



Creeks & Valleys

June
2025

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CONTACT INFO:

Church Office:

Hours: Mon.—Thurs.

9am—3pm

(608)-585-2281

acwvumc@gmail.com

Pastor Diana Lucas

(608)-421-0230

pastordianalucas@
gmail.com

Admin. Assistant

Logan Willis

ltwillis16@gmail.com

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facebook

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Matthew 25:35

When I arrived here nearly three years ago, I was a stranger whom you all welcomed. You fed me. You housed me. You helped me to grow. I hope I was able to do some good for all of you as well. We grew in prayer together. We grew in Biblical knowledge together.

I have come to deeply appreciate what it means to be a farmer, what it means to care for the land, and to be a steward of all living things in your community. I have come to appreciate the dedication and love that all of you have shown to your community and to each other. I know you will love and care for your new pastor who is coming. She has a monumental task ahead of her. But I know she comes to it with joy and happiness. Show her a good time, shower her with lots of cheese curds. Teach her to leave her car unlocked so she finds fresh zucchini or a dozen eggs on the front seat of her car. Be sure to laugh and love with each other as you celebrate and grow in the love of Christ. Be bold in your choices for the future of each church. And remember, we're all a part of each other. We are all one beloved church family.

I am no stranger to the country. My grandmother lived in a rural setting similar to Ithaca. Some members of her family still owned farms when we were children, and we were allowed to visit. In 2004, I drove around Chautauqua County photographing these farms. This is my favorite image from that collection. God bless. Thank you. Love always, Pastor Diana.



LAST LOOK, 2004, 35MM C-PRINT, PENTAX K1000, 50MM LENS

© DIANA T. LUCAS

Pastor Diana observes the Sabbath on Fridays;
in the case of emergencies and urgent matters that arise on Friday,
text her cell phone number at 1-608-421-0230.

Report from the Church Office

Contributed by
Logan Willis

SPRC Announcement

As you may have heard by now, Pastor Diana Lucas will be leaving Ash Creek and Willow Valley at the conclusion of June this year. She will be moving on to the First United Methodist Church in Baraboo this July, allowing her to stay in the Driftless Region she has come to love. We wish her the best on this next stage of her life and ministry!

The ACWC church Staff and Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) has been working diligently with the Wisconsin Conference to find a new pastor, and we are pleased to announce Rev. Grace Cho. Rev. Cho has a Master of Divinity (MDiv) and a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) from Chandler School of Theology (the theology school of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia). She is also just short of a PhD in theology from Northwestern University in Chicago. However, rather than finishing her PhD, she felt called to serve the local church, and was appointed through the United Methodist system to a series of rural churches in northeastern Wisconsin, serving in the area for about 6 years. She is moving to the Driftless Area for the first time, ready to serve our churches starting July 1.

Along with this new pastor comes a number of other logistical changes. In order to better manage our finances, the SPRC, along with the mentorship of our District Superintendent Amanda Stein, has elected to perform a "trial run" of joining the Ash Creek and Willow Valley circuit with the existing Richland Center UMC (formerly Trinity). This means that, for the next year, Rev. Cho will be serving as the pastor of a three-church, or "three-point," circuit. Should this experiment prove

successful, this would aim to be the new normal.

At the current time, there are still some logistical questions to be worked out, and the SPRC of all three churches are working diligently to resolve them. Our SPRC's current chair Marty Richards's goal, affirmed by Rev. Cho's willingness, is to have all three churches continue to have Sunday services as they currently do; however, this will very likely mean that service times will change. Even in the context of three church services, this is not totally unfamiliar territory; as some of you may remember, Willow Valley used to be in a three-point charge with the Loyd and Sextonville churches (briefly between 1967 and 1970, back when WV was still called the Ithaca United Brethren Church), and that pastor used to serve three Sunday morning services - one at each church. Because this has been done before, there are some existing models that we can learn from and reference. As these conversations are still ongoing, the office will notify everyone of that change once the details have been confirmed.

There are still many other questions about how this new system will work; however, I'd also like to confirm a few things that won't change:

- The role of the Ash Creek/Willow Valley Office will remain unchanged for the duration of this trial run; I (Logan) will still be serving the churches through all necessary office duties, and will still be serving them in the Willow Valley church building's office.
- This also means that the Creeks & Valleys Newsletter that you all receive will continue unchanged.
- AC and WV Church leadership in the form of the Administrative Councils will also remain the same.

The AC/WV SPRC Committee will want to hear your feedback. Please feel free to reach out to any SPRC member to share your initial thoughts or any concerns you may have. The committee members include:

Marty Richards (Chair)
 Annette Louis
 Alma Manning
 Jerry and Donna Sims
 Dan Willis
 Kay Zieghan



Month in Review

May was an extremely busy month in the life of the church! On May 10, Ash Creek hosted its annual Mother-Child Luncheon. This year, the theme was “Timeless Traditions,” with butterfly imagery.

Attendees were welcomed with a meal and invited to share their favorite traditions, and any shared Ash Creek traditions were written down. Pictures from the luncheon can be found on page 5. Congratulations on another year of fulfilling the tradition, Ash Creek!

At the same time, one of Ash Creek’s own was the recipient of a significant honor by the Wisconsin Conference of the UMC. Allen Unbehaun, an anchor of the Ash Creek congregation, was nominated for and won the Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation’s Lois C. Olsen Ministry of Memory Award. This was in recognition of Allen’s dedication to preserving the history of the Ash Creek church and community. A significant contribution Allen made to the preservation of Ash Creek’s history was in the book *Among the Hills of Ash Creek*, which he jointly compiled with Lila Sigrist in 1989; the text chronicles

the long and rich history of the Ash Creek area and the Orion township from its initial surveying in 1842 and its first European settlers shortly after all the way through the lineages of the many families that called Ash Creek their home. At Ash Creek, Allen was celebrated by Pastor Diana and the congregants with the presentation of a certificate during regular service (photo above), and the video of his receiving the certificate was shown at the Wisconsin Conference on June 6-8. Congratulations for the recognition of your work, Allen!

On May 14, Willow Valley hosted the Ithaca School District’s Baccalaureate service. The Baccalaureate service is hosted by either the Willow Valley Church or the Keyesville Catholic Church every other year, and 2025 was Willow Valley’s year. The students elected to have Willow Valley’s own Teri Richards serve as the featured speaker. A photo of the Baccalaureate attendees can be seen on page 6. Congratulations to the graduates!

Among this year’s graduates in the Ash Creek and Willow Valley church were two Willow Valley congregants, Arianna Louis and Wesley Nelson.

Arianna is the daughter of Brad and Rhonda Louis, and Wesley is the son of Andy and Sarah Nelson; photos of both are to the right. Their commencement ceremony was held on June 1 amongst a total of 33 graduates, all looking to what the future may hold for them. Congrats, graduates! We'll be keeping you in our prayers!

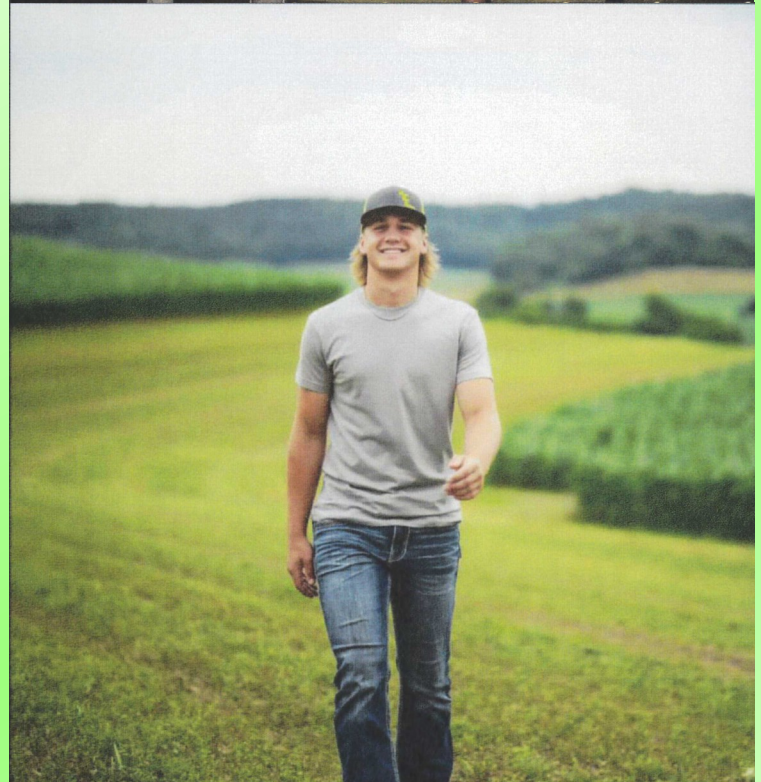
On May 31, Willow Valley hosted a local Celebration of Life for Therese "Tess" Guinther. Tess was a former teacher at Ithaca Public Schools, and she was a long-respected member of the community. She passed earlier this year in Florida, but her children also wished to have a celebration of her life at the Willow Valley church for her Ithaca family and friends. Many former and current Ithaca staff, community members, and Tess's family attended the service in which many individuals gave personal testimony and shared stories about Tess. Photos from the service, including a few of the speakers, can be found on pages 8 and 9.

The Month Ahead

Coming up on June 14, the Willow Valley UMC will be holding a graveside service for Dorothy Buroker. Dorothy, a long-time member of the Willow Valley church and wife of Kenneth "Ray" Buroker, passed away in La Crosse earlier this year. In accordance with Dorothy's wishes, no funeral service is being held, but the family has opened the invitation to any who would like to attend the graveside service at the Willow Valley Cemetery on Highway BA. The service will be June 14 at 2:00pm.

Pastor Diana's final service with Ash Creek and Willow Valley will be on June 22.

Coming up on June 29, the churches will have a guest speaker fill the pulpit. Robin Kelby has visited the churches before as the pulpit fill, and she will be coming back for the June 29 service.



And, as always, if any of you have events, fundraisers, or other info that you would want known by the ACWV churches, please reach out to us! We're always open to voicing our support for our neighbors' projects!

Ash Creek Mother-Child Luncheon



Above: Bonnie Klinzing and Pastor Diana attend the informational meeting on County Hwy O construction.

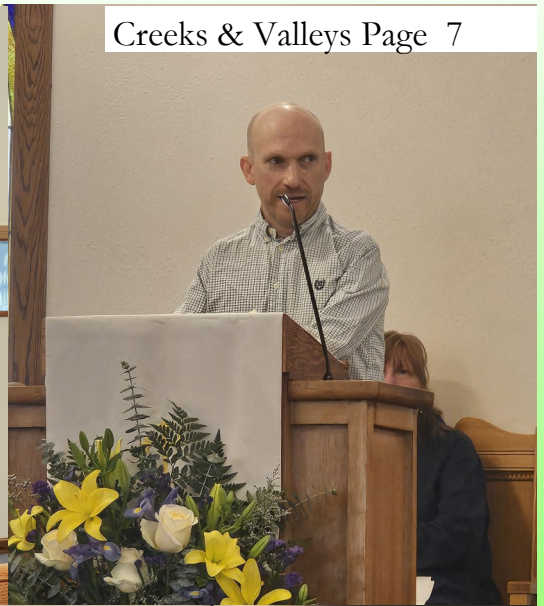
Ithaca Baccalaureate Class of 2025

The graduates of Ithaca High School had Baccalaureate at Willow Valley this year. The featured speaker for this year was Teri Richards, whose speech featured her personal journey in faith. A focal point of her speech was in her dedication to making Jesus first, holding herself to accountability, putting trust in Jesus, performing her acts in love and charity, and keeping a view of herself small. The post-service meal was prepared by Marge Brock, Annette Louis, and members of the Willow Valley chapter of the United Women in Faith. Congratulations to the graduates of 2025!



Celebration of Life for Therese "Tess" Guinther





ASH CREEK

Birthdays:

TyLacey Sims-Hines—6/04
Elijah Brown—6/09
Dean Schmidt—6/09
Dale Schmidt—6/10
Allyson Jurgensen—6/15
Alexys Stibbe—6/17
Brooklynn Johnson—6/18
Springfield McCauley—6/25
Bruce McCauley—6/26
Tonya Kadousek—6/27
Wyatt Heisz—6/28
Aimee Ziegahn—6/29
Shai Sims-Brown—7/01
Kolten Stibbe—7/02
Samantha Jurgensen—7/06
Allen Unbehaun—7/10
Santana Schmidt—7/18
Robert Stibbe—7/21

Anniversaries:

David & Aimee Ziegahn—6/15
Monte & Bridget Schmidt—6/22
Brent & Sarah Stibbe—7/09
Jim & Joleen Unbehaun—7/19

WILLOW VALLEY

Birthdays:

6/02—Megan (Burnley) Durst
6/04—Spencer Nelson
6/04—Judy Shadewald
6/11—Adam Durst
6/13—Carissa Willis
6/17—Bonnie Jones
6/25—Cameron Brown
6/28—Doris Eck
6/28—Patrick Peterson
6/29—Ann Durst
7/01—Darrick Marchwick
7/01—Eric Weigel
7/05—LaVerne Acketz
7/06—Kyle Dicke
7/10—Millie King
7/13—Maisyn Willis
7/22—Gene King
7/23—Carolyn Anderson
7/25—Bailey Wanless
7/26—Josh Clary
7/26—Larry Nelson
7/30—Betsy Wiedenfeld

Anniversaries:

6/04—Cole & Juanna Miller
6/05—Tom & Millie King
6/08—Normand & Vickie Bedard
6/09—Tim & Kris Willis
6/12—Marty & Trudy Kinyon
6/14—Adam & Ann Durst
6/22—Rodney & Shirley Gochenaur
6/28—Dave & Marge Brock
7/02—Frank & Barb Mayfield
7/04—Joe & Janice Lord
7/06—Dan & Marj Willis
7/07—Troy & Lisa Clary
7/28—Jeff & Sue Meyer
7/28—Dave & Marge Brock

June

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AC 9:00 AM WV 10:30 AM						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
AC 9:00 AM No Willow Valley Service						Graveside Service for Dorothy Buroker: 2:00pm @ WV Cemetery
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
AC Ad Council Meeting @ 8am AC 9:00 AM WV 10:30 AM						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
AC 9:00 AM WV 10:30 AM	WV Ad Council Meeting @ 6pm					
29	30					
AC 9:00 AM WV 10:30 AM Guest Sermon by Robin Kelby						

Ash Creek & Willow Valley United Methodist Churches

Willow Creek UMC & Charge Office

24811 State Hwy 58

Richland Center, WI 53581

Phone: (608)-585-2281

E-mail: acwvumc@gmail.com

Visit us on Facebook — [“Willow Valley Church”](#)

Ash Creek UMC

28820 Henry Clark Lane

Richland Center, WI 53581

Visit us on Facebook — [“Ash Creek Church”](#)

Creeks & Valleys

June 2025

Address Service Requested

Congrats, Graduates!

Upcoming Administrative Council Meetings:

Ash Creek:

Next Meeting is June 15, 2025 @ 8:00am

Willow Valley:

Next Meeting is June 23 @ 6:00pm

AC Worship Time:

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

WV Worship Time:

Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

G.I.G. Time:

Wednesdays 5:15 p.m.—7:00pm

(September—May)