinyl weave. If anyone can use them let Judy Icenogle know.

Also, if you know of anyone in need of a quilt please let the blanket ladies or the office know. They have several sizes of tied quilts, fleece blankets for adults & children. Since the church can't have the Grace Café it is more difficult to distribute blankets to those in need.

If interested, call Judy Icenogle to find out meeting times.

Altar Flowers

Sign-Up is Out! If you would like to dedicate a Sunday, make sure you sign-up on the poster outside the office. Remember, we are asking you to provide \$15.00 to cover the cost of silk replacements that may be needed in the future.

Grace County

Grace Country will return in January but they will be following a new schedule. Grace Country will be 4 times a year on the 2nd week of the month. If you like to follow this group look for them to lead worship in

- January
- April
- July
- October



Book Club

Book club is back! The club meets at Pekin Estates in the Library at 10:00AM. It is open to all. The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 14. A regular meeting time will be discussed at this meeting.

Come and share a Christmas book you have read recently or a favorite you have read in the past.

We will look at some books and choose one for all of us to read and discuss in January.

Questions?

Call Sandy Isenburg at 309-241-1411 or 309-347-1411

Prayer Concerns

Please contact the office when a name should be removed or added to the prayer list. Your help in keeping this current and timely is appreciated. When the names are shared the office isn't always aware of the reason.

Angel Tree

The Angel Tree is up! Pick up your angel now. Gifts need to be returned to the church by December 12. The delivery of gifts will happen on December 19. If you would like to help deliver the gifts please contact the office .

Lost and Found

Check our lost and found. Items will be donated to Goodwill if not claimed.

December Birthdays

Jane Evans	1
Braden Spears	1
Theresa Wicker	1
Gloria Johnson	1
Jerry Potts	1
Marianne Oltmann	1
Luke Stoner	1
Tyler Kennermer	2
Linda Garman	2
Connie Disney	2
Randy McDaniels	2
Edgar Sandoval	2
Jack Wyman	3
Jeremiah Thies	4
Brittany Cox	7
Morgan McDaniels	7
Sarah Hunter	8
Lainey Volz	8
Bailee Allsup	8
Mathieu DeCanter	8
Belen Alexander	9
Danielle Towne	9
Kelly Orrick	13
Katie Kriegsman Bashary	13
Tana Collins	14
Kenny Wiggins	14
Rachel Marsden	15
Chris Booher	16
Leila Bashary	16
Mike Williamson	16
Jessica Kennemer	17
Nancy Hangartner	17
Jerry Dunbar	18
Patrick Burks	18
Drake Wallace	18
Mason Tennel	18
Patricia Knight	19

Jimmy Byrd	19
Jim Harrison	20
Jane Smith	20
Jeanette Hammond	20
Gary Heiser	22
Mary Ellen Bevenour	22
Cynthia Spicher	23
Jodi Trombini	23
Mike Gazza	23
Gene Horton	23
Jill Powell	24
Bruce Burks	25
Ron Weyhrich	26
Greg Ries	26
Ory Patterson	27
Cassandra Towne	27
Janet Ray	27
Adam Towne	27
Jillian Plunkett	28
Logan Betzelberger	29
Carla Jacobson	29
Barbara Faichney	29



Connect!

601 N. 4th St.

Pekin, IL

309-347-7131

secretary@pekingrace.org

pekingrace.org

Worship Times

Saturdays 5:30pm

Sundays 9:00am & 11:00am

Thursday, December 16

Drive-through Food Pantry at 4:00 PM

Friday, December 11

Unitekids Christmas, 4PM at First

Sunday, December 19

Cantata, 11AM, Sanctuary

Sunday, December 19

An Evening by the Fire, 4PM, GFFLC

Friday, December 24

Christmas Eve Services
4PM and 11PM

Friday, December 24

Christmas Eve Online, 7PM

Sunday, December 26

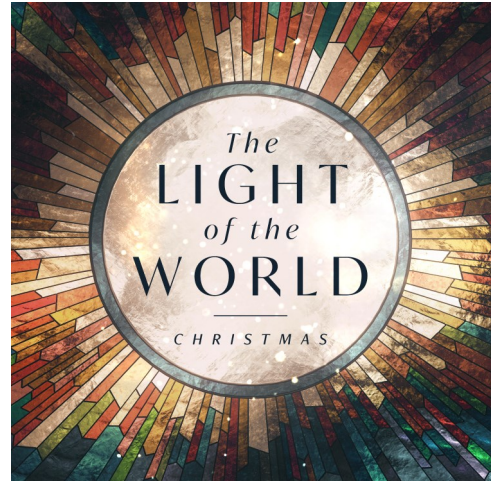
One Service Weekend, 11:00AM, Sanctuary

Wednesday, December 29

Radical Lock-in, 5PM-8AM

Sunday, January 2

One Service Weekend, 9:00AM, GFFLC



Prayer Concerns

Arlen Booth

Ron Doyle

Ben Daniel

Jane Evans

Tony Fulk

Jack Hall

Wes Icenogle

Jerry Klopfenstein

Roberta Moussalli

Mary Myers

Paul Pearson

Nancy Ridgeway

Brittany Sharp

Derek Stout

Fred Vogt

Bradley

Ronald Weyhrich

*For God so loved the world that
he gave his one and only son, that
whoever believes in him shall not
perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16