

Northern Illinois Conference 2024 One Matters Award

Ashton United Methodist Church

Ashton, IL – Prairie South



We were a struggling rural church, running around 25 people a Sunday with 2 youth regularly attending and a few who came a couple of times a year.

But things changed on June 2nd, 2022, a young man, 15 years old, one of the two that came regularly, was in a UTV accident and died. He and his family were important to the community, the high school and especially our church. He was an amazing young man with great faith, he was not afraid to share his faith even on Facebook. We knew we needed to help the other young people at the school during this time, we opened our doors and our hearts. We started going to support them at their sports games and other activities.

Eventually we arranged for all the basketball players, boys and girls, coaches, and cheerleaders to come over for breakfast, we prayed for 10, we got 44, praise God. We invited them back for a game day, they came. We invited them for movie nights, they came. They needed a place to be. We prayed and decided to make them a youth room, we converted the whole basement for them. The kids started coming not only for the games and movies, but also to worship, and then their parents came. We put out a notice that we were going to start confirmation classes, 16 mostly high school students signed up. The ministry and outreach of this church is truly "youth".



We started doing as much as we could to help, we decorated our gazebo so they had places to take pictures for Homecoming, Prom, and Graduation. We did a Baccalaureate Service for the graduates. It is so awesome when we have an event, and we see new faces. We never have to ask for acolytes, two always step up, they help serve food when we have events, they have become a real part of the church, as have their parents, several who have joined the church.

We believe that God has been working in this church. Through the death of a wonderful young man and his family, the eyes of a community have been opened as have their hearts and their spirits, they have invited Jesus in and He entered their hearts. We now have 55 to 60 in attendance on an average Sunday, including 20 youth.



Written by Pastor Jan Shaulis

