THE Visitor

June 2026

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

God Taught Me to Lead Courageously

Just after my high school graduation, my parents made a difficult decision. They decided not to send me to college anymore. Their fear was that I might follow the pattern of some of my siblings - studying while also getting married early and losing focus on my education. But deep in my heart, I really wanted to continue my studies. The challenge was that I had nothing - no financial support, no allowance, and no clear way forward. It was hard to go to school without anything. So, I began to work and save little by little. I helped others during harvest time, and in return, they would give me a small amount. That became my way of surviving and preparing for my enrollment. There were even days when I did not eat lunch because I had no money for food. I would sit and watch my classmates eat delicious meals, and somehow, I learned to feel "full" just by looking at them. But through all of this, my faith in God sustained me. My faith gave me courage to continue pursuing my studies and eventually to enroll in a pastoral school, even when I had nothing. And truly, God began to open doors. God used people to help me with my allowances and tuition fees. I experienced provision in ways I could never have planned or imagined. After completing my four-year course, I went on to Union Theological Seminary to pursue my Master of Divinity. There, I was blessed with a scholarship supported by the Central Conference endowment fund from the United States. I became one of the recipients of that gift for seminary students. After three years, I was given another opportunity, a full scholarship in South Korea to pursue my Master of Theology. Looking back, I can clearly say: this was the miracle of God in my life. God taught me how to lead courageously in all circumstances. When I later came to the United States, I carried this same faith. I knew that even without money or savings, God is able to provide everything we need. And indeed, we came here by God's provision. Now, I am not only serving in the Philippines, but also serving here in the United States specifically at Geneseo Grace UMC. That is how powerful God's miracle is and how God continues to open doors through faith, obedience, and courage.

This is why Miracle Sunday is so meaningful to me. It is not just an idea, it is my life story. I am a living witness of how God uses the Church, through endowments and scholarships, to raise up student pastors all over the world. And I believe deeply that what the United Methodist Church is doing through supporting 500 student pastors globally each year is not just financial support it is transformation. It is calling forth the next generation of leaders who will serve in Africa, the Philippines, Nigeria, and beyond. This is what God can do through the Church when we give, when we trust, and when we lead courageously.

Pastor Cel

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Church Council met on May 18.

The meeting began with Pastor Cel Biteng's report. She announced that May 24 is "Miracle Sunday." A special offering will be taken in hopes of raising $1,000 for 500 worldwide scholarships. Pastor Cel reported that Richard & Alma Navarro, missionaries to Taiwan, shared their experiences on May 12 at the Midweek Worship Service. Pastor Cel also thanked Becky Daniels and Lynne Haars for guiding her through American worship services. She also recounted her many pastoral visits and daily activities.

LaVon Swanson, our Lay Leader, and Pastor Biteng attended the United Methodist Women in Faith Conference in Indiana, which they found to be uplifting. They also attended a luncheon at Bethel United Methodist Church. LaVon announced that she and Dave will be attending the Annual Conference in Peoria June 3-6.

Staff Parish will meet Tuesday, June 9 at 5:30pm.

Karen Doy, Missions Chairperson, announced that the next Blood Drive will be at Grace on June 25 from 8:30am – 11:30am. Missions gave $500 for Alma & Richard Navarro's expenses and also $100 to Pastor Cel to cover food expense serving the Navarros. A project in September is being planned to help meet the 5-Star Donation. Missions' next meeting will on June 1 at 5:45pm.

Finance Chair Joe Mickley reported that, as of April, 89% of projected giving has been met for 2026. Joe distributed updated financial reports to the Committee. Endowment funds have increased. It was discussed if United Methodist Men had to continue to pay the Conference for participation. Joe renegotiated with Republic Services to reduce trash pick up expenses from $375 per month to approximately $70 per month. Karen Cook, our new auditor, will be paid $500. Finance is working on new voucher forms. Vouchers will need to be completed by church members making purchases, and expense vouchers will be given to Pastor Cel for her travel/education expenses.

In the Trustees' report, new windows were installed in the lobby. Also, Per Mar Security will be installing a new alarm center. The parsonage refrigerator needed replacement, and a new one was purchased for $2,087. Brian is getting bids to replace the rental house garage roof. He sent an email to Sterling Roofing regarding the backside of the sanctuary roof. Otterbein ceiling replacement will be in mid-August with 10-15 volunteers needed for this weekend project.

Tom Hitzhusen, Worship Chair, explained that audio issues with Sunday Worship livestreaming have been fixed. To help with technology, the Council suggested we look to our youth as volunteers. He also announced that May 31 will be the last service the choir sings until fall. Liturgists are now opening and closing the Bible during Worship Service. Sunday June 14, our VBS kids will sing during Worship Service. Tom said the committee is very thankful for those who make our sanctuary look so nice. Many thanks to Helen Akers, Mary Gorman, Joy Dwyer, Jackie Mickley, Cal & Paula Venema, and others. Next meeting is Monday, July 13 at 6:00pm.

Gayle Barnes, Evangelism Chairperson, informed the Council that Easter baskets were delivered to our nursing home and assisted-living members. She also related that plans for the 2026 New Teachers Luncheon in August are underway. Their next meeting will be on July 14 at 6:00pm.

Nominations and Leadership Development Committee asked that current Committee Chairs help recruit church members for committee assignments. We have a lot of active members, but if there are members interested in serving on committees, they are asked to please step forward.

Lynne Haars is trying to schedule guest singers and instrumentalists for summer services.

Next Council meeting will be on July 20, 2026 at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted, Jeff Orton, chairman

Grace United Methodist Church

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
Wednesday Worship Service
6:00pm

stayCONNECTED

309 944-4208

geneseograce.com

geneseogumc@gmail.com

Geneseo Grace

YOUR GIVING MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

2026 Offering Needed to Meet Monthly Budget

$30,833.00

May 3-24

$23,497.44

General Fund

ONLINE GIVING

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
May 3 & 6	70	17	9
May 10 &12	66	17	26
May 17 &20	76	9	13
May 24 & 27	62	13	15

RELIGION & RACE
The United Methodist Church

Celebrating 58 Years of GCORR

This year, the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) is celebrating its 58th anniversary. Since 1968, the General Commission on Religion and Race has been at the forefront of The United Methodist Church's work of inclusion, equity, and justice.

Read the current E-Newsletter – May 2026 Edition. Go to: https://mailchi.mp/gcorr/all-e-newsletter-may-2026-5122026?e=62910dd98d

Sign up to join the GCORR mailing list to receive the e-newsletter and other updates. Go to: https://www.gcorr.org/signup In the Conference field, enter "THE ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS."

Mark Lohman
Outreach Coordinator / Outreach Ministries Representative
email: Outreach.Coordinator@Lohman.bz



Be a Peacemaker

Jesus calls us to be peacemakers. June 15 is Peace with Justice Sunday. You have the opportunity to support life-changing initiatives focused on peace, human rights, and justice. Let's come together for the world God desires. The Mission Committee set a floor of $500 for this Special Sunday.

UNITED METHODIST MEN
The United Methodist Church

Men of Grace met on May 19 in the church library at 6:30pm. The group will continue to meet on the second Tuesday of each month (a change from what was first posted). The group of six men enjoyed fellowship and great conversation. All men are welcome to join the group anytime. Next meeting is on Tuesday, June 9 at 6:30pm.

LOOKING BACK WITH Grace

Did you know on June 3, Philip William Otterbein (1726-1813), would have been 300 years old? Do you recognize the name Otterbein? Otterbein, a German-born clergyman, was the co-founder of the United Brethren in Christ, which merged with the Evangelical Church in 1946 to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB). That church merged with the Methodist Church in 1968, forming the United Methodist Church. That's a lot of mergers. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Philip William Otterbein!" Please look for his celebration balloons in our fellowship hall.



JOBS WANTED

Are you looking for some help with summer projects? Yard work? Help around the house? ER Biteng is ready to work for you! Please contact Pastor Cel if you are interested 309-507-4628.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

03 - Virginia Clayton
04 - Lisa Hodgson
06 - Justin Shoemaker
07 - Becky Daniels, Lynette Williams
08 - Dwayne Blank, Joe Mickley
10 - Brian Berry, Laney Dunker
15 - Sheila Clary
16 - EJ Biteng, Shelly Emerick
20 - Molly Hamer, Connie Yager
22 - Nancy Lund
25 - Will Daniels
26 - Cindy Hudson, Sophie Rushing
27 - Owen Lindberg
30 - Lori Martin

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

06 - Mitch & Jennifer Lindberg (6)
Corey & Ann Neumann (28)
Ron & Bonnie Obrecht (62)
08 - Brian & Dee Humphries (35)
11 - Chuck & Rosemary Boardman (60)
14 - Roger & Billie Hulting (58)
25 - John & Joy Dwyer (49)
27 - Robbie & Jenna Rushing (6)
28 - Rod & Deb Magerkurth (51)
30 - Mike & Lori Martin (42)





VBS 2026
June 8 - 12
9:00 - 11:30am



3 yrs old - 5th Grade ('25-'26 school year)

Invite your friends & family to join the fun!



We need **YOU** to help make our VBS a success!
"Train up a child in the way he should go..."
Proverbs 22:6

Where can you help?
Leader/Helper - Music/Skit - Games
Arts/Crafts - Kitchen/Snacks - Decorations

If you're willing to help, please sign up in the lobby
or by contacting Director, Molly Hamer
mollyhamer23@gmail.com / cell 309-945-6934
or the office geneseogumc@gmail.com / 309-944-4208



REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN ON OUR WEBSITE:
geneseograce.com or pick up copies in the lobby
(return copies to the office)
or scan the QR code

PRAYER list

Peggy Betcher
Kim Brake
Corlette
Ruth Ann Eaker
Family of Cathy Gaudet
Nikki Haars
Mary Kintigh Family
Clarice Massingill
Karen Myhre
Linda Oertel
Mary Petre
Barb Sigwalt
Sally Swanson
Alan Yager

EJ Biteng
Mike Clark
John Davis
Family Member
GUMDROPS Families
Margaret Hitzhusen
Joe Loucks
Michelle Matheis
Cheryl & John Opsal
Patty
Ellen Rubino
Jann & Traci Sigwalt
VBS June 8-12

Those in Assisted Living & Nursing Home:

Joyce Criddle
John Riggs
Carolyn Stenzel

Lois Johnson
Connie Ryner
Karen Venter

Linda Oertel
Barry Snodgrass
Rita Webb



Thank you

Thank you to our church family for all your prayers for my mom Cathy (CiCi) Gaudet this last year and a half as she struggled with many health concerns. Your prayers sustained our family as her caregiver and through her passing. Thank you for your cards, kind words and the wonderful lunch provided by the best Church Basement Ladies after her funeral service.

The Family of Shelly & Doug Emerick

Samaritan's Purse OPERATION Christmas Child

We accept gifts for OCC. Each month will have a donations list. Please leave your items in the lobby in the OCC drawer of the hutch. Thank you! During JUNE we are collecting wash cloths & small stuffed animals.



So, I'm Becoming a Home Missioner (And You Probably Have No Idea What That Means)

by Curtis Franklin

Coordinator of Missions and Outreach / Associate Coordinator of Camping and Youth Ministries

The Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (IGRC)

Curt is the son of LaVon Swanson, Lay Leader, Grace United Methodist Church, Geneseo

I felt the call to ministry in middle school. Maybe you know that feeling during youth group where you just know God is calling you to something? That was me. But I never felt drawn to becoming a pastor. While I can fill a pulpit when needed, ordination just never felt like my path.

After college, I started living with this posture of openness. When needs would arise, I'd say "Ok God, if you can use me, I will serve." Doors would open. Sometimes things didn't work out the way I expected, but I kept trying to say yes when I felt the Spirit's leading. Staying focused on my calling instead of chasing after what the world says I should want? That was hard sometimes. But I kept showing up.

For years, I thought becoming a Deacon might be my next step. As a United Methodist, that seemed like the only option for continuing my ministry journey as someone not becoming an Elder. The world has this way of telling us that all ministry positions are just stepping stones to becoming clergy (*"real ministers"). I know that's not true, but this subtext is pervasive, both in and outside the church. Here's the thing, though–Jesus taught that we're all called to be ministers.*

I could have found purpose as an Elder or a Deacon. I don't believe there's only one right path in life. But I never felt that pull toward the commitments of a clergy person. Looking back, I can see the Spirit was leading me somewhere different.

There's something powerful about lay leadership. When a layperson leads, it reminds everyone that ministry isn't just for pastors. It shows that we can walk through life together, sharing the hope of Jesus side by side. Church isn't something we watch happen, we're all part of it.

On May 21 OWLS held their last lunch of the season. Devotion was given by Larry Campbell & Mark Stoneberger spoke about the military. See you in August!









June

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Regular Sunday Events 8:00am - Adult Sunday School 9:00am - Worship 9:00am - KIDS Worship 10:00am - **Women's** Bible Study	1 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library 5:45pm - Missions Committee	2 10:00am - VBS Planning Meeting	3 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 5:00pm - VBS Crew Leaders Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	4	5	6
7 Regular Sunday Events	8 VBS 9:00 - 11:30am 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	9 VBS 9:00 - 11:30am 5:30pm - Staff Parish Meeting 6:30pm - UM Men Meeting, Library	10 VBS 9:00 - 11:30am 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	11 VBS 9:00 - 11:30am	12 VBS 9:00 - 11:30am	13
14 Regular Sunday Events	15 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	16	17 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	18	19	20
21 Regular Sunday Events	22 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	23	24 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	25 Blood Drive 8:30 - 11:30am	26	27
28 Regular Sunday Events	29 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	30				