

A Celebration of our Vital Rural Ministries

And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

– Luke 10:2



Chana UMC

Upgrading of the Chana playground is slowly moving forward. We have accomplished some progress, but not yet met our goals. We have accomplished the following: new and safe playground border, certified playground mulch, a new sign, and preparations for the future upgrades.

The more radical upgrades will be completed during spring 2022. These upgrades will include: new roofing, cleaning and reconditioning the wood, new finish on wood, new equipment, new adaptable swing for ALL children, a sunshade over the picnic table, a little free library, a buddy bench, and completion of the handicap accessible entrance from the parking lot.

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of this project. ~ Brenda McCasky



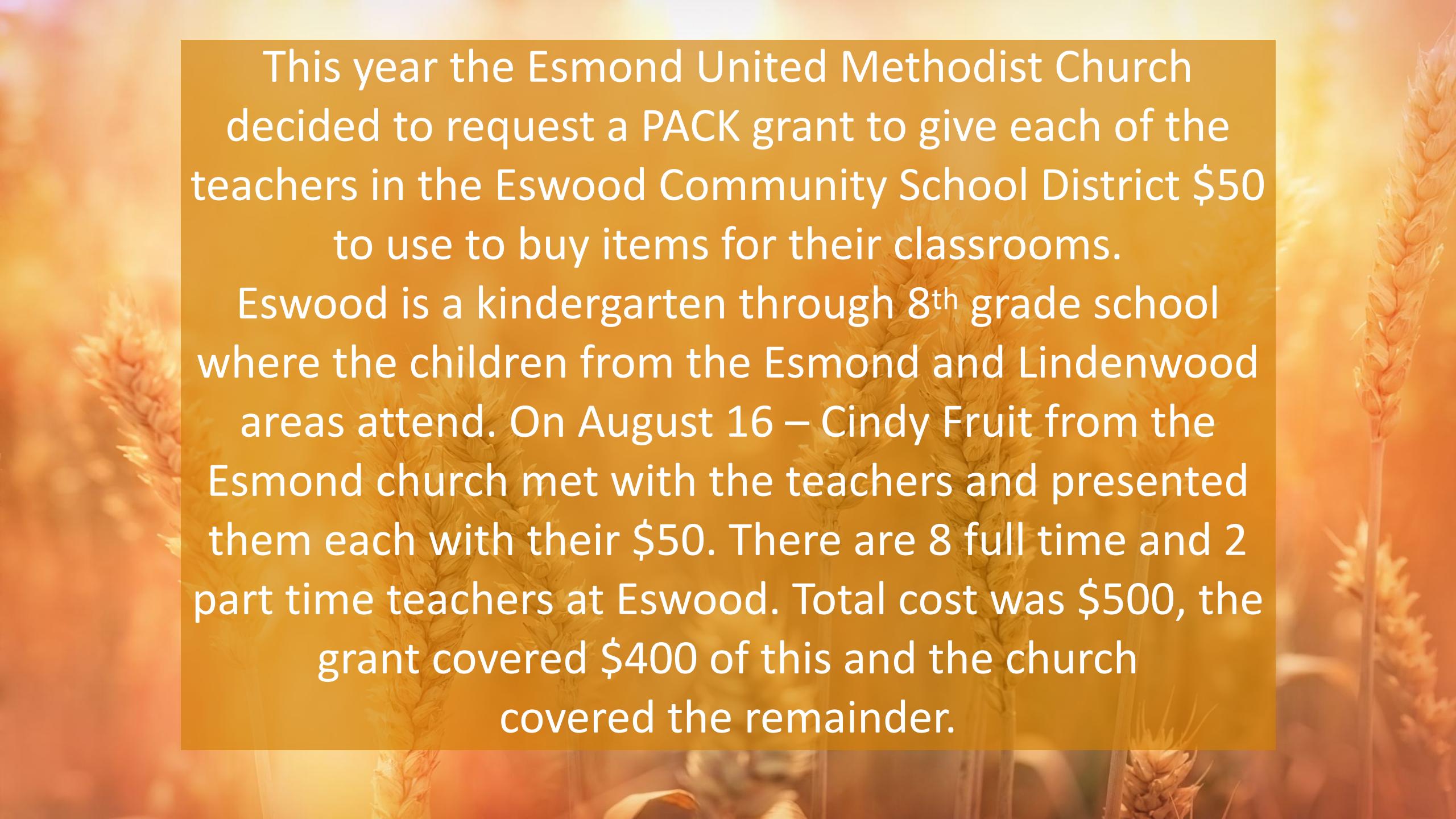
After the remodel



Before the remodel



**The Little Church with a Big Heart
Esmond United Methodist Church**



This year the Esmond United Methodist Church decided to request a PACK grant to give each of the teachers in the Eswood Community School District \$50 to use to buy items for their classrooms.

Eswood is a kindergarten through 8th grade school where the children from the Esmond and Lindenwood areas attend. On August 16 – Cindy Fruit from the Esmond church met with the teachers and presented them each with their \$50. There are 8 full time and 2 part time teachers at Eswood. Total cost was \$500, the grant covered \$400 of this and the church covered the remainder.





Elizabeth UMC

The Elizabeth First UMC received a \$500 grant from the NIC Town and Rural ministry. The money was contributed to the Elizabeth township for the construction of a "splash pad" at Terrapin Park.

The kids in the Elizabeth community now have a fun and safe place to cool down during the hot summer months. The pictures are of Pastor Roger presenting a check to the Mayor and village leaders of Elizabeth, and the actual splash pad that was constructed. - Roger Bronkema



Dixon: Grace



Dixon: Grace

- First of all, all the families of the children who attended this camp were extremely careful to send their kids to the camp (not going to any big gathering, only one family member went to the grocery, etc.). We had a safe and fun Summer Camp with Fully Rely on God (FROG).
- Second, it was time for Children to learn God is Good and God is always with them, and They want to share God with their friends and their neighbors. It helped them to learn and narrate their stories with God through crafts, games, storytime, and cooking.
- And... The best part of this camp IS (it is still happening) the kids who attended this camp are coming to Sunday School NOW (only one of them used to come). This is a BIG for us (honestly)!!! It helped to make a community of children and their parents. Because of this, four young moms are connected to one another as a faith community.

Tampico

The Tampico Area Food Pantry/Tampico United Methodist Church was thankful to be a recipient of Keagy Town and Rural Grant Funds in 2021. These funds allowed us to provide quality food boxes to needy families in our community. In addition to monthly food boxes, we were able to provide food boxes at Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, 'Summer Picnic Box' and most recently 'Back-To-School Breakfast Boxes' as well as school supplies for the families that utilize the Food Pantry. We have benefitted from relationships with our local Beef Producers to provide quality protein at a reduced cost and have included the local 4-H group to help fill boxes. Thank you for providing the opportunity to do this important work.

Marcia Widolff
Tampico UMC Mission Chair
Tampico Area Food Pantry Chair

Tampico Food Pantry



Savanna: First

Kids Kards

This ministry started in January 2020. Children, parents, and helpers make greeting cards to send to church members, shut-ins, people on our prayer list, and nursing home residents.

We meet monthly after Sunday worship service in our Fellowship Hall, make our cards, and share a meal, although our meals have been limited to Lunchables to take home due to the pandemic.

We focus on a theme based on scripture or a hymn, for example in August our theme was “In the Garden.” Each month we send out 70-80 cards.

Blessing Basket

The West Carroll School Food Pantry relocated to the Savanna FUMC building in Aug. 2020, providing food to any family with a student enrolled in the West Carroll School district. This district consists of children from Mt Carroll, Savanna and Thomson, and has a high percentage of poverty-level families.

The Blessing Basket is available to all school food pantry clients. Clients can choose the food items they want and anything from the Blessing Basket. It is funded entirely by donations, mostly from church members, and offers personal hygiene and household items. Items available include body wash, shampoo, toothbrushes and toothpaste, deodorant, laundry and dish detergent, toilet paper, paper towels, light bulbs, batteries, and other items.



Lanark

When I presented the idea of applying for a PACK grant, leaders at LUMC were interested, but not too sure with COVID still being a concern if the project involved being in close contact with other people. Many good ideas were suggested that will wait for safer times. But one thing that was suggested was to give out free batteries for smoke detectors during October since Fire Prevention Week is in that month. The plan was to have church members take a few blocks (or their rural neighborhood) and go door-to-door to greet people, share they are from Lanark UMC, and hand out free batteries for their smoke detectors because LUMC wants to keep them safe.



Lanark

They would take church information in case people were interested and also ask if they had any concerns they'd like prayers for.

We were awarded a grant of \$500 – thank you VERY much! I called our fire department to see if they had a battery supplier. The person I talked to was very impressed and appreciative for our safety gift to the community.

Although they didn't have a supplier, the fireman gave me good ordering info and asked that we alert folks that if their detector is older than 10 years, they should replace it, since by then the detector may not respond to smoke or a fire very effectively.



Lanark

That was good to know!

I ordered 3 cases of Energizer (per the fireman's suggestion) 9-volt batteries, (468 total). We put them in baggies since they weren't prepackaged. I made up a chart with all the streets in Lanark on it so people could sign up for the area they'd like to visit. Church information cards had been printed for another event, so people took them, along with typed info about what we were doing and why – because LUMC loves our neighbors and we want to keep them safe!

In the meantime, the Celebrate Lanark group decided to hold a Fall Festival event in our park the Saturday of Fire Prevention week. This wasn't part of our original plan, but they offered us a table without a participation fee, so some of our people volunteered to sit there, hand out batteries, and connect with our neighbors that way, too.

Lanark

Whether we connected with people at their homes or in the park, folks were very appreciative and surprised we were just giving them the batteries. Several wanted to pay us. They couldn't believe people, or a church, would care so much about their safety. Several people did ask us to pray for specific concerns. It was also a good way to reconnect with people from our church who we hadn't seen since COVID started and with members who haven't been to church for a long time. We pray this might plant seeds to bring them back, as well as welcome those with no church home to join us in worship or in our other ministry activities.

Thank you for providing this gift that allowed us to dream a little and offer some Jesus love and protection to our community. I pray this random act of kindness will inspire more people at LUMC to think outside the box and be more welcoming to our neighbors and friends.

Blessings, Pastor Marilyn Nolan & the Lanark United Methodist Church Congregation

Warren UMC

Warren UMC received a pack grant of \$500 from the town and rural ministry. The money was used for our "caring hands" ministry.

A group of volunteers would go to parishioners houses to do some small jobs and repairs. We would use the money to buy materials needed and lunch for the workers. We did yard work, painting, and even helped with a wheelchair ramp!

The pictures are of Pastor Roger and some volunteers cleaning up leaves and brush in an elderly ladies yard.





Mt. Morris: Disciples

We used our grant for this past summer's Community Vacation Bible School (VBS), a collaboration with two other Mt. Morris churches.

Apple River UMC

Apple River UMC created and hosted a unique kids and youth ministry week-long event this summer called “Feelings Fitness.” It was designed by a teacher (Sara Robbe, an ARUMC member).

We worked with educators and an expert in therapeutic art to create “Feelings Fitness” to help kids, ages 4 through 14, express their feelings, positive and negative, and integrate them into everyday life, especially in light of the challenges the pandemic has presented them.

Each day was centered around a new theme (e.g., community, being encouraging to others, good and not so good superpowers, the masks we wear for the world).

Apple River UMC

We brought out the themes through a Bible story, kids' literature, and an innovative art project, including discussion throughout. Each child had their own journal that they could add to each day. All of this helped the kids explore their feelings, be encouraged and build healthy community with one another.

This ministry was very successful, both for the kids (they loved the art projects!) and for the volunteers, because it was such an engaging experience for the kids. The kids understood that Jesus wants them to flourish in a variety of ways, and loves them in the midst of all their positive and not so positive emotions each day because Jesus knows what it's like to be human! We had 12 kids participate, which is a lot in our little town!



Apple River UMC

We are now extending this element of how God helps us flourish in our lives to the kids ministries in both Apple River and Scales Mound, especially in terms of art projects and creative journaling thematically centered around Bible stories.

The Keagy Grant helped fund the summer program (supplies, prizes, snacks, etc.) and will fund similar projects in the regular kids' ministry.

