

SEPTEMBER 2024

# GRACE NOTES

No. 9 [pekingrace.org](http://pekingrace.org)



## highlights

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## Food Pantry



### Hebrews 13:16

**“And do not forget to do good  
and to share with others, for  
with such sacrifices God is  
pleased.”**

# PASTOR'S CORNER

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



Working on things has always been a pastime of mine. I spent a good part of my youth building forts, clubhouses, and some unauthorized tree houses. In high school and college, I was able to work on many Habitat for Humanity houses, as well as a summer of work on my dad's 1890's farmhouse. As an adult, I have worked on the various old rusty vehicles that have followed me home, as well as numerous church construction/renovation projects. In each one of these projects, I have learned a lot. I have learned how to do various construction tasks such as plumbing, electrical and drywall. I know that I enjoy some of them, and others not so much. I have also learned that the old adage of "it is going to take longer and cost more," is a very true statement.

I say this, because the most important work that we have as a church is to share the gospel of Jesus to the world around us. Like when we are building a house, the work of sharing the gospel requires many different skills, phases, and plans. It also has various costs to it. Over the last few years, we have been working on planning, building, and living into the church of today while dreaming of our church of tomorrow.

We have been actively seeking to grow the overall congregation that is Grace United Methodist Church. When you look at mainline congregations, the statistic is declining at a 9-17% annual rate. Given factors such as the pandemic and the overall age of the church, many people would assume that we would be falling under those same statistics. Yet, over the last several years, we have seen the congregation continually move forward in our reach to the community. When we awoke from COVID, we had 130 people average attendance each week for that year. Last year we were back to 163 and over the last four weeks we have seen that same 163 average, at the end of summer!

The re-construction that is inevitably a part of every church and social organization is happening here at Grace. We have welcomed new members into the church, beyond confirmation, each year and hope to welcome many more this fall/winter after the UMC 101 class and Sr. High confirmation in October/November.

But, as I started with... our re-construction will be like that of most projects. It will take longer and cost more than anyone first tells you. As a relatively impatient person, I had prayed we would be at 185 (full recovery from COVID losses and deaths since 2020) and yet we appear to still be a year out from that. With those losses and deaths, we have still maintained the ability to be within 1% of our operating budget over the last several years. It has not always been pretty, but we have accomplished that. This year we are looking at being off by about 4-5% on our income vs expenses if we cannot raise about \$20,000 more than our current projection.

We have looked at ways to limit expenses, but we have not slowed any of our ministries nor have we delayed any facilities repairs as of yet. The ministry programs have been our source of growth over the last several years and to delay facilities repairs is to lose access to or increase later the costs associated with them.

We have to also celebrate, that though giving to the operating budget is down slightly, our giving beyond the budget to restricted funds that support our pantry, youth, and other various benevolences continues to be very strong.

I share all of this with you because we as a church will always be transparent with where we are. We are growing, but with room to grow. I share this because without knowledge of what help needs done, no help can be offered. I share this because Grace UMC is an outlier of sorts. We are a church that continues to offer the hope of Jesus Christ in ways that have been actively transforming our community, the broader city, and our own congregation. That is something that is larger than any one single person and that is something that is worth working on, over and over again.

So, I ask that you prayerfully consider how you may help us as a congregation, in your prayer, your presence, your gifts, and your service.



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## Town Hall Meeting

**Sunday, September 22, 2024**

**Gary Ford Family Life Center  
10:10 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.  
Between Services**

All are invited for an informative meeting directed  
by our Leadership Board.

## Church News



### **GRACE FOOD PANTRY UPDATE**

First of all, the pantry team wants to thank our congregation so much for your generous food donations with our Church Canned Food Drive a few months ago during the area's hunger drives. This extra food filled a void when we were very low on food staples. The food pantry continues to thrive thanks to the miracles we shared last year. These miracles continue to be driving forces in our program.

**\* Miracle #1:** the amount of food and the gracious generosity of Midwest Food bank every month! We never pay anything for the tons of food we receive to feed those in need of food.

**\*Miracle #2:** Midwest's loaders and our own pantry's unloaders of food in the trailer and van. Not only are they very dedicated, they are also very strong!

**\*Our caring calling team and those who receive pantry reminder calls are Miracle #3!**

**\*Miracle #4:** Our Pantry team packing sacks and frozen foods, distributing the sacks and conversing with our guests! This miracle has expanded because we often have more people joining us to help on pantry day! We have grandkids, interested congregation members, youth groups, boy scouts, and others... including two men who were once homeless but have successfully gotten their lives back on track and want to "pay it forward" to help others! We continue to distribute food on the second and last Saturdays each month.



**UPDATE:** In the past year and a half, our pantry demand for those needing food has greatly increased. Our lowest single distribution in the beginning of 2023 was 51 families having 165 individuals. Our lowest month (2 distributions) at that time was 125 families with 373 individuals who needed food. Each month since then, numbers have increased; the highest month in 2023 served 229 families with 746 people! **Total 2023 numbers were 2,008 families getting food to feed 6,137 individuals – an increase of 635 families and 2,095 individuals from the preceding year.**

**Fast forward to the first 11 pantry dates in 2024: we've served 1,000 families feeding 2,989 individuals!** The need for food continues to grow while, at the same time, the amount of available food at the Food Banks has decreased ... no fault of the banks but from food shortages.



When we first started giving Pantry food using the drive-through during Covid, we gave two full paper grocery sacks and a plastic bag of frozen food to each family plus any extras we may have had. Over a year ago, we had to cut down to only giving one paper sack of food for two reasons: our numbers of families had greatly increased, and our amount of food decreased at various times. Thankfully, the church's Food Pantry fund has helped us to purchase some food when on sale and toilet paper at times when our sacks were only half full.

**\*Miracle #5:** God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit continue to be involved in every aspect of this miraculous outreach mission of our church! We somehow always have enough food to give out at pantry time. We applied and received a grant from the Food Pantry Network-Heart of Illinois to buy a new upright freezer after two older freezers quit working last year! Additionally, we are receiving over 4,700 pounds of Midwest food per trip which is too much weight for our single-axle trailer.



For safety reasons, our church board recently approved the purchase of a 16 X 7 ft., dual axle trailer that will allow us to safely transport this much and even more food. We are so grateful to those who donated funds and to our church's Memorial fund for this needed purchase. Praise God for His continual help in feeding those needing food in our community!



### **SNACK PACK PROGRAM UPDATE**

When Pekin Outreach Initiative began the Snack Pack program in 2013-14, Willow Primary School, sponsored by our church, was the first school to pilot this program. This program provides sacks for 15 pre-school – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Pekin District #108, Head Start, Rankin, and South Pekin schools. We made snack packs of weekend food for Willow students in need for 10 years. Due to changes in some other pantry assignments, Liberty Baptist Church agreed to sponsor Willow School starting in January, 2023, and Grace took over Washington Intermediate and the two Junior Highs.

During the 2023 calendar year, our church packed 5,635 snack packs for the participating (parental approval needed) low-income students in our three schools, averaging about 170 per week (33 weeks).

District-wide for the year of 2023, 42,900 snack packs were given to participating students.

For the first five months of 2024, 4,255 snack packs were given to students in our three schools (Washington, Edison, and Broadmoor). Thank you so much to those who have donated healthy snack or financial support to Grace's Snack Pack program. Just like our generous Pantry, our church excels in feeding Jesus' precious (hungry) children!

Another amazing fact: Along with feeding hungry children, packing snack packs has enriched many lives of various volunteers who have packed snack packs for our church/our schools! Every month, adult participants from TCRC come here to pack about 175 sacks for our church/schools. Two students from Schramm School and their two teachers come here twice a month, packing close to 85 sacks. Our youth groups have helped pack here through the years. This spring, a group of Ameren employees joined some of our church friends here and packed over 500 snack packs and another 150 bags of cleaning supplies in about two hours! Once a month, First Church of the Nazarene volunteers pack 80 or more sacks (at their church) for our schools. Once a year, we coordinate with New Castle Bible Church's youth groups and guide them at their church in Mackinaw as they pack hundreds of sacks for our Pekin students in need.

Indeed, snack packs nourish the bodies of hungry children while giving them some security to have extra food at home (or at school when there are no snacks to bring from home for their midday snack). Equally important, the packing of snack packs allow volunteers to be Jesus' workers and feel gratified as they are helping children, families, and our community!





The kids' backpacks have been blessed and school is under way!

## Fall Children's Ministry Programs



**UNITEkids** - PreK through 2nd graders  
**Weds 5:30-6:30**

Weekly gathering for Bible lesson,  
music, activities, & snack



**Bible Buddies** - 3rd through 5th graders  
**Mondays 5:30-6:30 OR Weds 6:30-7:30**

Weekly gathering for Bible study,  
games, and snack

Now it's time to start up our weekly UNITEkids and Bible Buddies gatherings. Wednesday night groups kick-off September 4 and the Monday group starts September 9. Groups will meet at Pekin First UMC through September, and then they will switch to meeting at Grace UMC from October through March. New friends are always welcome!

Jason, Olivia, Addy, and Lila say -  
"Join us for UNITEkids or Bible Buddies!!"



# UNITEKIDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

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

Camp Firelight at Vacation Bible School was such a success, that we are extending the fun and inviting the whole family for a follow-up event! Join us for an overnight camp at East Bay on Lake Bloomington. East Bay is a UMC Camp in Hudson, IL. We are renting cabins for the night – no worries, not tent camping! Meals will be provided. We'll have family devotion times, games, activities, and time to hike and explore God's Creation. Register your family by emailing Emmy at [ethies@pekingrace.org](mailto:ethies@pekingrace.org) with the names of family members who will be attending. A \$10 per person donation is appreciated to help cover the cost of lodging.

If your kiddos were not able to attend VBS, you are still welcome to camp with us! This will be an amazing opportunity to unite with God and each other.



**VBS Follow-Up  
Event!!**

**Family Overnight Camp**  
**Friday-Saturday, Oct 4-5th**  
**5:00PM - 1:00 PM @ East Bay Camp**  
Dinner, breakfast, and lunch provided, \$10/person donation suggested. 1 parent/guardian must attend per family.

**S'mores! Games! Campfire Devotion!**

Questions about Children's Ministry or ready to volunteer?

Contact Emmy Thies at [ethies@pekingrace.org](mailto:ethies@pekingrace.org)

or call, 309-267-0595

# UNITE YOUTH MINISTRY

*Jill Stoner-Crouch and Brionna*



Big shout-out to the youth helpers that assisted with VBS!

Our youth helpers stepped up as young leaders to the younger kids and assisted wherever they were asked.



## Potato Bar Details

- September 6th, 7th, and 8th is the Potato Bar weekend
  - We are asking the youth to work two shifts which will total 4 hours and asking the parents to help. We also need adult volunteers for several jobs to help make this fundraiser happen.
  - There is a sign-up sheet in the lobby area. We will be reaching out to you for more specifics. Thanks in advance for helping. This is our main fundraiser that helps our youth do all the fun activities throughout the year, like Winterextreme and future mission trips.







## \*\*\*\*Big Announcement\*\*\*\*

### UNITE Youth Pekin First & Grace UMC Team Up!

We are so excited to share that we are joining forces with Pekin First and combining our youth groups! We will be called UNITE Youth. The naming of our group will be consistent with our other children's program within both churches (UNITE Kids/Bible Buddies).

We were so blessed to enjoy a big back to school celebration together that had in total 25 junior high kids and 30 high school kids! We really feel this is God's plan and look forward to what he has in store for our future.

With this combining of groups, we will be moving our group meeting nights to Sunday evenings. Junior High will meet 5-6:30pm and High School will meet 6:30-8pm. We will be meeting at Pekin First (*church by the lagoon*) April thru September in the lobby area and then at Grace, October thru March at the Mason building (*across the street from the church where Hobby Horse is located*).

No youth group Sunday 9/8



## New school year, same weekend routine

As the new school year starts, we want to remind the youth that.....

- We will ask for one youth helper to assist with children's church on Sunday mornings for the 9am service.
- We will also start to ask a youth helper to assist in the nursery on the second Sunday of every month and then every once in awhile for the youth to do tech support.

Please remember that if you are not asked to assist with children's church, the nursery, or tech, to sit in worship. You are always welcome to sit with Jill or Brionna or as a group.



## **It is that time of year again!**

Our Youth will be having their Amazing Spud Potato Bar at Pekin's Marigold Festival. Mark your calendar! Festival dates are September 7 & 8. This fundraiser does two things. First it gets the name of Grace United Methodist Church out into the community. Second, this fundraiser supports the youth program. All funds raised go towards the mission trip. Each year, it is our church community that helps make this happen, and we could not be more grateful! If you feel a "call" to help...there are several ways you can be involved.

- Volunteer to help sell at our booth**
- Volunteer to bake at the church**
- Volunteer to "run" food from church to booth**
- Volunteer for set-up and tear-down**
- Buy a potato OR TWO at the Marigold Festival**

We also are asking for people to donate \$30 for a bag of potatoes. *A volunteer sign-up sheet is available in the office.*

We really appreciate anyone that is willing to help!  
**Jill 309.241.2917 / or Brionna 309.922-6239**



### **Bible Presentation Sunday**

It is Bible time! Grace Church will be presenting the third graders with their very own Bibles on September 29 at the 9 a.m. service. If your child is in third grade, please make sure you let Emmy know that your child would like a Bible. In addition, if there are children who are older or were not here in third grade who would like a Bible, please let Miss Emmy, Jill Crouch, or Brionna know. This is such an exciting time of year in the life of the church.

### **Hunger Walk**

This year's Mike Caringello Memorial Hunger Walk will be October 5 at 10 a.m. at the Mineral Springs Park. Mike was a long-time leader in our community and Grace United Methodist Church, where he also swerved as usher, acolyte and greeter for years. He started the Hunger Walk several years ago. Over the years, thousands of dollars have been raised to feed people here in Pekin. Mike had a deep compassion for the hungry. He took seriously Jesus' command to "feed my sheep."

The money raised from this year's Hunger Walk will be evenly divided among Pekin Outreach Center, Grace United Methodist Church Food Pantry, and the Salvation Army.

Please either send your donation, if you are unable to attend the walk, to Grace United Methodist Church or bring it to the park on October 5 and then walk a mile around the beautiful lagoon. Come join the fellowship and together let's feed some hungry people. If you have any questions, call Brenda Nelson at 309-202-0926 or Phil Icenogle at 309-369-7354.

### **Marigold Festival Worship Service**

Come to the community worship service at the Marigold Festival on September 8 from 9-10:30 a.m. Pastor Sean Peters from Pekin First will be sharing the message at this event. There will not be any worship services held at Pekin Grace this weekend.

### **Monday Night Youth Volleyball**

Currently we have kids grades 4th-8th (and a couple of adults) meeting to play volleyball on Monday nights, 5-6:30pm. If you have a youth that is younger or older and would like to try it out, please reach out to [bgoodin@pekingrace.org](mailto:bgoodin@pekingrace.org)

### **Trunk or Treat**

Sign up for the Trunk or Treat Event! We need "decorated trunks" so that the children of the community can have a fun and safe place to go trick or treating. Please make sure to sign up your trunk.

### **Saturday Servants Changing time**

Saturday servants will now be meeting on the third Saturday of every month at 9 a.m. This group is an important part of Grace. With the absence of a full time janitor, there are many items around the facilities that need to be repaired, fixed, or tended to. Pastor Eric has been faithful in coming on Saturdays to lead this group. If interested, let Pastor Eric know you would love to help. Hope to see you here on September 21.

### **Partnering with First for Homeless**

Help us in donating supplies for the UNITE Youth project called Take-a-Bag. The youth will create bags with essentials for the homeless, and distribute them to those that park in the FUMC parking lot during the Marigold Festival. Those that receive the bags, will share with others when a situation arises when they can help out the homeless. Check the Grace Website or the info station in the hospitality area for more information about what to donate. All donations will be received by September 4.

### **UMW General Meeting**

The United Women in Faith will be having a General Meeting on September 11 in the Hospitality area from 1-2 p.m. The program will be entitled Food and Faith. Bring granola bars to be donated to one of our missions/schools. All women may attend.

# Trunk or Treat

October 19, 2024

3-5 pm

Grace United Methodist Church

601 N 4th St Pekin, IL

- Please arrive by 2:15 to get parked and decorate your trunk
- Vehicles must remain parked until the event is over at 5 pm
- Family friendly/non scary decorations only please!  
• Only prepackaged candy or treats
- We will have a contest for best trunk voted on by attendees!

Sign up [here](#) or scan QR code below

For questions please contact  
Shannon Dault ([sdault@peoriaroe.org](mailto:sdault@peoriaroe.org))

-or-

Emmy Thies  
([ethies@pekingrace.org](mailto:ethies@pekingrace.org))



## September Birthdays

Sue Crowell	1	Zach Bruns	21
Ron Robinson	2	Cindy Carlton	21
Eric Swanson	3	Linda Stoner	24
Tom Patterson	4	Sara Golden	25
Morgan Turner	4	Ann Tunis	25
Laura Swearingen	5	Chris Onken	25
Ron Garman	5	Judy Warner	25
Barbara Wright	6	Todd Tennell	26
Alice Cakora	8	Tammy Denning	26
Jay Zimmerman	10	Shannon Tebben-	
Kevin Stark	12	Sandoval	26
Robyn O'Shaughnessy	12	Vicki Mckinley	27
Ken Bradshaw	13	Gerry Zuercher	30
Marv Brown	14		
Sarah McKenzie	16		
Ed Mulvey	17		
Barbara Harper	18		
Jim Stallwitz	18		
Tracy Parkin	18		
Nick Patterson	20		
Nancy Wherry	20		
Linda Smith	20		



# Connect!

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

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

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

## Prayer Concerns

Gerry Zuercher

Dave

Greg Ranney

*For Jake, Kaitlyn and Owen*

*(The Lessen Family)*

*Jeanne Harmon and her father*

June Parr

Mandi S.

*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.*

## September 1

UNITE Youth at Pekin First,  
Junior High (6-8) 5-6:30 p.m.  
Highschool (9-12) 6:30 -8:00 p.m.

## September 2

Youth Volleyball, Monday Nights, GFFLC, 5-6:30 p.m.

## September 3

Men's fellowship continues meeting, Tuesdays, 8-9 p.m.

## September 4

UNITEkids (Pre-2) resumes, Pekin First UMC,  
5:30—6:30 p.m.

Bible Buddies, Pekin First UMC, 6— 7:30 p.m.  
Choir rehearsal resumes, Wednesdays, 6 p.m.

## September 5

Women's Bible Study resumes, 9:30 a.m. -11 a.m.  
United Women in Faith, Executive Meeting, Hospitality Area,  
1 p.m.

## September 8

Community Worship Service, Marigold Festival,  
9-10:30 a.m.

Enjoy a potato for lunch!!

## September 9,

Bell rehearsals resume, Balcony, 4:45 p.m.  
Bible Buddies (3-5) Mondays 5:30-6:30 p.m.

## September 10

Book Club, Pekin Estates, 10 a.m.

## September 11

United Women in Faith, General Meeting 1-2 p.m.

## September 14

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

## September 17

I was Broke Now I'm Not, 6:30 p.m.  
*(runs 7 weeks, registration needed)*

## September 18

Hot Topics of Life & Faith, 6:30 p.m.  
*(runs 12 weeks)*

## September 21

Saturday Servants, Hospitality Area, 9 a.m.

## September 22

Town hall between the services, 10-10:45 a.m.

## September 25

Communion, Pekin Estates, 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays, 2 p.m.

## September 26

Leadership Board Meeting, Upper Room, 6 p.m.  
Susannah Circle, UAW Café, 9-10:30 a.m.

## September 28

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

## September 29

Bible Presentation Sunday, GFFLC, 9 a.m.