THE Visitor

A ugust 2026

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

Empowering People to Bloom Where They Are Planted

The Bible teaches that every person is uniquely gifted by God. All of us have gifts and we are instructed to actively use these talents and gifts in serving others.

Persons should be actively involved in congregation if they are to bloom and bear the spiritual fruit described in John 15:4-5 - 4 "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing.

Romans7:4 - 4 "So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God."

To bloom, to bear fruit means using all our skills and spiritual gifts for ministry in the church and in the world. To be incorporated into a congregation means that a person is bonded together with other Christians in Christ in order to gain the spiritual sustenance necessary to make the most of each opportunity to be a servant to others. Ken Medema, a blind songwriter who composes lyrics for many contemporary Christian pieces of music, has a song about the church, which includes these words,

"If this is not a place where tears are understood, then where shall I go to cry? And if this is not a place where my spirit can take wings, then where shall I go to fly. If this is not a place where my questions can be asked, then where shall I go to seek. And if this is not a place where my heart can be heard, then where, tell me where, shall I go to speak?"

The image of blooming where we are planted is both beautiful and challenging. While each believer is responsible for growing in faith and responding to God's call, growth rarely happens in isolation. Just as a plant needs sunlight, water, and good soil to flourish, Christians need encouragement, guidance, accountability, and love from a caring community of faith.

Ken Medema's words remind us that the church is called to be more than a place we attend, it is to be a place where people are known, accepted, and nurtured. It should be a place where tears are met with compassion, questions are welcomed without judgment, gifts are discovered and developed, and every person is encouraged to become all that God has created them to be.

It is true that we all desire to bloom where God has planted us. However, if no one takes the time to encourage, mentor, equip, and walk alongside us, that growth can be delayed or even hindered. God often chooses to accomplish His work through other people. A kind word, a listening ear, a mentor's guidance, or an opportunity to serve can become the very means by which someone begins to flourish.

This places an important responsibility on every congregation. The church is not simply called to gather people but to cultivate people. We are called to empower one another, recognizing the unique gifts God has entrusted to each believer and creating an environment where those gifts can be used for His glory. When we intentionally invest in others, we help them take root, grow stronger in their faith, and bear lasting spiritual fruit.

May our churches become communities where every person is valued, encouraged, equipped, and provide opportunities to serve. As we empower one another through love, discipleship, and faithful support, we will see lives transformed and God's kingdom strengthened. Together, we can truly bloom where God has planted us.

Pastor Cel

August is Stewardship Month at Grace UMC

Stewardship of Life Commitment Card

Blessed to Be a Blessing

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace.” 1 Peter 4:10

Name: _____

With God's help, I commit to grow in faithful stewardship by:

□ PRAYER - I will pray daily for my church, its ministries, and those in need.
□ WORSHIP - I will faithfully participate in worship and Holy Communion.
□ SERVICE - I will use my time and gifts to serve God and others.
□ GENEROSITY- I will give faithfully to support the mission and ministry of the Church.
□ HEALTH - I will care for my body, mind, and Spirit as gifts from God.
□ COMPASION - I will encourage, visit, pray for, or help some in need each week.
□ CARING - I will make sure to Care for God's creation and using resources wisely.
□ WITNESS - I will share Christ’s love through my words and actions.

My personal stewardship commitment:
_____
_____
_____

Prayer: Lord, all that I have and all that I am come from You. Help me to be a faithful steward of my life, my time, my talents, my treasures, and Your creation. Use me to be a blessing to others and to bring glory to your name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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

June 28 - July 26

$29,944.70

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
June 28	76	5	No service
July 5	56	25	No service
July 8 & 12	71	24	11
July 15 & 19	73	28	12
July 22 & 26	68	25	15

MEN OF GRACE

Beginning August 4 Meets every Tuesday at 6:30pm in the library. This group welcomes all men!

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

United Methodist Men meet for Bible Study in the library every Thursday, 6:30am-7:30am. We are studying the book of Romans. Discussions are facilitated by Mike Rubino & Steve Wildemuth. Come with questions!



The Grace Church Council met on July 23. The Council began with a presentation and proposal by Joy Dwyer and Lisa Depies to mail the Visitor to every member and extended members. George Farley moved that the council vote on the proposal and was seconded by Lynne Haars. After discussion, it was passed unanimously. This was followed by Pastor Biteng's report. (I wish we could publish her report so you could see how busy our Pastor has been. She personifies discipleship and evangelism.)

Lay Leader LaVon Swanson encourages others to join the Bible Study in the lobby on Sunday mornings. She's also looking into a possible multigenerational Sunday School class. Dave & LaVon attended the 2026 Conference in Peoria, June 3-6.

George Farley reported that Staff Parish met in June to draft church policy. At the July meeting, they decided to send drafts to the committees. Employee evaluations have begun. Listening sessions among Church members will begin this fall with SPRC members hosting.

Mission Sunday is September 13. After the worship service, members will help pack 100+ student kits. Chair Karen Doy welcomes school supply donations and has allocated $1,200 for extra supplies. The committee also allocated $500 for Miracle Sunday, $500 for Chaddock Children's Home, $500 for Baby Fold, $500 for Backpack Blessings, and $1,000 to IGRC Philippines. Council discussed scholarships for future pastors.

Finance Chair Joe Mickley distributed financial reports for the year. The General Fund is down $35,060, which is not unusual for the first six months, but is still a concern. Grace's UMC Conference responsibilities are up $1,000. Elevator maintenance has increased, as well as insurance expenses. George Farley moved that Joe Mickley, Jeff Orton, and Jean Hahn be designated as signers for the Endowment Fund, seconded by Gayle Barnes and approved. Jean Hahn announced vouchers have been introduced for purchase approvals. Committees are responsible for checking their budgets to ensure adequate funding for their purchases.

For the Trustees report, a motion was made by George Farley, seconded by Joe Mickley and approved, to accept the Sedlock bid for the Anderson house roofing and garages. Volunteers will be needed to help remove and replace ceiling tiles in Otterbein.

Tom Hitzhusen reported that the Worship Committee discussed the WiFi. The signal is weak, the equipment is outdated, and the bandwidth is inadequate for downloading video class materials. The Council agreed with the need and recommended the Tech Team get a quote and consider using memorial funds to pay for the project. A motion was made by George Farley and seconded by Dave Swanson. Council also discussed the elevator and possible future solutions.

Evangelism Chair Gayle Barnes discussed the upcoming New Teachers' Luncheon on August 6. She also asked the Council about future budget needs.

Nominations and Leadership Development will meet in September. Pastor Biteng & Joe Mickley encouraged more church members to serve on our many committees.

Lynne Haars announced that the choir will resume in September. Becky Daniels has scheduled praise team replacements for the August services.

In other items, the 2027 budgets are due by September 27. The Charge Conference will be held on October 18 in Colona. The Safe Sanctuaries committee is finishing its work and will report in September. Two men's groups are meeting: Men of Grace meets on Tuesdays at 6:30pm & United Methodist Men meet for Bible study on Thursdays at 6:30am. All men are welcome.

The next Council Meeting will be September 21, 2026 at 6:00pm.

Participate In Mission Sunday At Grace!
September 13

You are able to make a world-wide difference right where you are by helping Midwest Mission build Student Kits in September. That's right! Grace Church is going to do it again! We are going to build 100 Student Kits Sunday, September 13 and deliver them to Midwest Mission so they may be distributed wherever needed.

You may participate in three ways:

1) Purchase any of the school supplies listed below and place them in the container in the lobby by September 1.
2) Make one-handled cloth bags and place them in the container in the lobby by September 1.
3) Right after service on Mission Sunday, September 13, build one or more kits and then celebrate with a donut and fellowship.

Midwest Mission, located in Illinois and Iowa, was founded by United Methodist Church to support disaster relief, education, health, and micro business by bringing God's people together to transform resources into humanitarian relief.

Student Kit
3 notebooks - 1 subject wide rule spiral 8"x10 1/2"
1 ruler - 12" long with metric
6 pencils - unsharpened
1 pencil sharpener
1 pencil eraser - 2" or larger
1 box 12 colored pencils
1 box 24 crayons
1 pair student scissors
1 one-handled cloth bag*

* INSTRUCTION SHEETS FOR THE CLOTH BAG CAN BE FOUND ON THE TABLE IN THE LOBBY.

* STUDENT KIT SHOPPING LISTS ARE ALSO ON THE TABLE IN THE LOBBY.

The Mission Committee appreciates your participation.



FAREWAY

Friday, September 4
11:00am - 1:00pm

COOKOUT
Served by Opal Circle

Stop by for a quick lunch!

Proceeds go to
Opal Circle

LOOKING BACK WITH Grace

Who remembers standing up during Sunday School to celebrate your birthday by dropping pennies into a decorated, plastic cake? This annual, fun tradition was a visual way for kids to count their age and blessings with each plunk of shiny pennies. FROGs continue this tradition. Such a simple moment, yet seemingly a part of something bigger. "Happy Birthday" 🎵



WELCOME BACK!



OWLS Lunch
Thursday, August 20
11:30am
Kenneth & Abigail Wolf, winners of the Next Generation Baking Contest, will speak about their win. Sign up in the lobby or call the office.

DEEPEST sympathy

To the Family of
Harold Thomas
who passed away on July 7
at the age of 100.

Father of Sharon (Larry) Campbell

To the Family of
Linda Oertel
who passed away on July 14.

To the Family of
Dwayne Blank
who passed away on July 29

Husband of Amie
Father of Cindy (Tom) Hudson
& Ron (Julie) Blank

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. ~ Psalm 34:18



September 5 & 6

15-20 people are needed to install a new ceiling in Otterbein. Looking for men to be on ladders, cutters, hauling old tiles out to the garbage, etc. Adults & Youth are encouraged to help complete this **project. "Many hands make light work!"**



02 - Allison Good
03 - Edith Shoemaker
04 - Larry Campbell
06 - Sandy French, LaVon Swanson
07 - Eliza Farley
08 - Tari Kneen
12 - Cora Gorman
13 - Corey Neumann
15 - Hilary Junis
17 - Rich Betcher
18 - Kelly West
20 - Deb Magerkurth
23 - Maud Depies
25 - Jodi Mosbarger, Linda Rice
26 - Dave Ernst, Harrison Neumann
27 - Shalee Johnson
30 - Mike Rubino, Pat Ufkin



03 - Brad & Robin Toone (30)
06 - Joe & Claudia Loucks (61)
07 - Rich & Peggy Betcher (55)
08 - Ron & Sheila Clary (65)
Justin & Valerie Shoemaker (18)
19 - Harold & Joan Johnson (68)
24 - Mike & Molly Hamer (41)



Dwayne Blank
Corlette
Ruth Ann Eaker
GUMDROPS Families
Margaret Hitzhusen
Joe & Claudia Loucks
Michelle Matheis
Patty
Ellen Rubino
Alan Yager
Kim Brake
John Davis
Family Member
Nikki Haars
Tari Kneen
Clarice Massingill
Cheryl & John Opsal
Mary Petre
Sally Swanson

Those in Assisted Living & Nursing Home:

Joyce Criddle
John Riggs
Carolyn Stenzel
Lois Johnson
Connie Ryner
Karen Venter
Tari Kneen
Barry Snodgrass
Rita Webb



Loving God, watch over our children as they begin their new school year. Bless them with joy at seeing friends, excitement at new experiences, and a love of learning. Guide and protect all who learn, replacing fear with joy, anxiety with peace, and tiredness with energy. Give wisdom, patience, and joy to teachers as they serve their students.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Friday, August 21
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!

Stitchers Garden



"Go and make disciples of all nations…"
Matthew 28:19

In the spirit of the Great Commission, Grace Church's council has unanimously approved bringing back mailed copies of The Visitor – reaching members, participants, shut-ins, nursing home residents, and anyone interested in following our activities. If a name comes to mind – a parent, sibling, child, grandchild, neighbor, or coworker, please share their name and address with the church office. College students' addresses are especially welcome; they'll appreciate knowing their church is thinking of them!

When someone who was raised in Grace Church wants to pursue the ministry, we, as a church, should step-up and support that individual. Courtney (Emerick) Morrison is starting her divinity studies at the University of Dubuque School of Theology. As we all know, post-graduate tuition is expensive and, as parents of twin toddlers, Courtney & Connor could use our help. A fund has been established for Courtney to assist with her mission in serving the Lord. Any donation to that fund would be appreciated. Drop the donation off in the church office or mail it directly.

Courtney Morrison
405 N Washington St.,
Abingdon, IL 61410
309-373-5236



I want to thank everyone for the love, support, caring, cards, visits, prayers, the women of the church who served a delicious meal the day of Larry's memorial service, for myself, Connie and the rest of Larry's family.

Thank you so much!
Linda & Connie





To the Women of Grace

Thank you for helping me celebrate my Graduation.
Your thoughtful gift is very appreciated and will be
used in my pursuit of flight.

Perry Farley

Thanks to Jody Rathman for building a protective cover for the wiring that feeds our Facebook Live videos. This will improve the integrity of the system, and should address the issue we have experienced with system disruption.

The Worship Committee

Grace Church,
Thank you for letting us use your basement for our end-of-season pizza party and annual meeting. This summer marked our 120th year in Geneseo, and we're happy to report the band had near record numbers of participants. We appreciate the use of your space to help us celebrate our season.

The Maple City Band Board



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Regular Sunday Events 8:00am - Adult Sunday School 9:00am - Worship 9:00am - KIDS Worship 10:00am - Wom-**en's Bible Study**						1
2 Regular Sunday Events	3 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library 6:00pm - Safe Sanctuaries Policy Creation Team, Chapel	4 6:30pm - UM Men Meeting, Library	5 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	6 6:30am - UM **Men's Bible** Study, Library 12:00pm - New Teachers Lunch, Otterbein	7	8
9 Regular Sunday Events	10 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	11 6:30pm - UM Men Meeting, Library	12 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	13 6:30am - UM **Men's Bible** Study, Library	14	15
16 Regular Sunday Events	17 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library 6:00PM - Missions Committee Meeting, Library	18 6:30pm - UM Men Meeting, Library	19 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	20 6:30am - UM **Men's Bible** Study, Library 11:30am - OWLS Lunch, Otterbein	21 9:30am - **Stitcher's** Garden, Library 	22
23 Regular Sunday Events	24 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library	25 6:30pm - UM Men Meeting, Library	26 9:00am - Staff Meeting 9:30am -Worship Staff Meeting 6:00pm - Worship Service	27 6:30am - UM **Men's Bible** Study, Library	28	29
30 Regular Sunday Events	31 8:00am - Prayer Group, Library 6:00pm - Worship Committee Meeting, Library					