

Peace Be With You: The Little Pastor Who Won Every Heart

The life of a pastor in an itinerant ministry is not always easy. Even when we do not want to be transferred, we must obey because this is part of our covenant with God: to go where God calls us to go. When we were transferred to that church, ER did not want to leave. He cried often, especially while we were packing our things. It was very hard for him to say goodbye to the place he loved. Even after we moved, every time we passed by our old church, he would say, *Mom, that was our house. Why can't we go there now?* There were moments when I would cry, too. As parents, we try to be strong, but our children are often the most vulnerable. **They are the first to feel the pain of every transition in a pastor's life. ER was only five years old** when we arrived at the new church. We stayed there for 14 years before coming here. Because he was still young, he really wanted to find friends his age, playmates he could spend time with. Before going out to visit homes, however, he had what I called a "training line." I taught him what to say whenever he entered someone's house. So whenever he visited a member's home, or any home in the community, he would begin with a smile and say:

☞ *"Peace be with you."*

The members and people in the community were always delighted to hear him say that. Because of this simple greeting, he quickly built friendships. One of those friendships was with a woman named Zeny, and they became very close. One day, Zeny offered him a big crab to take home. But instead of accepting it, ER looked around, noticed the cabinet filled with canned goods, and said, *"No, I like the corned beef there."* 😊 So she ended up giving him canned goods along with the crabs! Every time ER passed by their house, Zeny would call him over to visit. Her children, who lived in another country, even sent gifts for him while we were there. **But ER didn't stop there. After greeting people, he would sometimes add:**

☞ *"Do you have milk? I'd like to drink some because my mom didn't buy milk for me."* 😊

I did not teach him to say that part! But even at a young age, ER already knew how to talk very well. Whenever he visited other houses, he would also look for something to drink sometimes even asking for powdered chocolate because he wanted another treat. 😊 The adults in the community loved him. He was a bit chubby, very friendly, and full of charm. The members cared for him deeply, they gave him milk, snacks, and welcomed him into their homes. I will never forget those moments. Over time, he gained many friends. **Many of them became like grandparents, aunts, and uncles to him. Sometimes they would even "borrow" him**, and we would find ourselves looking for him because people loved having him around. They enjoyed his company because he interacted so naturally even with adults. They truly loved ER.

Pastor Cel

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Church Council met on March 23.

Pastor Cel Biteng distributed and discussed her report. She is very busy lady. If you want to see what she does, just ask for a copy of her report. It is extensive. Pastor Cel also asked about the \$2,000 raised back in December for Philippines Relief. It was agreed to send the money through Western Union.

- **LaVon Swanson, Lay Leader, will be attending the United Methodist Women's Conference May 14-16.** Dave & LaVon will also be attending the Annual Conference June 3-6.
- **Staff Parish has been meeting monthly to help with the Pastor's transition.** During the first six months of Pastor Cel's tenure, Grace UMC paid electric bills for the parsonage. The pastor's family will now be responsible for the payments. **Safe Sanctuaries class was held in February.** E.R. Biteng received his Illinois driver's license. Pastor Ely Biteng is currently preparing for his Illinois driver's license. **Listening Sessions with the Pastor are being set up.** Questionnaires are being created for these sessions. More information will be available soon. The Council discussed reimbursement for substitute pianists & guest speakers.
- Karen Doy, Missions Committee chair, reported that the Blood Drive was successful with 11 pints donated. The next blood drive will be on June 25 from 8:30am – 11:30am. The committee approved \$1,000 donation to Grace Hospital in Haiti and also approved giving \$1,000 to our missionaries in Taiwan. Coral will put in the newsletter a monthly list **of items to be donated to Operation Christmas Child. The YF is collecting donations for Midwest Mission's Personal Dignity Kits and Home Care Kits.** Jackie Mickley asked Karen Doy if Missions Committee could assist financially. Next meeting will be on June 1 at 6:00pm.
- The Finance Report was given by the new Finance Chair, Joe Mickley. The committee is looking for a replacement auditor. Joe reported that the General Revenue has been consistent for the past three years. The 2026 budget is currently being met. Joe has met with Tyler Mackey regarding investment philosophies. Joe would like 3-4 people interested in renewing our investments. Joe is also looking into Republic Services (garbage/recycling) contract issues. The next Finance meeting will be on May 18 at 5:00pm.
- There was no Trustees report.
- Tom Hitzhusen, Worship Committee Chair, discussed Lenten plans for worship services through Easter with Pastor Cel. He also brought up audio issues with Sunday Worship livestreaming. Tom complimented Brad & Tammy Dunker and the other volunteers for their technological assistance. There was discussion about the possibility of needing to contact an outside contractor to look at equipment. Graduation Sunday for high school graduates will be on Sunday, May 17. (Please inform Coral if you have a HS or college graduate.) A funeral plan/flowchart has been finalized and will be used for better communication. Jackie Mickley has been added as a second contact under Connie Yager for the funeral lunch planning. Tom moved to approve the funeral plan, Gayle Barnes seconded, approved unanimously by Church Council.
- **At Evangelism's last meeting, Chair Gayle Banes reported that they discussed Easter baskets for nursing home/assisted-living church members.** On March 20, Stitchers Garden ladies prepared ten Easter baskets and they will be delivered during the week before Easter. Next meeting will be on May 12 at 6:00pm. At that time, they will make plans for the 2026 New Teachers Luncheon in August.
- Joe Mickley reported for Nominations & Leadership Development that there are 40 active members currently on committees and 30 active members (not on committees) doing several things around the church. **Many in the church have stepped forward to do the Lord's work.**
- **Lynne Haars and Council voiced praise for Jamie Cucci's flute playing at the March 15 worship service.** Lynne said she would like to have other members share their music during Sunday worship services in the future.
- Jackie Mickley shared for the Education Committee that, by the end of summer, Janey Neumann will no longer be here to teach FROGS during worship. Jackie showed a Sunday School curriculum book that could be used in a new **Sunday School class which would follow worship service.** Education Committee would like to present children's Bibles to 2nd, 3rd, & 4th graders during worship service in the near future. A Bible learning session would follow the Bible presentations. VBS will be held June 8 – 12. Organizational meetings are already in process, and volunteers are encouraged to step forward.
- Next Council meeting will be on May 18, 2026 at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted, Jeff Orton, chairman



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

March 29 - April 26

\$38,855.92

General Fund

**YOUR GIVING MAKES
 A DIFFERENCE.**

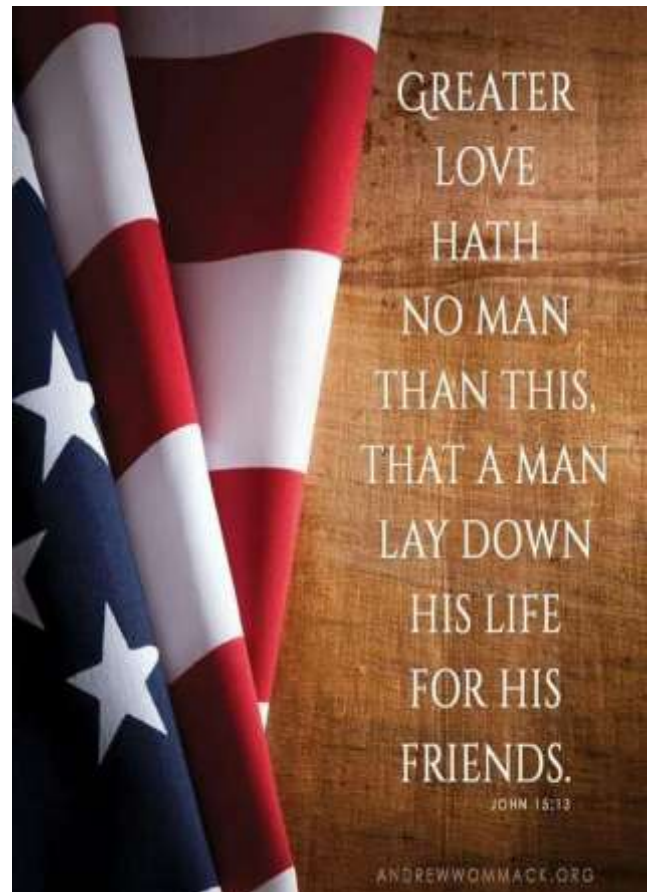


For your convenience we have 3 ways to give online!

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



Date	Attendance		
	Worship	Sunday School	Wednesday
March 25 & 29	86	14	30
April 2,3,5	195	7	No Service
April 8 & 12	109	30	14
April 15 & 19	66	23	12
April 22 & 26	71	19	12





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





Perry Farley,
Son of George & Gail
Farley

Perry will be attending
Black Hawk College in the
Aeronautics Program.

Graduation Party will be
held on Saturday, May 16
at the Farley home
25787 Angel Ferry Road



Cora Gorman,
Daughter of Tom & Jennifer
Gorman

Cora is planning to attend
a four-year university,
where she will major in
Kinesiology/Exercise
Medicine as she works
toward earning her
Doctorate in Physical
Therapy.

Graduation Party will be
held on Sunday, June 7
3:00-5:00pm at the
Red Barn



Wyatt Neumann,
Son of Corey & Ann
Neumann

Wyatt will be joining the
Navy.

Graduation Party will be
held on Saturday, June 20
5:00-8:00pm at the
Neumann home
11293 N 1950 Avenue



Janey Neumann,
Daughter of Landon & Sharon
Neumann

Janey will be attending the University
of Minnesota in Minneapolis in the fall
to study Biology

Graduation Party will be held on
Sunday, June 7 2:00-5:00pm at
Central School House
115 East North Street



Eliza Farley,
Daughter of George & Gail
Farley

Eliza will be graduating
from the University of
Illinois - Chicago

Bachelor of
Communications with
double minor in Business
Administration and Spanish



OWLS Lunch
Thursday, May 21 at 11:30am

Join us for a fun Cinco De Mayo lunch (tacos & enchiladas YUM!) followed by a program presented by Mark Stoneburger who will speak about Veterans Affairs. Sign up in the lobby or call the office.



- 03 - Gorden Bodeen, Greg Bodeen
- 05 - Dee DeBrock,
- 12 - John Tank
- 13 - Tami Monier
- 15 - Olivia Mosbarger
- 19 - Elaine Call
- 22 - Lauren Orton
- 23 - John Greenwood
- 25 - Sharon Campbell, Ellen Rubino
- 26 - Rod Magerkurth
- 28 - Courtney Morrison
- 29 - Ariel French

Stitchers Garden

Friday, May 22

at 9:37am in the library

Everyone is welcome to join us as we work on sewing, crocheting, crafting, etc. projects & enjoy chatting with each other!



LOOKING BACK WITH



This photo of Norma Lodge, Amie Blank, & Dwayne Blank is loaded with Grace . . . 229 years of combined membership with Grace!!! Norma joined on May 6, 1947 by profession of faith; Amie on March 25, 1945, by confirmation; and Dwayne on February 10, 1957 by membership transfer. Grace Church has truly been blessed with these long-haulers. Can you name others who have also "graced" our Church for decades?

- 01 - Jeff & Mary Orton (50) ♥
- 02 - Dick & Lyn Gradert (62)
- 07 - Kevin & Jody Akers (38)
- 11 - Steve & Paula Schulte (35) ♥
- 14 - Doug & Shelly Emerick (38)
- 28 - Dean & Shalee Johnson (31)
- 29 - Cory & Rachel Sheffler (5) ♥
- 30 - Tom & Diane Birmingham (39)
- 31 - Larry & Sharon Campell (18)
Brett & Lynda Yoder (29)



On April 12, Bibles were presented to Paisley Junis, Claire Rushing, Bodey Mickley, Eliza Shoemaker and Lyla Gorman. Please pray that these Bibles will lead them throughout their lives.

PRAYER list

Adopted children & families	Bonnie Aureda
Peggy Betcher	EJ Biteng
Greg Bodeen	Kim Brake
Mike Clark	Corlette
John Davis	Ruth Ann Eaker
Family Member	Cathy Gaudet
Family of Larry Goodwin	GUMDROPS Families
Nikki Haars	Margaret Hitzhusen
Mary Kintigh Family	Andrew Lord
Joe Loucks	Clarice Massingill
Michelle Matheis	Karen Myhre
Cheryl & John Opsal	Linda Oertel
Patty	Mary Petre
Ellen Rubino	Barb Sigwalt
Jann & Traci Sigwalt	Sally Swanson
Alan Yager	

Those in Assisted Living & Nursing Home:

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



May 13, Wednesday
6:00pm

Our missionaries to Taiwan, Richard & Alma Navarro will be here to speak during our Wednesday Worship Service. We hope to you there!



Sunday, May 10

*We honor & celebrate
all mothers past, present,
& future and all women!*

*We celebrate the women
who've taught us the
true meaning of
unconditional love.*



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 MAY we are collecting water bottles, plastic cups (no disposable)

The Community Choir of Geneseo will be celebrating their 18th Annual Concert entitled "American Tapestry - Celebrating America's 250th Birthday" on Wednesday, June 24 at 7:00pm in the Geneseo HS Concert Hall. Rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 - 8:00pm beginning Wednesday, May 27 thru June 17. The Community Choir includes those entering 8th grade and older adults. Students entering grades 4-7 are invited to sing in the Children's Choir. Registration forms are available through the Geneseo elementary & middle school choir instructors or contact Pam Edwards. The deadline to register is May 8.

MAY

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>					1	2
<p>3 Regular Sunday Events</p>	<p>4 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p>	<p>5 1:00pm - Book Club, Library</p> 	<p>6 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 11:30am - VBS Planning Meeting Library 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	7	8	9
<p>10 Regular Sunday Events</p> 	<p>11 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p>	<p>12 12:00pm - Pearl Circle Meeting, Chapel</p>	<p>13 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	14	15	16 9:00am - Maple City Band, Otterbein
<p>17 Regular Sunday Events</p> <p>GRADUATION SUNDAY</p> 	<p>18 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library</p> <p>5:00pm - Finance Committee, Library</p> <p>6:00pm - Church Council, Chapel</p>	19	<p>20 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service 7:00pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	21 11:30am - OWLS Lunch, Otterbein	22 9:37am - Stitches Garden, Library	23
<p>24</p> <p>31</p>	<p>25 CLOSED</p>  <p>MEMORIAL DAY</p>	<p>26 9:00am - Piano Rehearsal, Sanctuary</p>	27	28	29	30