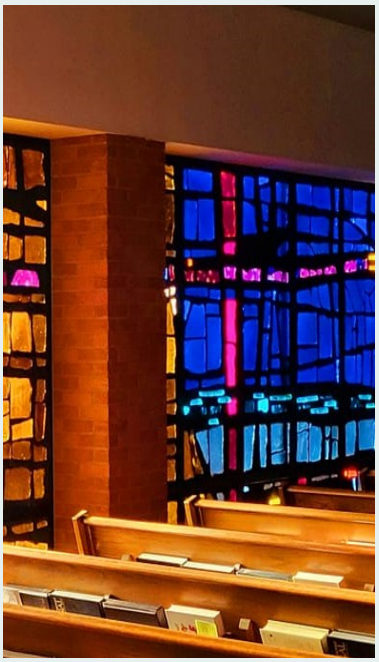
Grace United Methodist Church Newsletter

MISSION STATEMENT

Everyone is invited to know and feel God's love, experience spiritual growth, encounter forgiveness, receive respect and gain hope.



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To contact Pastor Michael

Email:

ThePastor @spencergumc.

Call:

712-262-5970

Pastor Michael's BLOG:

The Bare Church

THOUGHTS FROM PASTOR MICHAEL

I am a busy person in a busy world. My busy-ness does not always translate to effectiveness or a tremendous amount accomplished. There are always tasks to do. My mind is constantly distracted by something. There is always another something or someone demanding my attention. This busy-ness leaves little time to process emotions like fulfillment. Usually, if I do get a moment to reflect my brain focuses on what hasn't been completed, or what wasn't completed well, or what I may never get to and how that will impact myself, my family, my church, etc. It is an overwhelming existence created through habits of evaluating self through numeric metrics of accomplishment.

A few days ago, I was in a discouraging mood. My mind was drawn to a feeling of disconnect, a future or dis-repair, and a hopelessness that I just couldn't shake. More often than not, I am a laid back, optimistic person. But this day, or moment, got the best of me. Rachel was out of town, and our youngest, Elijah, was visiting Grandma and Grandpa. I was hoping I could keep Owen entertained until his bedtime. Then I planned on sitting quietly alone serving my despair with a proverbial "pity party". I had two hours to kill before I could start Owen's bedtime routine. It happened to be a gorgeous day. So I asked Owen if he wanted to ride his bike. With excitement he rushed to put on his shoes and make his way outside. After about a block he asked if I wanted to race.

"Well, dude I don't really feel like running and you are on a bike so I don't think it would be much of a race."

He responded, "You could ride my scooter."

I hesitated for a moment. I didn't feel like riding a scooter. I didn't feel like following him around until I could persuade him to go back home. I didn't want to do it. Then I walked back to the house, grabbed his scooter, adjusted the handlebars to my height, and scooted down the sidewalk.

It is hard to explain my emotional processing for the next hour and a half. Owen and I rode around town like we were exploring a brand-new territory. He pointed out things we hadn't seen before. We laughed as we did silly tricks. We talked about all kinds of different things as our experience presented new con-

versations. Even as the sun went down on a February night, there was no sense of cold for either of us. Our hearts, minds, and bodies were warmed by the physical activity, the experience, and the connection with each other.

After we arrived home, we watched a little TV to slow our heart rates and then we went to bed. As we started our bedtime reading, I thanked Owen and tried to explain to him what he did for me that evening. He didn't fully understand but he was glad he got to be a source of joy.

At the beginning of Matthew chapter 18 Jesus says that to become the greatest in the kingdom of heaven one must become like a child. Owen reminded me what that looks like. I often get focused on what is happening, or what will happen. Jesus desires my focus to be on the invitation to see where he is and what he is doing.

This Lenten season I invite you to grab your proverbial scooter and join me on an adventure. I invite you to reclaim the wonder in what you have already seen. I invite you to find laughter in connection with others as you bond in shared experience. I invite to allow your focus to drift away from the weight of responsibility and lean into the freedom of joy and play. This Lenten season I invite you to connect with God through play. Instead of the typical giving up something or adding spiritual practice I invite you to add play. Whether it is card games, board games, train sets, Legos, action figures, barbie's playhouse, etc. I invite you to make time each day to play again. This practice is intended to re-connect us with our inner child. Connecting with our inner child gives reprieve to our lives filled with duties and responsibilities and reminds us that we exist to love and be loved, to experience joy, and to share joy.

Come and play. You may be surprised to discover God laughing, loving, and playing right along with you.

MISSION PROJECTS

We are currently collecting:

- Tortilla Shells (medium)
- Spanish Rice
- Pudding or Jello cups

Pinto Beans will be provided by UDMO

Canned Chicken provided by Foundation Grant

Bags will be packed after Wednesday coffee on April 16th.

Noisy Offering Project – Supporting Young Readers
Our Noisy Offering this Lenten season will support the purchase of reading books for all graduating 2nd graders. This is the third year we have chosen to provide 2–3 books for every student, helping sustain reading skills throughout the summer months. Watch for opportunities to participate and make some joyful noise during Lent!

Garage Sale & Bake Sale Fundraiser
We are planning another Garage Sale and Bake Sale. We encourage everyone to begin gathering items now. This is a fun and meaningful way to support our ministries—so start saving those treasures and favorite recipes!

Friday,June19th 11:00 AM—6:00 PM

Saturday, June20th 8:00 AM—1:00 PM
with lunch from 11:00 AM—1:00 PM

GRACE CARES

The Grace Cares Team would like to thank the Grace Kidz for creating the Valentine gift bags which we were able to distribute to our local congregational care members. They were much appreciated.

On Sunday, March 8, 2026, we provided the worship services at the Longhouse and Northshire buildings of SPARC. It is always heartwarming to connect with this population. We will be doing this four more times this year representing Grace UMC along with nine other area churches. Also, on April 15th we will provide the Wednesday evening meal.

We are now in the process of putting together and delivering Easter bags to almost 30 homes and care centers as well as Easter cards to those farther away. Those that are not able to always worship with us in the sanctuary on Sunday mornings are so appreciative of being remembered.

In addition, we maintain contacts with our college kids and those in the military and man the Welcome Center to reach out to visitors on Sunday mornings. We are also able to provide communion upon request.

FINANCE REPORT

Winter Giving & Looking Ahead to Spring

As we reflect on the first two months of the year, we want to share a brief update on our church finances. During January and February, our pledge fulfillments and loose plate donations came in below our monthly expenditures. This can sound concerning at first glance, but it's important to remember that this pattern is not unusual for the winter months.

This year, several weekend weather events impacted Sunday worship attendance, which in turn affected both loose plate giving and the timing of pledge contributions. Additionally, our utility expenses—particularly natural gas for heating—have been higher than they were at this time last year, adding to our overall costs.

Even with these seasonal challenges, there is good reason for optimism. As we move into spring, we typically see an increase in attendance, along with a corresponding rise in both loose plate donations and pledge fulfillment.

Thank you for your continued generosity and commitment. Your support sustains the ministries and mission of our church, no matter the season.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Wednesday night class will once again be in session after the spring break last week. Our focus has been learning the Easter story. The last night of class is April 29.

Vacation Bible School this year is a partnership with Congregational Church and Bethany Lutheran Church. Dates are July 6, 7 and 8 from 6:00pm - 8:00pm. With a County Fair/Carnival is the theme and stations including pie baking, tie dye, woodworking, carnival games, crafts and fishing. The last night will include a family dinner.

A MESSAGE FROM LAY LEADER SANDY HEERDT

Putting It Into Practice: Helen - Frank - Brooke

Anyone who attends Grace United Methodist Church in Spencer, Iowa knows that Pastor Michael is devoting a large amount of his teaching & preaching to the topic of relationships. To put it simply, relationships are what Jesus focused on for most (all?) of His teaching and preaching time. It's all about "Loving God" & "Loving Neighbor".

Pastor Michael has encouraged us to consider how we can individually and communally focus more on relationships each day. And while I've always considered myself a friendly person, I know I can do better. So most days now, I attempt to go an extra step by stopping to visit a bit longer with people whom I meet throughout the day.

Helen

Lenny and I have known Helen as a mutual friend whom we see occasionally, but we have never spent any significant time with her. She is always smiling and very friendly. Saturday evening we were attending the same event. Afterwards she asked us if we'd like to go to a nearby restaurant for dinner with her. Remembering my goal of spending more time with others, I said "Sure!" and Lenny is always a good sport. Soon we were ordering our meal and enjoying each other's company. It was such a joy learning more about Helen. She speaks 4 languages and worked in international business all her life and continues this work today. But the coolest thing was a reply she gave me when I was stating how hard some of her experiences must have been. "Hard! No, it was not hard! Nothing is hard! You just do it. You learn and you do it!" I was so surprised by this response, but these words have been going round and round in my mind and have changed my entire mindset about what is really difficult in life. I have already shared this experience with three other people. Meeting other people can change our mind-sets. We are all capable of having an influence on others.

Frank

Also this past week I met a young man: Frank. Frank was my check-out clerk at Walmart. He was the first to start our conversation by complimenting me. He liked my red coat, red purse and red scarf. We continued small talk (no one was waiting behind me), and eventually I shared that I used to teach Middle School Reading. His response was, "If you had been my teacher, I would never want to leave your classroom." It was such a fun, delightful 5 minutes, and I walked out of Walmart with a lighter step. That good feeling has actually continued to warm my heart. Making new friends can lighten our loads.

Brooke

Lenny and I met Brooke at the Heart Hospital in Sioux Falls. Brooke's job was to prepare Lenny for a cardioversion. She was so friendly and delightful. She put us at ease while being honest and knowledgeable about our questions. She spent a lot of time with us and eventually shared some momentous events in her own life. She had a great smile and sense of humor. By the time we left, we felt a sweet bond with her. Making new friends (even short-term) helps us feel loved and cared for.

Lesson Learned: Take the time to get to know others. It's a good thing.

https://uwfaith.org/

UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

The next meeting of our Spencer Grace UWFaith group is scheduled for Thursday, April 2, 2026, at 1:30 pm in the church narthex. Our program will be based on Lessons 1 and 2 from the 2025 Mission u book, Practicing Hope by Tabatha Holley, and led by Jane Ingledue and Sheryl Larson. The questions we will be exploring are: What is hope? Where is hope and where does it live? What makes it hard to have hope? We welcome all women to attend; it is not limited to those of Grace UMC. We simply have a heart for missions and improving the lives of women, children and youth.

If you have any questions, please feel free to visit with Cyndi O'Hara (712-363-3185), Shurmaine McAlpine (712-592-1636), Lisa Elliott (712-240-0929), Jane Ingledue (605-413-7034), or Peggy Palm (712-260-8707).

UMYF

United Methodist Youth Fellowship is being revamped to care for youth seeking confirmation or simply seeking a peer group of faith. Meets every Sunday 10:45am in the fellowship hall.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

Saturday, April 11—8:00 AM

United Methodist Men Breakfast & Program

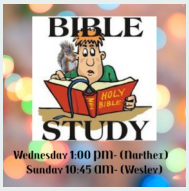
All are invited to join the United Methodist Men for breakfast, fellowship, and a meaningful program featuring **Feed America**. Come enjoy a great meal and learn how we can make a difference in our community.

Coordinator: Bill Elliott

SMALL GROUP OPPORTUNITIES

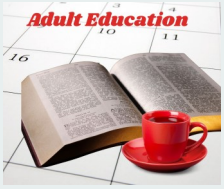
In the Methodist tradition disciples grow best in the context of Christian community. An essential part of becoming deeply committed Christians is our connection with others in small groups, and that is true now more than ever. Small groups allow us to find encouragement, prayer, learning and life together. Therefore, we emphasize that persons be committed to a small group.

Small groups can meet any time and any where! Expectations for all small groups include: growth in Bible use and practice of prayer; make an impact including and beyond the individual lives members.If you would like to start a new group or have an idea for a new small group, please contact Pastor Michael.



Men's Bible Studty

Wednesdays at 1:00–12:00 PM
Narthex



Adult Education
Sundays at 10:45 AM
Wesley Room

Our Adult Education group gathers each Sunday morning following worship. Together, we take time to revisit the scripture passages and sermon from the service, sharing insights, questions, and personal reflections. This welcoming discussion group offers a chance to grow in faith, deepen understanding, and build meaningful connections with others in our church family.

Coffee @ Grace

1st & 3rd Wednesdays | 9:30–11:00 AM
Fellowship Hall

Come enjoy good coffee, delicious food, and warm fellowship! It's a great place to catch up with old friends—or make new ones.

Everyone is welcome—we'd love to see you there!

Move, Stretch, and Breathe at GUMC!

Grace United Methodist Church is excited to invite the community to take part in our growing lineup of fitness and wellness opportunities! Whether you're looking to reduce stress, improve flexibility, or simply enjoy some uplifting movement, there's something for everyone—no matter your age or ability level.

Instructor-Led Chair Yoga
Looking for a gentle, supportive way to stay active? Join us for instructor-led Chair Yoga, designed to help you stretch, strengthen, and relax—all from the comfort of a chair. This class is perfect for beginners, those with limited mobility, or anyone wanting a low-impact workout.

Classes began March 31 and are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00–12:30 PM in the Wesley Room at Grace. The cost is just **$5 per session**, and all are welcome to attend!

To sign up, visit **www.SpencerGUMC.com** or stop by/call the church office. Questions? Contact Mandi King at **mandikingyoga@gmail.com** or call/text **(712) 260-3314**.
Payment options include cash, check, or Venmo (@Mandi-King-5).

Video-Led Fitness Classes
In addition to our instructor-led sessions, we also offer video-led classes twice a week:

Mondays & Wednesdays (Wesley Room):
- 9:30–10:00 AM – Essentrics
- 10:00–10:30 AM – Chair Yoga

Essentrics is a unique strength-training method that focuses on slow, controlled, muscle-lengthening movements to build strength, improve flexibility, enhance balance, and reduce the risk of injury.

Chair Yoga in this format continues to offer gentle stretching and movement with the support of a chair—making it accessible and beneficial for all fitness levels.

Come as you are, bring a friend, and take time to care for your body and spirit. At GUMC, we believe wellness is for everyone!

MUSIC MINISTRY

Grace UMC offers several opportunities for singers and musicians of all ages and skill levels:

Grace Band – We're always looking for new singers and musicians! Practices are Thursday afternoons and Sunday mornings before worship. Interested? See Pastor Michael to sign up.

Chancel Choir – Rehearsals are Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 7:00 PM. Join us as we lift our voices in praise and worship.

Bell Choir – Practices are Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:00 PM, following choir rehearsal. No need to be a professional musician—you just need to be able to count from 1 to 4 (sometimes 3!).

If you are interested in joining the Praise Music Team, the Sound Team, the Video Team, the Visual Arts Team, the nursery team, etc., please be in touch with Pastor Michael and he will get you set up with the right person!

WEDNESDAY NIGHT @ GRACE

3:30 - 5:30 pm Loom Working Session

5:30 - 6:00 pm Community Meal—open to ALL—freewill offering

6:00 - 7:00 pm Grace Kidz, ages 4 to 5th Grade

6:15 - 7:15 pm Chancel Choir

7:15 - 8:15 pm Bell Choir

Wednesday night meals

Apil 1	Grilled Cheese and Soup
Apil 8	Sloppy Joes and beans
Apil 15	Burgers and Hot dogs
Apil 22	Chicken Strips, Mac & Cheese
April 29	Pizza

Menu subject to change

JOYS & CONCERNS

In Loving Memory

This past March, our church family said goodbye to three beloved, long-time members—Judith Olson, Bill Prentice, and Carrie Krieger.

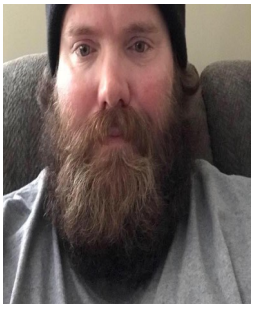
Their lives were a beautiful reflection of faith, service, and love. Each of them helped shape our community in ways that will continue to bless us for years to come.

As we hold their memories close, we also hold onto the promise of Easter hope.

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." — John 11:25

Please keep their families and loved ones in your prayers.

Judith Ann Olson
July 27, 1942 — March 11, 2026



Bill Prentice
January 22, 1983 — March 15, 2026

Clarice "Carrie" Willene Krieger
September 9, 1934 — March 17, 2026

Sunday Worship

9:30 AM Worship Service (Sanctuary)
10:45 AM Fellowship (Narthex)
10:45 AM Adult Education (Wesley)
11:00 AM UMYF

Wednesday Night schedule

5:30 - Community Meal (free-will offering)
6:00- Grace Kids
6:15 - Choir Practice
7:15 - Bell Choir Practice—

Committee Meetings

Children's & Youth Ministry	April 14	May 10	6:30 PM	Library
Church Council	April 27	May 23	6:30 PM	Fireside
Finance (Qtrly next mtg July)	April 27	May No mtg	5:30 PM	Wesley
Grace Cares	No mtg	May No mtg	3:00 PM	
Missions	April 6	May 4	3:30 PM	Library
SPRC	April 6	May 4	6:00 PM	
Trustees	April 13	May 11	6:30 PM	Library
Worship	April 25	May 30	10:00 AM	Library

Chair Yoga	Monday & Wednesday		10:00AM	Wesley
Coffee @ Grace	April 1& 15	May 6 & 20	9:30AM	Narthex
Essentrics Class	Monday & Wednesday		9:30AM	Wesley
Esther Circle	April 27	May No mtg	5:00PM	
Grace Band Practice	Thursdays		3:00 PM	Sanctuary
Loom Work Session	Wednesday		2:00-4:00 PM	Fellowship Hall
Men's Bible Study	Wednesday		1:00 PM	Narthex
Ruth Circle	April 16	May 21	1:30 PM	
UMM	April 11	May 9	8:00 AM	BenTena Room
UWFaith	April 2	May No mtg		
Weighted Works with Love	April 28	May 26	9:00 AM	Fellowship Hall
Adult Study Group	Sunday		10:45 AM	Wesley
Package Jump Start Bags	April 15	May 20	After coffee	

The complete calendar may be accessed here.

CHAIR PERSON OF MINISTRY BOARDS:

Church Council: Ben Pullen
Co-Lay Leaders: Sandy Heerdt, Ben Pullen
Lay Member to Ann. Conference: Jenn Ingledue, Bri Pullen
Treasurer: Sue Burdick
SPRC: Ric Guerrero
Trustee: Gary Small
Finance: Paul Kassel
Missions: Brownie Small
Memorial: Judi Calhoon
Grace Cares: Cyndi O'Hara
Worship: Linda O'Clair
Children's & Youth Ministry: Lisa Elliott
UWF: Cyndi O'Hara and Pastor Shurmaine McAlpine
UMM: Bill Elliott
Youth Rep:
Church Council Secretary: Joan Waller
Finance Secretary: Sandy Thomas
Director of Communications: Alison Herman

GRACE
United Methodist Church

JOIN US FOR...
Inperson/Live Stream Worship
Sundays @ 9:30 AM- Sanctuary

CONTACT US
Grace United Methodist Church
311 2nd Ave W
Spencer, IA 51301
Phone: 712-262-5970
office@spencergumc.com

OFFICE HOURS
Monday - Thursday
9:00 AM - 3:30 PM
Friday - Sunday
Closed