

MAY2023

# GRACE NOTES

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## highlights

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You're my place of quiet retreat, and your wraparound presence becomes my shield as I wrap myself in your Word!

Go away! Leave me, all you workers of wickedness, for you can't stop me from following every command of my God.

Lord, strengthen my inner being by the promises of your Word so that I may live faithful and unashamed for you.

*Psalms 119:114-116 TPT*

# PASTOR'S CORNER

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



This year Grace United Methodist Church will be 175 years old as a congregation. In our modern lifespans, that means we have covered an impressive seven generations if one was born at the founding to where we are today. Off and on throughout this year, I will take some time to help us reflect on what it means to be a 175-year-old congregation and what this tells us about the nature of God's work through us at Grace UMC.

I want to start with the beginning...

*Pekin Grace UMC has a long history dating back to 1826, when Methodist circuit rider Reverend Jesse Walker, visited the first cabin built in Pekin. Nearly twenty years later, a group of German immigrants began to gather in their homes to sing and pray, and in 1848, the German Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. They built their first small frame church in 1850, assisted by the original "English" Methodist congregation which included pews from their earlier church. A larger church followed in 1854, costing \$2,728 to build. In 1874, a great Gothic church was finished and dedicated on the church's present site, housing Pekin's first pipe organ. This grand location quickly became a repeat choice to host the annual Methodist conference.*

*From our "About Us" page on [pekingrace.com](http://pekingrace.com)*

This is the second largest congregation I have served where the founding story mentioned the Rev. Walker. Peoria First UMC also credits him as their founding. This is an interesting and important first point of our church. Though we would not officially form for 22 years, there was a gradual growth of the faith and need for faith in Pekin. People were dedicated to the mission and ministry that was happening, and when the timing was right, they in faithfulness would be given the chance to respond.

The time between Rev. Walker and the first chartering of our church does not have a lot of history saved, but it had to be full of so much life to get us to where we are today. Though the records are not here, we do know that in that time, people gathered in houses. They would spend time in prayer and in reading the Bible together. They would sing songs and give generously to the community.

Friends, the time of our congregation's founding and the time we are in today are very similar, though the world is different. We still gather for songs, scripture, sermons, celebrations, and service. It was hard to do back then (wait until you see the letter in our financials note) and it is hard to do today. It We must gather with one another and be committed to the task. The ability to read the community and meet its needs with the living Gospel of Jesus transforms it and us. Friends, it's exciting to be a church that is still doing the fundamentals of being church that got us here today. Let's always be excited about being Grace!

*Eiri Swanson*





# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

**Emmy Thies**  
Director of Children & Family Ministry

UNITEkids is finishing up this month, with the last weekly meeting at 5:30 p.m. on **Wednesday, May 24**, at First UMC.



## Egg Hunt



## Easter Children's Church



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

**Emmy Thies**  
Director of Children & Family Ministry

We'll have special events throughout the summer – **keep updated** by joining our Facebook group: *UNITEkids Pekin UMC.*

The first summer event will be ...WATER GAMES!

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UNITEkids will **restart** meeting weekly on Wednesday, August 30, at First UMC for the 2023-2024 school year.



If you have a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grader who is ready to study Scripture in a deeper way with a small group, Bible Buddies is for you! This is Bible Buddies Group 2. The first small group of Bible Buddies filled up quickly! Please contact Emmy at 309-267-0595 to reserve a spot for your kiddo!



SAVE THE DATE!  
JULY 31 - AUG 4

VBS 2023



It's not too early to start thinking about **VBS 2023**, which will end with a night out at Dragonland!

VBS is open to all kids in preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Get it on your calendar now, you won't want to miss out on this impactful and fun week!**



# RETREAT



## Youth Ministries



Some of our youth went to East Bay Camp to enjoy some time away from the distractions of this world. They went swimming, played games, and learned about God. They shared these pictures from the weekend. Continue to pray for these youth and their faith walk .







**MAY 3**  
6:30 - 8:00  
PARABLES OF JESUS

**MAY 17**  
6:30 - 8:00  
PARABLES OF JESUS

**MAY 24**  
7:30 - 9:00ISH  
OUTDOOR MOVIE  
NIGHT  
(WE WILL BE INDOORS IF THE  
WEATHER IS BAD)

**MAY 10**  
6:30 - 8:00  
PARABLES OF JESUS

**MAY 31**  
NO RADICAL  
WE WILL SEE YOU NEXT  
WEEK!

*May*  
RADICAL SCHEDULE

### Susannah Circle

Will meet at 9 a.m. on Thursday, May 25 at the UAW Highrise to enjoy fellowship and a wonderful meal. If you are interested in joining this group for breakfast, please contact the office or talk to Carol Booth.

### Grace Notes Articles

Interested in letting the church know about your group? If you take pictures of an activity your group is having and are interested in having it put in the Grace Notes or onto Facebook, please send the pictures and brief information about the activity to the secretary's email, ([secretary@pekingrace.org](mailto:secretary@pekingrace.org)). Make sure you communicate clearly how you would like the article shared. **The deadline for the Grace Notes is always the 3rd Tuesday of the month before.** Send a variety of pictures, but be aware that not all pictures may be used if space is limited.

### National Day of Prayer

Pastor Eric will be helping with the National Day of Prayer service at 5 p.m. Thursday on May 4th. on the lawn of the Pekin Court House. Please bring water and your own outdoor seating.

### Sermon Series

This month we will delve into, "The Almighty Dollar." In this four part series, we will learn some of the Biblical principles of managing money and some of the expectations God has for us as Christians. Please plan on attending and learning about this important aspect of our Christian lives.



### Book Club

Book club meets at 10 a.m. on the second Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be May 9 in the library of Pekin Estates. All are welcome! They will be discussing, *The Story Keeper* by Lisa Wingate. If you need more information or have questions, call Sandy Isenburg at 309-241-1411.

### Scholarship Applications

Applications are now being collected in the office of Grace Church. They must be returned by **June 15**. Recipients will be notified by mail and funds will be distributed in late July. Applicants must be members of Grace United Methodist Church. [Scholarship Application](#)

### Graduating? Notify the office

Graduates or graduates' families please let the office know who is graduating from high school, higher education or tech school. The church would love to celebrate this important milestone with you! Please send a picture of the graduate for the secretary to use in publications. The church doesn't want to miss anyone, so please don't assume the office is aware of your graduate. We will recognize and pray for all the graduates on May 21 at both worship services.

### Saturday Servants

Sign up to be a Saturday Servant or just show up! This ministry will be starting on May 13, with a meeting from 8 a.m.-12 p.m. They will start the day in the hospitality area and go from there to do different tasks.

This group will help with some of the maintenance items here at Grace. Pastor Eric will be leading this group. Some days they will be working on projects outside, and other days they will be working inside. This group will meet on a monthly basis on the second Saturday of the month. Let Pastor Eric or the office know if you are interested in being a part of this group or need more information. Or just show up on the second Saturday when you have time free. All are welcome and any help is appreciated!





We had had a wonderful Easter celebration with 310 in attendance. Some took advantage of an Easter photo opportunity, including these families pictures here. Here are a few of the pictures from Easter! It was fun seeing everyone celebrating the risen Lord!

Thanks to Ginnette Soupos for providing the backdrop and manning the camera for this opportunity!

### Church Softball League

Come support the softball team from Grace! The rainout line is 309-226-4060 or check the app. Scheduled Monday games are listed below. Let's play ball!!

5/1 at 9 p.m. at diamond 2  
5/8 at 7 p.m. at diamond 2  
5/15 at 7 p.m. at diamond 2  
5/22 at 8 p.m. at diamond 2  
6/5 at 8 p.m. at diamond 2  
6/12 at 7p.m. at diamond 2  
6/19 at 9 p.m. at diamond 1  
6/26 at 6 p.m. at diamond 1  
7/10 at 7 p.m. at diamond 1  
7/17 at 7p.m. at diamond 1  
7/24 at 9 p.m. at diamond 1  
7/31 at 7 p.m. at diamond 1  
8/7 at 8 p.m. at diamond 1

### Close Old Church Door

The old wood door exit from the sanctuary often swells in the summer. If exiting from this door, please take a few minutes to make sure it closes completely. In warmer weather it does not shut on its own.

### Children's Volunteers

As our children's program at Grace is growing, Emmy is always looking for more people to help with the program. If you are interested in getting involved in the Wednesday program, Vacation Bible School or Children's Church, please let the office or Emmy know. We need more volunteers to help with this growing program.

### Church Women United

United Methodist Women will host a Church Women United Friendship Day in the hospitality area at 10 a.m. Friday, May 12. All are welcome! Jessica Cotty will speak on Hope Chest's community services. Circle leaders will turn in their least coin contributions for the year at this function.



### Church Leadership Board *(Meetings scheduled for fourth Thursday of the month)*

Alisha Dault, Brian Garman, Mason Tennel, Michelle Hunt, Greg Ranney, Rich Kriegsman, Dale Golden, Marj Oesch, and Pastor Eric Swanson

We had a very productive board meeting in March. We were able to finalize our goals, as well as continue work on updating the processes. We have discussed the Youth Ministry Position at length and are ready to actively look at interested candidates. We are in the planning stages of our 175th Church Celebration. Please see a board member if you are interested in helping plan this event. Be on the lookout this month, as we are having the front steps to the main entrance redone! Please, if you have any questions or concerns, find a board member or attend the monthly board meetings for more information. As always, we encourage you to get involved in your own way at Grace.



## Financial update 1st Quarter 2023

The first quarter of 2023 is in the books. As I was digging through our history books in preparation of our 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a congregation, I learned that our history seems to like to repeat itself. I found a letter from Dr. Mason in 1960. This letter (attached after the article) talks about the financial giving to Grace in the first quarter of the year for 1960. This would have been the third quarter financially for them (With the UMC merger of 1968 all churches are to be on a calendar year budget). There are some fascinating things, as well as some obvious repeats that we are living through today.

It is fascinating to note that when adjusted for inflation since 1960, our budget has not significantly changed in its total, it's only off a few thousand or about two percent. Then, it is interesting to note where the church is sitting financially for the third quarter and what the months of February and March looked like.

With three quarters complete, they were down significantly. With the last two months they were behind by \$4,285. They were a touch over one month behind their operational budget. As a pastor with responsibilities for budgeting for about 20 years now, I have always seen this same exact principle play out in church after church. We are typically about one month behind in budget income with two months remaining in the calendar year.

The next similarity is how February and March play out. Traditionally, these two months can be hard on income. They are also heavy on utilities and once a year payments. Even with the rise in attendance as we hit our Easter stride, there is not a corresponding increase in our income to meet the operational budget. We may do well with some fundraisers during this time, but typically we have lower than expected income. Their struggles in the 1960's is very similar to ours of the 2020's. They also speak of a "slow summer", and this seems to be a trend that was carved out of the same stone as the 10 commandments.

What is different for them and for us are a few things. Our end of year is in December, when giving for churches and other not-for-profits in the United States are at their strongest statistically. With this information, we can have a certain degree of hopefulness when we are running negative budget numbers. We also see our relationship to church differently. Reading Dr. Mason's letter can be a bit jarring. I know some may want me to pen a letter like this, but our culture is not 1960's and it would not be as effective today. Though many had a strong faith, they also viewed their membership in the local church differently. The operating budget support could in some ways almost seen as a "membership due" to be a part of the church. This is a pattern seen in many churches of the era. Today, and especially for me, I want people to give to the church out of a reply to the work of Jesus in them. Lastly, our first quarter church giving is up two percent over last year's first quarter, this is a good sign of hopefulness.

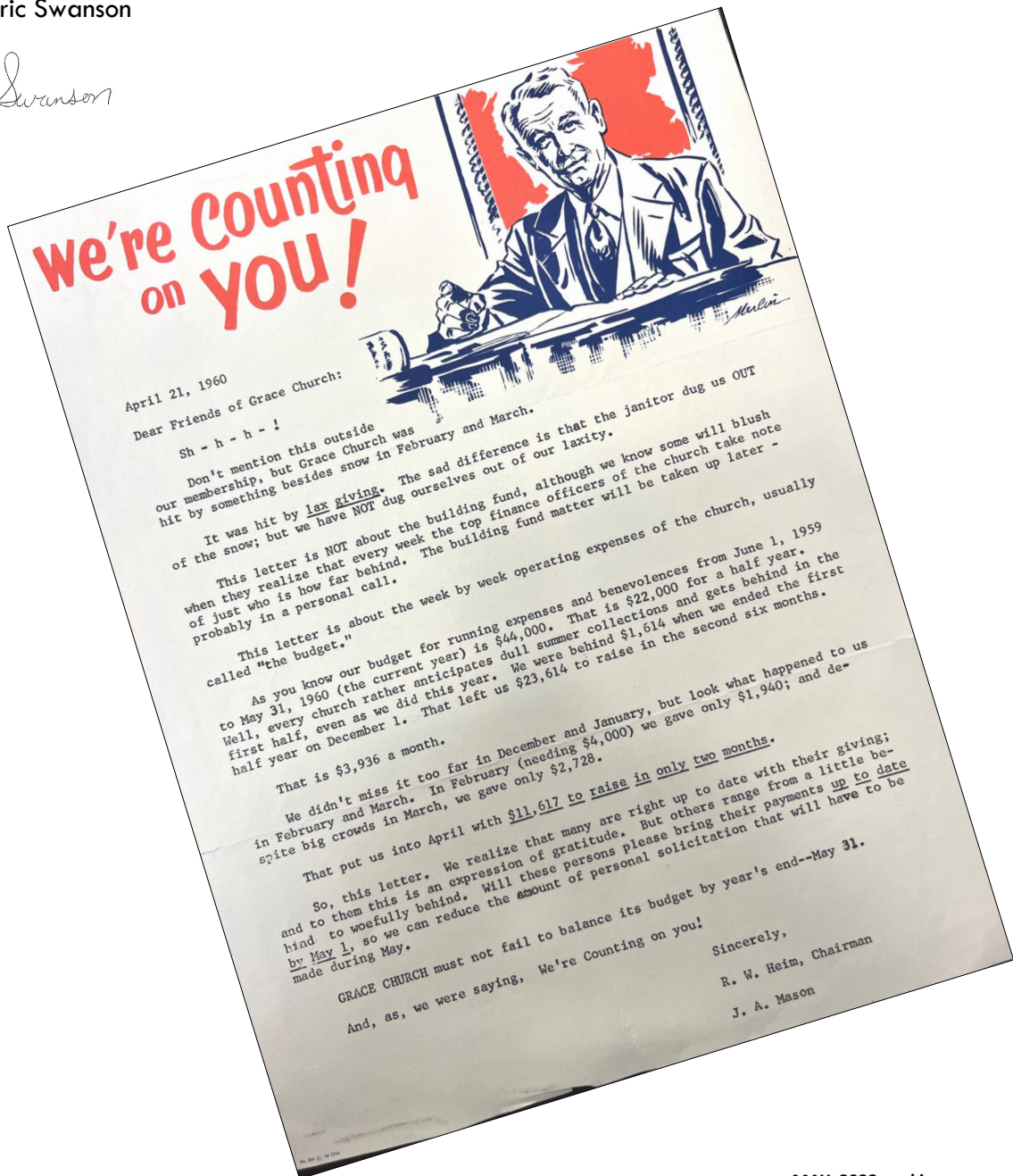
The mission of the church is to make more disciples. Those disciples are to heal, teach, serve, and live like Jesus did. We don't have the powers of Jesus, so we do it with our tools. Our money is a tool, the budget is a plan of how we want to use that tool for good in this year of our lives. We want to see people fed and children having a safe space to be. We want people to worship, come to know Jesus, and make friends that might help them.

Friends, the first quarter of 2023 is strikingly similar to 1960. Like 1960, I'm writing a letter. But in this letter, I want you know that we are all partners in this. I want you to know that we've been here before and we have been able to find the way. God has always moved in spaces that we have struggled with and yet God has always been moving us. You don't have to fear a team looking over your personal giving or an un-expected phone call from your pastor in an awkward way. What you can expect is this pastor really wanting to partner with you in a ministry that is so much greater than anyone of us.

Friends, I love being partners in ministry with all of you ... together, we are more than capable. In faithfulness, God provides through God's people. Let's use 2023 as the launch of a movement that ushers in the next generation of ministry from the people of Grace!

Pastor Eric Swanson

*Eric Swanson*





## May Birthdays



|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Kat Doering      | 1  |
| Bill Keltner     | 1  |
| Dianna Miller    | 3  |
| Kendra McDaniels | 4  |
| Kyle Nelson      | 4  |
| Joan Heiser      | 5  |
| Jay Presley      | 5  |
| Lucy Whitman     | 5  |
| Tommy Dault      | 6  |
| Devin Burks      | 10 |
| Gene Wyman       | 10 |
| Sharon Lohnes    | 12 |
| Jill Garman      | 13 |
| Nick Hill        | 15 |

|                   |    |
|-------------------|----|
| Cari Ranney       | 15 |
| Roy Johnson       | 17 |
| Harriet Canopy    | 19 |
| Chase Ranney      | 19 |
| Michael Ripper    | 20 |
| Jan Darnell       | 22 |
| John-David Cohoon | 22 |
| Brandie Stranz    | 22 |
| Jim Miller        | 22 |
| Neil Viviano      | 23 |
| Hailey Bucklin    | 23 |
| Kendall Garman    | 24 |
| Shirley Moore     | 25 |
| Sam McClain       | 29 |
| Willowdean Stone  | 29 |
| Joe Stoner        | 29 |
| Seth Ranney       | 29 |

# Connect!

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Pekin, IL  
309-347-7131  
secretary@pekingrace.org  
pekingrace.org

**Worship Times**  
**Saturdays 5:30pm**  
**Sundays 9:00am & 11:00am**

**Office Hours**  
**M-TH 8:30am-4:30pm**  
*Closed 12pm-1pm*

## **May 4**

National Day of Prayer  
5 p.m., Lawn of Pekin's Courthouse

## **May 11**

Grace Food Pantry, 4pm

## **May 12**

UWF Friendship Day, 10:00 a.m., Hospitality

## **May 13**

Saturday Servants Meeting  
8 a.m. -12 p.m., Hospitality Area

## **May 21**

Graduation Sunday

## **May 24**

Pekin Estates Communion, 2 p.m.  
Final UNITEkids AT First UMC, 5:30 p.m.

## **May 27**

Grace Food Pantry, 11 a.m.

## **May 29**

Office Closed Memorial Day

## **Prayer Concerns**

Ann Vogt

Barb Hill

Carol Moorhouse

Dave Champlin

David Cole

Grant Golden

Julia Albertson

Kellen Norman and family

Margarete Hall

Mark Weber

Nanette Mulvey & Family on the

passing of her mother

Paul Pearson

Sharon Robinson

Theresa Snell