

# the HERALD

PEORIA FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | FEB, MARCH, APRIL 2023



*because He first loved us*

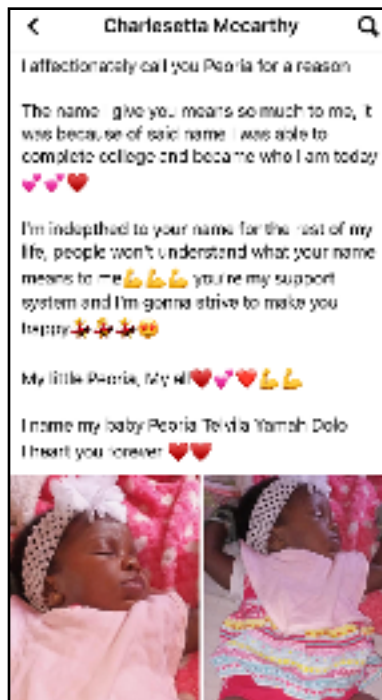


## A Beautiful Story for a New Year

A former Ganta School of Nursing student, Charlesetta McCarthy, has a new daughter to raise - the biological daughter of her sister. Charlesetta has named her Peoria (see her words in the attached picture, which I copied from her FB post)!! She specifically shared with me, "Charlesetta is grateful to the Peoria family, in this light she has named her new daughter Peoria in order to express her gratitude."

Some of you may recall that Charlesetta was our first (and only) 4.0 student to graduate on the Peoria Scholars scholarship. She continues to work at the School of Nursing and at Ganta Hospital. She is a tremendous asset to both institutions.

by Julie Rolffs  
Chair, Missions Team



Facebook Post by Charlesetta McCarthy

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DISCLAIMER: The information represented here is for the purpose of informing the FUMC-Peoria congregation of the change of events for a quarter. They are however subject to change. For more up-to-date information, refer to us online at [www.peoria1.com](http://www.peoria1.com), via social media platforms (@fumcpeoria), or via our weekly email newsletter, eHighlights.

DEADLINES: Contact Julie Bell at [jbelle@fumcpeoria.org](mailto:jbelle@fumcpeoria.org) for information on upcoming deadlines and publication dates. In the subject line of your email submission, type, "HERALD." All submissions are subject to editing and style standards, and their use is solely at the discretion of the editor. Picture submissions are encouraged to accompany your submission. Focus on individuals and smaller numbers of people who help tell the story.





# THEY PAVED PARADISE AND PUT IN A PARKING LOT

The song, *Big Yellow Taxi*, by Joni Mitchell, came out in 1970, and featured the line, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

Did you know that in 1970, First United Methodist Church did not have any parking lots? None. The hundreds and in some cases thousands that passed through our doors each week just found places to park on the street. In the mid-1970's, the Administrative Board gave Pastor Ira Gallaway permission to negotiate a purchase of the first piece of "paradise" so we could put up a parking lot (up to \$25,000). That little paradise was the Talk of the Town Tavern, located at the alley between the church and the library and Main Street. Other properties along Main Street followed and with the help of Don and Sylvia Fites, former CEO of Caterpillar, the Centennial Park side parking lot took shape in the mid 1980's.

At that time, across Perry Street, was a bank at 700 Main, a mortuary, Hunters Lunch, and the Jefferson Bank drive up facility. These businesses allowed us to park on Sundays and that was the only off-street parking we had. Remember, these were the days when First United Methodist Church had hundreds more in attendance each week than today. Since that time, we have had the opportunity to purchase adjacent properties to both provide convenient parking and insure a nice buffer from our neighbors.

Today, Peoria First enjoys several large open parking lots across Perry Avenue as well as being able to use the library staff parking lot on weekends. When we added on in 2013,

we were able to create a new side parking lot at Main and Perry with a covered drop off area and multiple handicap/accessible parking places. Our newest parking lot was created in 2021 when we took down the bank building at 700 Main.

Peoria First can park a couple hundred cars in lots we own or are available to use on Sundays. These lots are well lit and easy to access, and we are blessed to have these resources available today, when parking spaces are so important.

On weekend nights, we often block off our lots if we are not using them. Working with the Peoria Police Department, the library, and neighboring businesses, we close lots off to prevent the lots being used for "pop-up parties" that often result in parking lots being left with abandoned vehicles and trash the next morning.

Peoria First in downtown Peoria is in the heart of the city so that we may serve our Lord and the needs of our members and our neighbors. Managing our parking resources is just one of the many things done behind the scenes to make worshiping at Peoria First as easy as possible.

And yes, we did "pave paradise to put up a parking lot" but pray that the parking lots we created help our members and neighbors find God's paradise at First Church.

Special thanks to Jack Gove for his historical background.

by Dan Philips  
Director of Community Ministries and Missions





# LEARN. PRACTICE.

A survey done in 2017 found that 67% of Christians report reading one Bible chapter a week. That means that 33% of Christians don't read the Bible at all. And if you think about the 67% who read one chapter a week, you may be surprised when you realize that one chapter a week may be read on Sunday morning during the morning sermon or in a Sunday school class. And yet, we probably all agree with N.T. Wright (Bible scholar and theologian) of the importance of scripture. He proclaimed, "The Bible is the book of my life. It's the book I live with, the book I live by, the book I want to die by."

When I was just an early teenager, I determined that I would read through the entire New Testament, no matter how long it took me. I decided to read one chapter every night before I went to bed. I started reading Matthew chapter one. About halfway through that long list of names – the lineage of Jesus – I almost gave up. In spite of the slow start, I persisted. 260 days later I had finished my journey, or at least my first journey through the New Testament.

I can tell you that what I understood about the flow of early church history, the plan of salvation, the call to be sanctified, all became clear to me. Just reading one chapter a day made a huge impact on what I believed. It was foundational and formational to my faith.

This year we're inviting you to read one chapter in the New Testament a day, Monday through Friday. If you've not started, you can easily catch up at this point. Just read two chapters a day, Monday through Friday, and in 5 to 8 weeks you'll be caught up and can go back to just one chapter a day.

# **EACH DIRECTION IS A PART OF - BUT NEVER THE WHOLE OF - BEING A CHRISTIAN.**

We're also asking you to put into practice what you're reading. We talk a lot around Peoria First about Higher, Wider, Closer, and Deeper. Higher in worship, Wider in outreach, Closer in fellowship, and Deeper in the faith through Bible study and spiritual practices. Each direction is a part of – but never the whole of – being a Christian. Merely having knowledge about our faith, or even memorizing volumes of scripture passages, is not the goal. The goal is to gain an understanding of who God is and who God is making us to be, and then put into practice what we've been learning.

Jesus called the 12 apostles and several disciples who followed Jesus to learn what he was teaching. Then, Jesus gave them authority and sent them out into the world to put into practice what Jesus had been telling them. The process of being a disciple still works the same today. We come to church to worship, learn, encourage one another, and to meet with God. Then we're sent out into the world to make a difference. Start with just a chapter a day... but don't stop there. Put into practice what you're learning. If you're uncertain where to practice your faith, give the church a call and we'll help you plug into mission and ministry.

## **HIGHER, WIDER, CLOSER, DEEPER**

**PASTOR TIM OZMENT**

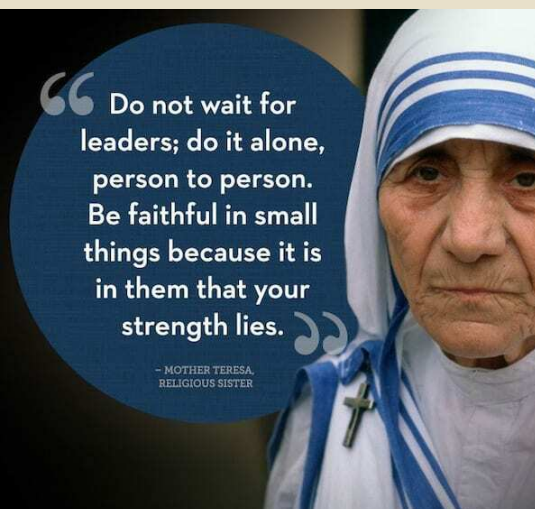
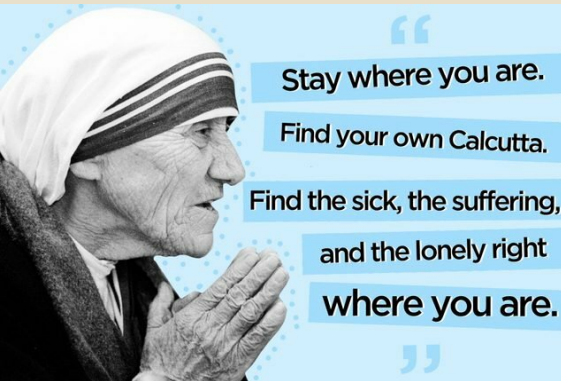
*Directing Pastor of Peoria First  
United Methodist Church*



# One at a Time

by Julie Bell

Director of Communications



How did Jesus make a difference? One at a time. Wherever God has placed you, it is a space in which he wants to use you.

Making a difference is not measured by a social media post, a name on a building or how many contacts you may have. Want to make a difference? Focus on the way Jesus did it: one person at a time. Ask yourself...would Jesus be pleased if He read your FB or Instagram posts? Is Jesus pleased with my private conversations with/about those I disagree? Agree to disagree where necessary. Then let's agree on the things that really matter. Lost people need Christ. Our communities need us to serve and love them.

How am I growing as a disciple? Am I growing in my knowledge? Am I involved in my church? These are important. But it is how you love other people that tells the most about your maturity as a follower of Jesus. He didn't say, people will know you are my follower by your denomination, your political preference, or your social media posts. They will know you are my disciple by loving like Him...loving people one at a time. Jesus showed the disciples that the way they loved people would be how they changed the world. Are you taking time to have a conversation with someone on Sunday morning? Are you reading to a student at Lincoln? Are you serving our guests at Loaves and Fish? Are you praying for the needs of others? Are you inviting your neighbor to worship? Ministry flows from proximity...one at a time. "The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood." John 1:14 (The Message)

We were made to be in close proximity to people, not to do life separate from one another. A New York Times reporter wrote an article about a guy named Hal. Hal had 700 friends on social media. He thought it would be cool to get all his friends together and extended an invitation to a party, gave the date, time, and location. He asked for responses: 15 said they could come and 60 said may attend. On the evening of the party, he was full of optimism as he left for the party. He waited and waited and waited. Eventually 1 person showed up, a woman Hal did not know. She was a friend of a friend; they talked for a bit, and she left. Hal stayed until midnight and no one else showed up. He concluded by saying, "700 friends and I am alone." That captures something real in our world today. Hal had all these cyber "friends", but virtually no one willing to show up. There is something powerful, when a follower of Jesus, intentionally puts oneself in close proximity with someone who may not have anyone, when you intentionally show up for someone even when it's inconvenient.

Don't know what to say? What to do?...don't let that stop you. Because in those moments, where someone is in need, they won't remember what you said...they will remember that you were there...that you showed up. As Mother Teresa said, "Do it Anyway."

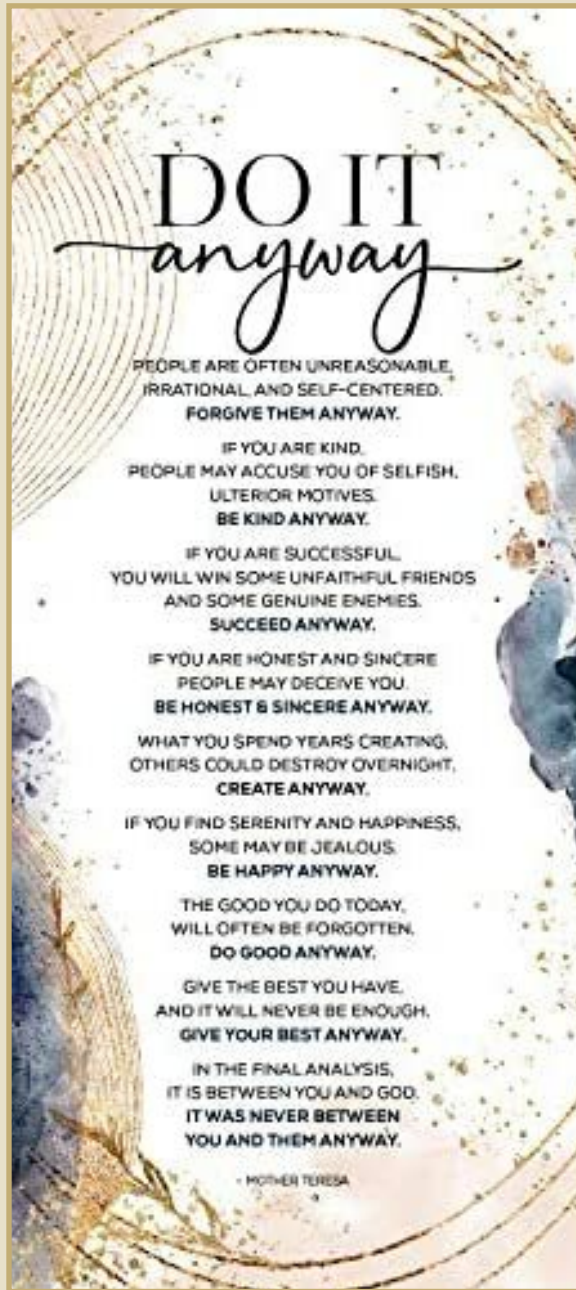
One at a time is the Jesus way of changing the world...lets follow Him.



# It IS the Small Things

by Kirsten Tharp

Director of Congregational Care



My friend was recently out running errands and about to enter a store, when she noticed an older woman outside the door waving and gesturing toward a bus on the opposite side of the parking lot. Sensing this woman's distress, she asked the woman if she was ok and if she needed help. The flustered woman quickly replied she had finished her shopping and was ready to get on the bus but could not seem to get the bus driver's attention. My friend offered to walk out to the bus and let the driver know and the woman immediately accepted her help. A quick walk to the bus by my friend and the situation was resolved, taking about two minutes of her day. My friend was reflecting on the situation when she said, "You know, sometimes it really is the smallest acts of kindness that mean the most." This wasn't said in a boastful manner, simply a realization that had it been a different day or a different time she may have walked right past the woman. Instead on this particular day, she stopped and both she and the woman experienced kindness and care for one another.

Caring and kindness goes back to the very basics. Stories of feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, healing the sick and caring for the poor and elderly are found all throughout the Bible. Kindness doesn't need to be a grand act or cost any money. The simple act of caring for another exists because God first loved us. As Christians it is our

call to share kindness and care for others even if they are strangers or those with whom we disagree.

Challenge yourself to find ways to increase acts of kindness in your day to day life. The next time you are out and about, take the two minutes to ask the stranger if they need help. The next time you are at church share a smile, stop and pray with someone, or get involved with a caring ministry like Caring Hearts. Take the time to check in with those you haven't seen in awhile, and especially with those you know are struggling. You just never know when the smallest act of kindness, may just mean the most.

## *Lutheran Hillside Village*



The Caring Hearts team enjoys the opportunity to make calls and visits to those hospitalized and unable to regularly take part in the life of the church. The pandemic kept people apart for too long so the Caring Hearts team decided to take action. Caring Hearts on the MOVE has been arranging visits to local senior living facilities where Peoria First members reside. The visit includes fellowship, a meal served by the Caring Hearts team, a hymn sing and a communion service led by Pastor Tim. The opportunity to gather and share this time together has been a huge blessing for all involved. The Caring Hearts team looks forward to the next stop!

## **Caring Hearts On The MOVE**

by Kirsten Tharp  
Director of Congregational Care



## *Proctor Place*



# Spiritual Markers

by Cathy Clark

Director of Adult Discipleship

*“And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the Lord had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged.” Joshua 4:8*

Pastor Tim has challenged us to read the New Testament in one year. According to the reading plan, each day has an assigned chapter. Many times, when I sit down to read the assigned scripture, something interrupts me. Examples of some of the interruptions include, but are not limited to: my phone ringing, the dogs barking, my mind wandering. I must be intentional to keep my mind focused on the readings not allowing distractions to overpower God speaking to me through His word. I do not want to miss any instruction or guidance He may have for me. When I feel His nudge or hear His voice, I commit it to my spiritual memory, and I write it down in my journal. Date, time, and words spoken by the Creator. They are Spiritual Markers. I revisit these markers when I experience the silence of God’s voice.

Spiritual memory is crucial in the life of a disciple. Do you vividly recall times when God spoke to you? Are there too many distractions and interruptions in your life to allow God to break through? It would be tragic if, in your haste to advance in your Christian faith, you neglected to leave spiritual markers at the key crossroads of your life. Without the help of these markers, you will lose your spiritual bearings.

The Israelites experienced a tumultuous pilgrimage. Their doubt that God was powerful enough to give them victory cost them forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Then God miraculously parted the waters of the Jordan River so they could pass over and continue their conquest. God knew that at times, the Israelites would face intimidating enemies and would need a reminder that He was powerful enough to protect them. God instructed them to build a monument on the banks of the Jordan River. This marker would give them confidence to meet the new challenges they faced.

A spiritual marker identifies a time of decision when you clearly know that God guided you. Spending time with God during these daily readings will create opportunities to build a spiritual marker. This will help you understand God’s activity in your life and give you a sense of direction as you face future decisions.

There are many distractions surrounding us every day. We must be intentionally focused on God’s word to guide us and direct us. Jeremiah 29:13 states, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” As we continue to seek Him through our daily Bible reading, my prayer is for us to create spiritual markers to remind us that God is truly with us.



# What is Your IP Address?

by Christina Koeppel

Director of Youth and AV

According to techterms.com, “an IP address is a unique address that identifies a device on the internet or a local network. It allows a system to be recognized by other systems connected via the internet protocol.” Basically, it allows different devices to communicate with each other as long as they are on the internet or the same local network.

I know that some of you are still lost. I’ll have to admit, the tech explanation can still go over my head. Think of it this way, it is a common language for computers and/or devices to find each other. Like a phone number, there are different parts that help you call your doctor or your best friend. You could have several digits that are the same, but if they aren’t in the correct order you may be calling some guy in Australia, instead of Doc McStuffins.

I think sometimes in Christian community, even at Peoria First, we find ourselves unable to communicate correctly because our IP addresses are incorrect. This could happen for several reasons - maybe we are speaking ‘christianese’ (church jargon), or maybe we approach a conversation thinking everyone sees through our lens or the same experiences with church/God/Christians/faith that we do, or maybe we are using some new technical words that we learned in our last Bible study or small group discussion, or maybe we use a different language or slang, or maybe we are listening to the story we created instead of listening to the source, etc. I’m sure you can come up with more ways that communication isn’t always clear in Christian community.

One thing that saddens me most is when “the main thing isn’t the main thing”. When we get bogged down in the business of church, that we forget the people are the church. When we worry about the way things have always been done and forget that God is the creator who transforms lives. We exist to make healthy disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of Peoria and the world. Healthy disciples who go higher in worship, wider in service, closer in fellowship, and deeper in study.

I encourage you to do a diagnostic test on your “IP address”. How’s your connection with Jesus? Are you calling the right number, or do you need to try dialing again? How can we break through the barriers and the misdials in our community to communicate with each other clearly? As we all readjust our personal IP address to be focused on connecting with Christ and bring others to know Him, I encourage you to dwell on this word from Paul to the Philippians: “Finally, brothers and sisters, fill your minds with beauty and truth. Meditate on whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is good, whatever is virtuous and praiseworthy.” Philippians 4:8, The Voice







**PASTOR ADRIAN GARCIA**

*Pastor of Latino & Outreach Ministries at  
Peoria First United Methodist Church*

# Re-Thinking Peoria First

The pandemic and its consequences have cornered us to rethink the ways we are doing church, since we are Christ's body, members of one another, and called to announce the virtues of Him who called us out of darkness into His admirable light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Let's rethink the culture that taught us, people will come "if we build them a place of worship." People come to Christ prompted by the Holy Spirit, when we share the Good News of salvation by grace and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Usually, an invitation to attend a service or an event will come from a family member or friend. Only 3% of people walk in, uninvited, compared to 70% who were personally invited. When was the last time you introduced someone to Christ or invited them to church?

Let's rethink who we want to reach and disciple? How caring are we of those around us? Jesus died so that all may be saved and sanctified through Him. Is there something I personally need to change to accept others in church? (John 3:16)

Let's rethink our worship so that it reflects our passion for God and connects with those we invite. Peoria First currently offers four different worship services each Sunday. Each has its focus in liturgy, music, and schedule preference to allow for more people to participate in this means of grace. However, after the pandemic, a decrease in our volunteer base is causing us to rethink the why? how? and when? Is there a way to ease the load and prevent the burn out of those who are already serving during worship? How do we accommodate new volunteers longing to participate in serving? Are we truly willing to change? (John 4:23-24)

Let's rethink about optimizing our resources, office hours, day and time of programs, childcare during church programs, community programs, etc. One of our priorities has been good stewardship of resources. Yet, after the pandemic this has taken a new dimension, determining the program adjustments needed according our current number of our volunteers, both in house and in outreach. Is there a better way?

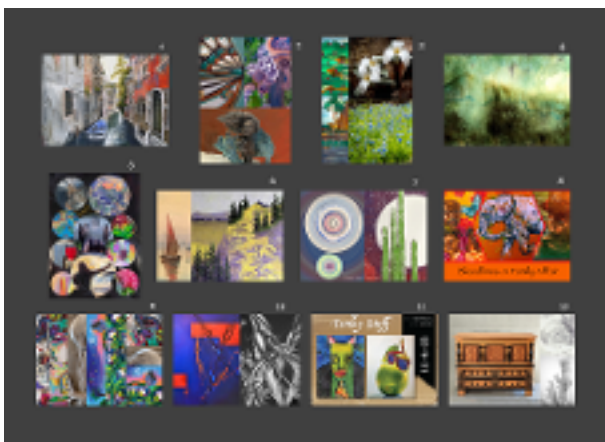
Rethinking our mission's ministry during the pandemic was driven by the great world crisis. Our missions team, guided by the Holy Spirit, saw new opportunities and has taken new challenges during and after the pandemic. What an opportunity!! Being the light in this century's great crisis.

Rethinking how to be His faithful, Word driven church, in these present times is not easy, but I believe with all my heart that the Holy Spirit is in us preparing us for this very age. Thru the centuries he has guided his Church, step by step and shall continue to lead us in making disciples of Jesus Christ until He returns.



## Foster Gallery

The Foster Gallery presented twelve exhibitions in 2022, each of which was celebrated with a reception on the first Friday of each month. We recognized the dedication of these artists in honing their God-given talents. The exhibitions featured diverse styles and mediums, showcasing the works of forty-six artists and twenty musicians. Each of these sixty-six artists brought in their own following to the first Friday receptions to view their artwork or hear their performances. This presented us with a valuable opportunity to expand our reach in the community and expose a larger audience to the gallery and Peoria First. It was also a great way to showcase the talents



of these artists and bring together different groups of people who may not have otherwise had the chance to experience the arts. The first and last exhibitions of 2022 were by artists from our congregation, which was a particular highlight for us.

We were delighted to host gallery visits, which included guests from Lutheran Hillside Village, Proctor Place Senior Living, Peoria Children's Home, and a group of Peoria artists. We look forward to continuing this outreach in 2023.

We invite you to join us at the first Friday exhibition receptions as we nurture mutual understanding and appreciation of the connection between art and faith, and develop and strengthen relationships between artists, the community, and the church.

# Building Relationships between Artists, Community, and Church

## Foster Art Enrichment

As part of the ongoing commitment to art enrichment for the congregation, last year, we brought in skilled artists to lead workshops for members who signed up. These workshops were a great success and allowed members to learn new techniques, explore their creative side, and connect with other members who share an interest in the arts.

We are excited to announce that we will continue to offer these art enrichment workshops throughout the year. The workshops will cover a wide range of mediums and techniques and will be taught by a diverse group of artists. It's an excellent opportunity for members to expand their artistic skills or learn new ways to express themselves creatively. We encourage everyone to sign up and take advantage of these wonderful opportunities this year. Keep an eye out for future workshops by checking eHighlights and church video boards.



Please continue to lift the  
Fine Arts Ministry in prayer.  
Thank you!

*The Fine Arts Ministry is made possible by the generous support of the First United Methodist Church Foundation through the Foster Endowment.*





### Lincoln Children's Choir (2nd– 4th-graders)

The Lincoln Children's Choir has chosen *Positive Character Traits* as the theme for their Spring semester. Along with learning six multi-lingual and culturally diverse songs, the choir aims to reinforce positive values and behaviors through music. The choir has an exciting performance schedule lined up for this semester, including Black History Month, Spring Celebration, and Lincoln School performances. These opportunities will showcase the hard work and dedication of the choir members and provide the community with an enjoyable and uplifting experience. Additionally, it should be mentioned that in 2022 the choir made several performances, where they performed thirteen songs in total on six separate occasions. This gave the students a sense of accomplishment and a sense of belonging.



### Lincoln After School Arts

The 3rd and 4th-grade students at Lincoln School who participate in the After School Arts program have the opportunity to work with local artists regularly. Currently, they are working with Ms. Brenda Gentry, a talented artist from the community, to create a mural that depicts the four seasons. Each month, a different local artist is invited to share their skills and knowledge with the students, providing them with diverse perspectives and experiences. This ongoing collaboration with local artists is an exciting and enriching aspect of Lincoln's After School Arts program.

### 6 Ways 2 Praise (6W2P) Summer Camp

6W2P had a remarkable comeback post-pandemic. The Fine Arts Ministry successfully organized a Literary, Visual, Performing, and Culinary Arts camp for students in grades 3-6 and a Puppets Camp for students in grades 7-12, which were a massive hit among the participants. This year's camp promises to be equally exhilarating and will feature a wide range of activities that will be both fun and educational for the students. The camp's focus on the arts provides a unique platform for young minds to discover and refine their God-given creative abilities in a dynamic and nurturing environment.



### To Our Volunteers

We extend our warmest gratitude to all our volunteers for their devotion to the Fine Arts Ministry. Your volunteerism has made a considerable difference in the lives of those we serve, and we are deeply grateful. We thank you for the countless hours you have spent helping us to achieve our goals. The time and effort you have invested has not gone unnoticed, and we greatly appreciate it.

Your selflessness, enthusiasm, and generosity have inspired us all. Thank you for all that you do, and we look forward to positively impacting our community together. God Bless!

Interested in volunteering? Please contact Eugene Maison, Director for Fine Arts at 309- 673-3641.

Loaves and Fish is back inside, and We Need You!

As we transition to serving our Loaves and Fish guests a hot meal and pantry service inside, we are faced with the challenge of securing 30 to 40 volunteers each week to serve our guests safely and effectively.

We know the needs of this world are great, but these challenges are also opportunities to show our neighbors the love of Jesus Christ through our service to them.

In the past 28 years, volunteers just like you, have made a difference in the lives of over 275,000 people. These people are our neighbors and our brothers and sisters and serving at Loaves and Fish gives you the opportunity to make a difference in our world.

It is easy to serve at Loaves and Fish. No skill is necessary, just a desire to help make a difference in someone's life.

You can sign up online at [fumcpeoria.org/loaves-and-fish](http://fumcpeoria.org/loaves-and-fish), at the Information Desk on Sunday morning, or call the church office at (309)673-3641.



## Reaching Youth in the Community

by Mike Illuzzi  
Mission Team Member

Youth For Christ (YFC) provides campus life ministries in middle and high schools throughout central Illinois. Peoria City Life (PCL) is the YFC ministry to urban youth in Peoria. PCL is one of the "Judea" ministries supported by the Peoria First Missions Team.

Jay Pearson is the dynamic, spirit-filled director of Peoria City Life. He reports that the PCL young people are being taught, trained, and equipped with God's Word to be lifelong followers of Christ. The PCL Leadership team is the healthiest it has ever been. Seven leaders have come through the PCL ministry in the last 15 years.

Post-Covid, PCL flipped from high school driven to middle school heavy with a focus on female empowerment. There are weekly female small groups and the young ladies are developing leadership skills. They are Christian role models in their schools and homes.

The young men enjoy Monday large groups and Buckets & Bibles on Thursdays. Basketball is the draw to B&B, but the focus is getting them into the Word of God. The halftime devotion is where the Word meets their world. The young men want more time with PCL mentors.

Forty young people are regular participants in PCL weekly activities. PCL staff connects with 200 students through a partnership with Peoria School District 150.

During 2022, sixteen young people made commitments to Christ.

PCL future plans include re-opening ministry at Prince of Peace Church and training PCL teams to impact the Youth Farm and Juvenile Detention Centers in Peoria, McLean, and Knox Counties.

Jay said, "We thank the First Church family for the love and support you have for the city of Peoria and count it an honor to have been connected for so many years. We humbly submit to the will of the Almighty God and His plan for our community. Peace and Blessings to you all!"





# Let's Pie Ms Lilly!

by Lilly Garcia

Director of Children Ministries

During Sunday School kids have been gathering points in the form of ping pong balls and filling the 'Reward Tower' in the Gathering Space. Kids earn a point for attending Sunday School, another for bringing a guest, one more for memorizing the Bible verse, and yet another point for bringing their Bible!

So far, they've had pajama day, fun day, ice cream day, and we are currently working on scheduling a movie night. Yet at the top of the reward tower there is the "Pie the Leader" flag, (which means I will have to ask for a sugar free pie!!!)

On Wednesday evenings we are learning about the Spiritual Disciplines with these tools:

Family Prayer Calendar -Kids can practice praying deeply, earnestly, and consistently. On January 6, we sent them home with a timer to spend at least two minutes praying for others. The take home packs include a picture of our missionaries and ministries. Your children are learning that God has all the answers to people's cries, needs, healing, and blessings. He is eager yet patiently waiting for kids to listen, believe, and agree with him in prayer to release what is needed to fulfil his perfect will.

"Eat This Book Challenge"- Elementary children are falling in love with the Word by reading thru the New Testament and fulfilling a weekly quest. You may request a copy at the children's desk or download a copy from [peoria1.com](http://peoria1.com). This tool helps children to:

- Quiet themselves and get ready to meet with God on the pages of the Bible
- Develop a regular habit of interacting with the Bible
- Read from each of the 27 New Testament books
- Memorize large portions of Scripture
- Learn about some key people God used in translating the Bible into English
- Keep a prayer journal
- Support Bible translation with their own money
- Get points towards cool prizes

What's Next?

Kix Mission Opportunities

"Rise Up" Light Kids Conference at Peoria First on Saturday, March 4, 2023

During 2023, our Directing Pastor Tim Ozment is taking us on a journey through the New Testament and has given us a reading plan for the year. Reading God's inspired Word and hearing sermon teachings are a great way to learn God's message to us. But they are only a launching point for the believer who wants to go deeper. Do you long for more explanation of the Scripture you're reading? Do you struggle to understand certain verses?

Yes, we can Google verses. But there is something about having collections of books all in one place that we can pull off the shelves without navigating a maze of websites, some of which may be suspect in providing trustworthy material.

Right now, we are going through the Book of Matthew. The church library (or as I like to call it, the "disciple-making resource room") has many options for digging deeper into the meaning of this sacred book. How do you find these options? Go to the online catalog, which has replaced the old card catalog, using one of your electronic devices. You can find it on our website or at [www.librarycat.org/lib/FUMCLibrary](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/FUMCLibrary). Key in "commentaries", "Book of Matthew", or other topic and see what you get.

You are welcome to check out these materials. You are also welcome to spend part of your Sunday morning reading at the library table. The library is open from 8AM -Noon on Sunday mornings.

by Lori Herold, Peoria First Librarian



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## Discerning our Future

As we discern the future of Peoria First UMC, it is important that we all do our part.

**Be Informed.** Attend meetings. You are encouraged to attend at least one Listening Circle and one Discernment Meeting.

### *Listening Circle*

A Listening Circle is a time for questions to be asked and answered. Pastor Tim, Directing Pastor; Charles Bush, Church Council Chair; and Melinda Huisenga, Church Lay Leader will answer questions to the best of their ability.

- February 26 / 9:45 AND 11:15 AM / Wesley Hall
- March 26 / Zoom Meeting / 4PM. Contact the church office if you need this option.

### *Discernment Meetings*

Discernment Meetings will be a time to hear presentations made by members of the Discernment Team. Presentations will be made on: Why should Peoria First stay UM? Why should Peoria First leave the UM? If the vote is to disaffiliate from the UMC, options available to Peoria First will be presented.

- Sunday, April 23 / 4PM / Worship Center
- Monday, April 24 / 10AM / Worship Center
- Monday, May 1 / 7PM / Worship Center
- Sunday, May 7 / 4PM / Worship Center

**Vote.** If needed, a Church Conference will be scheduled in August.