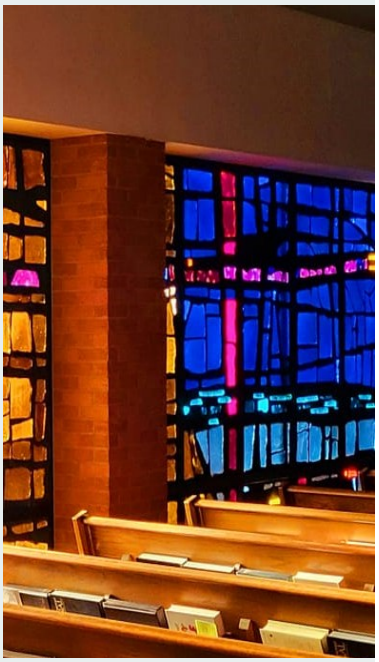
Grace United Methodist Church Newsletter

July 2026



MISSION STATEMENT

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

God's Beauty in Bloom

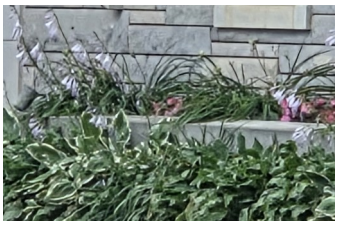
"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow..." **— Matthew 6:28**

Summer reminds us of God's incredible creativity and care. Blooming flowers, towering trees, and vibrant gardens all reflect the beauty of our Creator. Every season of growth reminds us that God is always at work, bringing new life, hope, and renewal.

The flowers and landscaping surrounding Grace United Methodist Church are more than beautiful—they offer a warm welcome to everyone who visits. Many of these colorful displays have been made possible through memorial gifts and the loving care of dedicated volunteers.

Thank you to everyone who gives their time and talents to help make the outside of our church as beautiful and welcoming as the inside. Your care for God's creation is a blessing to our church family and to all who walk through our doors.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the beauty of Your creation and for those who faithfully care for it. Help us to see Your presence in the world around us and to reflect Your love in all we do. Amen.



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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

The Month of June was a chaotic and beautiful experience. I had the privilege to officiate my niece's wedding. I was blessed to attend my sister's commencement ceremony for her Master's Degree. I attended the Iowa Annual Conference. (At least one day of it.) I was invited to preached at our Iowa Annual Conference Licensing School. I celebrated my oldest son's10th birthday. And of course, I celebrated Father's Day with my two boys. What a whirlwind of a month. (And I'm writing this with another week left of it.)

Now that these busy few weeks have passed, I am ready to enter a summer of prayer and listening. Grace UMC is entering a season of discernment. It has been over three years since a church split that sent our congregation into disarray, grief and wonder. And we are still standing, seeking to love God and one another. It has been two years since a devastating flood ravaged our community and decimated our facility. And we are still standing and the building's physical recovery is almost complete with only minor cosmetic projects left undone. We just completed the CAT (congregational assessment tool) survey that spoke of high satisfaction and adaptability of our congregation. All of this, leads us into a season where we have permission to "dream big". And so, this summer has the potential to be a pivotal moment, for Grace, that leads to the beginning of something amazing.

Before we begin brainstorming ideas, or sharing an old idea camouflaged as something new, or blurting out an idea that we have been holding onto, I invite us to pray and listen. When Ryan Christenson (Associate Director of Congregational Development for the Iowa Annual Conference) interpreted our CAT survey he shared with us to "dream big" my ego went on over drive. Right away, I had 3-4 ideas that were the "right" ideas for programs or ministries for Grace. It wasn't too long after that, a few other Grace leaders started coming to me with theirs. It is easy for us to became a convoluted mess of ideas and thoughts that are incomplete and yet exciting. Our approach with presenting these ideas was really us processing and navigating two fears; the unknown, and our need not being met.

I want to re-orient the commission to "dream big". What the CAT survey has revealed to us is that our congregation is

ready to welcome and be challenged by a big dream that God has for us. That dream can not be determined until we set our egos and fears aside and truly listen to Holy Spirit within us, read the words of God through scripture, and seek to love Jesus, the Son of God, each day. Our two greatest commandments as disciples of Jesus are "Love God with all you heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself." That may sound simple, but Jesus does not see these commandments fulfilled by simply attending church and being nice to people. It is a commission to sacrifice your daily routines, your belongings, and even some of your wants and desires in order to better love God and care for your neighbor as you care for yourself.

So, before we take a big step into a program or ministry that we want to claim as the next thing that will grow Grace UMC, I invite us to take some very intentional time with scriptural practices of discerning and visioning. These practices include; prayerful listening, fasting, communal scriptural discussion, and community involvement. Starting in July, I will be; fasting each Monday, practicing prayerful listening each Tuesday, inviting others to read scripture together each Wednesday, and doing a community walk each Thursday. If you would like to join me for any or all of these activities feel free to do so quietly or tell me about it. If you need more information on how to participate in any of these spiritual activities on your own, let me know. I will happily walk you through ways that can help you with any of these practices regardless of age, experience, health concerns, etc.

I am looking forward to hearing the voice of God over my own. I am looking forward to joining in what God is already doing that I have been missing out on. I am looking forward to doing something new or refreshing something old. I look forward to meeting Jesus for the sake of serving others. I hope you do too.

MISSION PROJECTS

We had a good turnout for our summer bake salegarage sale. There was a wide variety of items to choose from. Advertisement was spot on thanks to Alison Herman's expertise. Marietta Johnson did a wonderful job getting a wide variety of baked choices from our talented bakers and cooks. Everyone who purchased from the bake sale left with goodies and a smile. The congregation had cleaned their garages, closets and basements and offered up many items for sale. Linda Bress and Vada Calhoon worked hard at displaying everything in an orderly manner. As we reviewed the day we felt that the luncheon attendance was lighter than we would like and we are looking more closely at that segment of the day's events. Final combined total earning is $2010.94. We all felt that it was a success.

During the month of July, we're collecting personal hygiene products, including:

- Bath soap /body wash
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Deodorant (men's and women's)
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrushes for adults and children
- Other personal care and hygiene items

JumpStart is getting a summer makeover!

Instead of collecting food this summer, we're helping provide supplies that Head Start uses throughout the school year. Donations may be placed in the collection cart in the Narthex throughout the month of July.

Let's fill the cart every week!

This is an easy way for everyone to make a big difference for local children and families. Pick up an extra package during your next shopping trip and drop it in the collection cart at church. Every donation helps!

Together, we can keep the cart overflowing and show our community just how much Grace cares.

September Home Delivered Meals

Grace is blessed with the opportunity to provide home bound people in our own community with hot meals.September is our next opportunity to deliver meals to our neighbors. It is about more than a hot meal. The clients enjoy seeing a friendly face and chatting for a few minutes. Our assigned days are Thur. and Fri, and the route usually takes an hour to complete. You will find more information and a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Contact Sheryl Larson, 512-657-1288, with questions.

"*Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.*" – **Deuteronomy 15:11**

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Grace United Methodist Church Finance Committee is pleased to report that our ministry funding continues to remain on a positive track in 2026. We are grateful for the faithful generosity of our congregation, whose support makes our ministries and outreach possible.

Our 2026 Ministry Funding Plan totals $318,721. During the month of May, contributions totaled $19,951, bringing our year-to-date ministry funding contributions to $104,061.

For 2026, church members and friends have made pledges totaling $180,030. Through the generosity of our congregation, $65,960 in pledged gifts has been fulfilled so far this year. Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting the mission and ministry of Grace United Methodist Church.

Be watching for a mid-year financial update letter from the Finance Committee later this month. The letter will accompany the congregation's mid-year financial statement and provide an update on our church's financial health and ministry funding.

This summer, Grace UMC is once again pleased to welcome volunteers from Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). These volunteers will be staying at our church while they perform long-term disaster recovery construction work throughout the Spencer community. In addition to supporting this important mission, the building use fee received for lodging the MDS volunteers provides additional income that helps support the ministry of Grace.

The Finance Committee is also looking ahead to the future and is seeking additional committee members to help with this important ministry. We will also need a new Finance Committee Chairperson for the 2027 finance year. If you feel called to serve or would like more information, please contact Pastor Michael Slininger. Your gifts and leadership can make a meaningful difference in the life of our church.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

2026 Vacation Bible School was held July 6, 7 and 8 from 6:00pm-8:00pm each evening. Grace United Methodist Church partnered with First Congregational and Bethany Lutheran churches this year to present County Fair VBS. Just like at a county fair where ribbons and trophies are given, God blesses everyone with something that makes you special in the kingdom of God. Stations attended by the children each evening, included: fishing, bean mosaic, woodworking, slime, tie dye, or baking. The stations were led by adult sharing a gift or talent with the children. On the last evening VBS families were invited to a fair-themed meal and fellowship. VBS 2026 concluded with a talent show, where children were invited to share a talent. Many thanks to all of the great youth and adults that helped make County Fair a success!.

A MESSAGE FROM LAY LEADER SANDY HEERDT

How Big is Your God?

An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distributeHimself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as ifthere were no others. - A. W. Tozer

I loved reading this quote in my daily devotional. Once in a while I'll hear someone saysomething that triggers a thought in my mind: That person's God is not very big or very capable. Knowing we have a big God gives me a greater sense of trust and faith. I

believe God understands all I'm going through and will give me guidance and direction when I seek Him. I believe God's knowledge is far beyond mine, and so I won'tunderstand why or how certain things happen. How big is your God? In what ways isyour God capable? If we have a big God, where might He lead our congregation?

A bit about A.W. Tozer and his theological education:

According to Wikipedia, A.W. Tozer was born April 21, 1897, and died May 12, 1963. He was an American Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor, preacher, editor, and devotional writer associated with evangelicalism, the Holiness Movement, and Keswick Spirituality. He became one of the most influential figures in twentieth-century evangelical devotional literature, which emphasized holiness, contemplative prayer, reverence, self-denial, death to self, and conscious awareness of God's presence.

- The Alliance World Fellowship is an evangelical Christian denomination within the Higher Life Movement of Christianity, teaching a modified form of Kewwickian theology. It includes 6.7 million members in 88 countries within 24,000 churches.

- The Holiness Movement was a 19th-century Protestant Christian revival that emerged within Methodism in the US and Canada. Rooted in the teachings of Methodist founder John Wesley, the movement gained immense traction in the 1830's through parlor-room meetings led by figures like Phoebe Palmer. Believers focused on achieving heart purity, total consecration to God, and living a disciplined, conservative lifestyle.

- The Keswick Movement is a Protestant theological tradition within Evangelical Christianity that espoused a distinct teaching on the doctrines of entire sanctification, healing, and spiritual gifts.

FOUNDATION DISBURSEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Foundation Disbursement Committee met in mid-June to review all funding requests that were submitted for consideration. After careful discussion and evaluation, the committee presented its findings and recommendations to the Church Council at its most recent meeting.

The Church Council has approved the recommended disbursements. A list of the approved applications is included with this newsletter.

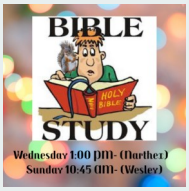
If you have any questions regarding the Foundation disbursement process or the approved requests, please contact a member of the Foundation Disbursement Committee, a Church Council member, or Pastor Michael Slininger.

Grant Title	Requested By	Amount asked	Grant Description	Reccomendation
Congregational Challenge for Mittens	Mission Committee	$500	funds used to provide mittens for underprivileged children in Spencer community	Approved
Head Start Winter Coat Drive	Mission Committee	$2,000	funds used to provide winter coats for underprivileged children in Spencer Community	Approved for $1000
2nd Grader Summer Reading Project	Mission Committee	$1,000	funds used to provide books for entire 2nd grade class of Spencer School District	Approved
UDMO Baby/Toddler Room	Mission Committee	$500	funds used to assist UDMO in helping families with suppleis to care for infants and toddlers in the	Approved
Prayer Shawl Ministry	UW Faith	$500	funds used for material for the prayer shawl ministry	Approved
CHART-Community Housing Access & Resource Team	Shurmaine McAlpine	$5,000	funds would be given to CHART organization to assist those in need particular of housing situations within the Clay County	Approved for $2500
Methodist Camp	Mission Committee	$3,000	Funds would be used to purchase deck chairs and a vacuum for the Okiboji United Methodist Camp	Approved for $1,000
Going Outside the Circle 2026	Mission Committee	$1,000	Funds would be used to encourage development of mission projects outside of the walls of Grace UMC	Approved
Heifer Project Challenge 2026-2027	Mission Committee	$1,000	funds would be given to Heifer international, an organization that assist in agricultural economic	Approved
Midwest Missions Project	Mission committee	$1,000	funds would be used for an event in which midwest missions is partnering with the Okiboji United Methodist Camp to assist Youth in putting together	Approved
The Banquet	Mission Committee	$1,100	Funds used to for meal fee for Grace UMC to participate in serving at the Banquet in Sioux Falls,	Approved for $500
Knotting Hope:Blankets of Bravery	Brianna Pullen	$500	Funds used for material to make tie blankets during mission event. These blanekts will be distributed to organizations that assist and care for abused	Approved
Trustees Priority List for 2026	Trustees	$16,865.17	Funds used for capital improvements projects on the Grace UMC facility	Approved
	Trustees	$13,000		
Advertising	Alison Herman	$1,500	Funds used for any potential advertising cost for Grace UMC events and ministries	Approved
Funding for Delivered Meals to Underserved Clay County	Bill and Shurmaine McAlpine	$20,000	Funds would be given to the organization that coordinates the home delivered meals within Clay county to supplement their costs to provide meals	Approve for $10,000
Leadership Retreat	SPRC	$3,000	Funds would be used for facility rental and supplies to host a leadership retreat for Grace UMC leadership team as well as connectional UMC	Approved
Small Group Books	SPRC	$1,000	Funds would be used to purchase books and material used for small groups	Approved

SMALL GROUP OPPORTUNITIES

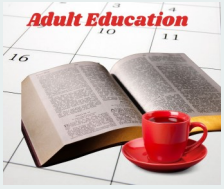
In the Methodist tradition disciples grow best in the context of Christian community. An essential part of becoming deeply committed Christians is our connection with others in small groups, and that is true now more than ever. Small groups allow us to find encouragement, prayer, learning and life together.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

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 invites you to enjoy our growing lineup of fitness and wellness classes—perfect for reducing stress, improving flexibility, and supporting overall well being.

Instructor-Led Chair Yoga A gentle, beginner-friendly class focused on stretching, strengthening, and relaxation—all from a chair. Tuesdays & Thursdays • 12:00–12:30 PM (Wesley Room)

Cost: $5 per session. Sign up at www.SpencerGUMC.com or contact the church office. Questions? Email mandikingyoga@gmail.com or call/text (712) 260-3314

Video-Led Fitness Classes (Wesley Room) Mondays & Wednesdays:

9:30–10:00 AM – Essentrics

10:00–10:30 AM – Chair Yoga

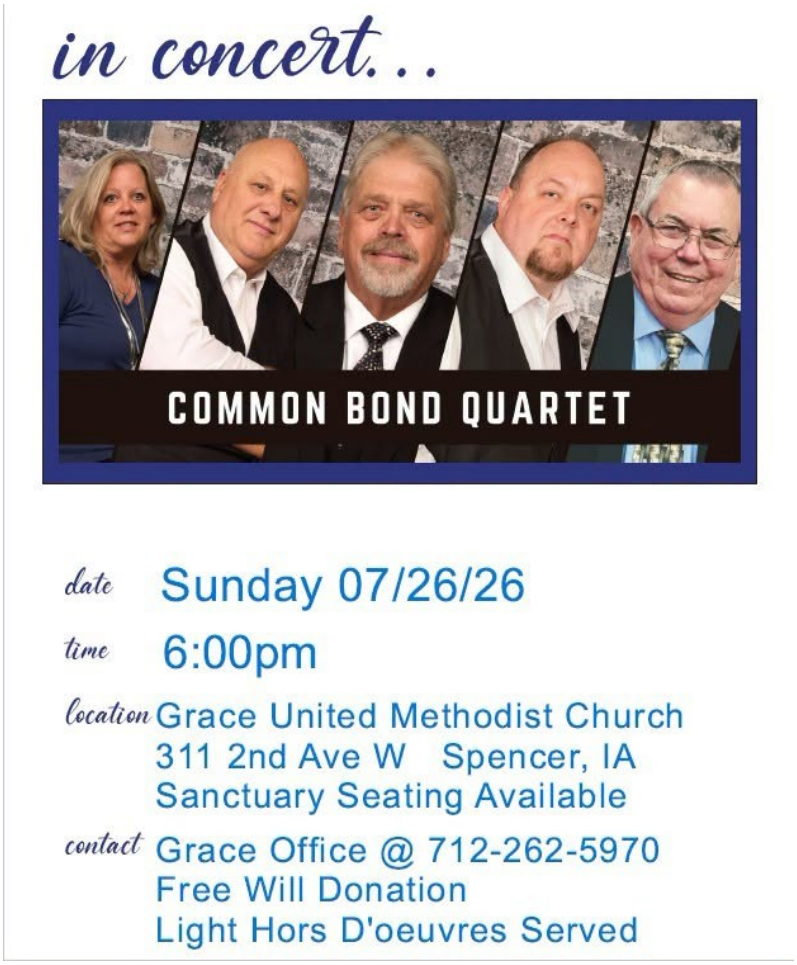
Essentrics uses slow, controlled movements to build strength, flexibility, and balance. Chair Yoga offers gentle, accessible stretching for all fitness levels.

Come as you are, bring a friend, and take time to care for your body and spirit—wellness is for everyone at GUMC!

Prayer Group

UPCOMING EVENTS &OPPORTUNITIES

Common Bond Quartet is based near Ashland, Kentucky. The group began in 2009 with four friends who loved Southern Gospel Quartet music. Thinking they'd only sing in the Lexington area a few times a year, they soon found that God has other plans for them. In the past 10 years, Common Bond has twice been nominated as a 'New Horizon Group' of the year and have had least 10 songs make their way up on the Singing News Gospel Music charts. God has extended their 'borders' to having sung in churches from Canada to Florida; and Virginia to Oklahoma--and in most states in between.



Main Street Market Root Beer Float Outreach

Join us for our first **Main Street Market Root Beer Float Outreach** on **Thursdays, July 16, July 23, July 30, August 6, Agust 13.**

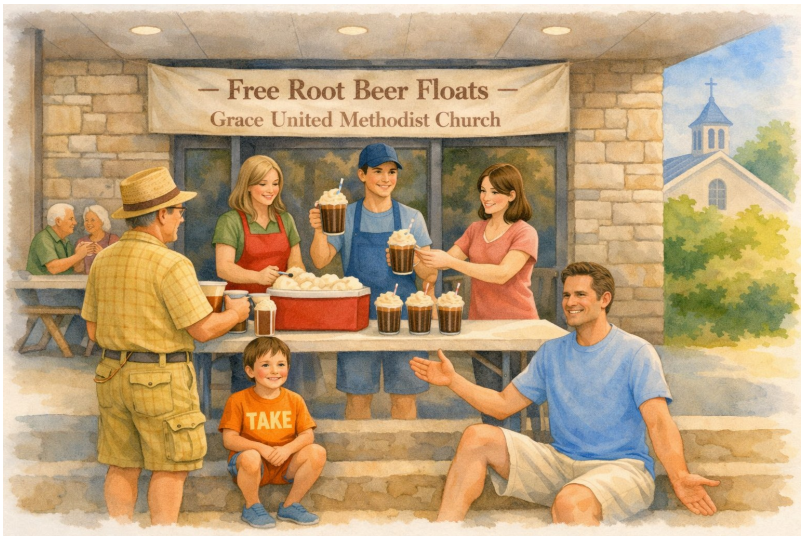
To help us prepare, we invite you to sign up to:

- Serve root beer floats at the market
- Donate root beer
- Donate ice cream

Sign-up and donation sheets will be available in the **Narthex**.

As you shop in the coming weeks, please watch for sales on root beer and ice cream. Your donations will help us provide free root beer floats while sharing Grace's hospitality and love with our community.

Thank you for helping make this outreach a sweet success!



JOYS AND CONCERNS

Bailey Swanson graduated from Coe College with an Elementary Education degree. Bailey also accepted a teaching job for this fall as a third grade teacher at St Joseph Catholic School in Marion, IA.

Grace's Flagfest Parade Lunch!

Thank you to everyone who helped set up, prepare food, serve guests, greet visitors, and clean up afterward. Events like this don't happen without many people working together.

It truly takes a team—and Grace Church has an amazing team.

We served approximately **150 meals**, and at one point every table in the Fellowship Hall was filled. What a wonderful afternoon of food, fellowship, and community.

Sunday Worship

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

Children's & Youth Ministry	July 11	August 11	6:30 PM	Library
Church Council	No mtg	August 24	6:30 PM	Fireside
Finance (Qtrly next mtg July)	July 27	No mtg	5:30 PM	Wesley
Grace Cares	No mtg	August	3:00 PM	
Missions	July 3	August 3	3:30 PM	Library
SPRC	July 3	August	6:00 PM	
Trustees	July 10	August 10	6:30 PM	Library
Worship	July 4	August 8	10:00 AM	Library

Chair Yoga	Monday & Wednesday		10:00AM	Wesley
Coffee @ Grace	July 1& 15	August 6 & 19	9:30AM	Narthex
Essentrics Class	Monday & Wednesday		9:30AM	Wesley
Esther Circle	July 25	No mtg	3:30PM	@Peggy Palm's
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	No mtg	No mtg	1:30 PM	
UMM	Summer Break	Summer Break	8:00 AM	BenTena Room
UWFaith	No mtg	August 6		
Weighted Works with Love	July 28	August 25	9:00 AM	Fellowship Hall
Adult Study Group	Sunday		10:45 AM	Wesley
Package Jump Start Bags	Summer Break	Summer Break	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