

FEBRUARY 2024

GRACE NOTES

No. 2 pekingrace.org



highlights

February 2024

PASTOR'S CORNER

Page 2-3

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Page 4

YOUTH MINISTRY

Pages 5

CHURCH NEWS

Pages 6

BIRTHDAYS

Page 7

PRAYER CONCERNS

Pages 8



John 3:16

*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him won't perish
but will have eternal life.*

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

PASTOR'S CORNER

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



I want to offer an end of year/Goodnews report for all of us as my February newsletter offering. We had an amazing year in 2023, with a celebration of 175 years of the ministry of Jesus Christ as Grace United Methodist Church and a vision for the future of ministry that God is so clearly calling us into.

175th Anniversary – This anniversary gave our church many opportunities. We were able to gather in a singular worship service that was to date, one of the largest post-COVID gatherings we have held in our Sanctuary. We then had a great time with food and fellowship. We celebrated the occasion with the dedication of both our new 175th Anniversary Memorial Garden, and the recently completed solar panel installation. We pledged our offerings to support the renovation of the paint in the Sanctuary and carried it beyond into goals around supporting worship in the Gary Ford Family Life Center and Evangelism to grow us for the next 25 years of ministry at Grace.

Attendance Information – When we came out of COVID, we saw a new normal. We saw that we now have a regular and dedicated online worship community. We also saw that our in-person attendance for 2020 had a new normal of 130 weekly average. That weekly average has long been the gold standard measurement of congregational health. Today, that number needs to be seen in light of new attendance trends, but we still use it to evaluate where we are. Our in person grew in 2021 to 133, and 2022 to 139. For 2023 we saw a nice in person jump to 163 in person average attendance and in the last half of the year our average weekends saw over 170 in person with 40-60 online. These numbers of growth come to us as we still continue to celebrate the lives of 18 members who have passed on average each year of the last 5 years. Our growth continues to give hope for the future!

Alongside the worship attendance information, we have seen multiple adult baptisms, membership vows taken, and this has all been done alongside the maintaining of a strong online weekly presence that brings us weekly into a congregation of more than 200 persons worshipping with us each week. We are seeing a unique people reach of around 225 per month in worship and many more on the periphery of our ministry.

Giving Information – Each year we prayerfully prepare a budget for the congregation. That is a vision of our yearly goals and priorities of ministry. This budget is a reflection on both our commitment to the ministry we are called to, as well as a declaration of faithfulness that God would provide through the faithfulness of all our members to the needs of the church. In 2023 we provided an estimate of \$475,000 (with real spending of \$483,000) for the yearly programming budget and with all expenses paid at the end of the year we were within \$500.00 or .001% of giving to spending in the Operating Budget. We also have fund accounts that are beyond the yearly budget for all kinds of ministries and programs. In 2023 we received \$155,288 and we spent \$128,860 leaving us with a net gain of \$26,427 in giving beyond the budget.

With a combination of steady faithfulness in giving and community service, we can clearly see how God has provided in the midst of our seeking fulfill God's ministry.

Accomplishments – Completion of the Christmas 2022 missional project of providing 3,000 pairs of shoes and socks to District 108 (we out did ourselves). We supported the United Methodist Church's special offerings through our mission program. We supported our college students with \$2,000 scholarship gifts. We completed the grant sponsored Solar panel installation on the Family Life Center. We hired two new part time Youth Ministry leaders who are now seeing growth within our Jr. High aged group that is a direct result of the growth we have seen through the work of UNITEkids that began 3+ years ago. We finished our 175th Anniversary Garden and beautification project. Our Cantata/Special Music/Santa's Prayer Breakfast weekend, the week before Christmas Eve, saw nearly 900 total attendances. Christmas Eve was spread out of 4 worship services and 400 unique persons in worship attendance.

These are the large accomplishments but every person who chose to join our congregation, and every person who made a commitment to be baptized. Every person who helped at our pantry and opened our devotionals. Every time a family was walked with through spaces of sorrow. Each of these spaces were accomplishments of us being the church of Christ here at Pekin Grace.

A Note on 2024 – Every year we have the mandate of the Gospels, to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. The metrics that we choose to place before us will always have a focus on people who are not yet here with us. This is not at the detriment of those who are already with us, but instead to give purpose for all of us. To share the ministry of Jesus is to offer life, to offer meaning, to offer hope, and to be the church. I believe we can be a congregation of 300-400 in a few years if we all own the responsibility to share that hope that we have in Jesus in the ways we experience it. This means, that when we each are willing to be open about our own faith then our authentic expression of ministry will transcend our experience of Jesus into a new experience of Jesus for a new person. Let us lean into this hope and into this work.

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

UNITEKIDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies
Director of Children & Family Ministry

The Family Craft Night was a much-needed activity in the middle of some very cold January days! The kids (and adults) channeled the beauty of God's winter creations to make their own snow scenes and snowflakes.



The next "Family Activity Night" will be a Lego building event in March!

Bible Buddies and UNITEkids continue to meet weekly on Monday and Wednesday nights. The kids are growing in their faith, asking great questions, reading from the Bible, and spending time in prayer.



Bible Buddies during study time

UNITEkids coloring the Fruit of the Spirit



Radical Youth February

See You Wednesdays 6-7:30 p.m.

2/7 Spruce Up Night

(for upcoming Bring A Friend Fun).

2/14 Ash Wednesday

Meet in our Youth Room at 6:00 PM. Then we will all go over as a group to attend the service at 6:30 p.m.

2/21..... Diving Into "Beneath The Surface",
Gospels on Identity

2/28..... Movie Night

(Going Deep Sea Fishing – Is God Dead?)

JANUARY HAS BEEN A MONTH OF
LEARNING ABOUT KINDNESS!

COLOSSIANS 3:12 "THEREFORE, AS
GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, HOLY AND
DEARLY LOVED, CLOTHE YOURSELVES
WITH COMPASSION, KINDNESS,
HUMILITY, GENTLENESS, AND
PATIENCE"



Winterxtreme 2024

Radical Grace had an amazing opportunity to go to Winterxtreme this year at Camp Timberlee in Wisconsin. We experienced team building activities, got pushed outside our comfort zones, and took steps to build on our relationship with Jesus!

3/1/2023

2

United Methodist Women-Bake Sale

Get ready for Valentine's Day with some goodies! United Methodist Women are having a bake sale on Saturday, February 10 at the evening service and Sunday, February 11 after both morning services. Donations of cakes, pies, candy, and cookies will be greatly appreciated. Donations of baked goods need to be to the church by 5:00p.m. on Saturday or 8:30 a.m. on Sunday.

Donated baked goods should be covered and placed on plates in the amounts of 4, 6 or 12. Please note: If any of your goodies contain nuts, please indicate this on the package. There is no need to put a price on anything as we will have a free will offering.

UMW also will be selling pecan halves and glazed cinnamon pecans. Thank you in advance for your help!

Ash Wednesday Service

Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Come join us for our Ash Wednesday Service on February 14 at 6:30 p.m. This service marks the start of the Lenten period leading up to Easter. At this service you will have an opportunity to come forward and receive the ashes upon your forehead. Come and be blessed.

Softball Chili Luncheon Fundraiser

Sunday, February 18

Convenient meal options:

- Take home meal after 1st Service approximately 10:00 AM
- Sit down fellowship meal at 12:00 (Take Home Optional)

Donations only, (No tickets needed)

Money raised will go towards the entrance fee to play any extra money will go towards uniforms or equipment. .

Community Outreach Team Meeting

A Community Outreach Event Team is being created, and you're invited to get involved! The team will focus on providing events that reach out to the community. The team's main goal will be connecting the Grace UMC community to new people. Annual events will include a Trunk-or-Treat and the Santa Prayer Breakfast. Other creative ideas for events may be discussed and implemented throughout the year. If you enjoy planning fun, festive, food-filled faith events, join us by reaching out to Emmy at ethies@pekingrace.org.

The first planning meeting for this team will **February 1, 2024 at 6 p.m.** in the lower level 2 or kid's area. Please make plans to attend.

Book Club

Book club will meet Tuesday, February 13 at 10:00 a.m. in the library on the first floor of Pekin Estates. We will discuss the book *Sister's Choice* by Emilie Richards which was meant for last month but postponed due to inclement weather. We welcome anyone who enjoys reading. If you would like more information or have questions, please call Sandy Isenburg at 309-241-1411.

Cancellations for weather

Grace United Methodist Church doesn't often cancel Sunday meetings. We like to leave attendance up to your own discretion. In the event that we do cancel church on Sunday, we will send out an email with the information and make a post to social media. This is the same email list used for the email blast. Please let the office know if you would like to be included on this list and make sure your email is still current.

Weekly activity/group cancellations will follow the 108 school schedule, including office hours. If school activities or school itself is canceled, the church activities will not take place.

February Birthdays



Donald Jackson	2	Branson Whitman	23
Lisa Poole	3	Donna Bignell	24
Bill Russell	3	Elisabeth Sandoval	24
Joyce Hill	3		
Judy Dietrich	4		
Jana Swisher	5		
Joy Wojtas	6		
Chris Ward	7		
Emily Weyhrich	7		
Theresa Holly	9		
Nancy Springer	10		
Kristy Whitman	11		
Savannah Butler	13		
Marcia Gazza	14		
Debra McKinley	17		
Willie Fahnstrom	20		

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

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

Prayer Concerns

Carla and Norma Terry

Dean Albertson

Don Jackson

Julia Albertson

Kathy Towne

Les Seman

Margaret Kelly

Names are kept on the prayer list for four weeks. If you would like to be kept on longer please call the office, 309-347-7131.

February 4

Church Leadership Board Retreat, 1:00 p.m.

February 10

Saturday Servants, Hospitality Area, 9:00 a.m. -11:00
a.m.

Drive-Thru Grace Food Pantry, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

UMW or UWF Bake Sale before/after Saturday Service

February 11

UMW or UWF Bake Sale before/ after Services

February 13

Book Club, Pekin Estates, 10:00 a.m. -11:00a.m.

February 14

Ash Wednesday Service, Sanctuary, 6:30 p.m.

February 18

Softball Chili Luncheon, Hospitality Area

February 20

Grace Notes Articles Due

February 22

Susannah Circle, Cracker Barrel in Morton, 10:00 a.m.

Tentative Church Leadership Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m.

February 24

Drive-Thru Grace Food Pantry, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

February 28

Pekin Estates Communion, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.