

# Northern Illinois Conference 2024 One Matters Award

*Marengo United Methodist Church*

**Marengo, IL – Prairie North**



2023 was an interesting year for Marengo United Methodist Church, a small church of just over 200 members in a small town.

We received 12 new members, including three via Confirmation, and we baptized 7 people. The main focus of our year became the Capital Campaign which we'd worked on all year, the result of which was getting pledges of over \$110,000 beyond our goal of \$450,000 to pay off our mortgage. The discernment we did to proceed with the capital campaign and the spiritual growth we focused on during that process had an impact on our congregation beyond just raising the money to pay off our debt. It's also had a wonderful spiritual impact as well.

Three of the baptisms we conducted were for a family who showed up a few years ago merely looking to talk with the pastor about a wedding, having never really attended any church before. They were so moved by the worship and the connection with the people that they eventually joined the church and (a few years later) had their children baptized. Three other baptisms were from a mother who decided it was time to get sober and visited our church as part of her sobriety, only to find such a loving, caring community that she joined and had her children baptized. The other baptism was the daughter of a family whose son had been diagnosed with leukemia. Our church rallied around that family and supported them in many ways. When it was safe for them to return to church, that's when they had their other child baptized.

Most of the new members we received were either re-affirmation of faith (including the mother who got sober) or transfer from other denominations. Two of the transfers are from a younger couple with children who had trauma from their previous church experience and were uncertain about going to church again, but felt it was important for them and their children. So they watched our Facebook Live services for a couple months to make sure our church was "safe." Once they determined we were safe, they started attending and have engaged in many areas of service. The mother will be the co-director of our VBS this summer, the first time we've had VBS since before the pandemic.

It's a joy to see God working in the hearts and lives of Marengo United Methodist Church!

*Written by Rev. Doc Newcomb*

