



GRACE GAZETTE

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IUKA, MISSISSIPPI

LISTENING, DREAMING, MOVING

Grace United Methodist Church gathered with Retired Bishop Bill McAlilly for something more than a meeting. It was a holy pause. A moment to tell the truth about who we are, what we carry, and what God might be calling us to become. The room was filled with voices, post-it notes, laughter, honesty, and a shared desire to see Grace UMC continue to serve faithfully in this season of change. People named what they love about this church, what weighs on their hearts, and where they see real needs in our community. What emerged was not a plan imposed from outside, but a picture shaped by the people who worship, serve, and love this church.

When members were asked what Grace UMC does well, the words came quickly. Love. Acceptance. Kindness. Support. Grace for others. Compassion. Friendship. A willingness to serve and help. People talked about how welcome they feel here, how no one worries about what someone wears, and how newcomers are treated with warmth instead of suspicion. The choir and music were named as a blessing. So were missions, young couples, and youth. One person wrote simply, "All are welcome," and that phrase came up again and again in different forms. These notes painted a picture of a church that knows how to open its heart and its doors.

At the same time, the group was honest about the burdens. Several people named the lack of a dedicated youth leader and the need for more young people. Others spoke about the challenge of keeping in touch with graduates when they leave for college. Space was mentioned, both in terms of physical room and in how crowded the calendar can feel. Financial limitations came up, along with the fatigue that comes from trying to do everything with a small group of faithful volunteers. A few people also named something that many churches experience, that opinions can clash and that disagreement sometimes makes it hard to move forward together.

None of these were shared with blame. They were offered as realities that need to be faced if Grace UMC is going to grow into its next chapter.

The conversation then turned outward. What is already happening through Grace UMC, and what does our community need that is not being met? The list of ministries already in motion is long and meaningful. Grace UMC serves as a church for all kinds of kinds. It hosts Soup Sunday and Jail Ministry. It offers a Blessing Tree and supports food pantries. Hospitality teams make sure people are welcomed and fed. School sports teams receive meals. The church shows up at community events. Youth are helped with scholarships to attend camp. AA groups meet in the building. These are not small things. They are the quiet, steady ways Grace UMC has been loving its neighbors for years.

At the same time, the group named needs in our community that remain unmet. There is a deep need for drug and addiction recovery support. There is a shortage of foster families. Single parents often feel alone and overwhelmed. Many adults have no health insurance and limited access to medical care. These needs are not abstract. They belong to people who live, work, and struggle right here in our town.

One hard truth was also spoken aloud. As a church, we have not always invited our Friends, Relatives, Associates, and Neighbors to be part of what God is doing here. We care deeply, but we have often kept that care inside our walls.

From all of this, a vision began to take shape, one that stretches across the next three, six, and twelve months. (Continued on page 2)

OTHER STORIES THIS MONTH:

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“Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Effort is action; earning is attitude.”
 – Dallas Willard

LISTENING, DREAMING, MOVING CONTINUED

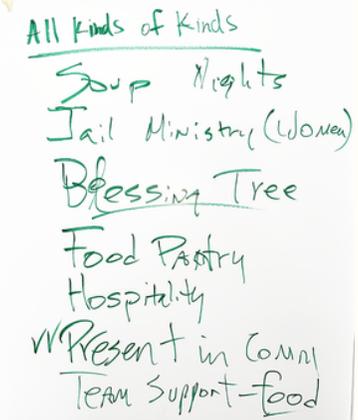
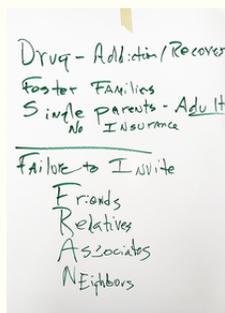
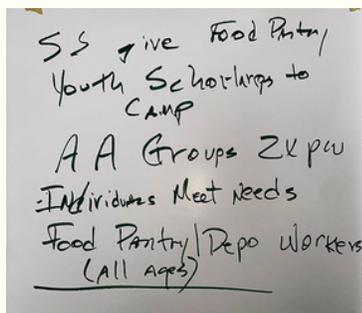
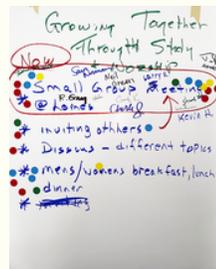
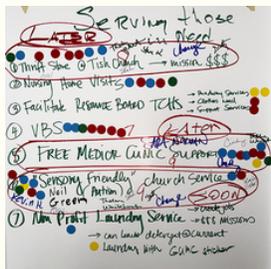
In the next three months, the focus is simple and relational. Small get-togethers in homes, backyards, and living rooms. No pressure. No programs. Just people inviting people to sit, talk, and get to know one another in a non-churchy setting. These gatherings create space for friendships to form and for trust to grow.

Looking toward six months, the church is preparing to begin a regular sensory-friendly worship service. This will be a space where people on the autism spectrum, those with sensory sensitivities, and their families can worship without fear of being out of place. It reflects what Grace UMC already believes, that everyone belongs and that worship should be accessible to all.

At the twelve-month mark, the vision expands into deeper community partnerships. Plans include working with a local clinic to provide free health services once a month for those without insurance. There is also a plan to partner with Golden Chapel and use the Tishomingo church as a thrift store, creating a new way to fund mission work while meeting real needs in the community.

None of these ideas came from one person. They came from the collective wisdom, experience, and faith of the people in the room. As the meeting closed, what stood out most was not a list of projects but a shared spirit. Grace UMC knows how to love. It knows how to welcome. It knows how to serve. Now it is beginning to imagine how those gifts can be focused, shared more boldly, and offered to neighbors who have not yet experienced them.

There is still work to do. There are still questions to answer. But yesterday made one thing clear. This church is not stuck in the past. It is paying attention to the present and stepping toward the future with hope, honesty, and a willingness to trust where God is leading. And that is a beautiful place to begin.





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WINTER STORM FERN

Winter Storm Fern was a massive winter weather event that swept across a huge part of the country. According to national weather data, this system affected up to 230 million people from the South into the Northeast, brought record ice and snow to many regions, caused widespread power outages, and contributed to well over a million customers losing electricity nationwide. Preliminary estimates show the storm resulted in more than 100 deaths across the country and was linked with more than \$1 billion in damages. It brought deep cold, ice accumulation that damaged infrastructure, and treacherous road conditions – the kind of weather most of us in Mississippi are just not built for.

Here in Mississippi, Fern’s toll was serious and heartbreaking. At the height of the storm, more than 180,000 homes and businesses were without power across the state, and tens of thousands were still without electricity several days later. Currently, officials are reporting 16 weather-related deaths in North Mississippi, as extremely cold temperatures and hazardous conditions took a toll on communities. Roads were covered in ice, fallen trees blocked travel, and residents faced days in frigid homes without heat or reliable water until repairs could be made.

In Iuka and the surrounding area, neighbors felt these impacts directly – without power, dealing with ice-covered roads, disrupted routines, and worry about loved ones. In response, Grace United Methodist Church has been a steadfast beacon of support. Members and volunteers from Grace UMC have committed time, energy, and compassion in so many ways. Church volunteers served at local warming centers, offering hospitality and a warm place for those struggling to stay comfortable in the cold. Through a partnership with Lil’ Smokies, Grace UMC helped provide meals to those in need, ensuring people were fed even when cooking at home was impossible. Beyond organized efforts, people from Grace have been out checking on neighbors, especially those who live alone or who were hampered by the storm’s aftermath. Congregants opened their homes to provide showers, warm meals, and laundry services for folks without power, modeling sacrificial care even while coping with their own household challenges from the storm. Others delivered groceries and supplies to neighbors who couldn’t safely leave their homes, donated financially to relief efforts, and offered prayer and encouragement to families throughout Tishomingo County.

Though the storm tested our community, what stands out most clearly is how Grace UMC lived out the call to love our neighbors. Through practical services – like meals, warmth, shelter, and check-ins – and through heartfelt prayer for our community and our state, Grace UMC has truly been a light in the cold for so many. As your pastor, I have to say, people of Grace, you **Rock!**





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MEANS OF GRACE

John Wesley spoke of the means of grace as the ordinary places where God has promised to meet us. They are not spiritual achievements or ways to earn God’s favor. Grace always begins with God. The means of grace are simply the ways we place ourselves where God’s grace is already at work, shaping us, healing us, and drawing us deeper into life with Christ.

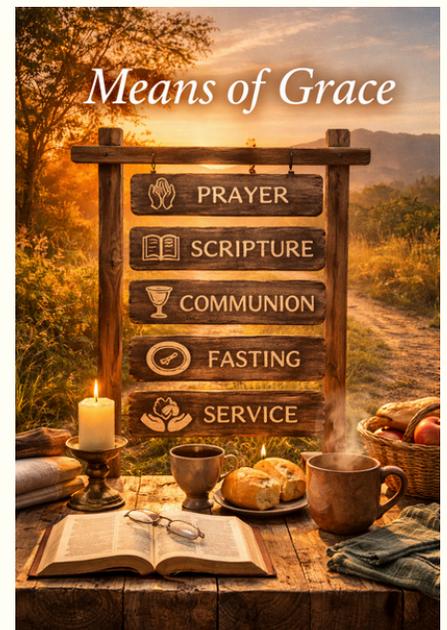
Wesley named several core means of grace that were central to Christian life: prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord’s Supper, fasting or abstinence, Christian conferencing, and the works of mercy. These practices were never meant to be isolated from one another. Together, they form a rhythm of life that keeps faith grounded in both devotion and love of neighbor. Wesley believed that neglecting the means of grace weakens faith over-time, not because God withdraws, but because we stop paying attention to the places where God has promised to be present.

At the heart of these practices is the conviction that God desires relationship, not religious performance. The means of grace are not about doing more for God, but about being more open to what God is already doing in us. They shape our habits, our desires, and our responses to the world around us. Over time, they form us into people who love God with our whole hearts and love others with compassion and courage.

This is why searching the Scriptures holds such an important place in Wesley’s teaching. Scripture is not only a source of doctrine, but a living word through which God continues to speak. How we read Scripture matters. When we rush, skim, or read only for answers, we often miss the deeper work God wants to do in us through His Word.

This is where lectio divina fits so naturally within the Wesleyan understanding of the means of grace. Lectio divina is a slow, prayerful way of reading Scripture that invites us to listen for God rather than rush toward conclusions. It helps us move from reading Scripture as a task to receiving Scripture as a gift. In lectio, we read attentively, reflect honestly, respond in prayer, and rest in God’s presence, trusting that the Spirit is at work even when the moment feels quiet.

Practiced regularly, lectio divina becomes a gentle but powerful means of grace. It trains us to notice God’s voice, to bring our real lives before Him, and to allow Scripture to shape us from the inside out. As we begin this series, my hope is that lectio divina will become not just something we learn about, but a practice that helps us live more fully into the grace God so generously gives.



LECTIO DIVINA

When many of us say, “I want to get more out of Scripture,” what we usually mean is this: we want the Bible to move from something we study to something that speaks to us. We want the Word to reach us not only in our minds, but down in our hearts, in the places where we feel fear, hope, weariness, gratitude, and questions we don’t say out loud. One simple way Christians have practiced that kind of listening for centuries is called lectio divina, a Latin phrase that means “divine reading.” It isn’t complicated, and it isn’t only for monks or scholars. It’s a slow, prayerful way of reading a short passage of Scripture so we can hear God’s voice and respond with our real lives. It’s not about racing to the finish line of a chapter. It’s about sitting with the Lord long enough to be shaped by what we read.



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Lectio divina is usually practiced in four movements: Read, Reflect, Respond, Rest. You can do it in ten minutes or in thirty. You can do it at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee, in a quiet chair before bed, or even during your lunch hour. The key is simple: slow down and listen.

Before you begin, choose a quiet place and a realistic amount of time. Set a timer if that helps you relax. Take one deep breath and ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart. Then read this passage slowly: Mark 10:46–52.

Begin with Read (Lectio). Read the passage through one time at a normal pace just to hear the story. Then read it again, more slowly. On the second reading, pay attention to anything that stands out, a word, a phrase, an image, a moment in the story. Don't force it. Don't try to make it happen. Just notice what catches your attention. Some people like to read it aloud because hearing the words can slow the mind down. If a word or phrase grabs you, underline it or write it down. If nothing stands out, that's okay. Read it one more time and simply ask, “Lord, what do You want me to notice today?”

Move into Reflect (Meditatio). This is where you gently turn that word or phrase over in your mind like you would a smooth stone in your hand. Ask a few simple questions. Why did this line stand out to me today? What does it reveal about Jesus? What does it reveal about the people in the story? What does it reveal about the human heart? Then bring it closer to home. Where do I see myself in this passage? Am I in the crowd, busy and distracted? Am I like Bartimaeus, desperate and honest? Am I like the disciples, trying to manage Jesus instead of listening to Him? Let the questions do their work without rushing to fix anything. Reflection is not analysis for its own sake, it's attention. You are letting Scripture shine a light on your real life.

Then come to Respond (Oratio). Now you speak to God about what you noticed. Keep it simple and honest. If the passage stirred gratitude, tell Him. If it exposed fear, name it. If it brought up grief, don't hide it. If you feel joy, offer it. If you feel nothing, even that can become prayer: “Lord, I feel dry, but I'm here.” A helpful way to respond in this particular passage is to pray the kind of prayer Bartimaeus prayed, direct and trusting. You might say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me,” and then add what you need mercy for. Or you might pray, “Lord, I want to see,” and name what you want God to help you see: a relationship, a habit, a decision, a season of life, the goodness of God in a hard place.

Finally, enter Rest (Contemplatio). This is the part that feels unfamiliar for some folks, because it involves silence. After you've read, reflected, and prayed, sit quietly for a minute or two. You aren't trying to manufacture a spiritual experience. You are simply practicing being with God. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the word or phrase that stood out, or repeat a simple line like, “Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening.” Rest is about trust. You have placed yourself in the presence of the Lord, and you believe He is at work even when you don't feel anything dramatic.

When you finish, you may want to write down one sentence: what stood out, what you sensed, or what prayer you offered. Don't judge it. Don't grade it. The fruit of lectio divina often shows up later, in a patience you didn't have before, in a softened heart, in a calmer response, in a renewed desire to pray, in a quiet courage that comes from being near Jesus.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank You for giving us Your Word, not as a burden, but as a gift. Teach us to slow down and listen. Open our hearts to hear You, and give us the courage to respond honestly. When we feel blind, show us Your mercy. When we feel distracted, draw us back. When we feel tired, give us rest in Your presence. Form us into people who look more like You, who love more freely, and who trust You more deeply. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.



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FEBRUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 What the Lord Requires Micah 6:1-8	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Salt and Light Matt 5:13-20	9 Finance Committee Meeting at 5:30 at Grace	10	11	12	13	14
15 Seeing His Glory Matt 17:1-9 Sunday Soup 3:30	16	17	18 Ash Wednesday Imposition of Ashes at Grace UMC from 7-9AM Self-Guided Prayer Stations from 4-8PM at Tish UMC	19 <u>Psalm 51</u> ; <u>Jonah 3:1-10</u> ; <u>Romans 1:1-7</u> ;	20 <u>Psalm 51</u> ; <u>Jonah 4:1-11</u> ; <u>Romans 1:8-17</u> ;	21 <u>Psalm 51</u> ; <u>Isaiah 58:1-12</u> ; <u>Matthew 18:1-7</u> ;
22 Held in the Wilderness Matt 4:1-11	23 <u>Psalm 32</u> ; <u>1 Kings 19:1-8</u> ; <u>Hebrews 2:10-18</u> ;	24 <u>Psalm 32</u> ; <u>Genesis 4:1-16</u> ; <u>Hebrews 4:14-5:10</u> ;	25 <u>Psalm 32</u> ; <u>Exodus 34:1-9</u> , <u>27-28</u> ; <u>Matthew 18:10-14</u> ;	26 <u>Psalm 121</u> ; <u>Isaiah 51:1-3</u> ; 2 <u>Timothy 1:3-7</u> ;	27 <u>Psalm 121</u> ; <u>Micah 7:18-20</u> ; <u>Romans 3:21-31</u> ;	28 <u>Psalm 121</u> ; <u>Isaiah 51:4-8</u> ; <u>Luke 7:1-10</u> ;

Worship Information

Sunday School: 10:00 AM
Fellowship/Hospitality: 10:30 AM
Sunday Worship: 11:00 AM
Wednesday Bible Study: 6:00
Location: 213 E. Eastport St. Iuka, MS

Online Worship

Live: <https://www.youtube.com/@lukaGraceUMC/streams>

[Sermons](#)

[Daily Devotionals](#)

Upcoming Events & Gatherings

February 18, Ash Wednesday Come and Go Ashes 7 AM-9 AM Grace UMC
February 18, Self-Guided Prayer Stations and Communion 4 PM-8 PM Tishomingo UMC

Missions & Outreach

Sunday Soup February 15 3:30 PM until ...
Please have soup at the church at 3:00 PM

Stay Connected

[Facebook](#)

Website: graceumciuka.org

Contact: [Rev. Cheryl Farr](#)

You are always welcome at Grace UMC. Come as you are.

Daily Readings for Lent

- **Wednesday, February 18, 2026: Ash Wednesday**
- **Thursday, February 19, 2026: Psalm 51; Jonah 3:1-10; Romans 1:1-7;**
- **Friday, February 20, 2026: Psalm 51; Jonah 4:1-11; Romans 1:8-17;**
- **Saturday, February 21, 2026: Psalm 51; Isaiah 58:1-12; Matthew 18:1-7;**
- **Sunday, February 22, 2026: First Sunday in Lent**
- **Monday, February 23, 2026: Psalm 32; 1 Kings 19:1-8; Hebrews 2:10-18;**
- **Tuesday, February 24, 2026: Psalm 32; Genesis 4:1-16; Hebrews 4:14-5:10;**
- **Wednesday, February 25, 2026: Psalm 32; Exodus 34:1-9, 27-28; Matthew 18:10-14;**
- **Thursday, February 26, 2026: Psalm 121; Isaiah 51:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:3-7;**
- **Friday, February 27, 2026: Psalm 121; Micah 7:18-20; Romans 3:21-31;**
- **Saturday, February 28, 2026: Psalm 121; Isaiah 51:4-8; Luke 7:1-10;**
- **Sunday, March 01, 2026: Second Sunday in Lent**
- **Monday, March 02, 2026: Psalm 128; Numbers 21:4-9; Hebrews 3:1-6;**
- **Tuesday, March 03, 2026: Psalm 128; Isaiah 65:17-25; Romans 4:6-13;**
- **Wednesday, March 04, 2026: Psalm 128; Ezekiel 36:22-32; John 7:53-8:11;**
- **Thursday, March 05, 2026: Psalm 95; Exodus 16:1-8; Colossians 1:15-23;**
- **Friday, March 06, 2026: Psalm 95; Exodus 16:9-21; Ephesians 2:11-22;**
- **Saturday, March 07, 2026: Psalm 95; Exodus 16:27-35; John 4:1-6;**
- **Sunday, March 08, 2026: Third Sunday in Lent**
- **Monday, March 09, 2026: Psalm 81; Genesis 24:1-27; 2 John 1:1-13;**
- **Tuesday, March 10, 2026: Psalm 81; Genesis 29:1-14; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4;**
- **Wednesday, March 11, 2026: Psalm 81; Jeremiah 2:4-13; John 7:14-31, 37-39;**
- **Thursday, March 12, 2026: Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 15:10-21; Ephesians 4:25-32;**
- **Friday, March 13, 2026: Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 15:22-31; Ephesians 5:1-9;**
- **Saturday, March 14, 2026: Psalm 23; 1 Samuel 15:32-34; John 1:1-9;**
- **Sunday, March 15, 2026: Fourth Sunday in Lent**
- **Monday, March 16, 2026: Psalm 146; Isaiah 59:9-19; Acts 9:1-20;**
- **Tuesday, March 17, 2026: Psalm 146; Isaiah 42:14-21; Colossians 1:9-14;**
- **Wednesday, March 18, 2026: Psalm 146; Isaiah 60:17-22; Matthew 9:27-34;**
- **Thursday, March 19, 2026: Psalm 130; Ezekiel 1:1-3, 2:8-3:3; Revelation 10:1-11;**
- **Friday, March 20, 2026: Psalm 130; Ezekiel 33:10-16; Revelation 11:15-19;**
- **Saturday, March 21, 2026: Psalm 130; Ezekiel 36:8-15; Luke 24:44-53;**
- **Sunday, March 22, 2026: Fifth Sunday in Lent**
- **Monday, March 23, 2026: Psalm 143; 1 Kings 17:17-24; Acts 20:7-12;**
- **Tuesday, March 24, 2026: Psalm 143; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Ephesians 2:1-10;**
- **Wednesday, March 25, 2026: Psalm 143; Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41; Matthew 22:23-33;**
- **Wednesday, March 25, 2026: Annunciation of the Lord**
- **Thursday, March 26, 2026: Psalm 31:9-16; 1 Samuel 16:11-13; Philippians 1:1-11;**
- **Friday, March 27, 2026: Psalm 31:9-16; Job 13:13-19; Philippians 1:21-30;**
- **Saturday, March 28, 2026: Psalm 31:9-16; Lamentations 3:55-66; Mark 10:32-34;**