

APRIL 2026

GRACE NOTES

No. 4 pekingrace.org



highlights

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PASTOR'S CORNER

Just sharing some thoughts from over my years in ministry, nothing too profound.



The weather is warming and there are early spring flowers in bloom. As attention turns to enjoying the warmer weather, it should also be focusing on Easter. Within Christianity, we do not have many major holy days, but Easter is one of them. Historically, Easter was the most important day in Christianity. Easter is the day we celebrate the risen Lord. It should be a day celebration, a time of great joy. This is the day that is at the center of our beliefs. I hope that you all celebrate it with us in worship on Easter Sunday.

I also hope that many of you can have family Easter celebrations in addition to our worship. It is generally not only a time of family gathering, but a time children will hunt Easter eggs. There will be decorations with bunnies and spring flowers. Although the eggs, the bunnies and the flowers are not a part of the Easter story, they are age old symbols of new life coming into the world. And for us, Easter reminds us of the new life we have in Christ.

Celebrate with us this year, celebrate with Christians throughout the world, celebrate the risen Christ this Easter and every day.

Rev. Dr. Curt D. Keller



From the Pulpit: A Message on **Church Finances**

As I am a retired minister here on an interim basis only serving $\frac{3}{4}$ time, there are some expenses that the church does not incur as it does with a full-time minister. Not only is the salary less, but there are no health insurance payments nor pension payments. As such, the church should be saving money and be well prepared for Rev. Beckwith when he arrives July 1. Some of the savings could be used for needed repairs on the parsonage. However, this has not been the case so far this year. At the end of February, we have spent more money than has come in. Hopefully, March and April will be different. Remember that the church cannot operate and do ministry without your support. Please give what support you can to help the church and its ministries.

Simplify Your Giving

Did you know your monthly gift can be automatically withdrawn from your checking or savings account? Electronic giving is a secure and convenient way to stay consistent in your stewardship.

Benefits of ACH Giving:

- Saves time
- Secure electronic transfer
- Appears on your bank statement
- Quarterly giving statements emailed to you

What is an ACH Transaction?

An ACH (Automated Clearing House) transaction is a secure electronic transfer of funds between banks and credit unions.

ACH is commonly used for:

- Direct deposit of paychecks
- *Automatic monthly payments*
- Online bill payments

When you authorize ACH giving, you provide your bank routing number and account number so funds can be transferred securely.

To enroll in automatic giving or ask questions, please contact Nanette Mulvey in the church office. businessmanager@pekingrace.org

2 Corinthians 9:7

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”



Rev. Dr. Cary L. Beckwith



Members and friends of Grace United Methodist Church, We are writing to share with you that the Bishops, in consultation with our church leadership and our District Superintendent, have selected our pastor, Rev. Dr. Cary L. Beckwith, to serve as our pastor starting July 1, 2026. Below you will find a brief bio of Rev. Dr. Beckwith. Please be in prayer for him at this time and for our ministry at Grace in this season of transition.

Biography:

The Rev. Dr. Cary L. Beckwith is a native of St. Louis, Missouri. He is the only child born to the late Marguerite Beckwith. Dr. Beckwith is a product of the St. Louis Public School System. A 1993 graduate of Knoxville College with a degree in Biological Sciences, he worked for 19 years as the Senior Microbiology Manager at Missouri Analytical Laboratories.

In 2004, Dr. Beckwith answered the call into the Lord's ministry, and from there has been laboring in the vineyard faithfully while serving in many capacities. His formative years in ministry were spent in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church where he received his initial ordination orders. In 2008, Dr. Beckwith was ordained a deacon, and in 2010 at the hand of The Right Reverend Roy Anderson Holmes (deceased), he was ordained an elder. Dr. Beckwith is currently an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church.

While serving under Rev. Kenneth McKoy at Blackwell Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Dr. Beckwith was an associate minister. He also served as youth minister at the historic Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church under the pastorate of the Rev. Dr. Anthony N. Witherspoon. These apprenticeships were valuable teaching and training moments in his ministry.

In 2010, Dr. Beckwith received his first pastoral appointment to serve Brown Community A.M.E. Zion Church in East St. Louis, Illinois. In 2012, he was assigned to the St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Buffalo, New York, where he served until July 2017. He was assigned to the Hope Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Utica, New York, where he served until July 2018.

After much prayer and consultation with family and friends, Dr. Beckwith made the transition to the United Methodist Church, where since July 2018 he has served as Senior Pastor of both the Wood River First, and Wanda United Methodist Churches. In July 2022, Dr. Beckwith was appointed to serve Grace United Methodist Church located in Springfield, Illinois.

In 2012, he was conferred with the Masters of Divinity Degree from Eden Theological Seminary, and in 2018, he graduated with honors from Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School with the Doctor of Ministry Degree.

Dr. Beckwith has been blessed to serve God's people in many capacities, has served on numerous boards, and is a proud life member of the greatest fraternity known to man, Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc. Yet, his greatest accomplishment is being husband to Rev. Chan-Tell King-Beckwith, father to Ni-Keith (son), Ni-Vante' (daughter), Car-Vante' (son), and grandfather to Ni-Keith, Jr.

His foundational scripture is Lamentations 3:24, "The Lord is my portion says my soul; therefore I will hope in him."

UNITEKIDS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Emmy Thies & Dianna Miller
Co-Directors of Children & Family Ministry



This month has been full of adventure at UNITEkids and Bible Buddies. Please check out our Facebook page UNITEkids Pekin UMC for updates each week. We share photos, a recap of our lesson and important information. Bible Buddies receives a newsletter weekly regarding the lesson plans and fun info. If you would like to receive the newsletter, please contact Ms. Dianna at dmiller@pekingrace.org. and she will add you to the list.

Our **last Wednesday at Pekin Grace** will be on March 25th. We **will not meet** on Wednesday April 1st.

We will resume meeting on April 8th at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court Street, Pekin,, IL 61554. See you there!

Please reach out to Ms. Emmy at ethies@pekinfirst.org or Ms. Dianna at dmiller@pekingrace.org. if you have any questions about the change in location or if you have transportation needs.



Ignite JR. Youth Group FUN FEST!



Meet weekly on Wednesdays
Mason Building, 2nd Floor

- Jr. High meets 5:30-7 p.m.
- Sr. High meets from 7-8:30 p.m.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Jill Stoner-Crouch, Brionna Goodin
Co-Directors of Youth Ministries

We finished our study on disciples in March.

We explored Jesus' "top 12 picks", to be disciples for His Great Commission.

We found that we can relate to many of them! Who do you relate to??

PETER was known for being bold, impulsive and a strong leader.

ANDREW: Brought people to Jesus & was Peter's brother.

JAMES: "Son of Thunder", John's brother.

JOHN: " Beloved disciple", wrote several NT books, James brother.

PHILIP: Asked honest questions

BARTHOLOMEW: Sincere, thoughtful

MATTHEW: Former tax collector

THOMAS: Honest doubter

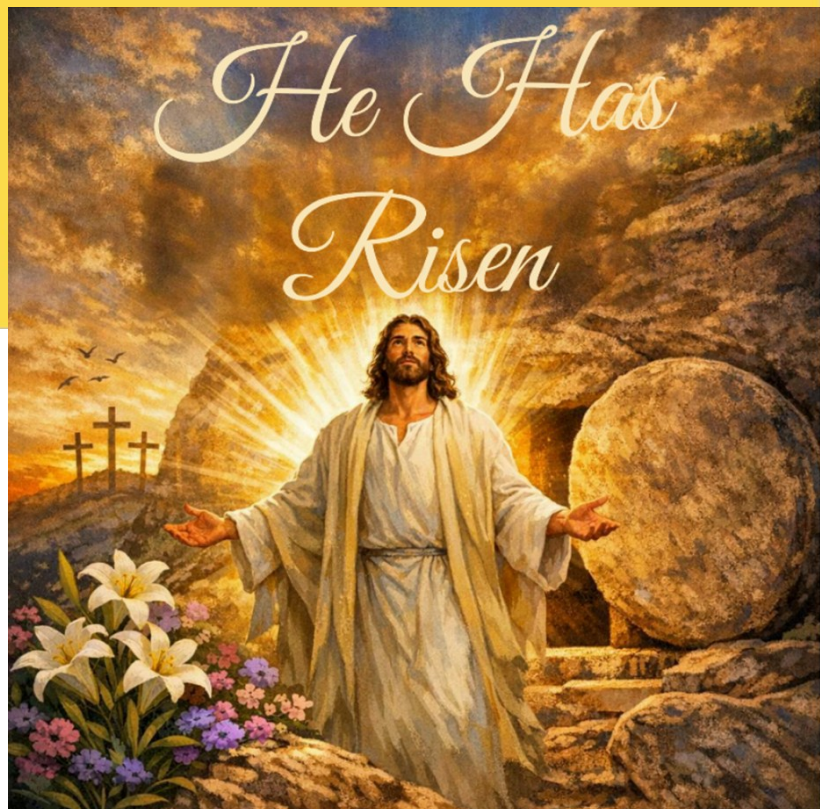
JAMES : (son of Alphaeus), Quiet, little known

THADDEUS : (Jude), Encourager.

SIMON : The Zealot, Former political radical.

JUDAS: Iscariot, Betrayed Jesus.

Spring Break is
4/1/2026
No Youth Group



HOSPITALITY TEAM

Judy Gordon
Hospitality Chairman



Coffee Bar

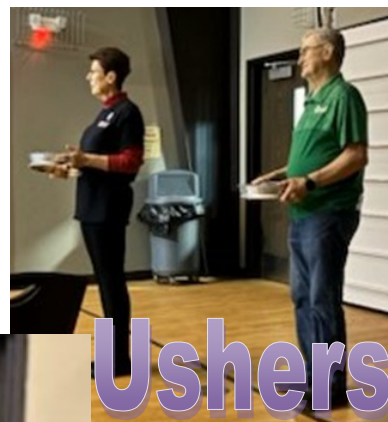
Hello Grace Family

I'd love to take a moment to introduce our amazing Hospitality Team here at church. This group is all about creating a welcoming, comfortable space where every person feels seen, valued, and at home. Whether it's greeting at the door, helping newcomers get connected, or simply offering a warm smile, this team plays a huge role in shaping the heart of our church family.

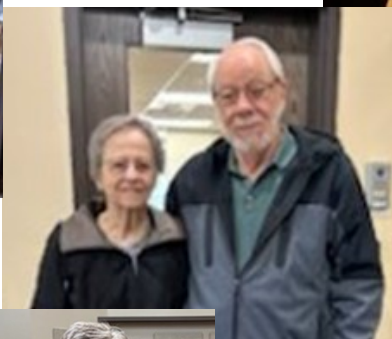
If you've been looking for a way to get more involved, meet new people, or serve in a way that makes a real difference, Hospitality is a beautiful place to start. We'd love to have you join us—whether you're outgoing, behind-the-scenes, or somewhere in between, there's a spot for you.

Come check us out, ask questions, or even try a Sunday with us. We'd be thrilled to welcome you in.

Judy Gordon
Hospitality Chairman
309.472.2534
judygordon10@icloud.com



Ushers



Greeters



Egg Hunt

Please make sure to sign up your children, infant to 5th grade.

Glow-In-the-Dark Egg Hunt

- Games start at 7 p.m.
- 7:15 p.m.: Infant through Pre-K Hunt
- 7:30 p.m.: K through 5th Hunt

Maundy Thursday

The Maundy Thursday service will be held at Pekin First UMC on Thursday, April 2, at 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday

If you look up on Google what is the purpose of a Good Friday service, it gives you the following:

A Good Friday Service commemorates the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, offering a time for solemn reflection on the sacrifice of his passion.

It focuses on gratitude, humility, and the theological significance of salvation, creating a somber atmosphere that contrasts with Easter's joy to fully honor the weight of Jesus' sacrifice.

The Good Friday service will take place at Grace on April 3 at 7 p.m. Come remember Jesus' sacrifice with us!

Easter Services

Easter services will be held at Grace on April 5 at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Grace will not have a Saturday Service. Please come on Sunday to celebrate Easter together. Sunrise services will not be held at Pekin Grace this year.

Book Club

Book Club meets Tuesday, April 14, in the library at Pekin Estates at 10 a.m. We will be discussing, *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens.

Communication at Grace

Just a reminder that at Pekin Grace, our primary means of communication is through email. Places to look to find more information about upcoming activities include:

- Tuesday Email (also sent out as a mailing for those without email)
- Grace Notes
- Grace App
- Grace Website
- Calendar of Grace (listed on the Website)
- Talk with staff of Grace

Listed below are important cut-off dates:

- Grace Notes articles need to be turned in on the 15th of the previous month to be included in the publication.
- Tuesday email announcements need to be emailed to the secretary@pekingrace.org. Announcements need to be received by noon on Mondays. Be sure to indicate you would like it included in the Tuesday email.
- Requests for check reimbursement need to be turned into the office by Wednesday at noon to be reimbursed on Thursday of that week.

Team Formation Update

Our GUMC "Teams" are up and running (Finance, Trustee, Outreach). These teams will be the lifeblood of our ongoing functioning at Grace. All teams have met and have been introduced to their Leadership Board liaisons. This is the opportunity for people in our congregations to get together and plan for our future.

The Outreach Team is likely the most diverse in its areas of responsibility and will continue defining its roles clearly. The Finance Team will look at our ongoing financial needs and how those can best be met. Our Trustee Team has already identified some areas of need within our facilities and is moving to get all of those prioritized and funded.

If anyone wants to be a part of these teams, they can contact the office, and information will be delivered to the appropriate team liaison.

Graduates Recognition

Congratulations to Our 2026 Graduates!

Grace United Methodist Church extends heartfelt congratulations to all 2026 graduates and their families! You deserve applause, recognition, and a moment to stand proud—this is a significant and unforgettable milestone in your life.

We want to celebrate graduates of **high school, college, technical school, and all forms of higher education**. If you or a family member are graduating, please inform the church office so we can honor this special achievement with you.

How to Participate:

To be included in our publications and graduation recognition:

- Please send **three pictures**
- And a **short write-up about your future plans**
- Email info: secretary@pekingrace.org

It's important to notify us, as we may not be aware of all graduates.

Recognition Sunday:

We will honor and pray for all graduates during both Sunday worship services on:

Sunday, May 24

Submission Deadline:

Please ensure we receive all pictures and write-ups **by May 7** to include them in the service materials.

Thank you, and congratulations again to all our 2026 graduates!

Happy Easter

District News

Greetings,

I wanted to share an update with you as soon as it became public. I have requested and been approved for retirement effective January 1, 2027. Just before Bishop Frank Beard told me in March of 2022 that he was going to appoint me as a District Superintendent, he asked me how long I intended to serve before retiring. He knew that Patty had been approved to retire July 1, 2022. I told him that I anticipated serving two to four more years before retirement.

Over the past couple years, I have been in discernment regarding when I would retire. Last fall I submitted a request to retire July 1, 2026. In further conversation with Bishop Bard and Bishop Bigham-Tsai, I was asked if I would consider postponing the effective date for six months. I agreed and that is why I will be retiring mid-year.

It has been my honor to serve churches in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference for the past 40 years. I cannot begin to express how grateful I am that pastors, laity, and churches have allowed me to work alongside their ministry for over twenty years, first in Congregational Development and since July 2022 in the role of District Superintendent. Your faithfulness in ministry and your encouragement of my ministry is inspiring.

Serving with you,
Mike

Rev. Mike Crawford
North District Superintendent
(309)688-9027 (Office)

NEW Grace Notes Deadline

The Grace Notes deadline is changing to the 15th of the month. If you have an article you would like included it needs to be given to the secretary by the 15th of the month before. Pictures and short articles are appreciated. Not all pictures may be used if we are short on space. Please take the opportunity to let your church know what your group has been doing.

April Birthdays

Scott Kriegsman	1	Charles Hanley	18
Nick Bruns	1	Jill Crouch	19
Alicia Marsden	4	Ryan Plunkett	23
Mariah Teaney	5	Trisha Plunkett	23
Phyllis McCabe	7	Wilda Carlton	23
Chuck Shields	8	Carol Groch	24
Keith Culp	8	Brennan Jacobson	24
Diane Ingram	10	David Cole	25
Judy Gordon	10		
Rachel Doan	11		
Jennifer Otey	11		
Sam Neff	11		
Hayes Tennell	11		
Landon Boker	11		
Angela Hannan	12		
Peggy Golden	13		
Nancy Spencer	13		
Matt Bloom	15		
Garrett Williamson	16		
Karson Norman	16		
Diane Aupperle	16		
Ray Long	17		



Connect!

601 N. 4th St.
Pekin, IL
309-347-7131
secretary@pekingrace.org
pekingrace.org

Worship Times
Saturdays 5:30 pm
Sundays 9 & 11am

Office Hours
M-TH 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Closed 12 -1 pm

Prayer Concerns

Arlen Booth
Christy McDuff
Duane Hill
Linda Stoner
Thomas Jacobson

*Names are kept on the prayer list for four weeks.
If you would like to be kept on longer, please call
the office, 309-347-7131.*

April 1:

No children or youth programs will meet this week.

Easter Break

No choir rehearsal at 6 pm.

April 2

Choir Rehearsal, Pekin First UMC, 5:45 p.m.

Maundy Thursday Service **at Pekin First UMC**, 6:30 p.m.

April 3

Small choir group rehearsal, Sanctuary, 5:30 p.m.

Good Friday Service, at Grace, 7 p.m.

April 4

Cancelled: Saturday Service: Come on Sunday for Easter!

Glow-In-the-Dark Egg Hunt

- Games start at 7 p.m.
- 7:15 p.m.: Infant through Pre-K Hunt
- 7:30 p.m.: K through 5th Hunt

April 5

EASTER Sunday Services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary, 10:25 a.m.

April 6

Office Closed in observance of Easter

April 7

Reminder: Men's Fellowship always meets on Tuesdays, Hospitality Area at 8 a.m. All men are welcome to join!

April 8

Children's programming will resume on Wednesdays from 5:30-7 p.m. Their programs will meet at Pekin First UMC, 1315 Court Street in Pekin, for the Spring/Summer IgniteYouth groups resume at regularly scheduled times (5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.) at Grace.

Sanctuary Choir will not meet.

April 11

Grace Drive-Thru Food Pantry, Hospitality Area, 11 a.m.

April 12

IGRC Camping Coordinator Rev. Nancy Lane is visiting Grace and giving the Sermon

April 14

Book Club, Pekin Estates, 10 a.m.

April 15

Finance Meeting, Hospitality Area, 5:30 p.m.

Sanctuary Choir resumes meeting at 6 p.m.

Grace Notes articles due

April 22

Communion at Pekin Estates (No Pastor Keller), 2 p.m.

April 25

Grace Drive-Thru Food Pantry, Hospitality Area, 11 a.m.

April 27

Finance Meeting, Hospitality Area, 6 p.m.

April 28

Leadership Board Meeting, 6 p.m.