

THE Visitor

March 2026

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

Discipleship: Up the Mountain and Back Down Again

I was very young when I was appointed to a church that did not even speak my dialect. They spoke Ytawes. And let me tell you honestly, it was hard. Very hard. For three months, I struggled. I preached in my dialect, but not everyone understood me. They spoke in their dialect and I did not understand them either. I heard complaints: **Pastor, we don't understand. Why can't she speak our language?** Those words can discourage a young pastor. I could have given up. I could have requested a transfer. I could have stayed comfortable, but discipleship is not comfort. So, I decided: If I cannot understand the adults, I will start with the children. I began talking to the little children. Teaching Sunday School, sitting with the youth, listening, and learning one word at a time. The children became my language teachers. Sometimes I would pronounce a word wrong and they would laugh at me! **But that's okay. Because discipleship requires humility. Little by little I learned. And something beautiful happened: We stopped being strangers. We became family. We planned to have a Retreat and a two day retreat, a youth retreat. We decided to climb a mountain in Peñablanca. It would take one whole day just to reach the top. Eighteen young people said yes. Church, it was steep, very steep. There were moments when we were so tired, our tongues almost came out like dogs in the heat! I told them, "If anyone sees my tongue touching the ground, please help your pastor!" ☺ We carried food. We carried water. We carried each other's burdens. And I carried the responsibility of 18 young souls. When we finally reached the top we were exhausted. But the view was so amazing and wonderful. White rocks. Green mountains. The beauty of God's creation everywhere was so fantastic. It was worth every step. And the place we stayed? It was a ranch. We had many animals around us. Sometimes I felt like we were not the retreat participants, the animals were watching us and judging our worship!**

Maybe they were saying, "These humans sing loudly, but we are more peaceful!" ☺ But that mountain became holy ground for us. What happened on that mountain? We had Bible studies. We prayed. We cleaned together. We served the community. Something changed in those young people. They came down from that mountain, with fire in their hearts. They became active. They started teaching Bible studies. They became leaders. And listen to this carefully: Out of those 18 young people two became pastors. Today, they are leaders. They are successful. They are serving God faithfully. And when COVID came they looked for me. They found me. They helped me financially. They supported my ministry. The ones I once cared for began caring for me. That is discipleship.

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

2026 Offering Needed to Meet Monthly Budget

\$30,833.00

February 1-22

\$33,375.17

General Fund

**YOUR GIVING MAKES
A DIFFERENCE.**



For your convenience we have 3 ways to give online!

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



Date	Attendance		
	Worship	Sunday School	Wednesday
February 1 & 4	76	23	13
February 8 & 11	83	22	14
February 15 & 18	70	20	57
February 22 & 25	74	24	

What fun we had at our first meeting of Stitchers Garden! We each had brought something to do. On February 13 we crocheted and embroidered. We had a super relaxing two hours working on our personal projects, visiting, and just enjoying each other's company. We will follow the schedule of meeting at 9:37 in the library the day following OWLS. Our next meeting is Friday, March 20. Come enjoy our fun gathering!



Please Join Us

Palm Sunday
Worship 9:00am

Maundy Thursday
Women's Lunch 12:00pm
Service 7:00pm

Good Friday
Service 12:00pm

Easter Sunday
Worship 9:00am



He is Risen

**Men's Lenten
Breakfasts 7am**

Feb. 21: Saint Malachy Church
Feb. 28: First Lutheran Church
Mar. 7: Kingswood Church
Mar. 21: Loraine Church
Mar. 28: Grace United Methodist Church



Illinois Great Rivers Conference Supports Local Need

The IGRC recently provided churches with the opportunity to apply for grants to support food ministries. We applied for the Capacity Building Grant (\$1000-\$3000) for building capacity to serve more people with the goal to strengthen the ministry long-term. We were awarded \$3000 to support the Geneseo-Atkinson Food Pantry increased need!

Grace United Methodist Church started the Food Pantry and has continued to offer support throughout the years. The demand for assistance increased 31% from 2024 to 2025. There were 72 first time visits in December 2025. In one month, up to 511 households, or 1496 individuals are assisted. This includes 515 children and 266 seniors.

Although our church and the community is generous, it has been difficult to meet this demand. **The grant was used to purchase food, allowing each family to select 8 additional items for their "Christmas basket". Recipients were very happy to be able to choose what they would use instead of being handed a basket.** They could mix and match traditional meal selections, including those for the makings of a green bean casserole, corn muffin mix, corn, sweet or baking potatoes, cranberry sauce, stuffing, a disposable roasting pan, and more.

"Clifford, the Big Red Van", donated to the Pantry by our church, has been used to pick up additional low-cost foods from the Midwest Distribution Center near Peoria.

The Pantry is appreciative of this grant, donations from church individuals, Opal Circle, and the Mission Committee.



Letter from Our Missionaries Assigned to Taiwan

Grace church supports missionaries Richard and Alma Navarro, assigned to Taiwan. They have two children, Charis Dorothy & Chadash Matthew. An abbreviated portion of their quarterly newsletter is below. Their entire newsletter is posted on the Mission Bulletin Board.

Alma & Richard minister to migrant workers, primarily fellow Filipinos, in Taiwan. These workers face many challenges as they are away from family and living in small spaces. In the midst of these struggles, **the Word of God gives comfort and assurance. "The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow" (Psalm 146:9).**

Their ministry, called TAHANAN, remains committed to caring for these migrants. They focus on teaching responsible financial stewardship and offering spiritual guidance. They believe that even while living and working far from home, they can experience the abundant life that God desires for all His people.

This ministry was the only ministry invited to a special dinner fellowship with local officials and local residents in the community, as they stand as the only foreign ministry actively participating in and supporting programs for the local community. They serve the community through clean up drives and other outreach efforts. His invite affirms that sincere service, love in action, and faith lived out can build bridges, break barriers, and create meaningful relationships.

They also provided an opportunity for migrants to laugh, connect, and share memories through Balik Tanaw Part 2. This activity was created to help ease the heavy burdens brought by long hours of daily work **and life's pressures. Through childhood games, participants were able to reminisce about a time when life** was simpler, laughter was free, worries were few, and joy came naturally. More than a game, it became a **celebration of life, gratitude, community, and God's enduring grace.**

The Navarros give thanks to God for the gift of life, hope, and love GUM church brings to their ministry journey. They continue to lift us up in prayer, asking God to strengthen and empower us as we keep touching lives in His service.

Sunday, March 22

Opal Circle invites everyone to Breakfast following service. The Blank Family invites you to Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Dwayne & Amie Blank during Breakfast. Cake will be served.



- 04 - Julie Dahlquist
- 09 - Wendall Akers
- 11 - Liam Coleman
- 14 - Robin Toone
- 15 - Brett Yoder
- 16 - Diane Birmingham, Jim Davison
- 17 - Judy Scott
- 19 - Joan Johnson
- 20 - Steve Scherer
- 22 - Ann Neumann
- 25 - Art French

OWLS Lunch

Thursday, March 19 at 11:30am

Join us for lunch followed by an enjoyable program. Sign up in the lobby or call the office.



BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, March 3 at 1:00pm



We will discuss "The Yellow Tail Moth" by Margot Shepherd. Together, our group enjoys exciting book discussions and just plain good conversations. New faces are always welcome!



- 04 - Larry & Bonnie Johnsen (59)
- 12 - Ron & Julie Blank (43)
- Joe & Jackie Mickley (49)
- 13 - Ron & Sue Vroman (55)
- 14 - Mark & Jodi Mosbarger (28)
- 18 - Dwayne & Amie Blank (70)
- 22 - Jerry & Judy Scott (51)
- 23 - Mark & Nancy Lohman (35)
- 24 - Cal & Paula Venema (54)

prayer is powerful

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Adopted children & families | Annika |
| Bonnie Aureda | Greg Bodeen |
| Kim Brake | Mike Clark |
| Corlette | John Davis |
| Ruth Ann Eaker | Family Member |
| Cathy Gaudet | GUMDROPS Families |
| Nikki Haars | Margaret Hitzhusen |
| Mary Kintigh Family | Andrew Lord |
| Clarice Massingill | Michelle Matheis |
| Jackie Mickley | Karen Myhre |
| Patty | Mary Petre |
| Powell's Brother | Barb Sigwalt |
| Barb Sigwalt | Jann Sigwalt |
| Family of Sarah Stees | Carolyn Stenzel |
| Sally Swanson | Todd |
| Ellen Rubino & her daughter-in-law | |

Those in Assisted Living & Nursing Home:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
| Joyce Criddle | Cathy Gaudet | John Riggs |
| Connie Ryner | Barry Snodgrass | |
| Carolyn Stenzel | Rita Webb | |

LOOKING BACK WITH



Did you, or do you, know . . . Irene Anderson, Keith Anderson, Brian Berry, Jim Crozier, Kathy Crozier, Steve Doy, Gary Feldman, Wilson Forbush, Rebecca Swanson Groves, Deanna Johnson Huddleston, Courtney Emerick Morrison, Connor Morrison, Corbin Shipp, Brandon Sieben, or Jon Sims? These are just some of the individuals who established their first Christian roots at Grace Church and have gone out to spread the Word as missionaries, pastors, etc. Can you think of others from Grace? Remember, we are all called to be disciples to every nation.



Dear Grace Church Family,

Thank you so much for the friendship you have showered over me and my parents with love and kindness over the years. Without them I wouldn't have made such great friends as the Grace Church Family over the years. I thank you from the bottom of my heart and I love all of you!

Thank you, Andy Radue



I wish to thank my Grace Church family for remembering me after my knee replacement with cards, texts, food, visits and flowers. So greatly appreciated.

Helen Akers



Thank you to all who prayed, sent cards, brought food, or helped in any way at the passing of our beloved husband, father and grandfather, Ken. Our deepest gratitude to Pastor Cel & Pastor Ely, Lynne Haars, Becky & Tom Daniels for the beautiful service and music for the Celebration of his life, to Steve Wildemuth for running the sound system and the Women of Grace for the delicious luncheon served afterwards. We thank God, and are deeply grateful, for each of you who helped ease our grief.



MISSION PROJECT REQUEST FOR DONATIONS

The Youth Group will be collecting **donations for Midwest Mission's** Personal Dignity Kits & Home Care Kits. We plan to deliver the kits, along with any donated bicycles & pedal sewing machines, this summer.

Items can be left in the F&F 5-gallon buckets that will be available in the lobby. Monetary donations are also welcome.

PERSONAL DIGNITY KIT:

- 1 - hand towel (no kitchen towels)
- 1 - washcloth (no dish cloths)
- 1 - adult toothbrush (individually packaged)
- 1 - bar soap 3-4 oz.
- 1 - shampoo 12-19 oz - lid taped
- 1 - deodorant 2-3 oz - stick, roll on, or pump
- 1 - lotion 8-10 oz - lid taped
- 1 - 1 gallon resealable plastic bag

HOME CARE KIT:

- *liquid household cleaner 56-80 oz total (no pump or spray bottles)
- *dish soap 42-64 oz total
- *liquid laundry detergent 100-150 oz total
- *1 scrub brush with or without handle



Group code: 4858
Last date to donate elsewhere: 1/15/25



BLOOD DRIVE

Grace United Methodist Church

Thursday, March 12th

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

318 N. Center Street - Otterbein Hall

To book your appointment, contact Karen Doy at karensdoy@gmail.com or scan the QR code

prayer is powerful

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Adopted children & families | Annika |
| Bonnie Aureda | Greg Bodeen |
| Kim Brake | Mike Clark |
| Corlette | John Davis |
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| Jackie Mickley | Karen Myhre |
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- | | | |
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Please contact Julie Dahlquist with prayer updates.



LILIES
Cost: \$12 each

If you would like to honor or remember someone this Easter by ordering a lily to decorate our sanctuary, please complete this form & return it to the office by **Sunday, March 15**. Our Administrative Assistant, Coral, will be placing an order on **Monday, March 16** to allow the florist proper time to fulfill our wishes. You may place your form & money in an envelope, and leave in the office on Coral's desk. Thank you.



In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

Other: _____

Submitted by: _____

March

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>	2 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	3 1:00pm - Book Club, Library	4 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:15am - GUMDROPS 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal	5	6	7 7:00am - Men's Lenten Breakfast at Kingswood Church
8 Regular Sunday Events	9 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library 6:00pm - Missions Meeting, Library 6:00pm - Opal Circle Meeting, Chapel	10 9:00am - Pearl Circle Meeting, Chapel 6:00pm - Evangelism Committee Meeting, Chapel	11 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:15am - GUMDROPS 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal	12 Blood Drive 7:30-11:30am, Otterbein 	13	14 NO Men's Lenten Breakfast Today
15 Regular Sunday Events	16 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library 6:00pm - Church Council Meeting, Chapel	17	18 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal	19 11:30am - OWLS Lunch, Otterbein 	20 9:30am - Stitches Garden, Library 	21 7:00am - Men's Lenten Breakfast at Loraine Church
22 Regular Sunday Events Breakfast Served by Opal Circle Following Worship Service	23 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	24	25 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal	26	27	28 7:00am - Men's Lenten Breakfast at GRACE
29 	30 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	