

MARCH 2025

GRACE NOTES

No. 3 pekingrace.org



highlights

MARCH 2025

PASTOR'S CORNER

Page 2-3

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Page 4-5

UNITE YOUTH MINISTRY

Page 6-7

CHURCH NEWS

Pages 8-9

PANEL INSTALLATION

Pages 10-11

BIRTHDAYS

Page 12

PRAYER CONCERNS

Page 13



Before



After

PASTOR'S CORNER

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



2 Corinthians 9:11

“You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”

It often takes the church a month or more to look back at all that has happened in the previous year to truly see where we are. As we have been collecting the data on 2024, it leads me, as the pastor, to thanksgiving.

2024 was what I consider being a stabilizing year. Since our return from COVID and the struggles that seemed all around us in 2020/2021, we have grown and stabilized the church for the future. In 2024, we saw just a small growth in AWA (Average Weekly Attendance) towards the mid 160's. Though this was milder than your often aggressively optimistic pastor would like, it is still a positive sign. It is positive because of where our growth is coming from. We continue to see new people who are long term de-churched or from an unchurched background. These are good signs that our efforts are not simply the shifting of people from one space to another, but the effort of evangelical growth that comes from offering the love of Jesus into the community.

2024 was also positive financially for the church. Grace finished the year just over \$11,000 in the black. This was after a sizeable slump in the summer giving that ended up with some very solid catching up over the November and December months.

Congregational giving for the operating budget and for the various fund accounts remains strong and as we can continue to grow our understanding of how our giving affects the functional mission of the church, we hope to grow in what we can offer back into the community. What this means in a broad sense is that, as more people can give regularly and consistently towards the operational budget, we will see less stress on the traditionally lean summer months and a greater ability for us to expand our ministry offerings. By expanding our offerings, we hope to grow the congregation so that the AWA above is up towards 225 soon and what we could then consider a generational stability for the congregation.

So as I am giving thanks for these milestones, I am also **praying for the “what’s next.”** This year the Leadership Board will work on this question of “what’s next.” It starts with us evaluating the Core Values of Grace, then reflecting on the Mission and Vision of the church. Finally, we will develop SMART goals for the broader church and for the various ministry areas. This will allow us to clearly see how things are aligned with the direction of ministry that we feel Christ calling us towards.

So, I will go back to thanks. I am thankful for all of you at Grace! I am thankful for the faithfulness of many that allows us to make a real difference in Pekin. I am thankful for the forward-facing work that we are leaning into. Many churches have given up on looking for a future with a hope, and here we see it clearly in the resurrecting power of Jesus moving through all of us. And so, I say, “THANK YOU.”

Pastor Eric



Church Leadership Board

Be in prayer for our Church leadership board as they join together in leadership with Pastor Eric. The members of the board from left to right, include: Michelle Hunt, Analise Poindexter, Kate Kriegsman, Mason Tennel, Todd Tennel, Denny Crowell, Dale Golden, Chris Onken, and Marj Oesch.

UNITEKIDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies & Dianna Miller
Co-Directors of Children & Family Ministry

We are moving into the Lenten season and want to provide activities that will teach and inspire kids to live closer to Jesus.

Make sure to bring your kids to Pekin First on Ash Wednesday, March 5, at 6 p.m. for a chance to learn the meaning of observance before attending worship (meet on the 2nd floor in the Children's Church room). Regular programs for this night will be replaced by this kids' lesson.

Then, attend the 6:30 service as a family. The kids will be able to serve by handing out snacks to everyone as they leave the service, as well.

If your kids love to sing, get them involved in the special Lenten choir opportunity – all kids in Kindergarten and up are welcome!



Bible Buddies love to study God's Word!



ASH
WEDNESDAY
SERVICE

March 5th
6:00 Kids Lesson
6:30 Worship
at Pekin First

WE ENCOURAGE THE WHOLE
FAMILY TO JOIN IN WORSHIP
TOGETHER IN THE SANCTUARY

A large, white, hand-drawn style cross is positioned on the right side of the purple background. The background has a subtle pattern of small white dots.

Children's Choir Opportunity!

All kids in Kindergarten and up are invited to sing with the adult choir at Pekin First on **Sat, April 12th** at 5:00 service in celebration of Palm Sunday.

Please attend practice at Pekin First on April 3rd AND 10th from 6:30-7:15. Arrive at 4:15 PM on Sat, April 12th to perform!

Contact Emmy Thies to sign-up your child via email at ethies@pekinfirst.org.



UNITE YOUTH MINISTRY

Jill Stoner-Crouch, Brionna Goodin & Megan Rahn
Co-Directors of Youth Ministries

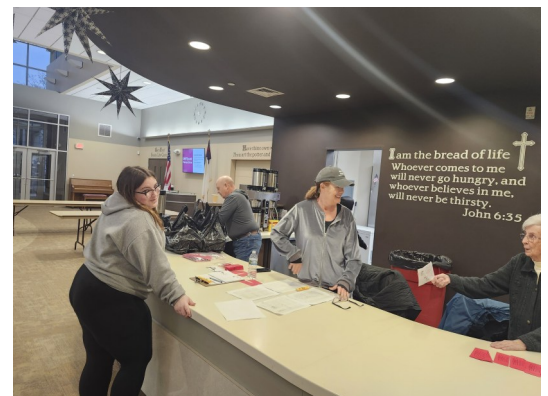


Thank you everyone who supported the youth by purchasing a chicken dinner or helping work the event! It was a huge success and brought in over \$1,000 towards the youth!



Important March Dates

- 3/5 Ash Wednesday at Pekin First, Service at 6:30 p.m.
- 3/8 Lock-In for **Senior High** UNITEyouth starts at 8:30 p.m.
- 3/12 Confirmation Classes starting at Pekin First at 5-6 p.m.
- 3/16 Paint a brick night
Come with your favorite verse to paint on a brick in the youth room at Grace
- 3/21-3/23 Chicago Junior High Mission Trip, be at Grace by 12 p.m.
- 3/23 No youth group
- 3/30 Last night at Grace, moving to Pekin First on 4/6





UNITE YOUTH MINISTRY


*Jill Stoner-Crouch, Brionna Goodin & Megan Rahn
Co-Directors of Youth Ministries*

We wanted to take some time to welcome Megan Rahn as she joins Brionna and Jill in ministering to the youth of this church.

Hello! My name is Megan Rahn, and I grew up in First United Methodist Church. I graduated from Moody Bible Institute with a bachelor's in teaching English to speakers of other languages last year. I am currently in the second graduate year at Dominican University for my Master of Social Work. I have a huge heart for teaching the next generation to be light in a world that is bleeding for hope and change.



**CONFIRMATION
CLASSES**
Co-taught by Pastor Sean and
Pastor Eric



**EVERY WEDNESDAY STARTING MARCH 12TH THRU
APRIL 16TH 5PM-6PM**

Pekin First UMC 1315 Court Street
**Any youth who wish to be
confirmed this year are
welcomed.**

****Sign up in the church office****

If your student is interested in learning more about God and becoming a member of both the local church and the United Methodist Church, please inform the office. The first class will be starting soon and will run weekly for six weeks. At the end of the course, the students will be confirmed into their respective churches. The youth groups from both churches will combine for the instructional classes, and then they will be confirmed into their individual churches.

Ash Wednesday Service

The Ash Wednesday service will be a combined worship with our sister church, Pekin First UMC. This year we are invited to join with them at 1315 Court Street in Pekin. They will be hosting the service this year. The service will start at 6:30 p.m. Hope you all can come and join together for this event. The choirs from both churches will be combined and sharing at this service.

One Service Weekend

Grace will be combining all their services into one on March 30 at 10 a.m. *Note* There will only be one service this weekend.

Lenten Luncheons

All are invited to the Lenten Luncheons held at Pekin First UMC. These luncheons will be held every Wednesday during lent from 12 -12:45 p.m. They will be meeting every Wednesday, March 12 through April 16. On April 2, Pastor Eric will be speaking at the luncheon. Each luncheon will have worship, devotion, and lunch. A love offering will be taken to cover the costs. Hope you can check it out.

Church Camp Registration

Church camp registration is now open. Brochures are available in the church office or at the Unitekids check-in table. To see listings with the full camp descriptions, you may go to the following camp websites.

lgc.org/camping

Littlegrassycamp.org

Eastbaycamp.org

Pray for the Board

The board has asked that we pray for discernment where God is leading us (Grace Church) next as they look into the mission and vision of Grace UMC.



To Grace United Methodist,
We want to thank you for the support and partnership with the "Angel Tree" for our Pekin families. Your church family made Christmas time so much brighter for so many children and families!

Shana and Mindy
Pekin District 108

Dear Grace United Methodist,
Thanks for the scholarship. This will go towards the cost of schooling and the uniform I will need to buy for my fire science EMS program!!!

Chuck Wyman

Dear Grace UMC Scholarship Committee,
Thank you for your generous scholarship to offset the cost of my doctoral program coursework. This semester I am enrolled in two courses. I anticipate 2-3 courses each semester until completion. This money will pay for tuition and books. It is a great help with 3 people from our family currently enrolled in college courses. I greatly appreciate your review of my application and am grateful for being selected as a recipient. Thank you!

Kate Wyman

Thank you so much for letting Foster Village Peoria use your space for our foster parent support gathering. We hope to start again when we have more parents able to lead it. WE TRULY appreciate the support.

Foster Village Peoria



United Women in Faith

Thank you to everyone who were very generous with donations to the United Women in Faith's bake sale during the week-end of February 15th and Feb 16th. This helps us to assist several local groups to help members of our community that are in need. Thank you!



Upcoming Events

March 6, 2025 United Women in Faith Executive Meeting, Hospitality Area, 1 p.m.

March 11, 2025 Book Club meeting at the library at Pekin Estates at 10 a.m. We will be discussing The Tattered Quilt by Wanda Brunstetter. If you have any questions or want more information please call Sandy Isenburg, 309-241-1411.

March 12, 2025 United Women in Faith General Meeting, 1p.m., Hospitality Area

March 14, 2025 Pekin Church Women United will meet at 10 a.m. at First United Methodist Church, 1315 Court Street in Pekin. The program will be "Early Churches in Pekin" by Jared Olar. There will be a diaper drive for pregnancy resource center. All are welcome!



Water and the Spirit!

(Water is a symbol of the spirit of God!)

March 12 at 1 p.m.

Speaker: Gloria Ranney – **Pekin Outreach Initiative** - she will tell us about the program – the history, purpose and the mission! *Please come and support Gloria as she tells us about Pekin Outreach Initiative, one of our purpose missions in the city of Pekin. The bake sale helps with this mission! You are always welcome to come to our programs. Hope to see you then.*



A huge thank you to everyone who helped with the installation of the acoustic treatment in the Grace Family Life Center! Thank you to those who contributed financially and with their time, it was a significant multi-week effort to install! Technically speaking, we reduced the decay time of the room from 5.5 seconds to 2.5 seconds, a huge improvement. Decay time essentially measures how long a sound reverberates within a space. High decay times make it increasingly harder to understand spoken word and make any audio less intelligible. Our 5.5 second decay time was the reason you couldn't understand anyone in the gym unless you were about 3 feet from them. It was the reason everyone would tend to congregate in the small common space (which has a much shorter decay time) rather than the large gym.

You may have already noticed with the upgrade, but we don't have that problem anymore. It is now possible to communicate across the gym effectively, Pastor Eric is more intelligible on stage, the room is much more comfortable to congregate in, and as an added benefit the band sounds clearer. Big picture, the space has become significantly more inviting. We have always wanted it to be a space our congregation and the community felt comfortable in, and the acoustic panels have removed one of its significant limitations.

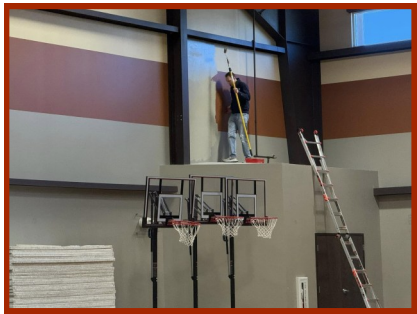
We still have some work to do at the sound board to dial in the "new" room. It will take a few weeks, but we are super excited to have a more intelligible event space. The panels make the little moments of communication that are so crucial to building relationships possible whether that be in a sermon, service, or between friends amongst the thundering of basketballs. Thank you to those that made the upgrade possible and thank you to everyone for putting up with the dust in the process. We are excited for the future!

SOUND PANEL INSTALLATION

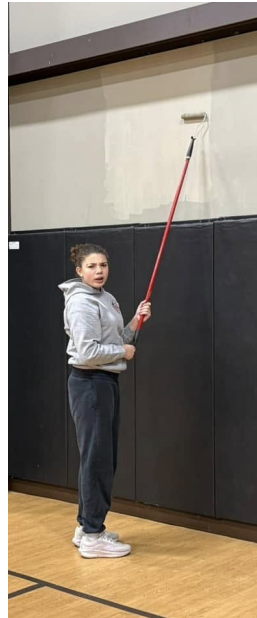
Church News



Panels after they were delivered



Pastor said, "Volunteers working the installation and painting have also saved us between \$25,000 - \$30,000 and we truly couldn't do all that we do without volunteers!"



Note Not all the volunteers and donors are pictured here. Monetary donations from 175th Campaign and individual donations helped to make this possible. So many supported the efforts of this project. We again say thank you to all involved.

THANK YOU!



Here's a bird's eye view picture.

March Birthdays

Sue Gentry	1	Tim Trantham	16
Blythe Roberson	1	Marj Oesch	17
Greg Ranney	2	Chris Schaefer	18
June Stoner	2	Sally Morris	18
Liam Turner	2	Diane Krause	19
Marcia Schwartz	5	Gloria Long	19
Jill Bucher	6	Brittany Dorf	19
Paula Witt	7	David Champlin	20
Janet Johnson	7	Michelle Hunt	20
Cathie Ripper	8	Les Seman	21
Sylvia Telford	9	Dick Wherry	25
Katheryn Towne	9	Brionna Goodin	25
Linda Beverage	11	Mary Myers	26
Lorelei Swanson	11	Barbara Hill	26
Brenda Nelson	11	Tom Hulting	26
Barbara Hardt	12	Chuck Wyman	27
Beverly Harrison	13	Linda Patterson	28
Kyle Harrison	14	Missy Ranney	31
Tammy Seman	14		
Anna Ingles	14		
Betsy Sterling	15		
Neil Mulvey	16		



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 pm-1 pm

Prayer Concerns

Arlen Booth

Doug and Dawn Keimig

June Parr

Mandi S.

Pat McMullin

Rich & Harriet Canopy

Vera Byrd and her family as she

has been put on hospice

Willowdean Stone

*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.*

March 5

Kid's Lesson (Pre-k-5) at Pekin First UMC to learn the meaning of Ash Wednesday before attending the service, Children's Church Room, 6 p.m.

(Regular Bible Buddies and Unitekids will not meet.)

Ash Wednesday Service at Pekin First UMC, 6:30 p.m.

March 8

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

Senior High Lock-In, at Pekin First UMC, 6:30 p.m.

March 12

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

Confirmation starts, meets weekly at First through April 16, 5-6 p.m.

March 14

Pekin Community Prayer Breakfast, GFFLC, 7:30 a.m.

Church Women United at Pekin First UMC 9:30 a.m.

March 15

Saturday Servants, Hospitality Area, 9 a.m.

March 11

Book Club, Pekin Estates, 10 a.m.

March 16

Moms & Friends, Lower Level 2, 10 a.m.

March 21 through March 23

Junior High Chicago Mission Trip

March 23

UNITEyouth (both groups) are cancelled

March 24

Grace Readers, 12:30 Our Inn Place

Last week Bible Buddies will meet at Grace

Next meeting they will be at Pekin First

March 25

Church Leadership Board Meeting, Upper Room, 6 p.m.

Last week Bible Buddies and UNITEkids will meet at Grace.

Next time they will be at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court Street

March 26

Communion, Pekin Estates, 2 p.m.

Last week UNITEkids and Bible Buddies meet at Grace

Next time they will be at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court Street

March 29

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

Chapel Service will be cancelled. Come on Sunday for the

Combined worship service at 10 a.m.

March 30

Last date the UNITEyouth will meet at Grace.

Next meeting they will meet at Pekin First UMC

March 30

Combined Worship Weekend, Sanctuary at 10 a.m.

March 31

Grace Readers, 12:30p.m., Our Inn Place