

JULY 2023

GRACE NOTES

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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



A time for everything includes time to be still. As a pastor, I have been preaching weekly for 19 years and full-time in ministry for 17. Over the course of this time, I have been blessed to be a part of the small moments and the large ones. I have traveled to parts of the world that a younger me would have never imagined. We have been able to build large additions and remodels of buildings and ministry programs. All this work has excited me and given me the energy I have needed to complete all of the ministry that being a pastor requires of me. Yet, I have never set aside a distinct time for rest and renewal for myself. The work has always been outward.

For the month of July, the direction of ministry will be inward for me. As a part of the planning for pastoral health, our Book of Discipline (the denominations book of rules and guidelines) provides a week of renewal leave a year and up to a 4-week period every 4-year period (a quadrennia).

This July I have a mixture of plans: there will be times for quiet and reflection... times for reading and growth. There will be spaces made to make memories with my children and wife. There will be space to reflect and space to look forward. In large part, the goals that I brought with me to serving as pastor here at Grace in 2019 have either been accomplished or no longer are the same for the world that we are living in today. My personal hope for this renewal leave is that this time will affirm the work I've been doing this year to set goals and direction for the next three to five years of Grace ministry as well as create new spaces of understanding and growth that we might live into.

While I am gone, we will hear from five different preachers. There are agreements to help with any care needs from our other UMC pastors, and many have been stepping up to facilitate any needs in our day-to-day operations. I thank you all for the great support you are as a church, and I can't wait to see what God does through this time for our ministry together.

Solar Update

Friends, we have a couple of updates to offer you on the solar project we have here at Grace. We received a grant to get a 287-panel solar system installed on the roof of the Family Life Center. The installation was originally proposed for late September, but it has been moved forward. Starting July 11, there will be construction on site, and that work should last 10-12 business days. We are excited for what this system will offer us in witness to a self-sustained future and how it will reduce our expenses on electrical utilities throughout the year.

While this construction is happening, we will close off the grass area behind the Family Life Center for materials staging and for the use of a tractor to raise the panels up to the roof. There will also be one day with no power to the building so that the transfer switch is installed. Aside from these minor inconveniences, we should largely be unaffected in the daily ministry the church offers while construction happens. Once the installation is complete, the city and later Ameren will need to finish their inspection work before the system is turned on for our use. We hope to see power generation within a month of the completion of physical installation.

We are also looking at partnering with SunRun to install solar on the roof of the parsonage as a fixed lease system. After several other members of the congregation had started working with SunRun we engaged them to build a plan for the parsonage that would have no out of pocket for the church but instead set a fixed cost system for the electrical utility for the parsonage. What this looks like on a practical level is that the monthly utility had a yearly average of \$129 and it will now be \$95 a month. A further benefit is a fixed increase rate of 2.9% instead of the average Ameren growth rate closer to 8%. This will then offer a growing savings as the lease moves onward and is able to be kept with the house over the 20-year term, regardless of who lives in the house. As a bonus note, if you are interested in a similar program, contact Jay Presley at SunRun and mention the church and if you lease through them, he will make a \$350 donation to the congregation. Jay's phone number is 309-264-7533.

Sanctuary Painting

After we worship in the Sanctuary on the last Sunday of July, we will be moving worship into the Family Life Center for 3 weeks as we have the Sanctuary re-painted. Over the last many years, the paint on the ceilings of the Sanctuary and throughout the stairwells have shown the signs of their age. After a long search, we have found a professional commercial company who is excited to take on the challenge of painting our space. With a bid of about \$40,000 for all plaster repair, necessary sanding, wallpaper removal in stairwells, and two coats of paint, we feel like the church has received a very good proposal. The church has offered the use of our lift, and that we would remove all items required to be moved for painting. This work includes the removal of our pews. The balcony pews were mostly removed this past Sunday but we are looking for all available members to assist us at 12 p.m. on Sunday July 30, for the removal of pews, padded chairs and other similar items. This will allow the CertaPro painters to move effectively throughout our Sanctuary.

The cost of this project is part of a campaign we are proposing with our 175th Anniversary this year. We would like to raise \$175,000 beyond the budget for several programs: \$40,000 for painting the Sanctuary, \$40,000 for adding acoustic panels to the Family Life Center to improve the sound in that space for worship, gatherings like funeral meals, speaker presentations, etc... \$75,000 would be used over 3 years for intentional evangelism and growth efforts to take our in-person attendance from a peak of 175 (non-Christmas or Easter) today to 350 in 3 years. We feel that an active congregation of 350 is a sustainable size for Grace to perform the ministries we desire for the next 25 years of life. The remaining \$20,000 is set aside with a twofold plan. The first part of the plan is to acknowledge that almost every congregational financial campaign has a direct link to a reduction on general fund offerings to meet a yearly budget. If that happens, then we would utilize these funds to offset the negative

impact. If we are the exception (we pray that we are) and do not see a shortfall in the general fund due to this campaign, then we will offer these funds up to the congregation for missional support, renovation or a project of the congregation's choosing. We would promptly bring options to the congregation for your selection.

We know that this will create a moment of inconvenience, but it should also allow for us to continue to offer our beautiful sanctuary for the work of Jesus for the next 25 years ministry!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Swanson". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

WATER GAMES

What fun we had at Water Games Night! It is always a joy to reconnect in the summer, circle up for prayer time, and then play! UNITEkids were thankful that many youth joined in to lead the games this time around. It is a blessing for the kids to make older Christian friends that can mentor them along their faith journeys.



THIS IS THE MONTH!! VBS starts July 31!



Make sure to register for Vacation Bible School!

We'll be twisting and turning with God Monday-Friday, July 31 – Aug 4. The kids will learn how following Jesus can change their lives! We'll have games, crafts, snacks, and science experiments. Plus, Friday night will be a celebration at DragonLand!

VBS is open to kids in preschool through 5th grade.

Monday through Thursday at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court St.

Please arrive 5:30 p.m.-5:45 p.m. on Monday for initial check-in and meeting group leaders.

Start time on Tues, Weds, Thurs will be 6:00 PM. VBS will conclude at 8 PM each night.

On Friday, meet at DragonLand from 6-8 PM - bring the whole family to twist and turn down the waterslides!

Cost: FREE!

Scan this QR code or go to the Grace Website for VBS registration



Looking ahead:

UNITEkids will resume their weekly meetings **next month!!!** August 30 will be their first date back. The group meets during the school year on Wednesdays from 5:30 p.m.—6:30 p.m. They start the school year meeting at First United Methodist Church, move to Grace for the winter months, and then return to First at the end of the school year.

*Youth Ministries
Jill Stoner-Crouch and Brionna Goodin*

My name is **Jill Stoner-Crouch**. I have been blessed to be a member of GUMC since my family moved to Pekin in 1975. I loved going to Youth Group at Grace and still have wonderful memories of my time there. Fast forward 4 decades (Yes, I'm showing my age). SO much has changed, BUT GOD...God has not changed. I know that God has a plan for this program, and I can't wait to see His plan unfold. He's given me a passion for these beautiful mini adults, and I can't wait to dig into their hearts and grow with them.

God has blessed me with amazing children & grandchildren. My son, Jeremy & his wife Amanda have 4 beautiful children, Evan, Tucker, Avery & Clare, # 5 is due any day now. It's a Boy! Name TBA . My daughter, Allie & her husband Dave have one son, Rory. They keep me young and are truly God's greatest blessings in my life!

Although I love gardening, travel , music & theatre, let's pull up a chair (anytime)...and talk about Jesus...my favorite topic of all.

Big thanks to Pastor Eric, leadership board and the wonderful staff/ team at Grace that has given me this opportunity.



Grace would like to give a big welcome to our new youth leaders. Please take some time to say hello!



My name is **Brionna Goodin**. My significant other, Jeff, and I have three amazing children that keep us very busy every day. We are huge animal lovers. We have 4 dogs and a bearded dragon.

I work full-time for Carle Health in their IT department. I have been a part of IT for 3 years now but all together at Carle Health (previously UnityPoint Health) for 7 years.

My vision for our Youth Group is to build deep connections with the youth and assist them in strengthening their relationships with God all while still having fun. I am excited to be a part of our Youth Group and can't wait to see what the future holds for us.

RADICAL YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth Ministries
Jill Stoner-Crouch and Brionna Goodin



Trip to Volunteer at Midwest Foodbank



RADICAL YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth Ministries
Jill Stoner-Crouch and Brionna Goodin



JULY

- July 5th
No Youth Group. Enjoy the Holiday!
- July 12th
Tie Dye Party
- July 19th
Community Walk/Ice Cream
- July 26th
Kartville

Close Wood Church Doors Firmly

Old wood door exits from the sanctuary swell in the summer. We are still finding this door open after church on Sundays. If exiting from these doors, please take a few minutes to make sure they close completely.

Soda Boxes Needed

Emmy is collecting the 12-pack soda boxes with the perforated tab still attached. She will be turning it into a life size Jenga game for Vacation Bible School. If you would like to donate, please put boxes in the nursery. Thank you!

Installation of Solar

The installation of the solar panels is scheduled to occur July 11 through July 28. The work crews will be in and out of the building. Use of the Gary Ford Family Life Center and the Hospitality Area may be limited due to the installation.

Register for Vacation Bible School

To make sure we have enough volunteers for Vacation Bible School, we are asking that sign-up for children be completed by July 17. If you are interested in helping with this program please let Emmy know as soon as possible. Late registrations will still be accepted.

Saturday Servants

Saturday Servants will not meet in July as Pastor Eric will be out of town. The plan is to resume in August as there are always items needing to be maintained here at Grace. Reminder the TCRC cleaning crew cleans the buildings, but does not complete maintenance.

Book Club

Book club meets at 10 a.m. on the second Tuesday of the month. The next meeting will be July 11 in the library of Pekin Estates. All are welcome! If you need more information or have questions, call Sandy Isenburg at 309-241-1411.

Thank you!

Thank you to First United Methodist Church for loaning us the surfboards we are using for the backdrop for the Summer of Psalms series. It helps create the festive atmosphere along with the palm tree light fixture Pastor Eric created!

175th Anniversary Celebration

Planning is under way for the 175th Anniversary Celebration. If you are interested in joining this team and helping to create this amazing celebration and remembrance, please let Pastor Eric or one of the board members know. They can get you plugged in! The celebration is being planned for October 15.

Preaching Schedule for July

This month, we will continue the series Summer in the Psalms. Each of these sermons are stand alone and take one of the Psalms to look further in depth and learn what we can glean from them. We hope you can come as you are able. Over the next month, Pastor Eric will be on renewal leave. During this time, the following people will share the message with us: Greta Long, Christian Krost, Sue Crowell, Valerie Moehle, and Brad Everett. Each person comes to us with different experiences and insights, and we are thankful for their time with us. Be sure to fully participate with them as they continue to lead us through the Summer in the Psalms sermon series.

During July, the church will suspend serving Communion as we cannot guarantee the offering of it throughout each worship service. Come each week and enjoy the experience of new preaching.

We encourage you to wear your favorite Hawaiian shirts or flower print to church to celebrate the Summer of Psalms sermon series.

Painting the Sanctuary

The painting of the sanctuary and stairwells is scheduled to start on July 31. CentraPro Painters will start by preparing surfaces and repairing/scraping the areas that are in need of new plaster. After July 30, all worship services will be in the Gary Ford Family Life Center. The plan is to meet there until the painting is complete. Worship is expected to resume in the sanctuary on or around August 27. This is a tentative time frame as painting may take longer or shorter than anticipated. We thank you for your patience as the work is being completed. If you have any questions or concerns, please direct these toward the board or Pastor Eric.

Pew Moving

To reduce the cost of the painting contract, the church will be moving pews out of the sanctuary before the painters arrive. The date to do this will be July 30. Much of the work of moving the remaining pews from the sanctuary will be using dollies. Pastor will not yet be available to help as he will still be out of town. Please let the office know if you plan on helping!

The removal will start after 2nd service completes and the parishioners have had time to exit. The expected time to begin will be 12:15pm. Lunch items and drinks will be available in the hospitality area to snack on as needed. A babysitter will be available in the nursery to watch any children so parents can help.

It is important that all items in the sanctuary are removed and tucked away on that day as the painting will start on July 31. Remember many hands make light work.

Garden Crews

A special thank you this month to the garden team. These members of Grace are involved with designing and maintaining the church gardens. We really appreciate the end result. The gardens and pots have been looking good in spite of the lack of rain.

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!!

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

Summer Bible Study

There will be a summer Bible study starting on July 6 at 9:30 a.m. in the Upper Room. This study will be led by Nancy Ridgeway. The study is entitled "Short Stories by Jesus, The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi" It is written by Amy-Jill Levine. Books are available now for pick-up in the office.

The study is planning to run for six weeks. If you are interested in this study, please pick up your book from the church office and show up on July 6 with the first chapter read. If for some reason you cannot pick up your book beforehand, the books will be available the first day of the study.



Annual Conference 2023

It has been our pleasure to serve as the lay delegates from Pekin Grace to the Illinois Great Rivers Conference again this year, attending in person on June 8-10 at the Peoria Civic Center. Annual Conference is the organization of United Methodist Churches within a region of our state that connects the local churches to each other, to a district, and to the organization of the UMC. Beyond that level, there is a jurisdictional conference, ours being the North Central. And finally there is the General Conference which meets every four years and is a gathering of representatives of churches and annual conferences across the globe. One of the activities of this annual conference was to consolidate the current districts in our conference from 10 to 5, naming our new district the Vermillion-Illinois.

At our IGRC Annual Conference this year we also conducted the regular business of the conference such as approving a budget of over \$8.7 million; recognizing ministries within the conference such as camping, United Women of Faith, Campus Ministries, Board of Ordained Ministry, Pensions, and many others; sadly accepting the closing of several churches; recognizing retirees, and celebrating the commissioning of new elders and deacons. In addition there was music, preaching, conferencing, election of delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conference in both clergy and laity sessions, and offerings to support causes such as Africa University and a school in Monrovia, Liberia. The key note address was given by Rev. James Swanson, a retired bishop, who spoke about God's continuing presence in our lives, no matter the season. His words addressed the theme of the conference which was "A Time To Plant, A Time To Build." It is an inspiring and educational experience to see the church on a larger scale as part of the UMC, making disciples for Jesus Christ to transform the world.

It was particularly encouraging for us to see that although our denomination is facing a future with churches choosing to disaffiliate, and some people stressing our differences in ideology, a large majority of churches in our conference, and indeed across the country, are choosing to remain United Methodist and are excited about the future of a church that welcomes God's children to worship together in love and hope for sharing our faith in today's world. As senior members, it is particularly good to see so many younger members, both laity and clergy, who are stepping up and serving as leaders in the denomination.

Thank you to Pastor Eric Swanson for his leadership in our church and in our conference, and blessings to all of you for your presence and service here at Pekin Grace Church.

Sue Crowell and Greg Ranney

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

The Leadership board met on May 24th. We would like to welcome Brionna Goodwin and Jill Stoner-Crouch as our two Youth Leaders! They will begin their positions this summer. We discussed Pastor Eric's renewal for the month of July and how all of our pastoral needs will be met during the month. We will pray for him and all of the great things he will accomplish during his renewal. We also discussed plans for the 175th Anniversary celebration.

June Birthdays



Cori Swanson	1	Dennis Crowell	12
Helen Dietrich	1	Steve Knight	13
Chelsea Tennell	1	Larae Muselman	15
Janni Harrison	4	Elizabeth Louton	15
Margaret Kelly	5	Barbara Berardi	16
Chloe Ranney	5	Lila Beth Hoffert	17
Trey Tennell	6	Stuart Holder	17
Julie Wallace	7	Norma Bell	20
Joanne Miller	7	Jami Burks	22
John Darnell	8	Alisha Dault	22
Parker Huse	8	Matt Fitzanko	23
Thomas Jacobson	8	Stacey Melloy	26
Lee Oltmann	9	Don Regan	26
Amy Meron	10	Bonnie Hulting	27
Sam Poole	12	Rich Kriegsman	28
		Wayne Holly	28
		Nick Stoner	28
		Vicki Garman	28
		Christina West	30
		Gloria Ranney	31
		Keith Bonnett	31
		Mary Clinebell	31
		Pat Stark	31
		Mary Johnson	31

Connect!

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309-347-7131
secretary@pekingrace.org
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Worship Times
Saturdays 5:30pm
Sundays 9:00am & 11:00am

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

Prayer Concerns

Ann V.

Barb H.

Bev H.

Carla T. & Family

David C.

Grant G.

Kellen N. and her Family

Les S.

Mark W.

Paul P.

Sharon R.

July 4
Office Closed

July 6
Summer Bible Study Starts,
Upper Room, 9:30 a.m.

July 10
Grace Softball Game,
Diamond #1, 7 p.m.

July 13
Grace Food Pantry, 4 p.m.

July 17
Register cut-off for Vacation Bible
School

July 17
Grace Softball Game,
Diamond #1, 7 p.m.

July 24
Grace Softball Game,
Diamond #1, 9 p.m.

July 27
Susannah Circle,
Leaves & Beans Coffee, 11:00 a.m.

July 29
Grace Food Pantry, 11 a.m.

July 31
Grace Softball Game,
Diamond #1, 7 p.m.

July 31-August 3
Vacation Bible School,
at First UMC, 6-8 p.m.

August 4
Vacation Bible School
at DragonLand, 6-8 p.m.