

Northern Illinois Conference 2019 One Matters Award

Shannon: Bethel (Rockford District)

Located in a small rural farm community in northwest Illinois, Bethel United Methodist Church is situated in the Village of Shannon (pop. 800), with many of the congregation coming from the village and surrounding farms. Located about 8 miles away is Lake Carroll, a resort community with about 1,000 homes. About 70 percent of these homes are vacation homes owned by families who come on weekends and holidays.



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

After a trip to South Korea to learn about the power of prayer, the congregation began holding 30-minute prayer services three times a week in spring 2017. In order to accommodate all kinds of schedules, the prayer services are held 6:30 pm Monday, 6:00 am Wednesday, and



12:30 pm Thursday. The congregation's participation in those prayer services led to the idea of holding a weekly worship service at a shelter house at Lake Carroll to reach new people for Christ. Once the idea was shared with the congregation, God confirmed it in the hearts of others who immediately volunteered to arrange for refreshments, advertising, and setup each weekend. Music at each service typically consists of a keyboardist, a guitarist and a bass player.

This year will be Bethel UMC's third summer of Church at the Lake, with services from Memorial Day through Labor Day (weather permitting), when many people spend weekends at the lake. Approximately 50-70 new people have been reached through this service, with some of those becoming members of the congregation. On Easter Sunday 2019, 28 people joined the church. The congregation gives God the glory for the fruit they have witnessed as they continue to pray for God to lead them in new paths of reaching more people for the kingdom of God.

God's power working through Bethel UMC because of prayer has revitalized the congregation and provided new opportunities for ministry.