

the HERALD

PEORIA FIRST UMC | NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2023, JANUARY 2024

"True navigation begins in the human heart. It's the most important map of all."

Elizabeth Kapu'uwailani Lindsey
Cultural Anthropologist,
National Geographic Society



from Handwritten to the Digital Age

by Rodney Nelson
Church Historian

I have been busy entering baptismal information into a new database that was created for easier access to those needing this information. It has been a daunting and very time-consuming task. I have entered over 5500 names thus far and have been entering since Mid-August.

The information I am gleaming is person's full name, date of birth, place of birth, clergy who performed the baptism, date of baptism, and the parents' names. We have records in ring binders, in record books, and on loose sheets of paper. Many of the older records are handwritten and my handwriting reading skills are put to the test to interpret what was written. I have provided a sample sheet from the 1929 record book, and you can see what I am often working with.

The first book I came across is from 1934 through 1944. I have encountered people who were born from all over the world. I even came across a lady baptized in 1962 and then again in 1970. The second time was by full immersion. It amazes me that I am coming across a lot of folks born in the late 1800's. There are both infant and adult baptisms.

I am sort of skipping around chronologically but Excel does a great job of alphabetizing the names making searches much, much easier. Every now and then I run across someone I recognize. I only do this for about 3 hours a day. Not sure how long this will take to complete but I am enjoying the job.

Wish me luck!

RECORD OF BAPTISMS				
NAME OF SUBJECT	NAME OF PARENTS	AGE OF INFANT	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH
Bruce, Joanne	Robert Glenn & Julia Elvina	Infant	June 25, 1928	Peoria, Illinois
Burrows, Melba Delaine	"	Adult	"	"
Callfield, George Victor	"	"	"	"
Clinton, Jean Franklin	"	Child	"	"
Cortley, Arthur Albert	"	Adult	"	"
Cowan, Elsie May, Jr.	John & Mary Ann	Infant	Oct. 21, 1928	Peoria, Illinois
Cover, Jacqueline Joyce	Arthur & Mary Ann	"	Dec. 17, 1928	"
Cushey, George Elmer	Levick & Mary Ann	"	Nov. 13, 1928	Oklahoma City, Ok.
Cushey, James Randolph	"	"	May 7, 1927	Peoria, Illinois
Cushey, Marileigh Anne	"	"	Feb. 8, 1925	Little Rock, Ark.
Cushey, Walter Cotton	Walter & Mary Ann	"	Apr. 13, 1929	Peoria, Illinois
Cushey, Eugene Elmer, Jr.	Eugene Elmer & Mary Ann	"	Nov. 19, 1929	"
Cushey, Robert William	Robert & Mary Ann	"	Aug. 12, 1929	"
Cushey, Evelyn Dean	Robert & Mary Ann	"	Dec. 27, 1929	"
Cushey, Jack A.	"	Child	"	"
Cutler, Julia Ann	James Hamilton & Alice Ann	Infant	Sept. 23, 1920	Peoria, Illinois
Cutler, Ruth Anne	William Leonard & Ruth J. Ann	"	June 11, 1929	"

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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 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.



by Kirsten Tharp
Director of Congregational Care

It hardly seems possible, but the holiday season is upon us. As a planner I find myself making many lists and checking them twice. One of these lists is about gifts – who I need to buy for, what my budget is, how much to spend on each gift, and maybe most importantly where can I get it on sale! During all the hustle and bustle it becomes easy to focus on the busyness and checking off all the lists. I challenge you this holiday season to take ‘a time out’ each day. You see if we take time to be intentional there are other gifts we can focus on – gifts that God wants to give us. These gifts won’t come packaged in shiny paper and bows, but these gifts are far more beautiful. A relationship with God gives us many gifts including knowing your deepest longings, words of comfort, God’s love placed in our hearts, and hope that lasts.

It is important in this season of busyness to take time to reflect on what we are truly longing for in our lives. We often think the next great “thing” will allow us to find peace or calm or bring us joy (especially if we can find it on sale!). That “thing” might do that for a bit until it breaks, or we forget about it, and it begins to take up space on a shelf. Our true longings are for the presence of God in our lives. Spend time with God – not only praying to Him, but also listening to Him speak into your

heart. Even spending five or ten quiet minutes with God daily leads us closer to Him and his generous love. We also need to listen for God’s words of comfort, either through our daily communication with Him, or through reading the Bible. God’s comforting words can be an anchor in our daily lives. God places love in our hearts and we need to live out that love. We need to take responsibility for ourselves and be the seed of change in our families, our church, our communities, and our world. Lastly, we receive a hope that lasts. *For I know the plans I have for you...plans to give you hope and a future.*(Jeremiah 29:11)

This holiday season I challenge you to look at things a little differently. When you make your lists add a daily reminder to spend time with God and receive his gifts. Ask for his guidance on how to share God’s love with others. I pray God’s gifts can be a blessing in your lives, during the holidays and every day of the year.

**WHEN WE DRINK DEEPLY OF THE GIFT OF HOPE THAT
GOD OFFERS US, WE CAN CHERISH WITHIN US THE
SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS. WE CAN THEN BRING TO
OTHERS THE BLESSINGS OF THE CHRIST CHILD EVERY
DAY OF THE YEAR.**



A Call to Renewal and Growth

In the heart of our community stands a church with a heart for the people of Peoria. Here is a place for worship, a sanctuary for the spiritually and physically hungry, and a lighthouse of hope - our treasured congregation and church building. For generations, our church has been a cornerstone of faith, offering guidance, love, and support to countless individuals and families.

At the turn of the 19th to 20th century we helped build a nursing school and a Methodist hospital just up the hill from 116 NE Perry Avenue. In the last five years alone we've financially supported nursing scholarships, provided supplies, textbooks, and helped build a cafeteria at the nursing school in Ganta, Liberia. We have also built a grade school in Korsen, Liberia. We have provided medical clinics in Honduras. We have helped to add a third floor to a Christian High School/college prep school in the Czech Republic. Locally, we are heavily invested in the Lincoln K-8 School just at the end of Perry Avenue by providing reading tutors, backpacks full of food for the weekend, and monthly birthday parties for children who may never have had a birthday party before. Through the Peoria First Foundation we've provided after-school arts and children's choir programs. We provide food every Saturday through the Loaves and Fish ministry to our neighbors in need. In addition, we've engaged in missions and ministries in dozens of other ways through children's ministries, youth ministries, senior ministries, adult discipleship classes, small groups, and the list goes on.

Peoria First UMC has survived a civil war, two world wars, a half dozen "military operations," two national depressions, national terrorist attacks, and a world pandemic in 1918. Most recently we've survived another pandemic and a discernment process. We find ourselves at a crossroads, facing challenges and a diminished congregation. It is a pivotal moment that demands our shared efforts and dedication to revitalize our much-loved congregation and church for the call of Jesus Christ.



PASTOR TIM OZMENT

*Directing Pastor,
Peoria First United Methodist Church*

**FOR GENERATIONS, OUR CHURCH HAS BEEN A
CORNERSTONE OF FAITH, OFFERING GUIDANCE,
LOVE, AND SUPPORT TO COUNTLESS
INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES.**

Before we embark on this journey of renewal, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges we face. Only through a clear understanding of these obstacles can we hope to overcome them:

1. **Declining Attendance:** Over the years, we have witnessed a gradual decrease in the number of attendees at our services and events. This is due to many factors – some out of our control like a pandemic, perhaps some within our ability to change like personal invitations to “come and see.”
2. **Changing Demographics:** Our community is evolving, with a new generation of residents who may have different needs and expectations from our church.
3. **Outreach and Engagement:** We must work on enhancing our presence and relevance in the digital age, as well as improve our outreach to the broader community. We must engage people where our facility is located and also where our congregation lives beyond the downtown area.
4. **Financial Sustainability:** Maintaining the church's facilities and ministries requires resources. We need to develop sustainable financial plans to ensure our long-term viability.

The Path to Renewal

To breathe new life into our church, we need a multi-layered approach that touches upon various aspects of our congregation and community. The first step will be to engage the congregation in the decision-making process. We need to pray, share concerns, ideas, and dreams for the church's future. To

accomplish this, we're holding three meetings. The first is on Saturday, December 15, 2023, from 9:30 am - 2:30 pm. Sam Rodriguez, the Congregational Development Director from the conference office, will come and lead us in a conversation around current realities and a vision for our future. He will return in February for a second session to continue the conversation concerning strategies, goals, and objectives. In between, on January 13, Pastor Garcia and I will offer a session on God's call and how we answer that call.

Our church has a rich history and a deep connection with the community. The challenges we face are not insurmountable, and with the right approach and a strong commitment to renewal, we can overcome them. By embracing change, engaging our congregation, and reaching out to our community, we can breathe new life into our church. New life is not for the sake of just keeping doors open, but for the sake of making healthy disciples of Jesus for the transformation of Peoria and the world.

Let us remember that at the heart of our church is the faith and love of Jesus that binds us all together. So, together let us ask God to reignite the fire of God's Holy Spirit in us and our congregation with the aim of empowering us to make new and healthy disciples of Jesus. Let's ask God to bless our church so we might remain a beacon of hope for our generation and for generations to come.

As we walk together on this journey of renewal, let us do so with open minds to where God might lead us. Open our hearts to those God is calling us to love and serve with unwavering faith. If God has called us to make a difference, God will give us the strength and resources that we need to accomplish God's will.

THANKFUL GRATEFUL

by Julie Bell
Director of Communications

The holidays are fast approaching and there is no better time to think about being thankful and grateful. Both are words of appreciation, but are they the same? Can/should they be used interchangeably? Should we practice both?

Knowing the difference may just change your life.

Being Thankful is a Feeling while Being Grateful is an Act

Being 'thankful' is defined as the *feeling* of being pleased or relieved; being aware and appreciative.

'Gratefulness' is *showing* appreciation for something done or received, expressing it verbally or through actions.

It's easy to feel appreciation for the things you have. But acknowledging someone who gave you a reason to feel such appreciation can be a challenge for some people. It's easy to tell God that we are thankful for the blessings we received, but how many times have you told Him how much you appreciate Him? What are you doing to show Him your appreciation for everything that He has given?

Gratefulness is outward focused while thankfulness is mostly internal.

Since gratefulness is an action, there must be a receiver. Meaning, it must be directed at another person. While thankfulness, as a feeling, is mainly aimed at yourself.

When our boys were young, I was adamant about their manners – saying please and thank you. We had a neighbor boy that we often took to various places with us. When he would get out of our car, I noticed he never said thank you. I admit, it bothered me. After he left the car, I would say to our boys, "I better not ever hear that you did not thank someone for a ride, a meal, or a play date." It got to the point where the boys would recite it before I even had the chance to say it. Over the years, and even today, people tell us how polite our boys are.

I was looking for an act of gratitude from that young boy, to know he was grateful for what I had done for him. I knew he was thankful that we had included him - he felt special that we included him – but I was always looking for that act of acknowledgment. Though I did not receive the acknowledgment of gratitude, I did not stop doing the acts of kindness.

Thankfulness Comes Before Gratefulness

Have you heard the saying, "You cannot give what you don't have?" The same applies to expressing gratitude. You cannot express it if you don't feel it in the first place. This is why thankfulness almost always comes before gratefulness.

As I've said, thankfulness is a feeling. When you feel thankful, your perspective will change. You'll begin seeing silver linings and notice things typically taken for granted. Start to think about your blessings rather than look for things to complain about, and that feeling of gratitude may eventually extend to people. You begin to notice small gestures like your spouse helping with the laundry or the clerk who helps bag your groceries. When this happens, you just can't help but be grateful.

It's not a question of choosing between being thankful and being grateful but rather how to practice both at the same time. Start by being thankful for life, the things you have as well as those you lack, and the good days together with the bad ones. These will help you find the true meaning of gratitude and when you do, being grateful will come naturally.

On SOLID Ground

by Christina Koepfel

Director of Youth Ministry and AV Production

Over the past few months, as we have been navigating where we are going as a church, I have been reading various books, listening to podcasts, and learning more about the direction of the big “C” Church. I have found that many post-covid churches are in the same spot we are – looking for ways to rejuvenate and regain the passion that God has placed within us. I’ll be honest, many of these resources have a slant on how to become younger as a congregation. I love our church family, but we all can attest to the aging of our congregation. Look at me, I turn 40 this year. And as one of our “younger” congregants I look in the mirror and see the reality. No, I don’t believe that God is done with the church family that has taken root at the corner of Main and Perry, but I do believe we need to dust off some cobwebs.

My most recent read, “Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church” by Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, encourages churches to “Grow Young” by committing to 6 Core ideas.

1. Unlock keychain leadership,
2. Empathize with today’s young people,
3. Take Jesus’ message seriously,
4. Fuel a warm community,
5. Prioritize young people everywhere, and
6. Be the best neighbors.

While I won’t go into detail on each of these commitments, I do believe they embody what we all look for when we enter the doors of 116. We want to be a part of a family in which we are seen, included, accepted, belong to, cared for, and that it is all based on the transforming power of faith in Jesus Christ.

In my life, I can fully attest to the principals of “Growing Young.” When I returned from college in 2006, I was at my lowest, broken, lost, filled with depression and thoughts of suicide. Without the family here at Peoria First, I don’t know where I would have ended up. I was loved back through the doors and back into ministry. Patrick Jenkins reached out in various ways to include me in small groups and bible studies. When he left, Pastor Eric continued small groups and activities. On nights when no one would show up, Pastor Adrian included me in his Spanish speaking studies. I was put to work in our children’s ministry by Pastor Cheryl, Barb, and of course my mom, Miss Sue, not to mention Book

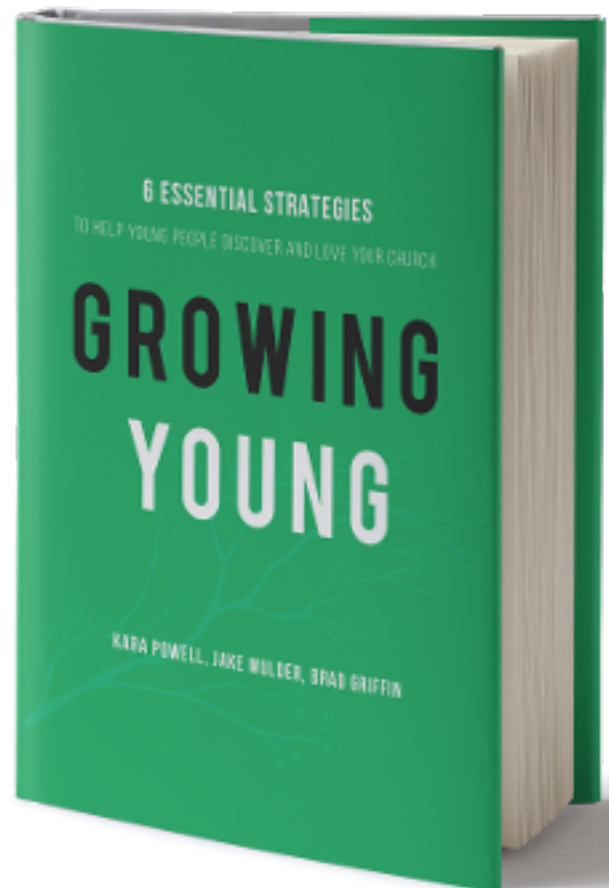
Buddies at Irving School. I was seen, included, and accepted. I was given a place to belong and to be cared for and most importantly, I was given time to reconnect with God.

I am sure each one of us has a story about how God has used this family at Peoria First to love us back into relationship with Him. Have you told anyone your story? What if the next person you meet within these doors is looking for solid ground, how are you going to stand with them in the storms of life? Have you gotten to know anyone younger than you yet?

If you are interested in reading, “Growing Young,” please let me know. If someone has my copy, I’ll buy another one. If you would like a taste of the book, check out this YouTube video: “Growing Young: Helping Young People Discover and Love the Church| Kara Powell | Calvin University”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il1KMMwPDpI>.

If you watch the video, make sure you check out her answer to the last question.



Fine Arts

by Eugene Maison

Director, Fine Arts

The Fine Arts Ministry remains dedicated to enriching lives through art, while actively fostering the development and strengthening of relationships between artists, the community, and Peoria First UMC.

Peoria first Art Enrichment

About a year ago, Sandi stumbled upon a delightful hobby. Through extensive hours of online tutorials, self-guided learning, and dedicated practice, she has honed her skills in crafting intricate paper flowers. Rather than keeping this talent to herself, Sandi generously shared her creations with family, friends, and colleagues. Taking it a step further, she led two Art Enrichment workshops for members of Peoria First UMC, guiding them in crafting beautiful bouquets of paper flowers and an impressive twelve-inch-wide paper sunflower.



Art Enrichment Coming in December

The Art of Pysanky with Crystal Potthoff

Crystal Potthoff has been sharing her expertise in the art of pysanky at various locations in Central Illinois. In this upcoming workshop, we will explore the creation of intricate snowflake patterns on real (empty) chicken eggs. The designs are simple and elegant, providing ample room for individual creativity.

Our method of choice will be the wax batik process known as pysanky, and Crystal will guide us through every step of this fascinating

art form. Pysanky entails a multi-layered process using wax and dye. As the wax is delicately applied to the eggshell, you may offer heartfelt prayers on either the chosen design, the intended recipient of your creation, or whatever issues you may have in mind. Once all the vibrant colors have been applied, the wax is gently melted away, revealing the magnificent, multicolored artwork underneath.

Date: December 2
Time: 10-Noon or 1-3 PM
(Same WORKSHOP
DIFFERENT TIMES DUE TO LIMITED
SPACE)
Venue: Peoria First Room
215
Ages: 15 and older
Registration fee: Free
10 SPOTS available per session



Register Here



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

Peoria First Arts Outreach at Lincoln K-8 School

Lincoln Children's Choir

The choir comprises thirty-four students from Lincoln K-8 School, ranging from second to fourth grade, who eagerly joined this year's choir. The semester's theme centers around *Peace, Love, Hope, and Joy*. Under Ms. Nichole's direction, the song selections are diverse, featuring multiple languages and cultural influences. Every musical piece is beautifully accompanied by Ms. Aleta on the piano. Our weekly choir rehearsals kick off with essential practices like breathing exercises, vocal warm-ups, and voice training. The children are putting in the effort to ensure they are thoroughly prepared for their performances. Their goal is to spread Peace, Love, Hope, and Joy throughout this season through songs such as "Where Can We Find Peace," "Dona Nobis Pacem," "Candle of Hope," "Alle! Alle! Alle!," "Alegria!," and "We Want Peace!"

Lincoln After School Arts

We are thrilled to welcome an eager and dedicated group of 14 third and fourth graders who have enrolled in our After-School Arts program for this semester at Lincoln K-8 School. Additionally, we feel fortunate to have two former participants of the program, now in fifth grade, who have volunteered as student helpers out of their love for the program.

EXHIBITION DATES:

JANUARY 5 - JANUARY 20, 2024

DECEMBER 4: ALL SUBMISSIONS DUE

**DECEMBER 14 AND 15:
DELIVERY OF ENTERED WORKS
9AM – 1PM TO 116 NE PERRY
AVENUE**

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 14:
EXHIBITION RECEPTION 9:45 -
11:15AM**

**JANUARY 20: EXHIBITION
CLOSES AT 1PM**

**JANUARY 21 OR 23: PICK-UP
WORKS AT THE GALLERY 9AM –
12PM**

Foster Gallery



One Art Exhibit at the Foster Gallery is an invitational show for members/relatives of the Peoria First congregation. One entry per individual. Please submit one of your most recent creative works to be part of this exhibition.

Original works in any medium of artistic expression (fine arts, crafts, woodwork, quilt, embroidery, poetry, etc.) are eligible. We hope you will be part of this exhibition.



Register Here

We express our sincere appreciation to all our volunteers and supporters. We kindly ask that you continue to keep this ministry in your thoughts and prayers as an ongoing act of support.

**If you have questions about the Fine Arts Ministry, contact Eugene Maison.
emailson@fumcpeoria.org**

FALLOWEEN

by Lilly Garcia
Director of Children and Family Ministry

Fear is no match for faith in Jesus.

Thank You for encouraging the kids to love His Word at home, and every Sunday and Wednesday at church.

All for ONE Book!

Can you recite all 66 books of the Bible in order? Some of our kids can! Make it a family challenge!

Love conquers all!

Our newly arrived non-English-speaking students feel our kids love. We all felt it during our Family Harvest Celebration on.

Laughing with purpose.

Spend more time laughing with your loved ones: His joy is such a gift amid this world's pain.

On a mission to increase intercessory prayer

Broaden your children's prayer list by including new people, places, and situations beyond basic needs.

We want more . . .

interaction with our senior brothers and sisters. We need their affirmation, values, and skills.

Every Sunday kids enjoy a simple snack at 10:45.

Let us know if you are interested in donating snacks.

Entering a season of stewardship in November.

Special envelopes are available for kids who want to practice tithing, giving the first 10% of their allowance to God and His work. He sanctifies the rest, so kids can learn how to save and spend wisely.

Now is the perfect time to share Christ.

Pick up children's tracks at the Children's Area.

JESUS has given us a wonderful First family and we are grateful for all your support:

- Praying for our team
- Volunteering/Donating
- 4OurKing Worship team participation
- Your future support for Ms. Jill's sewing projects for our Christmas Experience on Sunday, December 3 at 9:45AM.



In August 2023, a mission team from Peoria First UMC traveled to Aposento Alto, our partner church in Honduras. We helped with a medical brigade (clinic) followed by a Youth Conference and a Women's Conference. Children's activities were planned throughout the week.

Four teens and young adults from Peoria First UMC were an integral part of the team. They described their experience in the notes below.

Gabby Romero

"I'm a junior at Richwoods High School. I volunteered for the Honduras mission trip because I wanted to help out. Some of my responsibilities included being in the childcare area and keeping the kids entertained. The most memorable parts of the trip for me were the kids and the youth conference. I had a great time, and it was such a great and different experience. I enjoyed the trip a lot!"

Kate Rolffs

"Buenos! I served on the Honduras mission trip because the opportunity fell into my lap, and it was too sweet to turn down. It was such a joy to serve with Peoria First UMC again after living away from home for the past few years. I really loved reconnecting with our wonderful pastors and getting to see them outside of the normal Sunday morning. We are so incredibly blessed to be led by them!"

It was my first time being in Honduras and being a part of a medical brigade as well! Some of my responsibilities included passing out reading glasses, helping check people into the pharmacy, distributing medicine, and helping on the worship team for the youth conference. The people of Fuerzas Unidas touched my heart with their zeal for the Father."

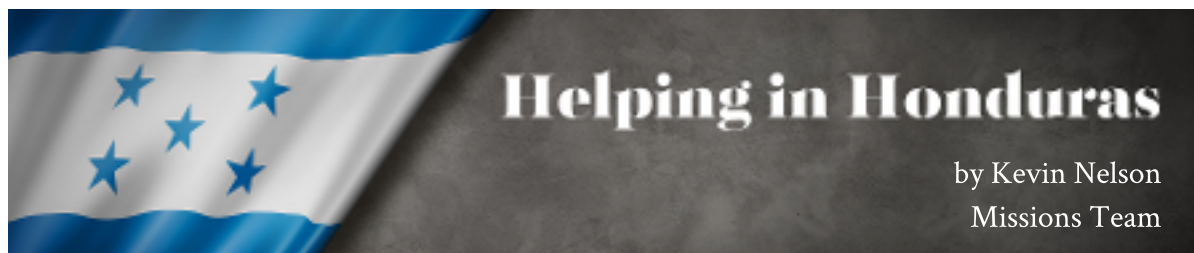
Analid Alcaide

"I am a sophomore at Illinois Central College. I volunteered for the Honduras mission trip because I love helping people, especially those in need. Some of my responsibilities included assisting the dentist in the medical brigade, translating prayer, and assisting in games for the youth conference. One of the most memorable parts of the trip for me was receiving hugs from the patients leaving the medical brigade as they were so thankful for our help."

Fatima Salinas

"I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have been able to join one of our mission groups in their trip to Honduras this summer. This being my first major mission trip, first time traveling without my parents, I was excited, yet nervous because I was not sure what to expect. However, those worries quickly went away when I realized the group of people I found myself surrounded by. They welcomed me and made me feel safe, protected, and blessed and became such guidance on this trip. The week that we were there was filled with many good things, sad things, and trials that could have stopped many from continuing this type of trip. I saw the hand of God through many of our experiences but most importantly, I saw God in so many of fellow members. I had an amazing time in Honduras, getting to know the people from Aposento Alto, those in the mission house, and serving the community who love God so deeply. I cannot wait to serve again, see familiar faces, and keep serving the community of people God truly loves."

Other Team Members: Pastor Miguel Rios, Rosie Quiñones, Pastor Adrian Garcia, Lily Garcia, Pastor Tim Ozment, Jennie Ozment, Dr. Greg Guard, Julie Rolffs, Ernestina Tamayo



Immigrants in a Foreign Land

³³*“Do not take advantage of foreigners in your land; do not wrong them. ³⁴They must be treated like any other citizen; love them as yourself, for remember that you too were foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God.”*
Leviticus 19:33-34

God establishes our treatment of foreigners living among us. Immigrants are at their most vulnerable far away from their homeland, family, and friends. Scripture says, “Don’t wrong them, treat them as your own.” A foreigner in a different country, facing unexpected circumstances, may be starving for emotional support. But they are not alone, relying in God’s outstretched arms through those eager to show His love and will.

A big part of “foreigner conflict” begins when we do not speak the same language which creates distance from one another. It is surprisingly easy to remove language barriers through technology. Yet, I can’t emphasize enough that the language of love is far more efficient than the foreign words for which you are searching.

Another “foreigner conflict” that discourages us from reaching out to immigrants, comes from the idea that “they” are to be valued according to their immigration documents instead of their God given value. I understand people don’t want to be seen as law breaking supporters. To address this, believe me when I tell you that each person has a different immigration

route under the current law to apply for their legal status. Each case is different. There are tourist visas, which allow people to visit relatives, go sightseeing, shopping, and even conduct some business. Others come with renewable work permits, depending on their employer, and the political conditions and ties to their homeland. Some come under humanitarian visas reserved for victims of violence without their country’s protection, and others come under political asylum visas. Astonishing as it may be, there are now more children of immigrants born in the USA than those coming to this nation. Second and third generations of migrants are the most visible as they make their way into our schools, health systems, and technical /professional jobs. They are bilingual and bicultural.

Racism, in my opinion, is the hardest obstacle to break. Our country, the USA, is comprised of immigrants from many nations. Racism has been adopted as the only way to “protect ourselves and to survive.” The damage has affected us on so many levels, including politically and socially.

Biblically, God in his mercy, created everyone to his likeness, to fellowship with him. When sin entered thru the first Adam, we became estranged from God and each other. God declares in 1 Timothy 2:

⁸*Therefore, I want men everywhere to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from sin, anger, and resentment. It*

takes a personal decision to regard and treat others as equals, with the same loving kindness God modeled for us. Titus 3: ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.





My father was born in Texas in 1925 and became an orphan at an early age. In 1932 he was repatriated (sent back to his home country) with his Hispanic grandparents under the repatriation law of 1930. The instigation came from the slogan, “Mexicans are stealing American jobs.” My father of Mexican American descent was uprooted and taken to the alien country of Mexico, where he had to learn Spanish. I was born in Mexico and couldn’t relate to my dad’s story. I tried to make sense of dad’s plight by reading the historical pieces north of the Rio Grande. I soon got a taste of similar treatment when I moved to Illinois to reach farmworker immigrants for Christ and to establish a congregation of multi-cultural foreigners.

Today, I recognize the greatest law this country could operate under is Christ’s law of love. His love breaks down every barrier and merges us into one family in Christ, where our origin doesn’t define us. In Christ we are bound together for a final destiny, where we all will be gathered in his heavenly abode.

Revelation 7: ⁹*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all the tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and* ¹⁰*crying out with a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*



PASTOR ADRIAN GARCIA

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

TUNED IN TO HEAVEN

by Dan Philips

Director of Community Ministries

Music is one of God's greatest gifts to his children, if you ask me.

Go ahead, ask me, and I will tell you that music brings more joy to me in this world than nearly everything else besides my love for God, and my family. Growing up in the 1960's, Rock and Roll was the soundtrack of my life and as I've grown older, my taste in music has changed and grown.

Just as God created all things—the heavens and the earth, the sky and the sea, the vegetation and the animals, and all human beings—He is also the author of the arts, which includes music. God graciously gave men and women musical abilities, whether with instruments, their voices, or with composing music.

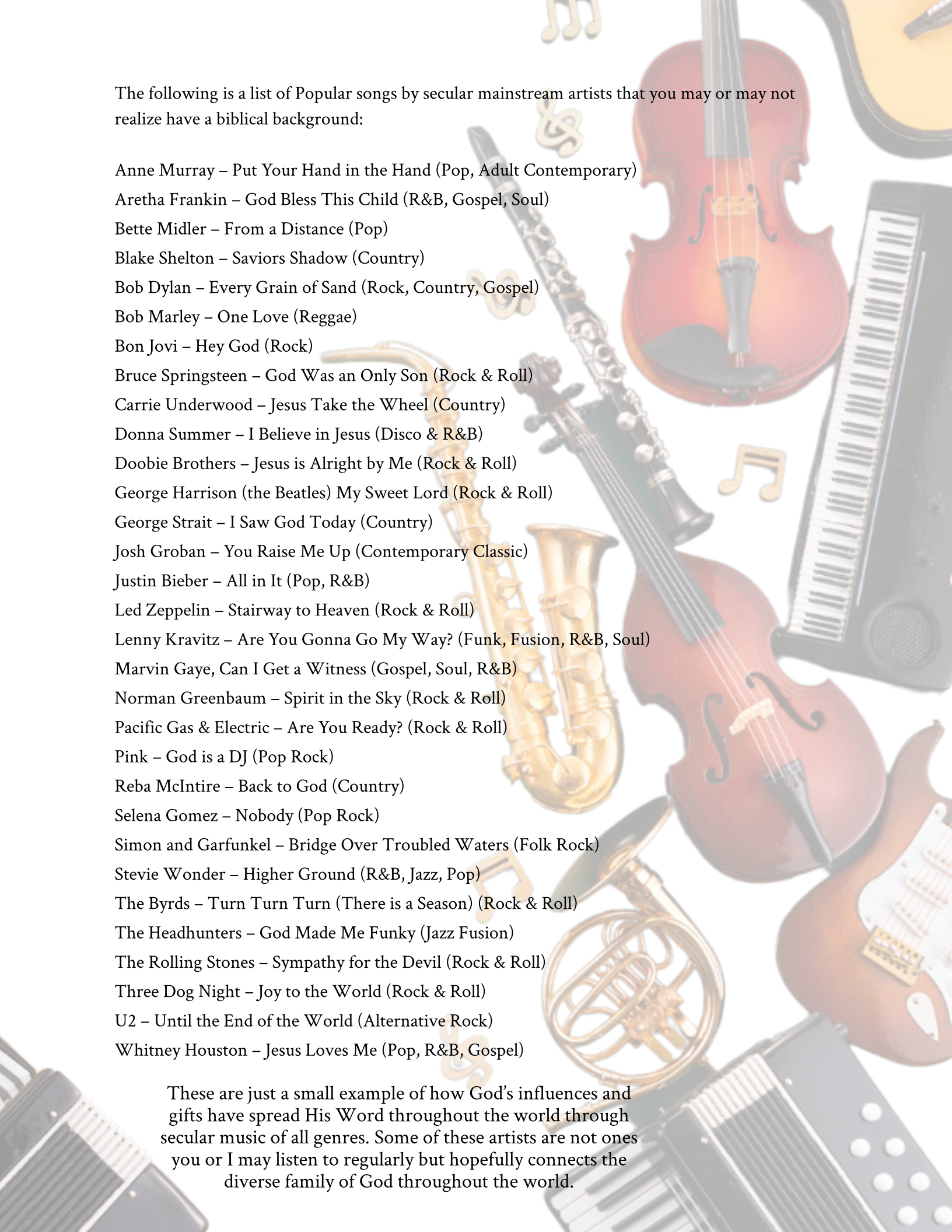
It would seem, that God gave us music and instruments for uses other than in worship. But are those uses limited to only Christian contexts for believers? Can we use them and listen to them outside the Christian realm? After all, many secular artists have been blessed with great talent, which is the result of God's common grace to *all* of mankind. Do Christians have the freedom to listen to them?

Scripture does not approve (or disapprove) of any one style of music over another. That also goes for instruments. Instruments in and of themselves are neutral. Rather, it is the heart of the person playing the instrument that determines the message, not the instrument.

Style and instrumentality, then, are completely subjective, based on culture, geography, and generation. While some believers prefer the traditional hymns to the accompaniment of an organ or piano, others want more upbeat, contemporary music. Styles of music today range from Country to Rock, R&B to Jazz, Classical to Pop, Funk to Gospel, and everything in between.

I love it when popular secular artists reference Jesus, God, Scripture, and the Bible in positive ways. These artists realize and acknowledge through their music that these positive references are more than just rhyming words and music.





The following is a list of Popular songs by secular mainstream artists that you may or may not realize have a biblical background:

Anne Murray – Put Your Hand in the Hand (Pop, Adult Contemporary)

Aretha Franklin – God Bless This Child (R&B, Gospel, Soul)

Bette Midler – From a Distance (Pop)

Blake Shelton – Saviors Shadow (Country)

Bob Dylan – Every Grain of Sand (Rock, Country, Gospel)

Bob Marley – One Love (Reggae)

Bon Jovi – Hey God (Rock)

Bruce Springsteen – God Was an Only Son (Rock & Roll)

Carrie Underwood – Jesus Take the Wheel (Country)

Donna Summer – I Believe in Jesus (Disco & R&B)

Doobie Brothers – Jesus is Alright by Me (Rock & Roll)

George Harrison (the Beatles) My Sweet Lord (Rock & Roll)

George Strait – I Saw God Today (Country)

Josh Groban – You Raise Me Up (Contemporary Classic)

Justin Bieber – All in It (Pop, R&B)

Led Zeppelin – Stairway to Heaven (Rock & Roll)

Lenny Kravitz – Are You Gonna Go My Way? (Funk, Fusion, R&B, Soul)

Marvin Gaye, Can I Get a Witness (Gospel, Soul, R&B)

Norman Greenbaum – Spirit in the Sky (Rock & Roll)

Pacific Gas & Electric – Are You Ready? (Rock & Roll)

Pink – God is a DJ (Pop Rock)

Reba McEntire – Back to God (Country)

Selena Gomez – Nobody (Pop Rock)

Simon and Garfunkel – Bridge Over Troubled Waters (Folk Rock)

Stevie Wonder – Higher Ground (R&B, Jazz, Pop)

The Byrds – Turn Turn Turn (There is a Season) (Rock & Roll)

The Headhunters – God Made Me Funky (Jazz Fusion)

The Rolling Stones – Sympathy for the Devil (Rock & Roll)

Three Dog Night – Joy to the World (Rock & Roll)

U2 – Until the End of the World (Alternative Rock)

Whitney Houston – Jesus Loves Me (Pop, R&B, Gospel)

These are just a small example of how God's influences and gifts have spread His Word throughout the world through secular music of all genres. Some of these artists are not ones you or I may listen to regularly but hopefully connects the diverse family of God throughout the world.



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DECEMBER 3 · 9:45AM · WORSHIP CENTER

DECEMBER 3 · 4PM · WORSHIP CENTER

DECEMBER 9 · 6PM · SANCTUARY

DECEMBER 10 · 11:15AM · SANCTUARY

8:30AM · TRADITIONAL · SANCTUARY

9:45AM · RENEW · WORSHIP CENTER

11:15AM · RENUEVO · WORSHIP CENTER

4 AND 7PM · SANCTUARY

CHRISTMAS EVE