



Grace United Methodist Church
 100 Central Avenue
 Oil City, PA 16301
Pastor: Rev. Dr. John D. Miller
Lay Pastoral Ministry: Barbara Dittman
Church Office: 814-677-3013
Weekly Sunday Worship Service: 10:45 AM
Sunday School: 9:30 AM
E-Mail: church@graceoilcity.org
Website: www.graceoilcity.org
Worship Service Online:
<http://www.graceoilcity.org/about-us.html>
YouTube: <http://youtube.com/@graceoilcity>
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/graceoilcity/>

November/December 2023

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
 100 Central Avenue
 Oil City, PA 16301
 (Address Service Requested)

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 Oil City, PA 16301



GRACE NOTES

NOVEMBER 2023

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			01	02	03	04
			Stephen and Cindy Kelley	Mike McKean Jill Montgomery	Adam Hale Cecil and Bonnie Cassatt	Megan Hale Robert Stark
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
	Melissa Hayes-Gehrke Janille Lambertson		Robert Reed, Jr. Bonnie Rider	Mark and Rita Hale	Kathleen Lauer Richard and Georgia Strawbridge	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		Joel Bagdon Amy Show Ruth Woolcock	Rachel Deeter Matt Updegraff		Ben Middleton	Bob Montgomery
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Larry and Marilyn Kirkwood	Amy Dykins Cathy Fink			Patty Shiley	Stanley Erwin	Vic and Sally Bowser
26	27	28	29	30		
Jerry Brosius	Karee Heffernan Eugene and Kathryn Flockerzi	Alana Montgomery Amy Ziegler		Pamela Berlin		

DECEMBER 2023

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					01	02
						Nancy Whaley
03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Kiley Schoor	Jim Whaley		Ken Vogan	Kelly Kossman	Brenna Myers	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Melanie Myers	Stacy Griffin	Tracy Winger Mike and Nicole Goughler	Sarah McDonald	Judy Guyton Mazie Mellring Karen Warner		Julie Arnink Mark Davis Ian Scheer
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Sara Flockerzi	Jason and Sass Galla	Donald Hartsell Dorie Kurzenberger Larry Shaffer, Jr.	Allysa Hoyle Ritchey Logan Moon	Barb Huey	Michelle Shiley	Gerald and Sheryl Giaccai
24 / 31	25	26	27	28	29	30
John Mahle Ralph Solida		Susan Hileman Frank and Cindy Fultz	Rodney Campbell, Jr	Tim and Karee Heffernan	Connor Highfield Deacon Smith	Jim and Nancy Whaley Rob and Tina Ziegler

Thank You – Again: Pastor’s Appreciation Surprise

When Cindy Fultz, Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) chairperson asked to make an announcement before we began worship on October 29th, I had no clue that you, as the congregation, had collected thank you cards and notes, and made a cash gift to Olmsted Manor, in appreciation. Actually, who knew someone even developed a “pastor appreciation month?” After reading a poem she had composed, and having a poster size “special delivery envelope” presented with all your cards, I was “almost” rendered speechless, while trying to compose my emotions.



Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians expresses my thanks, and Diane’s, more eloquently than I can: *“So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.”* (I Thess. 2:8)

Pastor John

A Thank You for the welcome

Dear Friends: You are a special group of people! Gary and I, along with John and Diane, want to thank you so much for the welcome reception you had for us! You do make us feel welcomed! The food was delicious, the decorations were beautiful, and the fellowship was so meaningful to us! We are excited to see what the next few months will bring. We are going to minister to each other, following God's lead. God will show us His grace, hope, wisdom, and love! We love you all! Hugs and prayers

Gary and Barb Dittman

Philippians 4:13 and Psalm 121



Invitation to a Lunch Munch: Thursday, November 9, 2023 – noon to 1:00pm

Pack up your lunch bag and join Pastor John and others for the last of the series, “Embracing Hope’s Challenges for Beloved Community.” This final session, “Celebrating Community,” focuses on how sustaining our discipleship and joy involves creative celebrations that are much more than rejoicing in our successes.

Thanksgiving Cards

During the month of November, cards with names and address of our home-bound friends will be placed in the sanctuary for the congregation to sign their names and/or a brief message. This will help our wonderful people, who are not able to join us in the service, to know they are thought of and loved during this holiday time.

Advent Decorating

Volunteers are needed to help decorate the church for Christmas. If you’d like to join the fun, please stay after church to help on Sunday, November 26. Pizza will be ordered for lunch. All are welcome and needed! We’ll be decorating the sanctuary and the large Christmas tree by the entrance to Asbury Hall.

Celebrating Giftedness: “Thanksgiving Service” - November 26th

As the new pastor, I am particularly thankful to God for you who worship and support the Grace UM ministries by your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.

My hope is that on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, November 26th, the worship service will be structured around *your giftedness*. This last Sunday before Advent on the liturgical calendar is celebrated as The Reign of Christ, aka, Christ the King, Sunday. *Knowing that Christ does reign in your lives, and that each of you have been given gifts and talents, I want to structure the worship service around your offerings of thanks to God.*

What might you offer?

- Music – play an instrument? Sing? Favorite hymn and how it touched your life?
- Stories – have you expressed yourself in poetry? A short story? A prayer that can be used? A writing by someone else that has meaning that you would be willing to share?
- Visual Arts – how about paintings, drawings, sculpture, pottery, fabric art, or other art expressions that can be displayed in the sanctuary, or on the screen, with the story of its meaning to you? How about designing bulletin covers to offer for Advent?
- Family and Friends – how about sharing the witness of how God helped touch your life through personal stories and special people? As God’s angel to give hope, who has helped you through struggles, failures, losses, and despair?



Please! Let’s celebrate what our loving God has given us on the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Contact jdmler@graceoilcity.org. (*Contributions appreciated by November 15th so the service can be developed with your unique giftedness.*)

Giftedness: Some Examples For Encouragement.

Are you wondering how you might express thanks to God for the gifts you’ve received? Here are some examples already offered for the Thanksgiving worship of Celebrating Giftedness.

Photos for slides to hymn lyrics of “America the Beautiful.”

Prayer Quilt: invitation to finish tying the threads, each a prayer for Grace UMC and its ministry.

Duet: Special music.

Hymn Choice: With an explanation of how this hymn has touched a life.

A Graphic usable for bulletin cover.

Write a short “witness” about how Christ has touched your life. Finish the sentence: “During this event/moment/time of my life (chose one), I experienced the power/presence/purpose of God (chose one) in this way” Since the Spirit is experienced in many ways, your witness is unique. Write it out, and if you do not want to read it yourself, someone else will.

Prayers, collects, special Bible verses (and why), music (vocal and instrumental), your story or poem – will be appreciated. *Please submit by November 15th so bulletin can be completed before Thanksgiving.*

Pastor John

Sunday School - Join us for Sunday School each week at 9:30am

November 5 – 26, 2023

The book, “The Case for Christ: Investigating the Evidence for Jesus” will be the topic of Sunday School November 5 – December 10, 2023.

Written by one-time atheist Lee Strobel, this study investigates the truth about Jesus Christ, leading to the facts that moved Strobel from atheism to faith in Christ. Join us as we sift through fascinating historical evidence that will transform our lives.

Beginning December 3, 2023

The book, “All the Good: A Wesleyan Way” will be the topic for our Sunday School beginning December 17, 2023. Written by a group of diverse Wesleyan scholars, this study will take us on an Advent journey to discover Methodist history and their connection with the message of Christmas. Pastor Miller’s sermon topics will frequently tie in with this Sunday School study.

Advent: “Grace for our Journey”

Charles Wesley wrote these familiar words:

*Come thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.*

The first four (4) Sundays of December will begin our journey toward a birth in Bethlehem.

God’s GRACE awakens and promises to sustain all the Biblical characters who responded to God’s call. They didn’t even know how the promises would be fulfilled. All they had were mere words from old time scripture, or some ethereal encounter that no one else could verify. Yet they journeyed on. John in the wilderness. Zechariah in silence. Elizabeth and Mary in maternal songs. Here are Biblical lessons on which to meditate.



December 3rd: John, son of Zechariah, is in the wilderness to proclaim a “way of preparation.”

(Luke 3:2b-8a)

December 10th: Zechariah the priest asks, “How will I know?” Silence and silenced!

(Luke 1:5-26)

December 17th: Mary & Elizabeth both say, “Look what God has done. The impossible!

(Luke 1: 24-45)

December 24th: Mary sings God’s magnificent song for the world.

(Luke 1: 46-56)

From each character we may learn how God’s GRACE will move and sustain us during this season and beyond!

Volunteers for December

During the Sundays in Advent, people are needed to add some special music to the services. If you enjoy singing or playing an instrument, please contact Barb Dittman at the church. The music could include soloists, duets, quartets, and playing of an instrument. Thank you for offering your talent. People are also needed as readers and candle lighters for the Advent wreath each week. If you feel led to help with this, please call the church office.

Tags on the Christmas Tree and Prayer Ornaments

Names of our home-bound people will be put on tags on the sanctuary tree. If you feel so led, take a name tag and send a card or a small gift. In addition, you can add an ornament to the tree. This ornament should have your name and at the end of the Christmas celebrations, please take an ornament with another person's name and pray for that person.

Victorian Christmas Bazaar, Too

The Victorian Christmas Bazaar, Too will be held in Asbury Hall on December 2, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. A delicious breakfast will also be served from 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. in Grace Hall. The cost of the breakfast is \$5.00. The menu includes a ham and cheese casserole, French toast, fruit, dessert breads, juice, coffee and tea. Nearly twenty crafters will be selling a wonderful variety of Christmas items and baked goods at the bazaar in Asbury Hall. Grace UM Church will again have a craft table to support missions. Volunteers are needed to donate crafts, work in the kitchen, and

help supply food items. Please contact Cindy Fultz (814-673-5058) or Amy Ziegler (814-671-6734) to volunteer. Thank you for your support! Come and



enjoy a wonderful tradition and visit the many events of Oil City's *Christmas Past Weekend* around the town.

Sounds of the Season

The Schubert Musical and Literary Club will present a Christmas concert, *Sounds of the Season*, in the sanctuary of Grace United Methodist Church on Sunday, December 10 at 3:00 P.M. Performers will include organists Sue Ogden, Nancy Davis, Joseph Emanuele, Janice Grunenwald, and Steve Winslow as well as violinist Nancy Simpson and a vocal ensemble directed by tenor Preston Yoder. A social time and refreshments will follow the concert in Asbury Hall. This concert is always free and open to the public. All are invited to join us for this beautiful Christmas tradition.



Christmas Eve: Candle Lighting!

December 24th: 7:00 pm

Phillips Brooks' hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," offers this invitation:

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given;
so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.*

*No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.*

The stories of the journey end. The story of Christ's never-ending birth begins anew! Join in this traditional Christmas Eve worship in Grace UMC sanctuary.



Understanding The United Methodist Church

One of the disturbing comments I hear because of the “disaffiliation” process is, “I no longer believe what the United Methodist Church believes.” I can only wonder what that means to a person. If you want to “understand” the United Methodist Church, rather than just complain based on anger, fear, misinformation or disinformation, I have some suggestions.

Notes From
Pastor John

*If you want to understand the UMC’s “Constitution and Restrictive Rules” or its “Doctrinal Standards and Theological Tasks,” I’d suggest engaging *The Book of Discipline, 2016*, Parts I-III. To change the Constitution requires multiple steps, years, and action across the global church. Our theology is historically orthodox and combines both the former EUB & Methodist articles of faith.*

If you want to understand the Ministry and Mission of the UMC or its Social Principles, I’d suggest Parts IV & V of The Book of Discipline (BOD) be studied. For example, most people do not realize that The Social Principles are not church “law,” but prayerful and thoughtful efforts to speak to human issues in our contemporary world with a sound biblical and theological foundation. As a call to faithfulness in the prophetic spirit, they are intended to be instructive and persuasive. Every quadrennial conference they are revisited. As you can imagine, within a global church, many issues are controversial. When disagreements are expressed with love and respect, we strengthen our Christian witness. (An 8-year review and recommendations to the General Conference in 2024 is available on-line.)

If you are interested in the Church’s Structure and Polity, including ordination, leadership roles at all levels, organizations and even judicial administration, the remainder of the BOD is worth engaging.

If you are interested in engaging in a dialogue, not a tirade about the UMC, as your United Methodist pastor, I’d invite you to contact me at the church. We may disagree about many parts of the church. However, may we struggle together with love to find Christ’s way.

United Methodist Membership

Because of the process of “disaffiliation,” many wonder about UMC membership. There are two categories of membership: baptized and professing.

Baptized members are those baptized as infants or adults within a local UM church. If baptized at Grace UMC, you were baptized into the family of God, not baptized as a United Methodist. Your baptism records will be kept here and will be available. If you join another church, they may not recognize your baptism because of their own theology and practice.

Professing members are persons who have “confirmed” the vows of baptism and commit to join a local UMC. Professing members commit to support the church by their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.



If you have questions about your membership, please contact the church office at 100 Central Avenue, Oil City, PA 16301.

Funding Ministry

Ministry continues at Grace Church. Though changes have required adjustments, important ministry continues. Your renewed commitment of support financially allows ministry to continue.

Funding Ministries:

- **Worship:** People gather weekly; the Word is preached; music of voices and organ praise God; and community is rebuilt by sharing of prayers and gifts.
- **Communications:** The on-line ministry through Facebook and YouTube reaches Grace folks and others; weekly Grace Post-emails and bi-monthly Grace Notes newsletter connects all.
- **Caring:** Not just pastoral care, but a ministry led by lay staff to pray, visit, connect, and train persons to reach out. Bulletins are mailed weekly to home bound. Communion is offered.
- **Spiritual Growth:** Short term studies, like the 8-week study on the Lord's Prayer; the Zoom Sessions with Dr Luther Smith on "Celebrating Communities of Hope" during the Lunch Munch time with Pastor John; and weekly Sunday School for adults provide growth of heart and mind.
- **Missions:** Supporting UMCOR by collecting items for cleaning buckets for the Conference Mission barn; travel to Mission Barn to deliver 10 cleaning buckets and verify kits; regular collection of items for the Salvation Army Foodbank; and continuing support for the mission projects adopted by of the church.

Funding Buildings:

We sometimes forget that our buildings are a staging area for ministry. Here we gather for worship, study, planning, eating and fellowship. The parsonage is home for a pastor and family. All the practical expenses of heat, electricity, cleanliness, and safety need support. These are held in trust for Grace folks to be good stewards of our physical presence at the corner of W. First and Central Avenue.

Funding Staff:

When you see titles for pastor, secretary, financial secretary, custodian, organist, lay minister, you know there are people filling roles to carry on ministry. Add to this list the volunteers that organize, fill in, cook, teach, and you have a long list of disciples. Though expenses have been reduced by the appointment of a part-time retired pastor, support is still needed.

Your Response Ability:

As you pray and plan about Funding the Ministries of Grace Church, consider choosing a percentage of your income as an on-going contribution. Choose 2%, 5%, or even the biblical tithe of 10%, or more, as a way of thanking God for continuing Grace UMC's ministry to you and the world. Any gift restricted by the donor to support a particular project will be honored. All other gifts will be distributed for general use.

Special Opportunities for Giving

Year End Gifts: Have you received your annual alumni giving requests? (They seem to come earlier every year.) How about the organizational requests for on-going or additional support? (I like the groups sending notepads and address stickers.) How about the ones with cute pictures of cats? (So many needs.) How about the ones offering you guidance to continue your legacy in their organization by helping with estate planning? How about the most recent emergency appeal to replenish funds? (The next global crisis will keep these appeals coming.) Welcome to the reality of funding organizations – most with important needs. **Grace Church has the same needs for on-going and extra support.** A year-end extra gift would be greatly appreciated.



What's the difference? Our giving is a THANK YOU to the One who created us out of love and sustains us through love. God first gave to us – creation, human life, then Jesus Christ as the Way to live. Our gifts are a resounding “Thank You” to God.

Help Grace UMC continue to be a means of God's grace in this community and world. Send your generous year-end gift to **Grace UMC, 100 Central Avenue, Oil City, PA 16301** or give online at <http://graceoilcity.org>

United Methodist Student Sunday: November 26th

One of the six “special offerings” received across the denomination, UM Student Sunday began in 1872 by church Sunday Schools. We continue the original purpose to support our students as they prepare for life by adding knowledge to their faith through education. The offering taken on United Methodist Student Day is one opportunity to support these scholarships.

Every year, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry awards an average of \$5.5 million in financial aid to United Methodist students. Every dollar received, yes 100%, goes towards supporting and educating a new generation of principled Christian leaders for the church and the world. Over 70 scholarships are available for undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral United Methodist students.

Pastor's Discretionary Fund

Donations given through Christmas Memorials and Poinsettias provide support for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund and will be used to fulfill Jesus' challenge to help those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked or imprisoned – literally and figuratively. When a person's life is disrupted, either by their own choices or unexpected circumstances, the Church can help stabilize a situation so people have the chance to make different choices. The process involves assessing each request. No funds will be given directly to a person, only to an organization that can help. Your help is appreciated.

United Methodist Apportionments

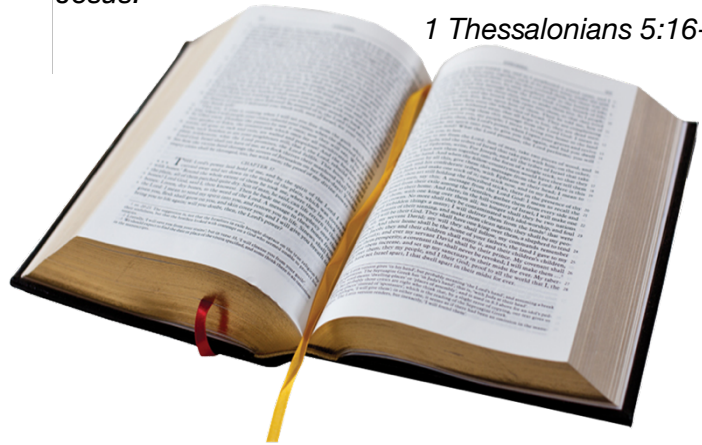
At the September Ad Council Meeting, members voted to begin paying apportionments to the United Methodist Conference for the final months of 2023. Apportionments are now being paid from the Ministry and Operations Account. It was also decided that unspecified giving will be split with 75% designated to Ministry and Operations and 25% designated to Missions.

Prayer Concerns

- Friends and family of Norma Hogue who passed away on Friday, October 13, 2023. Norma joined Grace Church in 1986. She was a member for 37 years.
- Rodney Campbell, Sr. who is recovering from a fall.
- Miriam Myers who is recovering from surgery.
- Debbie Rae and David Miller for medical concerns.
- Carla Cochran for health concerns.
- Marcia Hanna, sister of Rita Hale, for return of cancer.
- Jim Whaley, recovering at home.
- Ginny Taylor as she progresses through cancer treatment.
- Blaine Beers for health concerns.
- Mary Berlin.
- The ministry of Grace United Methodist Church.
- Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi.
- District Superintendent Rev. Deborah Ackley-Killian.
- Peace in the Hamas-Israeli Conflict.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV



Sharing Grace Ministry

The Sharing Grace Ministry needs volunteers to help with the presentation of Sunday Worship Services in the sanctuary. John McCullough can show you how to easily present the worship service slides, operate the sound, or control the video. Anyone interested can stop by the video room on any Sunday before or after any worship service. Or you can send John an email (john_mccullough@windstream.net) or a text (814 758-9083) with questions, comments, or concerns.

Grace United Methodist Church in Oil City worship services can be viewed live at 10:45am Sundays at the locations listed below. Archives of previous services can also be viewed at the same locations.

<https://www.graceoilcity.org/worship-service-recordings.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/@graceoilcity>

<http://facebook.com/graceoilty>

Grace Church Volunteers

November/December Counting Team:

Rhonda Cubbon, Tom Peebles, Amy Ziegler

November Ushering Team:

Judy Hards, Tom Peebles, Amy Ziegler

December Ushering Team:

Tom Peebles, Amy Ziegler

Grace Volunteers – November/December				
	<u>Greeters</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Audio</u>	<u>PowerPoint</u>
November 5	Judy Hards	John McCullough	Rob Ziegler	Leeann McCullough
November 12	Kim Bridge	Bill Lambertson	Wesley Scheer	Rodney Campbell
November 19	Art/Rhonda Cubbon	John McCullough	Charlie Motter	Chris Salvo
November 26	Helen Chapel	Bill Lambertson	Rob Ziegler	Rodney Campbell
December 3		John McCullough	Wesley Scheer	Leeann McCullough
December 10		Bill Lambertson	Charlie Motter	Rodney Campbell
December 17		John McCullough	Rob Ziegler	Chris Salvo
December 24		Bill Lambertson	Wesley Scheer	Rodney Campbell
Candlelight		TBD	TBD	TBD
December 31		John McCullough	Charlie Motter	Leeann McCullough

Church Calendar

November 5:

All Saints Sunday

November 9:

Zoom Lunch Munch, 12:00noon

November 12:

Katie Peterson Mission Barn presentation

November 16:

Ad Council Meeting, 7:00pm

November 26:

United Methodist Student Day
Decorate Sanctuary

December 2:

Victorian Breakfast and Bazaar

December 10:

Schubert Club, 3:00pm

December 24:

Christmas Eve Service, 7:00pm

December 25:

Christmas Day, Office closed

December 26:

Christmas Holiday, Office closed

Record of Our Faithfulness	2022	2023
	September	September
Avg Sunday School Attendance	39	19
Avg. Worship Attendance	71	44
Ministry/Operations Offering Received	\$10,558	\$5,254
Ministry/Operations Paid	\$13,530	\$8,219
Mission Offering Received	\$3,097	\$1,226
Mission Expenses Paid	\$1,708	\$5,050
<p>Thank you for your generosity! Your routine giving supports the ministry of Grace Church We encourage your online giving on our website: http://graceoilcity.org/giving</p>		

County-Wide Thanksgiving Service

Sunday, November 19th at 6:00 p.m.

At Salvation Army Church, 217 Sycamore Street, Oil City, PA

Featuring: Congregational Singing, Scripture Readings, Prayers of Lament for Peace in the Holy Land, and a message from Rev. Tom Harmon of Second Presbyterian Church of Oil City. This event is free and open to the public, all are welcome. An offering will be collected to support the food pantries of Franklin, Oil City, and Seneca. *Sponsored by the Venango County Christian Ministerium*

Cleaning Bucket Mission Project

Six "Grace Girls" joined the "Rockland Ladies and Gent" for an excursion led by Diane Miller to the UMCOR Mission Barn in New Castle on Thursday, October 26. The group delivered and helped verify Grace's 10 Cleaning Buckets, toured the new location, and worked to verify Hygiene and Menstrual Kits for distribution to people in need because of a disaster. It was an educational and really fun mission experience.

Katie Peterson from the Mission Barn will be presenting during Sunday School and the Worship Service on November 12, 2023.



Grace Women Quilters

The Grace Women Quilters are busy hand stitching a lovely yellow and blue quilt that will soon be auctioned off. Proceeds will benefit Grace Missions.