

APRIL 2024

GRACE NOTES

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highlights

APRIL 2024

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John 3:16-17 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

PASTOR'S CORNER

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



I am going to start with a prayer request from all of the church. I am asking for your prayers for myself, for the delegates from the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the UMC, for the United Methodist Church, and for the Gathering of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Charlotte, N.C., April 23 through May 3.

The United Methodist Church is a global church in form and function. We have spent hundreds of years sharing the message of the love of Jesus Christ to the world. We have done this through preaching, teaching, and missional service. This work has given hope to countless people, offered healing to the masses and been able to build a church not only for Pekin but for people in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

As a part of the ongoing visioning that God is always doing through his people, the church spends time in prayer and in what we call Holy Conferencing. The General Conference is that international body that functions like a very large version of our church leadership board and a body similar to our United States legislative branch. Every Annual Conference elects delegates based on their size. Our Illinois Great Rivers Conference has five clergy and five laity who have been elected by their peers to represent us. I am one of those five clergy delegates from our Annual Conference who will be serving on behalf of the entire church.

When we gather, there are 1100 pieces of legislation that have been submitted to this body. Every person who is a member of the UMC is able to submit legislation and some people truly take great sums of time to make sure we are always perfecting our denominational polity found in our Book of Discipline.

The hot button items are threefold. The first one is what is known as our Revised Social Principles. The Social Principles are the 41 pages of our church attempting to understand the nature of our faith in relationship to the standard issues of the world. The topics involve the Natural World, Nurturing Community, Social Community, Economic Community, Political Community, World Community and a Social Creed.

Following that, we will focus on Worldwide Regionalization. This is a petition set that is focused on keeping those things that are core, into the General Conference and the allowance for the United States to have the same liberties that the rest of the world has on adaptations to our Book of Discipline. This would bring parity to the countries, and this would take some of our US focused issues (such as American Pensions) out of the General Conference and into regional conversations. We would also see a reduction in global expenses to maintain our system today.

The last piece is the removal of restrictive language on LGBTQIA persons. This was the debate over the past 40+ years that lead 25% of the US UMC churches to leave the denomination last year. The proposals that are before the Conference would remove any restrictive language that would bar the church from being in ministry to, and with persons who identify as gay or lesbian. These changes would not mandate things such as weddings, just like I am not required to perform any weddings I am uncomfortable with today, but it would instead end the prohibitions that today would see the end of my clergy credentials if I participated in such a wedding today.

These by far are not all of the issues before us, but these are the ones that will hold the most weight in the room of the body that gathers and among news media agencies from across the globe. This is a strange mixture of spiritual practice as well as political process. There will be life uplifting moments as well as truly heart-breaking decisions that will be made. Our hope will be always found in the life-changing message of the resurrecting power of Jesus Christ. Ultimately that will always be what we prayerfully desire to engage.

So I covet your prayers. For me, and for my family as I am gone. If you have a moment, check in on Cori and the kids., and if you see me on May 5 in church (I hope to be back), don't give me too hard of a time if I fall asleep.

As always, please reach out to me if you have any questions, hopes, concerns, etc.

Peace & Grace,

Pastor Eric Swanson

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eric Swanson".

UNITEKIDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies
Director of Children & Family Ministry

Next Family Game Night is Friday, May 10th at Pekin First UMC from 6-7:00 PM



Lego Night was an awesome way to “connect” across generations and learn Bible stories by “building” them.

Willow and Val teamed up to create a literal red sea for God and Moses to part! Lana and Deb pieced together a cross.

The Dault family made Noah’s Ark complete with a large giraffe and Jesus’s empty tomb with a boulder that could be rolled away.



UNITEKIDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies
Director of Children & Family Ministry

Planning ahead . . .

UNITEkids and Bible Buddies, please note that there will be no meetings the week of April 1-5th due to Spring Break. Both **will resume meeting the week of April 8th**, and both will **start meeting at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court St.** UNITEkids and Bible Buddies will both wrap up the week of May 13th for this school year. Plans for summer activities are in the works!!

UNITEkids spent the month of March learning about the days of Holy Week. And, they had a St. Patrick's Day craft based on the Trinity – they learned that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all ONE.

Bible Buddies started doodling through stories of Jesus – feeding the 5,000, walking on water, and making time for children to be with Him.



Get your girls and their dates registered for the Ties & Tiaras Dance. Scan the QR code to register or contact Emmy Thies at ethies@pekingrace.org. This event sponsored by the Outreach Event Team is a wonderful way to invite new people into Grace – tell your friends and family members!!



Ties & Tiaras Dance

Sat, April 27th ~ 2-4:00 PM

Grace UMC, 601 N. 4th St., Pekin

Girls are welcome to bring dad, grandpa, uncle, or any other important guest for an afternoon of dancing!

Pictures, Snacks, and Tiaras Provided!

Registration Required, scan the QR code to register:



SAVE THE DATE:
VBS 2024 is July 22-26

RADICAL YOUTH MINISTRY

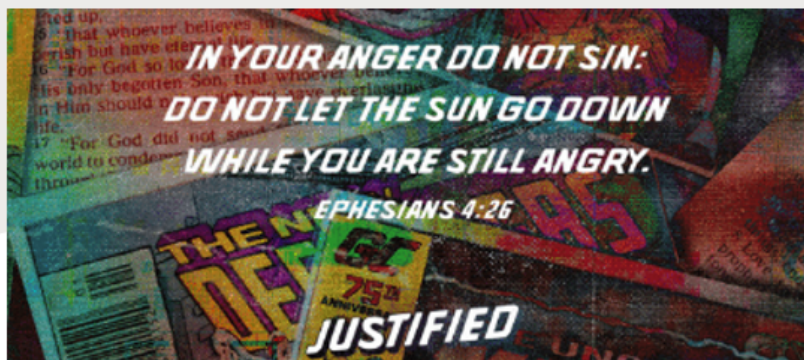
Jill Stoner-Crouch and Brionna Goodin
Co-Directors of Youth Ministries



Anger is such a big, powerful emotion. When we're angry about things that matter, our anger can lead us toward action. Anger can even inspire us to make the world a better place! But other times, our anger can lead us to make choices that are harmful to ourselves or others.

There's no escaping situations or people who make us angry, but how we respond when we're angry is up to us. So, if we can't completely avoid getting angry, what can we do?

In this **four-week series**, we'll explore four passages of Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments that might challenge our view on anger. We'll learn practical skills like when we feel angry, pause to ask God why. We'll see how, when we're angry, Jesus shows us how to respond. And in our anger, we'll be challenged to show grace and not get hurtful.



We have separated our youth group into two groups:

- **Radical Junior High**
(5:30pm-6:45pm)
- **Radical Senior High**
(7pm-8:15pm).

Volunteers needed:

Most of our Junior High group rely on our leaders to pick them up and drop them off. Please think about driving the van for 4 weeks at a time to assist. We are also always looking to recruit more volunteers. If you feel a calling, please talk to Jill or Brionna.

- 4/3 **No Youth Group. Enjoy Spring Break!**
- 4/10 When you're, angry pause and ask God why & When we're angry, Jesus shows us how to respond
- 4/17 When you're angry, you can still show grace. We will have the youth that have not painted a square in the youth room, paint a square this night.
- 4/24 When you're angry, don't get hurtful

Book Club

Book club will meet Tuesday, April 9 at 10:00 a.m. in the library on the first floor of Pekin Estates. We will discuss the book *The Sweetness of Forgetting* by Kristin Harmel. Everyone is welcome. If you want more information or have questions, please call Sandy Isenburg at 309-241-1411.

Susannah Circle

Susannah Circle provides meals for the Rust Center. During the winter they have been enjoying food and fellowship by having their meetings at various restaurants. If you are interested in becoming a part of this circle please, talk with Carol Booth. Their next meeting will be April 25th at the UAW Café at 9a.m.

Save the Date

Father Daughter Dance

Saturday, April 27, 2:00 p.m.

Family Life Center

Dads, bring your daughters for an afternoon of dancing! Photo backdrop, snacks, and a tiara for each daughter is provided.

Donations appreciated.

Pre-Register for the event online.

Pecan Sales

United Women in Faith still have pecans for sale. Halves and cinnamon are available. Contact Carol Booth, 309-347-0075

Blessing

God of all that we hardly notice,
ruler of the ground under our feet
and the sky stretched over our heads.

Send your spirit to direct our steps
and our thoughts as we stumble around this
day and night.

Thomas Merton

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 three pictures along with a short write up on your future plans to secretary@pekingrace.org for the secretary to use in publications. The church does not 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 the weekend of May 19 at all worship services. Pictures and write ups need to be received by May 6 in order to be included in the service.

Garden/Outside Maintenance

Looking for a way to get involved at Grace? Summer is upon us, and we always need help with maintaining the outside of our facility. There are so many things you could help with, including weeding flower beds, mowing, edging, mulching, or picking up trash. If you would like to become involved let the office know, and we will get you connected.

Women's Bible Study

This Bible study meets in the Upper Room on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. We just started a new study on March 26. The new study is by Kristi Mclelland and is entitled *Jesus and Women*. This group likes to explore different types of Bible studies and Christian books.

If you would like more information please contact Sue Crowell or Carla Jacobson. This group will take a break over the summer.

Scholarship Applications

The scholarship applications will be coming out in May. Please be on the look out for these. We will post to the website and include a link in the Tuesday email.

General Conference: who, what, when, where, and why...

Who: 850 delegates from across the globe. 50/50 clergy and laity. From Illinois there were 50 names lifted as candidates to be delegates of the 800 eligible clergy. Pastor Eric is 1 of the 5 clergy and 5 laity who will represent the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

What: A once every 4 years meeting of the international policy and visioning body of the United Methodist Church. This is the only body that can speak for the UMC as a whole and the only body that can edit our Book of Discipline, the policy book of the church.

When: April 23 through May 3

Where: Charlotte, North Carolina (also live streaming through various church pages)

Why: To help continue the conversations (Holy Conferencing) of the church so that it might live into the mission of the church: "To make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Please be in prayer for all those involved and especially delegates (and their families) from our IGRC.

IGRC Delegates:

Clergy – Janice Griffith, Sara Isbell, Randy Robinson, Eric Swanson, Bev Wilkes Null

Laity – Paul Black, Anna Fender, Anish Hermon, Christian Krost, Pamela McDavid

Clergy alternates – Beth Fender, Mike Crawford, Jennie Edwards Bertand

Laity alternates – Erik Slingerland, Andrea Stuby

Grace Softball

The softball team is resuming their Monday Night games. If you are interested in becoming involved with this group, please contact Chris Booher or the office. We can get you connected!!

Thank You!

Thank you so much for the donations of candy and eggs for the Outreach Event. The event was a great success!

Thank you for donating canned goods to the Grace Food Pantry. We have been overwhelmed with your generosity and thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Many that come through the food pantry have said what a blessing this ministry is to them and you are helping this ministry continue!

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 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.

General Conference

Pastor Eric will be a clergy delegate for the Illinois Great River Conference at the upcoming General Conference in Charlotte. This means he will be attending the conference in North Carolina. While he is away, we will have guest speakers share the message with us.

If during this time you need to speak to a Pastor, have an emergency, or need pastoral care, please let the office know. Any building maintenance concerns can be directed towards the office.



1 Corinthians 5:7-8

Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Ash Wednesday



APRIL Birthdays

Scott Kriegsman	1	Karson Norman	16
Nick Bruns	1	Diane Aupperle	16
Alicia Marsden	4	Ray Long	17
Mariah Teaney	5	Charles Hanley	18
Chuck Shields	8	Jill K. Stoner-Crouch	19
Keith Culp	8	Ryan Plunkett	23
Dave Johnson	9	Trisha Plunkett	23
Diane Ingram	10	Wilda Carlton	23
Judy Gordon	10	Carol Groch	24
Rachel Doan	11	Brennan Jacobson	24
Jennifer Otey	11	David Cole	25
Sam Neff	11	David B. Johnson	30
Hayes Tennell	11		
Angela Hannan	12		
Peggy Golden	13		
Nancy Spencer	13		
Matt Bloom	15		
Carol Gustoff	15		
Garrett Williamson	16		



Connect!

601 N. 4th St.
Pekin, IL
309-347-7131
secretary@pekingrace.org
pekingrace.org

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

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

Prayer Concerns

Carla Terry and Norma Griffin

Cari Ranney & her family

Julia Alberson

Jo Trombini

Joyce Hill

Kathy Towne

Lee Oltmann

Les Seman

Nanette Mulvey

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.

April 1

No UNITE Bible Buddies

April 3

No UNITEkids, (PreK-2)

No UNITEbible Buddies (3-5)

No Radical due to Spring Break

April 8

UNITEbible Buddies move to First UMC, 5:30 p.m.

April 9

Book Club at Pekin Estates, 10 a.m.

April 10

UNITEkids will move to First UMC, 5:30 p.m.

UNITEbible Buddies will move to First UMC, 6:30 p.m.

Radical Resumes with the new schedule:

April 13

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

Saturday Servants, Hospitality area, 9 a.m.

April 17

Grace Readers, Miriam Circle to C.B. Smith, 9:45 a.m.

April 23-May 5

General Conference, Pastor Eric will be unavailable this week. Please contact a board member or the office if needed.

April 25

Church Leadership Board Meeting, 6 p.m.

April 27

Grace Drive-Thru Food Pantry, 11 a.m.

Father/Daughter Dance, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Registration required.