

**THE HISTORY OF THE  
UNITED EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PEACE  
303 North Mulberry Street  
Steeleville, IL 62288  
(updated through July, 2025)**

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Peace began with eleven men of great faith in God. Services were conducted as early as 1875, but the congregation did not organize until 1896 when Dr. J.L. Neve, Pastor of St. John's - Bremen, began preaching in Steeleville.

1896:

- A meeting was held on August 9<sup>th</sup> at which a constitution was adopted and Articles of Incorporation were prepared. The Rev. George Schulz was elected the first pastor by a unanimous call. A church council was elected and instructed to find property for a church.
- Three acres of ground were purchased on August 16<sup>th</sup> for \$375.00.
- The decision to build a church was made on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- On September 13<sup>th</sup>, a contract for construction was awarded in the amount of \$1,858.05, including furnishings.
- A cornerstone was laid on September 27<sup>th</sup>.
- The completed building was dedicated on December 6<sup>th</sup>, with 27 charter members.

1897:

- The congregation built a school house. For the next 25 years, young people from the congregation received a religious education five days a week during their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. They dropped out of public school to complete their confirmation instruction.

1898:

- The church cemetery was started at North Sparta Street. The land cost \$60.00.
- In July, the first parsonage was built at a cost of \$728.00. This building was later sold and moved to 110 East Hancock Street.
- In a brief two years, the congregation had acquired the land and building that would serve it for many years.

1906:

- The Ladies' Aid Society began many years of faithful and devoted service to the church.

1917:

- A combination of English and German services were used for the next thirty plus years.

1917 - 1918:

- Beginning in 1917, a controversy arose over the use of the German or English language to record church minutes. For a brief period in 1917 - 1918, the minutes of the congregation were recorded in English.

1919:

- The congregation reverted to recording minutes in German.
- The Busy Girls Club was organized on January 12<sup>th</sup>. Its purpose was to create fellowship and to assist the church in raising needed funds.

1920:

- Pastor George Schulz resigned after 24 years of service at Peace. He also served as President of the Wartburg Synod from 1915 to 1919.

1920 to 1922:

- The Rev. W. Wuestenberg served as pastor. During this time, a major renovation of the church was completed. A balcony, new roof, metal ceiling, and sacristy were added at a cost of \$2,000.00.

1921:

- The congregation celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in August.

1923 to 1925:

- The Rev. P. Roediger served as pastor, during which time the Sunday School and choir were organized.

June 1925 to July 1927:

- The Rev. William Meineke accepted a call and served as pastor.

1927:

- The Rev. F.W. Schneider was elected pastor.

1931:

- The Luther League was organized.
- The 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation's growth and development was observed.

1933:

- Pastor Schneider died on May 9<sup>th</sup>, ending a fruitful and faithful six years of service in Steeleville and a lifetime of service to his Lord.
- Peace, which considered itself an independent Lutheran congregation in affiliation with the Wartburg Synod, officially joined the Synod.
- On June 11<sup>th</sup>, the congregation extended a call to the Rev. Walter Kaitschuk.
- Minutes of the congregation appear in English at this time.

1934:

- Peace Lutheran Brotherhood was organized.

1935:

- The congregation decided to build a new church on March 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Ground was broken for the new structure on April 17<sup>th</sup>.
- The cornerstone was laid on June 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The new building was dedicated on October 20<sup>th</sup>. This fine structure, built at a cost of \$42,000.00 still serves the congregation (after several renovations) as their place of worship.

1936:

- Our congregation hosted the 61<sup>st</sup> convention of the Wartburg Synod from June 16<sup>th</sup> through June 19<sup>th</sup>.

1939:

- On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the Missionary Society was organized. Their purpose was to support the mission work of the church.

1940:

- A Wicks pipe organ with chimes was added.

1941:

- The present parsonage was built.

1942:

- Mr. Darwin Dovemuehle, a son of this congregation, was ordained to the Gospel ministry by the Wartburg Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on June 20<sup>th</sup>. He was the first from this congregation to enter the ministry.

1945:

- Mr. Eldred Trede, another son of this congregation, followed in Mr. Dovemuehle's footsteps and was ordained to the Gospel ministry on March 4<sup>th</sup>.

1946

- For its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the church was renovated and redecorated.

1950:

- Beginning this year, all services in German were discontinued; all services were "in American."
- The year 1950 brought tragedy to the congregation. The church was preparing to dedicate a rebuilt and enlarged pipe organ on April 30<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Kaitschuk was killed in an automobile accident on April 28<sup>th</sup>. In shock and sadness the organ was dedicated as scheduled. Pastor Kaitschuk's untimely death brought an end to seventeen years of service to the people of Peace as pastor and friend.

1951:

- After almost a year of serving as supply pastor, seminary student E.W. Belter was ordained and installed as pastor.

#### Early 1950s

- A young women's Missionary Society (known as the Samaritan Society) and two children's choirs were started.

#### 1953:

- A new addition to the basement of the church was dedicated on January 18<sup>th</sup>. This "west-end" addition provided classrooms and offices at a cost of approximately \$40,000.00.
- During this period, broadcasts of the Sunday services were begun over WHCO.

#### 1955:

- Four additional acres of land were purchased to enlarge the cemetery.

#### 1957:

- In the fall of this year, Pastor Belter resigned to accept a call to work full time for the Wartburg Synod.

#### 1958:

- The Rev. Edward Hammer assumed the duties of pastor in January.

#### 1960:

- The sanctuary was extensively redecorated.
- This was also the time extensive study was given to the proposed merger of American Lutherans, which resulted in the formation of the Lutheran Church in America.

#### 1962:

- Pastor Hammer, after four years of ministry, resigned on January 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Two sons of the congregation, John P. Kaitschuk and William Mueller, were ordained into the ministry on May 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Rev. Kenneth Schroeder was installed as pastor on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### 1963:

- Because of the merger of the Lutheran Church in America mentioned earlier, the Illinois churches of the Wartburg Synod, including Peace Lutheran, became a part of the Illinois Synod of the Lutheran Church in America on January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- In January, the congregation began using the new *Service Book and Hymnal*.

#### 1965:

- A new organ was purchased, the balcony was renovated, and new pews were installed.
- The parsonage was air-conditioned and carpeted.
- During the mid-60s, Peace led all congregations in the Illinois Synod by remitting 150% of its apportioned benevolence.

1970:

- Another major project of the church was completed. A large wing was added for more classrooms, a conference room, and office. The sanctuary was enlarged, the entire structure was air-conditioned, and the basement was redecorated. The cost to complete these projects was \$197,000.00. All were dedicated on March 1<sup>st</sup> by Dr. Gerald Johnson, President of the Illinois Synod - LCA.
- In the fall, the parsonage kitchen was completely remodeled.

1971:

- The people of Peace celebrated 75 years of faithful witness to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Anniversary services were held each month from May to August. Pastors, who were sons of the congregation, and former pastors returned for these services.

1972:

- After ten years of faithful service to Peace, Pastor Schroeder resigned.

1973:

- Rev. Paul Holmer was installed as pastor.
- The Sunday School Teachers' Appreciation Dinner was begun.

1974:

- First Communion classes began.

1975:

- The debt on the education wing was retired.

1977:

- Peace began participating in the Intern Program of the LCA. In this program, a seminary student spent one year in our congregation assisting the pastor.
- The Thursday Bible Study class was begun.

1978:

- Changes to our worship services occurred. A Saturday evening service was added for a total of three services on a weekend. The children's sermon was added to some of the Sunday services.
- The new *Lutheran Book of Worship* became our hymnal.

1979:

- A portion of the conference room was set aside for an updated library.
- A ramp for the handicapped was built at the front entrance to the building.

1980:

- Pastor Holmer resigned after seven years of faithful service at Peace.

1981:

- Rev. William Ahlfeldt was called to serve as pastor.

1982:

- The annual Sunday School promotion day and picnic were begun.
- The Saturday evening service was discontinued.
- Marc Kiehna was hired as the adult choir director.
- Lynette Bollmann and Janet Hafford became the children's choir directors with Marilyn Knop as their accompanist.
- Georgia Eckart was hired as assistant organist and accompanist for the adult choir.

1983:

- The McClure property was purchased.
- Margaret Bergmann retired after serving forty-seven years as organist; Georgia Eckart assumed her responsibilities.
- The hand bell choir was formed.

1984:

- Marilyn Knop was hired to share organist duties with Georgia Eckart.
- A new parking lot was built on the McClure property.

1985:

- All Sunday School teachers were honored on Teacher Appreciation Sunday.
- The intern program was discontinued.

1986:

- We celebrated our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Illinois Synod Bishop Paul Erickson, Pastor John Kaitschuk, and Pastor Ed Hammer joined in this celebration.
- L.C.A. Bishop Crumley came to celebrate with the District event held at Peace.
- The debt on the McClure property was retired.

1987:

- The Prayer Group began.
- The Altar Guild was formed.
- Pastor Ahlfeldt resigned after six years of service.

1988:

- On January 1<sup>st</sup>, the official beginning of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America took effect with the merger of the Lutheran Church of America (LCA), the American Lutheran Church (ALC), and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC).
- We became part of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod, and the Rev. Dr. John P. Kaitschuk, a son of Peace, was elected the first Bishop of this synod.
- Pastor Harold Bolm began his ministry at Peace on May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The church bus was purchased by the youth.
- A new roof was installed on the Education Unit for under \$65,000.00.

1989:

- A new baby grand piano was purchased.
- A deck was built at the parsonage.
- Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bergmann donated pew cushions.
- The Social Ministry Committee of Peace, along with the other churches in Steeleville, formed the Christian Community Aid Alliance.
- An afternoon Maundy Thursday Communion service was begun, and a lunch was prepared for senior citizens attending.

1990:

- The sanctuary was redecorated.
- Jan Bolm organized the Swing Choir.

1991:

- Peace began holding semi-annual congregation meetings.
- Louis Bergmann was recognized for his many years of service implementing the radio broadcast of our services.
- The congregation observed the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LSSI by contributing \$21,560.00 to its "Keep a Light Shining" campaign.
- Six youth along with Pastor and Jan Bolm attended the ELCA Youth Gathering in Dallas, Texas.

1992:

- The congregation completed the installation of beautiful new stained glass windows. Bishop John Kaitschuk spoke at the dedication service.

1993:

- Pastor Bolm retired on June 30<sup>th</sup> after forty years of ministry, including five years at Peace.
- Dr. James Lillie accepted the call to Peace and was installed on October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- In December, the combined adult choirs of St. Mark's Lutheran and Peace performed Handel's "Messiah" in a concert at each of the churches.

1994:

- Saturday evening services were reinstated.
- In July, sixteen youth and four adults, including Pastor Lillie, attended the ELCA Youth Gathering in Atlanta, Georgia.
- Due to the generosity of the Arthur Meintz and Fred Schuette estates, the congregation embarked on a major renovation of the lower level of the church. This included installing an elevator and restrooms for the physically challenged.

1995:

- A new Wick's pipe organ was installed; the purchase was made possible, in part, by a large contribution from Margaret and Louis Bergmann.
- The lower level renovation was completed and dedicated on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

1996:

- The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation was observed throughout 1996. Monthly centennial celebration services were held beginning in January with Pastors Holmer, Schroeder, Hammer, Belter and Bolm participating. The celebration culminated on August 11<sup>th</sup> when Bishop Zenker of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod preached at our services; a fellowship dinner and talent show followed. This congregation has prospered throughout its history. God has richly blessed our church, and we look forward to the next 100 years as an opportunity to celebrate and proclaim the grace of God.
- In June the congregation approved a \$15,000 renovation project for the church building to bring it up to state Fire Code.
- Weekly Communion services were established.

1997:

- We began using the *With One Voice* hymnal.
- Our senior youth attended the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans.
- The congregation adopted a resolution to open a preschool as soon as possible (the preschool began operation in August 1997).

1998:

- The church donated its bus to the Little Egypt Lutheran Bible Camp.

1999:

- Nan Ellis was hired as Clinical Pastoral Education Intern at a special congregational meeting held August 8<sup>th</sup>. In this position, she worked twenty hours per week providing counseling, shut-in and hospital visitation, assistance with clinical issues, and pastoral care.
- Nan organized the Ambassadors for Christ program that provides respite care for family caregivers.

2000:

- The Ambassadors for Christ volunteers were further trained to be Eucharistic Ministers, taking Holy Communion to shut-ins and nursing home residents every other month.
- Fifteen youth and three adults attended the ELCA National Youth Gathering in St. Louis, Missouri.
- In November, Peace opened a food pantry, which proved to be an overwhelming success (we are now serving in excess of 100 people every week).
- Playground equipment was purchased and erected for preschool students.

2001:

- Nan Ellis was hired as Parish Ministry Assistant by a unanimous vote of the congregation at its January 28<sup>th</sup> semi-annual meeting.
- On April 1<sup>st</sup>, volunteers placed door hangers inviting people to our church on all homes in the city of Steeleville and nearby Percy.
- Pastor Lillie resigned his ministry at Peace on June 14<sup>th</sup> after 7-1/2 years of service.

- On August 16<sup>th</sup>, our congregation took a new step for churches in this area and employed Father Walt LaBatt, an Episcopalian priest, as Interim until a new pastor could be found.
- A new youth and outreach program called Wednesday All Stars began in September. This program for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students included study hall, Bible study, music, games, and a meal. Children from Peace, all other denominations, and the unchurched were invited to attend. Parish Ministry Assistant Nan Ellis directed the program and provided oversight for the staff of volunteers.
- Fun Night with Friends began in June and was held the third Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. This group ranging from high school students to our senior members enjoyed pinochle, dominoes, other games, snacks, and fellowship.

#### 2002:

- In September, the New Life Sunday School and volunteers implemented "Kids Karavan to the Promised Land," a workshop rotation method of instruction for children in Kindergarten through grade 6. The Sunday School rooms were redecorated for use in the new program.
- Pastor Frank S. Langholf was called and began his ministry at Peace in November.

#### 2004:

- A new sound system was installed, greatly enhancing our worship experience.
- Beginning this year, Sunday School was not in session during the summer months. Our children's summer education continued through attendance at Vacation Bible School.
- A new roof, at a cost of \$53,544, was put on the church building in July. All monies were raised through donations.

#### 2005:

- During the last half of the year, the congregation experienced significant losses due to the resignation of Parish Ministry Assistant Nan Ellis and the accidental death of organist Georgia Eckart.
- From August through December, Pastor Karen Knodt served as Interim Parish Ministry Assistant.
- The Peace Lutheran Preschool closed due to loss of student attendance as a result of the public school offering preschool at no charge.

#### 2006:

- Robin Bert began as Parish Ministry Assistant in January.
- We began using the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal in the fall.

#### 2007:

- Parish Ministry Assistant Robert Bert resigned in November.
- The fall of the year saw the beginning of the Wartburg Cluster's conversation about developing a geographical parish.

2008:

- Julie Posth was hired as Parish Ministry Assistant.
- A writing team began the process of preparing a contract to form a geographical parish to be presented to the eight congregations involved.
- All asphalt parking lots on the church property were replaced with concrete parking lots in the fall of this year. The cost of \$95,989 was covered by a very generous bequest from one of our members.
- Pastor Frank Langholf left in September 2008; Interim Tim Hubert filled the vacancy.
- The Angel Tree provided Christmas gifts to 178 children in 72 families.

2009:

- Nine youth and two adults attended the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans.
- Peace Lutheran voted to join the Wartburg Geographical Parish with a vote of 87 “yes” and 18 “no.”
- Pastor S. Blake Duncan began his ministry at Peace in September 2009.

2010:

- Renovation of the sanctuary was completed (new carpeting, painting, rebuilding the altar, and providing a catwalk in the ceiling).
- The Wartburg Parish was officially established in March and included St. John’s - Bremen, Peace - Chester, St. John’s - Post Oak, Peace - Steeleville, and St. Peter’s - Wine Hill. We elected two members and two alternates to the Wartburg Parish Council.
- The Memorial Committee commissioned the process of repainting the four signs at the entrances to Steeleville.
- Constitution changes included: the quorum for congregational meetings was changed from 60 to 50; the number of Call Committee members was changed from nine to six.

2011:

- New figurines were purchased and a new stable was built for the outdoor nativity scene.
- The *With One Voice* supplemental hymnals were replaced with pew Bibles.
- The first Wartburg Parish pictorial directory was published.
- A Worship Band was established to play at services one weekend each month.
- The Food Pantry provided food for 1,178 households consisting of 2,690 individuals.
- Members of the congregation sent Christmas cards to all homebound and nursing home members. Those members were very pleased to be remembered in such a way.

2012:

- Nine youth and three adults attended the ELCA National Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

- The Food Pantry provided food for 1,273 households, consisting of 3,373 individuals.
- A Funeral Policy was prepared for use by individuals in planning their funerals.
- A Mother's Day Brunch was instituted by the Christian Education Committee.
- New First-Aid supplies, an oxygen tank, and an AED were purchased.
- The Wartburg Parish bylaws were changed as follows:

Current Language

- F. A call committee will be composed of representatives from all congregations.
1. The call committee will include one member from each congregation in the Parish. Each congregation will develop its own method for determining how its representatives will be selected for the call committee. Two (2) pastors, one being the Pastoral Head of Staff, will serve as advisory members for the call committee.
  2. Letters of call will be approved by all congregations.

Proposed Change in Language:

- F. A call committee will be composed of representatives from all congregations.
1. The call committee will include at least one member from each congregation. A majority of the call committee will come from the church/churches who are issuing the call with equal representation from each of the calling churches. The chairman of the call committee will be selected from the members of the primary church/churches who will issue the call. Each congregation will develop its own method for determining how its representatives will be selected for the call committee. Two (2) pastors, one being the Pastoral Head of Staff, will serve as advisory members for the call committee.
  2. Potential pastors will be approved by the call committee and submitted to the primary church/churches who will vote on issuing the call.

2013:

- A Good Friday Children's Service was initiated.
- New tables and chairs were purchased for the Fellowship Hall.
- The unused Sunday School room by the basement west entrance door was renovated into a chapel.

2014:

- A volunteer Parish Nurse position was established.
- The five congregations of the Wartburg Parish joined St. Luke's Campbell Hill to teach confirmation classes together.
- The Angel Tree provided gifts for 139 families consisting of 385 children.

2015:

- A new Holy Week service "Women at the Foot of the Cross" was established by the Parish Ministry Assistant.

- A new sign was purchased along Sparta Street in the church park.
- Nine youth and four adults attended the National Youth Gathering in Detroit.
- The following change was made to the Wartburg Parish bylaws: the Pastoral Call will be issued through the Wartburg Parish on behalf of the congregations (primary church/churches) involved in the call process.

#### 2016:

- Per Constitutional amendment voted upon by the congregation, the number of Congregation Council members was reduced from 15 to 12 with officers to be elected by the Council rather than the congregation. In addition, the Constitution was amended to hold semi-annual congregational meetings in January and June on Sundays designated by the church council.
- New vinyl road signs were installed at the entrances to the city.
- St. Luke's - Campbell Hill withdrew from the Wartburg Parish confirmation program.
- The Peace Women of the ELCA and the Thursday Quilting Group disbanded and have ceased to meet.
- The Angel Tree provided Christmas gifts for 151 families consisting of 418 children.

#### 2017:

- The Finance Committee discontinued the outside professional audit of the books; the audit will be done by members of an in-house Audit Committee.
- Renovations to the kitchen were completed (including two new stoves and an ice machine).

#### 2018:

- At the request of the congregation at the January 2018 semi-annual meeting, a new Evangelism/Congregational Care Work Group was formed. The focus of the group is three-fold: 1) to contact lapsed members and urge them to return to regular attendance at worship services and to take a bigger part in other activities of the congregation; 2) to vigorously pursue inviting neighbors, friends, and new residents of the Steeleville area to visit our church; and 3) to update the membership rolls of the congregation.
- Three Constitutional/Bylaw amendments were approved at the June semi-annual meeting; they are as follows:

Remove Section C5.05. completely. It currently reads:

“This congregation shall have a mission endowment fund that will operate as specified in this congregation’s bylaws. The purpose of the mission endowment fund is to provide for mission work beyond the operational budget of this congregation.”

Remove Bylaw 12 completely. It currently reads:

“This congregation will keep in place its investment in the Mission Investment Fund of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. This fund provides opportunity to earn interest on financial resources while helping to build mission congregations in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Interest earned will be reinvested in the fund at the end of each quarter.”

Add the following bylaw pertaining to Section C8.05.e.:

Lapsed members are those who have failed to receive Holy Communion or to make a contribution of record for a period of two consecutive calendar years. Those members meeting the definition of “lapsed” as described in the sentence above shall be notified in a letter signed by both the pastor and the president of the Congregation Council. The notification shall indicate the Council’s concern for them. The letter will ask if the member wishes to be released from membership. If the member responds that he/she wishes to be released from membership or fails to respond to the letter within two months, the member’s name shall be taken before the Congregation Council. The Council shall then take action to remove that member from the membership rolls. In the event a lapsed member’s address is unknown and all efforts to obtain a current address are exhausted, that member’s name shall be taken before the Congregation Council for action to be removed from the membership rolls.”

Amend Section C13.05. It currently reads:

“When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a ***Call Committee*** of six voting members shall be elected by the Congregation Council. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.”

Proposed Amendment reads:

When a pastoral vacancy occurs, a ***Call Committee*** shall be elected by the Congregation Council. The call committee shall be selected in accordance with the bylaws of the Wartburg Parish. It shall include at member from each congregation other than this congregation in the Wartburg Parish (currently four congregations). A majority of the call committee will come from this congregation (five members). The chairman of the call committee will be selected from the members of this congregation. Two (2) pastors, one being the Pastoral Head of Staff, will serve as advisory members for the call committee. Term of office will terminate upon installation of the newly called pastor.

- Pastor S. Blake Duncan retired in June after approximately nine years of ministry at Peace.

- Due to increased duties for the Parish Ministry Assistant and lack of volunteers, the Wednesday All Stars program was discontinued until a new pastor is called.
- Interim Minister Deb Rathert began her service at Peace in October.
- In lieu of the annual Christmas Chorale, a Family Christmas Caroling event was held on December 16. Forty-three individuals sang at twenty-one homes. The event was very well received by both shut-ins and carolers.

#### 2019:

- Funeral meals will be provided in full by the church. Money and food donations will be accepted.
- A Baccalaureate service for Steeleville High School graduates was held May 18; Dave Mulholland was the speaker.
- Marlene Rathert retired from the position of Cemetery Sexton after over fifteen years of service.
- New fans were installed in the sanctuary at a cost of \$4,838.
- In an effort to improve congregational care, the Evangelism Work Group organized a "We Care" committee. This group will assist members in times of severe illnesses, deaths in the family, trips to medical providers, gasoline cards for travel costs to medical providers, and other needs that may arise.
- A recorder for the organ was purchased at a cost of \$1,123. This will allow music to be played in the event an organist is not available.
- A luncheon was held in October to honor Steeleville's First Responders and their families. The entire congregation was invited; Sunday School students provided music and several gifts were given to the various departments.
- Several members participated in the Wartburg Parish service and picnic held at Fort Kaskaskia State Park on October 6.
- Roofs on the church, parsonage, and park shed were damaged by a severe hailstorm; all were replaced at no cost to Peace. The \$52,046 cost was covered by our insurance carrier.
- The Evangelism Committee began sending get well cards to members suffering prolonged illnesses, recovery due to accidents, and members undergoing surgery, sympathy cards to those who lost loved ones and congratulatory cards to those newly baptized or confirmed and to new members received into the congregation.

- Ali and Jeff Brockmeyer were appointed to fill the vacant position of Cemetery Sexton.
- The Parable Productions Sunday School room will be repurposed for a respite/comfort room for funerals with memorials from Marvin Gielow covering most of the cost. The We Care Committee will begin providing snacks and beverages for families holding visitations in the church.
- Judy Wilson resigned from the position of Inside/Outside Custodian.
- The Memorial Committee erected four new welcome signs at the entrances to Steeleville.

#### 2020:

- Ethan Feldmann was hired for the vacant position of Inside/Outside Custodian.
- Due to the COVID pandemic, indoor services were discontinued in March. Services were recorded for airing on WHCO radio and put on the website. Sunday School, Council meetings, and Confirmation classes were conducted via ZOOM. The office was closed, and the church was locked. All employees continued to be paid.
- The Food Pantry continued to serve the community. No recipients were allowed to come inside. Workers provided a list of the items available to individuals outside. They indicated what they needed and workers filled the orders and took the items out to the waiting cars.
- The \$50 funeral fee to pay the custodian and church sexton was discontinued.
- Vacation Bible School was cancelled due to COVID.
- Services began being streamed live on Facebook.
- The Christian Education committee, along with Sunday School children, prepared and mailed thirty-seven Care Packages to military personnel associated with the congregation.
- Drive-in services on the parking lot began on June 14. Saturday night services were temporarily cancelled. In addition to drive-in services, members could also attend under the trees on the lot to the south side of the parsonage. An altar and sound system were set up on the parsonage carport. Members enjoyed this new way of worship.
- Due to the ministry plan revised by the Wartburg Parish council (allowing only two full-time called pastors for the five churches), many expressed a desire to discontinue being part of the Parish. Three break-out sessions were held to

inform members of the new Ministry Plan and how it would affect Peace.

- In August, the congregation council voted to hold one Saturday night service with Holy Communion per month on the fourth weekend.
- At the September 20 semi-annual congregational meeting, members voted to leave the Wartburg Parish effective December 31, 2020. The vote was: 71-yes; 11-no; 1-abstain.
- In-person outdoor Sunday School classes for ages 2-1/2 years through 6<sup>th</sup> grade began in October.
- The Call Committee revised Peace's Ministry Site Profile to reflect no longer being part of the Wartburg Parish.
- With the arrival of cold weather, services under the trees were discontinued; drive-in services resumed on the west parking lot.
- The Sunday School Children's Christmas Eve program was pre-recorded and presented on a large blow-up screen in the parking lot. It was extremely successful and very well received by those in attendance.
- Interim Minister Deb Rather resigned December 31, 2020.
- The Evangelism and We Care Committees prepared 240 Christmas treat bags for distribution to the four nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Chester and Sparta and to shut-ins at home. The Sunday School children provided coloring pages to be included.

2021:

- Pastor Matthew Helfrich began serving as part-time interim minister on January 3.
- The Food Pantry continued to serve the community despite the COVID closure and only required one closing due to inclement weather.
- Indoor worship services following the COVID pandemic closure resumed on March 7 with a capacity limit of fifty in the sanctuary and thirty-five in the Fellowship Hall (where members could watch the services in real time on the big screen television). Social distancing and mask guidelines were adhered to. The semi-annual congregational meeting followed the service.
- The Council approved paying Julie Posth \$40 per confirmation class in which she participates and agreed to give her a 3% wage increase in lieu of a pension.
- Mary Wegener and Ada Gill, long-time buyers of supplies for the Food Pantry, resigned. Margo Block will assume their duties.

- Margie Wagner and Marsha Thomas assumed the duty of purchasing food for the Food Pantry in October 2021.
- The comfort room renovations were completed in March, and the room is now available for use during visitations and funerals.
- Narcotics Anonymous asked for and received Council approval to hold meetings at the church.
- Peace Sunday School students were invited to play handbells at the annual Steeleville community "For God and Country" ecumenical service prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.
- A monthly worship service with distribution of Holy Communion was initiated at the Cedarhurst assisted living facility in Sparta and was well received by the residents.
- Peace celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an outdoor service and meal in August and provided a celebratory float in the Oktoberfest parade. Pastor Ken Tegtmeier, assistant to the bishop of the Synod, was the guest speaker.

#### 2022:

- An Open Doors grant in the amount of \$1,500 toward construction of an outdoor pavilion was received. A committee formed to explore the feasibility of such a project. The committee received a quote to build the pavilion at a cost of \$20,000 to \$23,000. This amount was deemed too great to proceed with the project at this time.
- Parish Secretary Deb Prest retired at the end of August. Karen Murdach was hired to fill the vacant position. A brunch was held on August 28<sup>th</sup> to celebrate Deb's many years of service to Peace.
- A donation of \$41,000 was given to cover the cost of building a pavilion in the park. The Council voted to proceed with construction.
- A new HVAC Fund was established to provide income to update our aging air conditioning/furnace system. In 2021, \$10,900 was spent to purchase a new air conditioner for the Sunday School addition. Because other units are approximately the same age, we expect them to need replacement in the not-too-distant future.
- Christian Education efforts continued with a successful Vacation Bible School program in June. Sunday School students prepared outreach projects for our congregation's shut-ins and pretzels to be distributed at Ash Wednesday services.

- A fundraiser for Josie Raby was held to help with medical costs following her serious accident. In addition, the Congregational Care and Outreach Committee prepared meals for the Raby family three days a week for several weeks while they dealt with Josie's recuperation.
- The Congregational Care and Outreach Committee organized numerous events throughout the year: Reverse Advent Calendar to provide supplies for the Food Pantry, family Christmas caroling to shut-ins, constructing a float for the Steeleville Small Town Christmas parade, mailing Easter cards and gifts to shut-ins, providing transportation to members undergoing cancer treatment, and sending get-well and sympathy cards to members when needed.
- Services at Cedarhurst assisted living continued with ten to twelve residents participating each month.
- The Angel Tree provided gifts to 120 families consisting of 320 children.
- Pastor Matt Helfrich discontinued his ministry at Peace December 25, 2022.

#### 2023:

- New locks were installed on all church doors and offices, and online security was updated.
- In the absence of a pastor, Julie Posth preached three weekends per month; Deb Rathert provided supply the fourth weekend.
- The Congregational Care and Outreach Committee provided 271 treat bags for residents at the Murray Development Center.
- A new copy machine was purchased.
- Pastor Ken Tegtmeier accepted the position of Interim Pastor at Peace.
- Park pavilion construction was completed. An outdoor service and pot luck dinner were held to dedicate the pavilion "To the Glory of God in memory of James A. Gerlach."
- Pastor Tegtmeier and his wife Nancy will be staying in the parsonage several days a week. As a result, many upgrades were made including deep cleaning, new blinds, new bed, new kitchen faucet and garbage disposal, new toilet, new television, and new refrigerator.
- The Council approved increasing the bank account cosign amount to \$3,500.
- Eight metal picnic tables were purchased for the pavilion.

- Rather than send letters to lapsed members, it was approved to declare such members as “inactive.” These members will not be included on Synod reports.
- A new furnace and air conditioner were purchased to replace the ones in the south hallway.
- The Angel Tree provided gifts for 116 families consisting of 354 children.

#### 2024:

- Peace hosted the Southern Conference Assembly meeting on January 16. The new Synod bishop Greg Busboom attended.
- The first Kick-off to Summer event organized by the Congregational Care and Outreach Committee was held June 2. The entire community was invited to enjoy a water slide, bouncy house, old-fashioned carnival games, and refreshments.
- \$15,000 of the amount in the Wartburg Parish Fund was used to purchase a certificate of deposit.
- We will no longer use a bulk mailing permit due to increased costs and less usage.
- A new iced machine was purchase at a cost of \$3,275.
- The Youth held several fundraisers to cover the cost of attending the National Youth Gathering.
- Nine youth attended the National Youth Gathering in New Orleans.
- A new lawnmower was purchase from Sydenstricker Nobbe at a cost of \$6,000.
- Construction of new sidewalks to the pavilion and handicapped parking at the west end of the rear parking lot was approved by vote of the congregation.
- At it’s meeting on September 8<sup>th</sup>, the congregation voted to call Pastor Ken Tegtmeier to be Peace’s 80%-time, rostered minister.
- The front entrance doors were repainted.
- The Thanksgiving service was moved from the Wednesday before Thanksgiving to the Tuesday before.

- The Council regretfully accepted the resignation of Inside/Outside Custodian Ethan Feldmann. The position was then divided into two positions with Nathan McSmith accepting that of Inside Custodian and William Reed as Outside Custodian.
- Ten youth and two adults attended the Youth Conference in Carlinville.
- Julie Posth completed classes and officially became a SAM (Synodically Authorized Minister).
- The annual outreach project by the Congregational Care and Outreach Committee consisted of donating \$500 each to Campus Outreach (SERVE) - a ministry outreach in Africa, the Hospitality House for Menard Penitentiary, and the Marion Medical Mission.
- The Angel Tree provided gifts for 94 families consisting of 284 children.

#### 2025:

- The flooring in the parsonage was replaced using Memorial Fund monies.
- Due to the lack of another organist to play when Marilyn Knop is not available, we will begin using recorded music provided by the ELCA at a cost of \$45 per service plus \$350 for an I-pad and \$100 for a box. Wartburg Parish funds will be used to cover costs.
- A second Kick-off to Summer event was held June 1<sup>st</sup> and was well attended by individuals from the community.
- Landscaping timbers and rock were placed around the park pavilion.
- New signs directing people to the church were purchased for West Broadway and West Main Street.
- The Youth Group participated in a work day to assist senior members on April 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Peace hosted the Southern Conference Assembly meeting.
- Pastor Tegtmeier held a class to discuss what happens when we die and the need for members to make written funeral arrangements to file in the church office. Approximately 35 members were in attendance and expressed what a good class it was.
- A new air conditioning unit was purchased for the Fellowship Hall.

- The Congregational Care and Outreach Committee's project for this year was the donation of \$1,000 to Lutheran Disaster Relief - Hurricane Relief.