

# Northern Illinois Conference 2022 One Matters Award

*Our Saviour's United Methodist Church  
Schaumburg, IL - Prairie Central*

Throughout the pandemic we were blessed to be able to continue the “work” of the church, baptizing over several infants and young children in 2021. One family chose to share their baptism service during one of our outdoor worship services, on a warm sunny day in August. The setting was perfect, the guests comfortable in casual clothing. The parents and family members were beaming, and God was in our midst.



Many of the new parents and/or families have continued to be with us, sharing their gifts and time. They now seem to feel this is “their” church, a place they are comfortable and want to serve.

By the grace of God, as well as the persistence of our Confirmation teachers, and the cooperation of parents, we received into membership ten young confirmands. The leaders sought new ways to connect with their students, as well as connecting them with one another.



The outdoor worship services were possible with the help of several volunteers who set up chairs, sound equipment, assisted in seating people, greeted newcomers and conveyed a cheerful and welcoming atmosphere. As the weather changed and we still could not meet indoors, many newcomers followed us to our Zoom service.

Especially popular among newcomers and long-time church families were our “virtual coffee hours” following Zoom worship. When we joyfully resumed our in-person worship (and continuing Zoom) we were happy to welcome our “newcomers” as new “old friends.” From Zoom to in-person, our newcomers came into the church, including two who came into our Choir!

Our recent newly-hired staff members, as well as long-time staff, had great success in creative ways to serve and reach out to people during this unusual situation. Our Discipleship director led several study groups, first with day and evening Zoom meetings. Later the leader combined Zoom and in-person meetings. This new way of doing small groups made it easy for people to participate in studies no matter where they were. Our studies became accessible to a much wider group of people.

Our youth director started with outdoor meetings, then small group meetings, always encouraging the youth to bring friends. Our youth group grew in numbers during the pandemic. Our new Education Director also strove to contact parents, and then encouraging family Sunday school experiences. They are now happily meeting in person.

Our Pastor's focus has been to direct us outward, asking us how we will serve those who do not come to us. One result of a renewed purpose has been the creation of a Racial Equity Task Force; another, the continuation of financial support of our local Township food pantry. Challenges are met head-on, and our members have responded swiftly and generously, with both their resources and their physical abilities.

The key to staying vital has been our willingness to pivot quickly and to adapt to the new challenges. We have been willing to abandon some old paradigms and experiment with new strategies that have allowed the church to minister more effectively to God's people. The use of technology for creating and keeping relationships has been crucial.

Through our in-person service, our online streaming, and zoom bible studies and youth gatherings, many people in our community are finding it easier to connect with our church. Our church can show up every day rather than just Sundays.

Our goals for the near future are to reach out to our neighbors in-person, getting more involved in social issues in the community; partnering or re-engaging with non-for-profit agencies; participation in community events such as parades and town halls; creating more small groups; exploring and embracing new methods that work in our context; developing our church brand; updating technology and show we are in 2022; improving online platforms; equipping, and releasing people to use their skills and passions for new ministry.