

the **HERALD**

PEORIA FIRST UMC | MAY, JUNE, JULY 2026

On the Road

DIFFERENT PATHS MAY BRING US HERE, BUT
TOGETHER WE WALK THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO CHRIST.





Hospitalized?

When you or a loved one are hospitalized, please remember to notify the church office or inform the hospital of your church affiliation. Daily calls are made to local hospitals to check on our members but we are finding more and more the information we receive is incomplete or not accurate. Peoria First is a congregation committed to caring for each person and we do not want to miss the opportunity to offer prayer, support or a visit. A call or message to the church office helps us stay connected and care well for you in all times of need.

Church Office: 309.673.3641
receptionist@fumcpeoria.org

Have You Ever Wondered?

by Rodney Nelson
Church Historian

Have you ever wondered about the early years of our church ~ The history of the original church building (Sanctuary) and the Shaw Building? It all begins with the purchase of property at the corner of Perry & Hamilton for the amazing price of \$20,400 on March 14, 1914. Our church is a merger of two congregations: Madison Avenue Episcopal Church and First Church resulting in a new name, First United Methodist Episcopal Church. The two churches merged on Sept. 27, 1914. The trustees employed the firm of Hewit & Emerson as architects for the new church. Upon completion the corner stone was laid on June 20, 1915, and the church was dedicated on June 18, 1916. In early 1917 ground adjoining the original lot was purchased for \$6,000 to provide space for future expansion. The cost of the present property, building, and equipment brought the total of the new building to \$133,762.18. The mortgage was paid off, and the mortgage was burned in 1924. At this point in our

history, the membership was 2,277 members. The Shaw building was added next to house administration, children's programs, a chapel, church parlor, and a great hall (Wesley Hall) which would seat 1,000 people. The cost for the Shaw Building would cost \$1,250,000. The formal opening was in May of 1957. The pastor at that time was Dr. Robert Harvey Bodine.

And now you know some little known facts and figures about Peoria First UMC.



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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, via social media platforms (@fumcpeoria), or via our weekly email newsletter, eHighlights.

DEADLINES: Contact Julie Bell at jbell@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.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with a heavy heart that I announce my stepping down as your Traditional Music and Worship Director. I have accepted a position as Worship Music Director at Bethel Lutheran Church in Morton, IL. I have enjoyed my time here leading your music ministry and will miss you all so dearly. The relationships I have formed with you all will prove to last and I look forward to continued relationship building.

A few highlights for me during my time here were leading the Lessons and Carols each Advent season, the introduction of the Summer Jazz Vespers, the continued support of incorporating jazz in our worship services and being able to worship with you all on a regular basis. I thank you for welcoming this southern boy and his family into your midwestern home. The Holy Spirit is at work, and I feel that FUMC is about to experience something radically

A Heartfelt Thanks

good and I look forward to seeing and hearing about all the good things that will happen.

To my beloved choir and fellow partners in music ministry, take heart! The work is not done! We will still sing songs of praise and adoration with full conviction and give all the glory to our most beloved Heavenly Father. My last Sunday at FUMC will be June 28, 2026. I will start my new position on July 1, 2026. Until then, I look forward to many more instances of worshipping together and enriching our relationship. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or would like to get together over coffee or lunch. I am always happy to fellowship with one another.

With Love and Thanksgiving and All Glory to God,

Andrew Sánchez

AND THE WINNER IS . . .

by John Orfe

Church organists typically don't dream of winning a Grammy.

On Sunday, February 1, music ensemble *Alarm Will Sound* was honored with the Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for its performance of "Land of Winter" by composer Donnacha Dennehy on the Nonesuch label. The award was one of 95 categories presented at the 68th Grammy Awards held by the Recording Academy in Los Angeles, CA.

John Orfe is a founding member and the core pianist of *Alarm Will Sound*, which is celebrating its 25th year in 2026. The 16-member chamber orchestra was founded by students at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York.

"The human artmaking impulse, like Creation itself, reflects the imprint of the Creator," Orfe says. "God is the first Artist, who in the beginning made the universe from nothing when he declared, 'Let there be Light.'"



Celebrating 15 Years of Renuevo

Giving Thanks for the Past, Looking Forward in Hope

by Pastor Tim Ozment
Directing Pastor

This year, we celebrate with gratitude and joy 15 years of Renuevo as a cherished and essential part of our church family. ¡Felicidades Renuevo!

Nine years ago, as Jennie and I prepared to come to this congregation, following the discernment of the Bishop and Cabinet, we spent time learning about the church we would soon call home. What we found was a congregation deeply committed to living out the call of discipleship by serving the community with compassion and reaching beyond its walls through meaningful ministry and mission partnerships around the world.

What especially moved us was seeing a church that had taken seriously the words of Scripture:

The stranger residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. — Leviticus 19:34

Those words, echoed throughout Scripture in Zechariah and Deuteronomy, are not simply verses we admire, they have become values we seek to embody.

From the very beginning, this congregation chose to approach Renuevo not as something separate or secondary. We did not merely offer unused building space or create ministry at arm's length. Instead, we embraced the belief that the Gospel and the Kingdom of God are best lived out together in harmony, equality, and mutual love.

We all stand before Jesus on level ground. Each of us comes before God in need of grace. Each of us is called to love and support one another as neighbors, as brothers and sisters in Christ, and as one church.



For me, one of the most powerful images of the church comes from Revelation 7:9:

"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

I do not believe this is only a picture of heaven that will someday be a reality. I believe it is also a vision of what the church is called to become right here and right now. While we may not yet represent every nation, tribe, people, and language, we are committed to living more fully into that beautiful vision with each passing year.

As we celebrate these 15 years, I give thanks not only for what God has done, but for what God is still doing among us. We have grown together, learned from one another, and been shaped by each other's stories. I know that I am a better pastor, a better man, and a better Christian because of this shared journey. My worldview, my theology, and my compassion have all been stretched and deepened through the relationships we share.

We do not always get everything right. Sometimes my Spanish is still way off... and I remain deeply grateful for your patience, grace, and willingness to teach me. Yet even in those moments, we see the beauty of what it means to truly be the body of Christ: learning from one another, blessing one another, and growing together in love.

As we honor this milestone, may we also look ahead with hope. The first 15 years are worth celebrating, but I believe God is not nearly finished with Renuevo. The Holy Spirit is still moving. The vision is still unfolding, and there is yet work to be done as we seek to reflect the beauty of God's kingdom.

May the next 15 years be marked by even deeper unity, stronger compassion, and a clearer witness to the love of Christ in our community and beyond.

Happy 15th Anniversary, Renuevo. ¡Felicidades, Renuevo! The best is still to come.



I BELIEVE IT IS ALSO A VISION OF WHAT THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO BECOME RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW.



PASTOR TIM OZMENT
Directing Pastor,
Peoria First United Methodist Church



by Andrew Rininger
Director of Community Ministries

Community Ministries is alive and well here at Peoria First. I would like to introduce myself. I'm Andrew Rininger, your new Director of Missions and Community Ministries. If I haven't met you yet, please feel free to introduce yourself.

Loaves & Fish

Loaves & Fish has been keeping steady and thriving. Each week we receive between 2000 and 6000 pounds of food, which allows us to be very generous with our brothers and sisters who come in on Saturdays. Our guests can come in and choose freely what will best suit their families. I would like to give a huge shoutout to all our volunteers. Without them, we wouldn't be able to do what we do, thank you!

Our medical team is as busy as ever. Each week they come out to support our ministry and to see the difference they are making in the lives of those who go through the line is amazing. We are grateful to have the medical providers and students who give us their time and knowledge. Our hygiene team is also at work providing the best supplies they can to our guests. They always provide top-notch products and have them very organized. Both teams make Saturdays go smoothly and very efficiently. Their passion for the ministry is what keeps us moving forward.

If you haven't heard, we are getting retiring the Loaves & Fish aprons. As the years have flown by the aprons have gotten a little worn out. We, as a team, decided that since we have moved away from serving hot food and are more like a grocery store that we would transition into vests. We are keeping with the same color scheme, and they will be better suited for the ministry work we are doing at this time.

Saturday morning, we invite our guests to participate in our Alive service from 10:15 -11:00AM. Attendance is growing and it's a great time to meet people where they're at. They can then meet up with our prayer team who will pray with them and offer them Bibles and devotionals. We always feel happy to rejoice with them in answered prayers.

Volunteering

There are so many ways to volunteer or help at Loaves & Fish. We need help Saturday mornings starting at 10AM. Serving opportunities include the kids' area, passing out food, greeting guests, pushing carts, and prayer. Please consider volunteering.

Benevolence

Our Benevolence team is always so faithful in helping provide the community with documents such as state IDs, driver licenses, birth certificates, and school transcripts. Our receptionists and counselors do this every 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings. We appreciate their willingness to serve the community in this way. We are also adding bus passes to this ministry to try to help even further with transportation. Prayers are appreciated as we move forward with that process.

Morton Square Soccer

It's time for another year of fun in the sun at Morton Square Park. Our Soccer Ministry partners with the Peoria Park District to offer a family-friendly event every Tuesday evening from June 2nd through June 30th for children ages 5-12. This is such a great opportunity to meet other families and to build new relationships in our community. This program is completely free. Each week the teams will pray together, learn a Bible verse, have a snack, and play soccer. We as a community always look forward to this program and cap the season off with a celebration and awards.

Registration

Registration to participate in our soccer program will be on May 19th and May 26th in the Worship Center from 5-7PM. Game Day

Game days will be on Tuesday evenings from 5:45-8:00PM starting on June 2nd.

Volunteering

We need your help! It takes a lot of volunteers from our church family to make Morton Square Soccer happen. You don't have to have any soccer experience to volunteer.

- ▶ Registration Volunteers to help with registering children, recruiting coaches, making the team assignments, and assisting with the shin guard distribution.
- ▶ Game Day Volunteers to help distribute snacks, listen to kids recite the week's bible verse, setup/tear down, and 2 coaches for each team.

There are so many ways to volunteer or help with community ministries. If you would like to volunteer you can always reach out to me at my email, arininger@fumcpeoria.org. Please consider volunteering and help me make our community a better place.



Six Ways to Praise (6W2P) 2026 Arts Camp

God's Gift

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” – 2 Corinthians 9

June 22 - 25, 2026

by Eugene Maison
Director, Fine Arts

This summer, we are excited to once again host the Six Ways to Praise (6W2P) Arts Camp, a dynamic, faith-based program designed to inspire creativity, build community, and deepen spiritual growth in our children and youth.

The 6W2P Arts Camp is a four full-day experience where students are encouraged to explore their God-given talents in a supportive and engaging environment. Through a blend of artistic expression and faith formation, participants grow in creativity, teamwork, leadership, and their connection to God and one another.

What to Expect

This year's theme, “God's Gift,” will guide all activities and reflections as students explore gratitude, generosity, and the understanding that creativity itself is a gift from God meant to be shared.

Students in grades 3–6 will explore:

- Black light performance
- Culinary arts
- Studio arts
- Photography
- Music
- Mission-based art projects

Students in grades 7–12 will participate in Podcraft & A/V Arts Camp, with hands-on experience in:

- Podcasting
- Audio production
- Video creation

Each day includes devotionals, scripture engagement, and opportunities to connect faith with creative expression.



A Growing Ministry

Since its launch in 2011, the 6W2P Arts Camp has become a vibrant ministry, bringing together youth from our church and the wider community. It provides a meaningful space for discipleship, artistic growth, and relationship building.

Lasting Impact

The impact of this camp continues well beyond the summer:

- Youth Engagement: Many participants stay involved in church life, especially in A/V ministry, and often return as junior leaders and mentors.
- Community Connection: Campers come from diverse churches and backgrounds, building lasting friendships and inviting others to join each year.
- Faith Formation: Through devotionals and creative projects, students deepen their faith and connection to ministry.
- Skill Building: Participants gain hands-on experience in the arts while developing confidence, collaboration, and leadership skills.

Support & Accessibility

The 6W2P Arts Camp is made possible through the generous support of the Peoria First United Methodist Church Foundation. This funding ensures that the program



remains accessible, providing essential supplies, staffing, and outreach to maintain a high-quality experience for all participants.



remains accessible, providing essential supplies, staffing, and outreach to maintain a high-quality experience for all participants.

Register & Get Involved

We invite all families with students in Grades 3–12 to be part of this meaningful and exciting week.

Whether your child loves the arts, wants to try something new, or is looking to grow in faith and community, this camp is for them.

Six Ways to Praise (6W2P) Register Here:



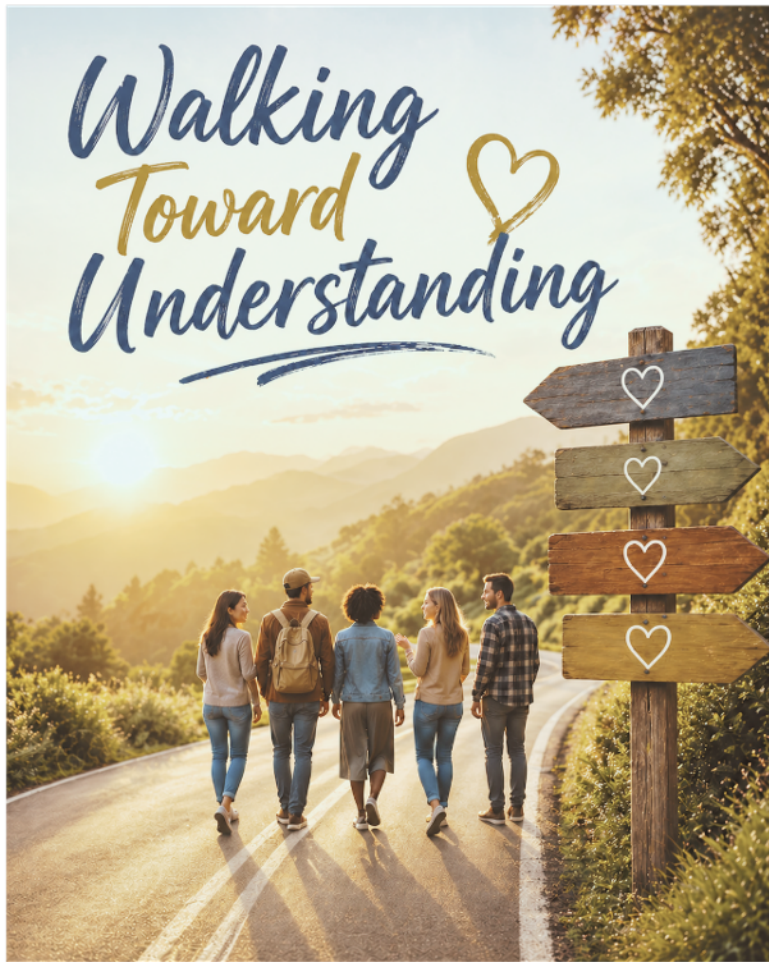
Podcraft & A/V Arts Camp Register Here:



To volunteer, please contact Eugene, Ms. Sue or Register Here:



Thank you to FUMC foundation, camp instructors, and volunteers.



The story of the road to Emmaus in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 24:13–35) offers a powerful model for meaningful and transformative communication. In this passage, two followers of Jesus Christ are walking in confusion and grief after the crucifixion. As they talk, Jesus joins them—though they do not recognize Him—and what unfolds is a masterclass in how to communicate with people in moments of uncertainty.

One of the first lessons we see is the importance of listening. Jesus does not immediately correct the disciples or reveal His identity. Instead, He asks a simple question: “What are you discussing?” This invites them to share their perspective fully. Even though Jesus already knows the truth, He allows them to express their disappointment and confusion. This demonstrates that effective communication begins with genuine listening. People are more open to understanding when they feel heard.

Closely connected to listening is the ability to meet people where they are emotionally. The two travelers are downcast, and Jesus acknowledges their sadness rather than dismissing it. He does not rush them past their grief but enters into it with them. This teaches us that communication is not just about exchanging information; it is about recognizing and honoring the emotional state of others. When people feel understood emotionally, they are more receptive to deeper truths.

by Julie Bell
Director of Communications

Another key lesson is the power of asking thoughtful questions. Jesus uses questions not to test the disciples, but to draw out their understanding. Questions engage people in the process of discovery rather than making them passive recipients of information. In our own communication, asking good questions can help others reflect, clarify their thoughts, and become more open to new perspectives.

Jesus also models clarity and patience in explaining truth. As they walk, He interprets the Scriptures for them, helping them see how the events they witnessed fit into a larger story. He does not overwhelm them but gradually builds their understanding. This reminds us that effective communication requires both clarity and timing. Truths shared too quickly or without context can be missed, but when it is unfolded carefully, it can deeply resonate.

Perhaps one of the most profound aspects of this story is that recognition comes in relationship. The disciples only realize who Jesus is when He breaks bread with them. This shows that communication is not just about words, it is also about presence. Shared experiences and genuine connection often open the door to deeper understanding in ways that words alone cannot.

Finally, the result of this encounter is transformation. The disciples move from confusion to clarity and from discouragement to action, immediately returning to share their experience with others. This highlights that meaningful communication has the power to change people and inspire them to act.

In the end, the road to Emmaus teaches that communication is most effective when it is rooted in listening, empathy, thoughtful engagement, clear explanation, and authentic presence. It is not merely about delivering a message, but about walking alongside others until truth becomes clear and meaningful.

A Caring Congregation in Every Season

by Kirsten Tharp
Director of Congregational Care

Spring has a way of reminding us that God is still in the business of renewal. After a long winter, we begin to see signs of life again—tiny buds on trees, longer days, and the promise that what once seemed dormant is quietly being restored. The same is true in the life of a congregation. A caring church is one where God nurtures new growth in relationships, compassion, and community.

Caring for one another is not simply a ministry for a few—it is the shared calling of the whole church. Paul writes in Galatians 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” That burden-bearing takes many forms, from celebrating life’s joys to walking alongside one another in grief or uncertainty.



This spring, as our congregation moves forward in faith, we are invited to renew our commitment to being a deeply caring community. That begins with the small, steady acts of kindness that form the backbone of our church family. A phone call to someone who hasn’t been able to attend worship. A handwritten note tucked into a mailbox. A porch visit just to check in. A warm greeting to someone visiting for the first time. These gestures may seem simple, but they communicate the heart of Christ in powerful ways.

Caring also means noticing. It means paying attention to who might be sitting alone, who hasn’t been around for a few weeks, or who might need help with a meal or a ride. When every person in the church sees care as part of their discipleship, no one slips through the cracks.

This season also offers new opportunities to participate in congregational care ministries. Whether it’s joining the prayer team, helping deliver communion to homebound members, writing encouragement cards, or serving on the Caring Hearts team, your gifts matter. God uses each of us differently, and every contribution—large or small—helps create a church where people truly feel known and loved.

Spring reminds us that God can grow grace anywhere. As we open our hearts to one another, we plant seeds of compassion that will bless our church long beyond this season. May this be a time when we deepen our commitment to being a congregation where every person is valued, supported, and held in prayer.

Together, let us choose to be a caring church in every season—but especially now, as God makes all things new.



Plan Ahead



MAY 19 & 26
MORTON SQUARE SOCCER
REGISTRATION



MAY 31
COMBINED
WORSHIP SERVICE



JUNE 14 - 20
BEULAH YOUTH CAMP



JUNE 2 - 30
MORTON SQUARE SOCCER



JUNE 22-25
6W2P AND PODCRAFT ART CAMPS



JULY 16 - 18
FULLY LOADED BILINGUAL
YOUTH CAMP



JULY 6 - 9
VBS



JULY 19 - 24
YOUTH MISSION TRIP

GIVING

@ First

Your tithes and offerings are very important to the future of our ministry work.

3 Ways to Give:

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(4483)

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Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of Peoria and the World.

