

Northern Illinois Conference 2022 One Matters Award

*East Jordan United Methodist Church
Prairie South*



When the pandemic hit, we used this situation, this new attitude that was pervading all around us, the attitude of impossible to do stuff, to make sure that we redoubled our mission of knowing God and making God known. How could we best do that? Not by closing down and putting the Gospel back on the shelf. But by being positive, setting up a plan and doing it. We built a pavilion outside, where we could worship, meet, eat all outside and visible to all that drove by. It has become a visible witness to the fact that we are growing rather than shutting down.



Our membership grew. New professions of faith have become exciting and are on the upswing. One new member in 2018 has brought on 14 new members. Baptisms and weddings have increased, community has revived, people are a blessing to one another. In 2019 there was one baptism, three more in 2021 and now five more are scheduled. There are seven weddings on the calendar for this summer and fall.

When the terrible atrocities began in Ukraine, we began our weekly prayer service every Wednesday evening. We will continue to pray as long as there is fear. God is alive. We offer people the choice of positive rather than the negative place to get stuck.

"STOP! TAKE A CROSS HOME!" appears on the outdoor sign in front of the church. East Jordan members invite any and all to stop, get a cross, take it home and display it.

Attached to the cross is a plastic bag with a writing about the cross and a prayer for the people of Ukraine. We want to encourage people to pray with us for safety, care, love, and protection from the vicious killers of their freedom and families. We pray that our actions as Christians would encourage others to join in. Our members are building the cross, assembling the cross, painting the cross and planting the cross. So far, we have given over 200 crosses to people who have stopped by the church. We have received numerous phone calls, notes, text messages and posts of Thanks. We will continue to build the crosses and plant them in our lawn for all.

For 15 years we have reached out to the farming community in celebration of who they are. We call it: "The Farm Heritage Festival" This is where we invite local farmers young and old, to share with us their history, equipment, and practices. Our goal is to reach people outside, where they are at doing what they love to do and embracing them with our faith.