

THE Visitor

December 2025

Grace United
Methodist Church
318 N Center Street
Geneseo, IL 61254
309-944-4208
geneseogumc@gmail.com
geneseograce.org

Salvation Has Come to This Home

The Blessing of a Family Altar

In Luke 19:1-10, we read the story of Zacchaeus - a man whose encounter with Jesus changed his life and his household. When Zacchaeus welcomed Christ into his home, Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house." (Luke 19:9)

That story reminds us that when Christ is welcomed into a home, everything begins to change - hearts are softened, faith is rekindled, and families are renewed.

When I look back on my own journey, I see that same truth reflected in the story of my family. My mother was a woman of deep faith who made sure that our home had a family altar - a simple table with a Bible, a candle, and a cross. It wasn't grand, but it was sacred ground where our family met God every night.

Even when I had fallen asleep, my mother would gently wake me and say, "It's time to pray." My father, in those early days, was not a churchgoer, and my brothers often did not join. But my mother's faith never wavered. She believed that the light of prayer could one day touch every heart in our home.

Through her steadfast devotion, that light began to shine brighter. Slowly, my father joined us in our nightly prayers. He learned how to pray - not from a sermon or a book, but by watching a faithful wife who prayed with love and perseverance. In time, my father accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and began attending church with us.

Truly, salvation had come to our home.

At our family altar, my mother also taught me the hymn "Jesus, As Thou Wilt." I can still hear her voice singing those gentle words of surrender and trust in God's will. That song became a prayer that carried us through every trial and joy, reminding us that God's way is always the best way.

That small altar was more than a piece of furniture - it was the heart of our home, the center of our faith. It was where peace was found, forgiveness was shared, and God's presence was felt.

As members of Geneseo Grace United Methodist Church, I encourage every family to create a family altar in your home. It need not be elaborate - what matters is the heart that gathers there. A Bible, a candle, a song, and a few minutes of prayer can make your home a place where Jesus is welcomed daily. When families pray together, hearts are healed, love grows stronger, and faith deepens. Through prayer, God still brings salvation, peace, and renewal to our homes - just as He did for Zacchaeus, and just as He did for my family.

"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." - Joshua 24:15

Pastor Cel



Pastor Excelsis (Cel) Biteng
Email: celbiteng@gmail.com

318 N Center Street
Geneseo, IL

Sunday School:
Adult Classes 8:00am
Ladies Bible Study
10:00am

Worship Sunday at 9:00am
Kids Worship (Ages 4-11)
Sunday at 9:00am

stayCONNECTED



309 944-4208



geneseograce.org



geneseogumc@gmail.com



Geneseo Grace

2025 Offering Needed to Meet Monthly Budget

\$31,800.00

Received November 2 - 16 (23 & 30 will be posted
in January)

\$23,679.50

**YOUR GIVING MAKES
A DIFFERENCE.**



GOOD NEWS!

For your convenience we have added 3 ways to
give online!

Scan the QR code | website: geneseograce.com |
Download the "Vanco" mobile app



Date	Attendance	
	Worship	Sunday School
November 2	94	21
November 9	88	24
November 16	77	17

Prayer Requests

Adopted children & families
 Kim Brake
 Mike Clark
 Joseph Titus Countryman
 Family Member
 Nikki Haars
 Mary Kintigh Family
 Michelle Matheis
 Patty
 Ellen Rubino
 Sally Swanson
Powell's Brother
 Alan & Connie Yager

Brenna
 Sue Chaffee
 Ruth Ann Eaker
 Ruth Ann Eaker
 Cathy Gaudet
 Hannika
 Andrew Lord
 Karen Myhre
 Bev Radue
 Barb Sigwalt
 Todd
 Karen Venter

Those in Assisted Living & Nursing Home:
 Joyce Criddle Mary Lou Deane Bev Radue
 John Riggs Connie Ryner Barry Snodgrass
 Sarah Stees Carolyn Stenzel Rita Webb

Please contact Julie Dahlquist
with prayer updates.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Church Council Meeting Summary November 17, 2025

The first order of business was to accept the generous donation of a 2020 Buick Encore by Dean & Sharon Yoder. Concerns about who will pay the insurance, does the church keep ownership, can the church sell the vehicle to Pastor Biteng were discussed. **Insurance will be paid by the church until the vehicle is sold to Pastor Biteng. Pastor Cel has a driver's license for 90 days in the U.S. She will need to take the driver's test to get a new license. ER Biteng is in the process of getting his learner's permit to drive.** Church Council will be in charge of all vehicle issues. A gift letter/form will be given to the Yoders for proof of donation for tax credit. Mark Mosbarger will take care of the car title, and Brad Toone will provide an insurance policy for the vehicle. Motion by Jean Hahn was made to accept the vehicle gift, seconded by Dave Swanson and approved by members.

Pastor Cel thanked the congregation for meeting the parsonage needs, rides to destinations and overall support for her, Ely and ER. ER Biteng will enroll in Scott Community College in January. Pastor Cel has been attending all committee meetings to learn about **the church's ministries. Pastor Cel has been visiting families and our seniors who are in nursing homes/assisted living.** Council members expressed their appreciation for her visits and phone calls. District Superintendent James Fielder appreciated the reports given for Charge Conference on November 16.

Staff/Parish Relations Committee has been meeting monthly to aid in the transitions of Pastor Cell. Next meeting is December 9.

The Missions Committee met, and Karen Doy reported that the Thanksgiving Offering will go to the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry with a floor of \$2,000. The Christmas Offering will go to the Red Bird Mission and Clinic with a floor of \$2,000. A Blood Drive will be held at the church in March 2026, and Missions Sunday is scheduled for September 26, 2026. Missions will meet on January 12, 2025 at 6:00pm.

Mark Mosbarger, Finance Committee Chair, reported that the General Fund is down \$28,000 from 2024.

We want to thank Mark Mosbarger for all his guidance throughout the years. Ann Neumann will chair the committee starting in January, 2026.

Brian Humphries, Trustee Chairman, said that flooring will be installed in the men's restroom in Otterbein. Steve Doy has scheduled the installation time with Chicago Street Decorating. Ceiling tiles will be replaced in Otterbein next spring. Volunteers will be needed to help. Steve Doy will be getting an estimate on repairing two window leaks in the foyer. Bat inspection/prevention has been delayed until 2026.

The following was reported by Tom Hitzhusen, Chair of the Worship Committee:

* Decorating the church for Christmas season will be Saturday, November 29, *The Christmas tree that was formerly used in the sanctuary has been sold. Three smaller trees will now be used. * December 7, a potluck lunch, hosted by the Worship Committee will follow the worship service, * Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held at 7:00pm. * Families are asked to volunteer to **light the Advent candles each Sunday. * On New Year's Eve, people will be able to come to the chapel for communion. * On** January 4, we will celebrate all birthdays in 2026. Cake will be served following worship service. * A new Head Usher will be needed beginning January 1. Mark Mosbarger will no longer be head usher. We are so thankful for his many years of service. Extra ushers are also needed. * Member name tags are now outside of the sanctuary. * Policy for Inclement Weather is in the works. * Next meeting is December 1 at 6:00pm.

Evangelism Committee met on November 10, as reported by Gayle Barnes, Chairperson. Grace will have a float in the Geneseo Christmas parade on December 13. All are invited to join in singing Christmas Carols. Jackie Mickley is overseeing the placing of a prayer box on the north side of the building. A special email address will be set-up for prayer requests. A library box, filled with **children's books, is also being planned**

LaVon Swanson has been elected as our new Lay Leader beginning January 1, 2026

Thirty-seven people were served at the Soup Lunch on Sunday, December 16. It was also recommended that a Youth Representative be in attendance at Church Council meetings.

The next Church Council meeting will be on January 19, 2026 at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted, Jeff Orton, Church Council Chair



HOLIDAY EVENTS



Join us as we celebrate the Birth of Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
with Holy Communion
December 24 at 7:00pm

Join us for a Christmas Potluck

Sunday, December 7
following Worship Service

Bring a dish to share.
Drinks & tableware supplied



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
to decorate our church for the
Christmas Season.
Saturday, November 29 at 9:00am



The Evangelism Committee is looking for volunteers to participate as Choir members in the Grace Church float for the Geneseo Lighted Christmas parade on December 13. There will be a speaker playing Christmas

music and the "Choir" will be singing along. The Evangelism Committee feels it is important to include the message of our Savior's birth in an otherwise secular parade. Cards with Grace Church information will be passed out to the crowd. We'd appreciate your support! Sign up in the lobby.

OWLS Lunch

Thursday, December 11
at 11:30am

Join us for lunch followed by our Annual Christmas Sing-a-Long with Becky & Lynne. Sign up in the lobby or call the office.



Holiday Hours

OFFICE & BUILDING
Closed Christmas Day
Closed New Year's Day

Coral will be out of the office
December 22 - January 4

If you have an emergency,
please call Pastor Cel
309-507-4628



Christmas Offering

The Christmas Offering will go to Red Bird Mission and Clinic, missions supported by the United Methodist Church. Red Bird Mission and Clinic have been providing ministries in the Kentucky region of the Appalachian Mountains since 1921. Today the need remains critical in this isolated, rural distressed area. Chronic poverty, lack of jobs, poor housing, and rugged mountainous terrain provide obstacles to a fuller life for the residents of this area. Red Bird Mission and Clinic strives to meet these needs through ministry in five areas: Education, Health and Wellness, Community Outreach, Economic Opportunity, and Community Housing Improvement.

It is time to order POINSETTIA PLANTS for the Advent/Christmas Season. These plants adorn the sanctuary, and can be purchased in memory of, honor of, or celebration of loved ones. Cost is \$10.00 per plant.

Plant purchased by: _____

Plant purchased for the following reason: (please circle)

† In Memory Of

† In Honor Of

† In Celebration Of

Name(s) to include: _____

- Please complete one form for each plant ordered
- Payment is due at the time of ordering
- Turn forms & money in to Coral in the church office before December 4, 2025





- 01 - Mary Gorman
- 02 - Karen Venter
- 03 - Rita Webb
- 07 - Daniel Coleman
- 09 - Paula Venema
- 10 - Suzie Neumann
- 12 - Izabella Stewart
- 13 - Pam Snodgrass
- 16 - Randy Clary, Emma Shoemaker, Brad Toone
- 17 - Jean Hahn
- 18 - Russ Gray
- 19 - Mary Orton
- 21 - Karoline Hasson, Kenzi Hasson
- 22 - Linda Goodwin, Sharon Neumann
- 27 - Avery Mickley, Lora Lea Miller, Jenna Rushing
- 28 - Ben Burris
- 29 - Landon Neumann



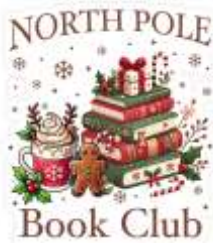
- 14 - George & Gail Farley (23)
- 18 - Steve & Karen Doy (49)
- 21 - Mark & Nancy Koster (12)
- Steve & Sue TeStrake (57)
- 28 - Steve & Jane Scherer (40)



Anyone who is involved in FROGs, GUMDROPS, or VBS will need to attend a "SAFETY GRACE" meeting on Sunday, January 18, 2026 following worship service. Please mark your calendars & plan to attend. A future class may be scheduled, if needed. Thank you!

BOOK CLUB
 Tuesday, December 2
 at 1:00pm

Our fun group meets in the church library. We will discuss "The Christmas Promise" by Donna Van Liere. New faces are welcome anytime!




Our Deepest Sympathy to the
 Family of Bruce Wolfe
 who passed away on November 14.

Husband of Jody Wolf
 Father of Evan (Jimmy) Hill
 Grandfather of Emmett & Harrison Hill
 Brother-in-law of Jackie (Joe) Mickley

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Prayers are requested for the family of former local pastor, Rhoda Warner, who died unexpectedly earlier today while visiting family in Virginia.

Rhoda is the daughter of Revs. Sylvester & Aletha Weatherall. She previously served as pastor at Alton Main Street UMC. Rev. Sylvester was District Superintendent for Grace a few years ago. Condolences may be sent to Revs. Sylvester and Aletha Weatherall, 36 Harmon Dr., Lebanon, IL 62254-1115.

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*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
 he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.
 Psalm 34:15*

MERRY
Christmas
 &
 HAPPY NEW YEAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
<p>Regular Sunday Events</p> <p>8:00am - Adult Sunday School 9:00am - Worship 9:00am - KIDS Worship 10:00am - Women's Bible Study</p>	<p>1 Angel Tree Gifts Due</p> <p>8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p> <p>6:00pm - Worship Committee, Library</p>	<p>2</p> <p>1:00pm - Book Club, Library</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting</p> <p>7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Chaddock picks up gifts</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>7</p> <p>Regular Sunday Events</p> <p>Potluck following Worship, Otterbein</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p> <p>6:00pm - Opal Circle Meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p>9:00am - Pearl Circle Meeting, Chapel</p> <p>5:30pm - Staff Parish Meeting, Chapel</p>	<p>10</p> <p>9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:15am - GUMDROPS 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting</p> <p>7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>11</p> <p>11:30am - OWLS Lunch, Otterbein</p> 	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Geneseo Christmas Walk Parade Line Up 3:30 - 5:00pm South Parking Lot</p>
<p>14</p> <p>Regular Sunday Events</p>	<p>15</p> <p>8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting</p> <p>7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>21</p> <p>Regular Sunday Events</p>	<p>22</p> <p>8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p> <p>CORAL OUT OF OFFICE</p>	<p>23</p> <p>CORAL OUT OF OFFICE</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Candlelight Service 7:00pm</p> 	<p>25</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>CORAL OUT OF OFFICE</p>	<p>27</p>
<p>28</p> <p>Regular Sunday Events</p>	<p>29</p> <p>8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p> <p>CORAL OUT OF OFFICE</p>	<p>30</p> <p>CORAL OUT OF OFFICE</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Communion served in the Chapel</p> <p>CORAL OUT OF OFFICE</p>			