

MAY 2026

# GRACE NOTES

No. 5 [pekingrace.org](http://pekingrace.org)



## highlights

MAY 2026

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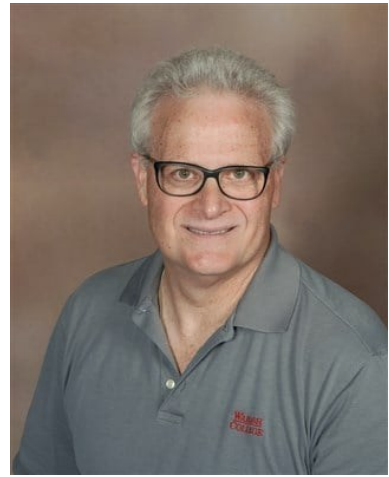
### PRAYER CONCERNS

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# PASTOR'S CORNER

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



Just two more months and I will be finished with my interim appointment here at Grace. I will assume that the last 2 months will go as the first 4 months, and that is enjoyable. It has been a privilege for me to be here as there are so many wonderful people here. There are great programs happening in the church as you reach so many people in ministry. My assignment in coming here was essentially to keep things going and prepare for the next minister, who begins July 1. What makes these last couple of months even better is that I am truly excited about the Rev. Cary Beckwith coming to Grace. I have had some communications with him and look forward to meeting him face to face in the coming weeks. And what has made my job here fairly easy has been that I was able to follow the Rev. Eric Swanson, who had helped lead this congregation for several years in a good direction.

As a short-term interim, it is not for me to try to make any major changes or to stir things up. I hope I have not done so. I do want to say that even though you have been doing some incredible ministry, there is much potential to do even more. I believe that Rev. Beckwith will help you tap into those potentials with his vision and abilities, along with your vision and strengths.

Grace UMC has all the elements needed for a great future in ministry in the Pekin area. You have wonderful staff, wonderful leadership, a great facility and you are very friendly people. On top of all that, you are people of great faith.

Reverend Curt Keller

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Please be in prayer for Reverend Dr. Cary Beckwith as he finishes up his ministry in Springfield and then comes to Pekin Grace UMC on July 1.

#### Key Areas to Cover in Prayer

- Heart for the People: That he will love the congregation and develop genuine friendships.
- Vision: That he will discern God's direction for the church's future.
- Integrity: That his life will be marked by faith, love, and holiness.
- Perseverance: That he will remain steadfast through the challenges of ministry.

# End of year Celebration!

Can you believe that it's May already? UNITEkids and Bible Buddies have enjoyed an amazing year full of lessons, friendship and tons of fun along the way. **Our last meeting at Pekin First UMC will be Wednesday, May 13.**

Then we will enjoy our family picnic on Wednesday, May 20, from 6- 7 p.m. at the Blenkiron Park on Park Ave. UNITEkids and Bible Buddies will provide the main dish and drinks. Please bring a side dish to share and a chair or blanket. We look forward to wrapping up another fantastic year with our friends and their families.



End of Year **Celebration** for UNITEkids  
May 20 at Pekin's Blenkiron Park, 6-7 p.m.  
*Bring a side to share!*



# VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

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



This year, we are excited to announce our first annual VBS preview night on June 24 from 6-7p.m. at Pekin First UMC. You will get an up-close and personal sneak peek at the fun that awaits us at Rainforest Falls! This preview night is for everyone! All children are invited along with curious parents, leaders and anyone who may be interested in being a leader but may not know how to get involved. We will answer all questions and get everyone excited to be a part of one of our largest children's programs! Please come and join the fun! We will have fun music, activities and a registration station for our kids and sign-up for leaders and volunteers. There is something for everyone! This year we are adding a new crew to the mix! Bible story leaders to teach our main Bible lessons in grand detail, so our crew leaders can join in the fun with their crew and help them get to where they need to go.

VBS is scheduled for July 13 - 17 at Pekin First. We will be posting a donation list very soon with all of the wonderful items it takes to make our Rainforest Falls the best VBS ever! if you're interested in donating to our program, we will post the wish list on our Unitekids and Bible Buddies Facebook page and we will have a VBS table at Pekin First to claim a donation item. Oh, and guess what?

## Registration for VBS is now open!



How exciting is this? Let's get on the list! For questions or to register contact Miss Dianna at [dmiller@pekingrace.org](mailto:dmiller@pekingrace.org). You may also use the QR code to register your child or to be a leader. We are so excited about our VBS program and hope to see everyone at Preview Night!

# GLOW-IN-THE-DARK EGG HUNT

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



Our Glow-in- the--dark Easter egg extravaganza was a glowing success this year! We had 85 children join us for our glow in the dark egg hunt. Although the weather was not cooperating with us this year, we moved our hunt indoors, and the eggs glowed so beautifully. The children enjoyed the hunt with games that were led by our Ignite Grace youth group and fun was had by all. Ms. Emmy led us in a beautiful message, putting Jesus as the focus of our evening. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to make our event special for the children.

# YOUTH MINISTRY

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

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.

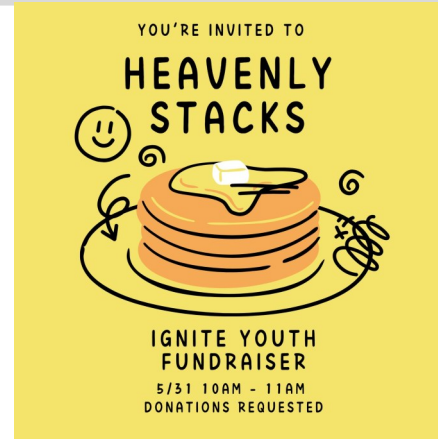
## Upcoming Dates

**May 6** Last night for regular youth group meeting times. 5:30-7p.m. for Junior High and 7-8:30 p.m. for High School.

**May 20** End of Year Celebration at Blenkiron Park! This is the last day the group will be meeting regularly. We will be celebrating the end of a successful year with UNITEkids at Blenkiron Park on Park Avenue. Picnic will be from 6-7pm for both junior high and high school. The Unite programs will provide a main dish and drinks. Please bring a side dish to share and a chair or blanket for sitting.

**May 31** Heavenly Stacks at Grace UMC. Youth need to arrive at church at 8:45 a.m.

Stay tuned for communication throughout the summer for different events and VBS volunteer sign-ups!



Jr. High Group

# Sr. High Group



Our Ignite Youth have been exploring what it means to "take up your cross and follow me," as Jesus teaches.

**Matthew 6:24** (ESV):  
*"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'"*



Their spiritual journeys are deepening as we share in fellowship and faith, recognizing the essential role of Jesus in today's world.



### Thank you!

Grace Church Family,  
On behalf of myself, children and grandchildren, I want to thank you all for everything. For prayers, cards, very kind words, meals, memorials, and the list continues on and on.

So much love and kindness. So many caring people. Over 1200 signed the register book, and there were so many kind donations to our pantry program for Gloria.

As life continues on, we are continuing both the pantry and working with District 108 to take over the snack pack program after the next 8 weeks. On the pantry side, we are looking for a director/lead person. Brenda Nelson is working with me for now but states it is temporary. We have an excellent team for the program. All are willing to continue and happy to sit down with anyone willing to look at the very worthwhile program. Please get with me if you are interested.

Again Thank you! Thank you!, Thank you all for everything over the past 5 weeks. Please remember Gloria's smile, how much you all meant to her and how much she loved God and her family.

Greg and the kids



### 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](mailto: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.

### Weekly Email

If you are interested in being added to our Tuesday email, please let the office know. Each Tuesday, the office sends out an email with notification of our upcoming activities and the current prayer list.

### Grace Scholarships

The Grace Scholarship is available on the website. Completed applications should be returned to the church office by May 31. In order to qualify for this scholarship, the applicant must be a member of Grace United Methodist Church.

In addition, the applicant and/or family must have attended at least one church service per month (or 12 per year) the prior year. The recipients will be chosen on May 31 and will be announced in the July Grace Notes. They will be notified by mail.

### Book Club

Book Club will not meet in May. See you next month!

### Graduates Recognition

Congratulations to our 2026 graduates! 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, items must be received by May 7.

- Please send three pictures
- And a short write-up about your future plans
- Email info: [secretary@pekingrace.org](mailto:secretary@pekingrace.org)

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

### Graduate Recognition Sunday

We will honor and pray for all graduates during both Sunday worship services on, Sunday, May 24.

### Welcome New Members!

Please be in prayer for our new members Calvin and Martha Willard. We would like to welcome them to Grace Church.



### Heavenly Stacks

The youth will be having a pancake fundraiser on May 31, from 10-11 a.m. Donations are requested. Money raised will go to support the youth program

### Key Cards

A new policy has been started in regard to the entry key cards for the church. If you are utilizing the facilities for your group and it meets after regular hours, the church now has a nonrefundable \$10 fee any time a key card is needed.

We still ask that the card be returned at the end of your event. The price covers the cost of the card and its programming. You can always schedule your event for times when the church is open to avoid the card fee.

In addition, if you currently have a card in your possession, please take some time to make sure it is still active, especially if it has not been used in awhile. Please do not share cards as we need the correct users name in our system.

### Kroger Community Rewards

From January 1 through March 31, 2026, Grace Church received a total of \$56.43 from the 32 families that utilize the Kroger's Community Rewards. Thank you!

If you shop at Kroger's, join the community rewards and select Grace Church as the recipient.

### A Powerful Experience is Coming

Save the Date!

What if you could step into someone else's reality for just a moment? Pekin First UMC, in partnership with Grace UMC, will be hosting a Poverty Simulation—an eye-opening experience designed to deepen our understanding of the challenges many face everyday.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, May 30, in the GFFLC at Pekin Grace UMC, 1-3 p.m. More details and sign-up information coming soon.



# Co-Rec Softball

## Monday Church Softball League

- May 4, #2 6 p.m. vs. Faith Baptist
- May 11, #2 9 p.m. vs. North Pekin Nazarene
- May 18, #2 8 p.m. vs. St. Joseph
- June 1, #2 6 p.m. vs. Community of Christ
- June 8, #2 6 p.m. vs. City Church
- June 15, #2 7 p.m. vs. First United Methodist
- June 22, #1 8 p.m. vs. CBC
- June 29, #1 9 p.m. vs. Faith Baptist
- July 6, #1 7 p.m. vs. North Pekin Nazarene
- July 13, #1 6 p.m. vs. St. Joseph
- July 20, #1 7 p.m. vs. Community of Christ
- July 27, #1 6 p.m. vs. First United Methodist
- August 3, #1 7 p.m. vs. City Church

## Church Women United

May Friendship Day

May 8 at 10 a.m. at Our Savior Lutheran Church on 2223 Sheridan Rd. A representative from The Blessing Room will give the program. The collection will be the Least Coin, health kits and school kits. Contact Connie Disney if you need more information.

## National Day of Prayer

May 7 at the Pekin Riverfront Park, 121 Court Street. In the event of inclement weather, meet at: Reachpoint Church at 215 N. 5th Street in Pekin. Join us to pray for neighbors and the nation.

## Pledge Drive 2027

Grace UMC will be conducting our annual pledge drive during the first few weeks of May. Pledge cards will be mailed the first week of May, and we ask that you return them by May 17. Cards may be mailed back, dropped off at the office, placed in the offering plate, or completed and submitted using the QR code on the pledge card. Please help us plan a responsible and sustainable 2027 budget for Grace!

# Church News

## End of Program Year Program Schedule

UniteKids and Bible Buddies

- May 13-Last night for regular meeting time at Pekin First UMC, 5:30 - 7 p.m.
- May 20-End-of-year celebration at Blenkiron Park, 6-7 p.m. Bring chairs to sit in and a side dish to share. The church will provide the main dish, tableware, and drinks.
- This group will *resume* weekly meetings in the fall at Pekin First UMC on September 9.

Ignite Grace Youth Group

- May 6- Last night for regular youth group meeting times. 5:30-7 p.m. for Junior High and 7-8:30 p.m. for High School.
- May 13 Youth group is cancelled.
- May 20- End of year celebration! Last night for the youth group before summer break. Celebrating with UNITEkids at Blenkiron Park. 6 pm-7 pm for junior high and high school. Parents are welcome to attend as well.
- Stay tuned for communication throughout the summer for different events and VBS volunteer sign-ups!
- This group will resume weekly meetings in the fall on September 9 at Grace.

Choir

- May 24 Last Sunday the Sanctuary Choir sings before summer break.
- July 1 Musical Rehearsal (Choir, Brass & Bells) Sanctuary, 6:30 p.m. Group will share at the service on July 5. Meet at 10 a.m. on July 5 before service for rehearsal.
- This group will *resume* weekly rehearsals in the fall on September 9 at 6 p.m.



## May Birthdays

Kat Doering	1	Jan Darnell	22
Anna Booher	1	Theresa Snell	22
Bill Keltner	1	Mark Weber	22
Dianna Miller	3	John-David Cohoon	22
Kendra McDaniels	4	Brandie Stranz	22
Kyle Nelson	4	Jim Miller	22
Joan Heiser	5	Kendall Garman	24
Jay Presley	5	Larry Collier	26
Lucy Whitman	5	Sam McClain	29
Tommy Dault	6	Joe Stoner	29
Joe Hunt	7	Seth Ranney	29
Devin Burks	10	Andrew Hannan	31
Gene Wyman	10		
Sharon Lohnes	12		
Jill Garman	13		
Cari Ranney	15		
Patsy Groch	16		
Roy Johnson	17		
Harriet Canopy	19		
Chase Ranney	19		
Michael Ripper	20		
Bill Booher	21		



# 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

Christie McDuff

For the family of David Nelson Wright  
on his passing.

Diana Jacobson (Thomas' Mom)

Judy Kimzey Booher

Linda Stoner

Norma Griffin

For the family of Shay Wright on their  
passing. This is the cousin of Angie Hannon

For the family of Vicki McKinley  
on her passing

*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.*

**May 1**

Scholarship Applications are available

**May 5**

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

**May 6**

Last night for regular youth group meeting times. 5:30 -7p.m. for  
Junior high and 7-8:30 p.m. for High School  
Stay tuned for Summer Activities

**May 7**

Deadline for graduates' pictures and write-ups

**May 8**

CWU Friendship Day, Our Savior Lutheran Church, 10 a.m.

**May 9**

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

**May 10**

Mother's Day

**May 12**

CANCELLED: Book Club, Pekin Estates, 10 a.m.

**May 13**

CANCELLED: Both Youth Group times  
UNITEkids will meet 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Pekin First UMC

**May 15**

Grace Notes Articles due

**May 20**

Final UNITEkids, Bible Buddies, and youth group celebration,  
Blenkiron Park, 6-7 p.m. UNITEkids will provide drinks and the  
main dish. Please bring a side to share  
Finance Team Meeting-5:30 p.m.

**May 24**

Last Date for the Sanctuary Choir to share at Sunday's services  
Graduate Recognition Sunday at both services

**May 25**

Memorial Day, Office Closed

**May 26**

Church Leadership Board Meeting, 6 p.m.

**May 27**

Communion at Pekin Estates 2 p.m.

**May 30**

Grace Drive-Thru Food Pantry, Hospitality Area, 11 a.m.  
Poverty Simulation, GFFLC, 1-3 p.m.

**May 31**

Heavenly Stacks Youth Fundraiser  
Deadline for Scholarship Applications