



Creeks & Valleys

August 2025

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[“Willow Valley Church”](#)



When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” — John 21:15-17

Dear Family of Christ’s Church,
“Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”
“Yes, Lord,” he said, “You know that I love you.” (John 21:15)

These words are not only Peter’s confession but mine as well. I was born into a religious family; four generations of deep believers, shaped by the Korean Methodist Church. I grew up observing my grandparents’ and parents’ dedication as church leaders. From a young age I embraced life as a child of God, but my faith was ritualized and taken for granted. I did not understand God in a deep, experiential way.

Forty days before the all-important Korean National University Entrance Examination (similar to the American SAT), I fell into a helpless state of body, spirit, and soul. Through counseling with my home pastor, I realized that these feelings of helplessness came from my arrogance as a top student. I became aware that I’d just trusted in my own will and efforts rather than accepting the God of mercy and grace. After noticing this, I felt deep regret for my arrogant attitude and for refusing Jesus’ love and grace.

God gave me the opportunity to repent of my wrong attitude and confess my love to Jesus just as Jesus visited Peter who had betrayed him and must have had a deep sense of guilt, despair, and helplessness. This experience was an important moment in my healing.

“Grace, do you truly love me more than these?”
“Yes, Lord,” I said, “You know that I love you.”

Although I had lived beforehand by relying on my own will and desires and denied the presence of God, Jesus nevertheless visited me, loved me, and called me to be a servant of God. I first entered Methodist Theological University in Seoul, South Korea (graduated in 2009), and then studied in the United States at Emory University (Master of Divinity, graduated in 2012 and Master of Theology, graduated in 2013), and pursued further studies to be equipped in order to provide holistic care in various contexts. I have had ministry experience at Dae Eun Methodist Church in South Korea, Glenn Memorial UMC, and Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, GA, Galilee UMC in Highland Park, IL, and at Almond and Plainfield UMCs and Mosinee UMC in Wisconsin.

I believe that coming to Jesus with our own brokenness and receiving not judgment and rejection, but embracement and grace, is our source of loving and following Jesus. Also, our confession of this love to Jesus is the source of our caring for and serving others, the people of God. I pray that we all experience the grace of God, the acceptance of God, and the love of God more and more. Thank you for your kindness and support; I have been truly blessed by it. May God bless you abundantly! Thanks be to God! Amen.

In the Lord Christ’s Love,

Pastor Grace

Report from the Church Office

Contributed by
Logan Willis

It has been a busy time of transition for the Ash Creek and Willow Valley churches. There are already many moving parts when churches have pastoral coverage changes, but joining a two-church circuit with another church into a three-church charge makes the issues all the more complex. As the ACWV leadership continue to work to resolve all of the problems associated with the transition, please send us your warm thoughts and prayers.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the transition or anything that occurs within the new system, the SPRC have made their names known and are inviting your input and responses. Their names are below:

Marty Richards (chair); Annette Louis; Alma Manning; Jerry and Donna Sims; Dan Willis; Kay Ziegahn

Our new pastor, Pastor Grace Cho, has now been serving our churches for about one month. Below is a brief biography she has provided us:

“Pastor Grace was born in South Korea and follows in the footsteps of four generations of Christian leaders. She grew up watching her grandparents and parents as church leaders, and their models of faith have inspired her journey with God. The death of her grandfather during her teenage years motivated her to pursue theological studies. She began her studies at Methodist Theological University in Seoul, South Korea, and graduated in 2009. That same year, she moved to the United States to further her studies at Emory University in Atlanta. There, she

earned a Master of Divinity in 2012 and a Master of Theology in 2013. She also pursued further studies in pastoral care and counseling at Garrett. Her ministry experience includes serving at Glenn Memorial UMC and Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, GA, Galilee UMC in Highland Park, IL, Almond and Plainfield UMCs in Wisconsin, and at Mosinee UMC in Wisconsin. She is grateful to be in ministry that helps her serve others in their walks of faith, and she is thankful for all trustworthy companions in this journey.”

Welcome to the area, Pastor Grace!

Month in Review

It has been a busy time for the churches. On June 14, Willow Valley held a brief burial service for Dorothy Buroker, who passed in February of this year. In accordance with her wishes, there was no funeral service, but the burial service at the Willow Valley Cemetery was open to all attendees to pay their respects.

With the conclusion of June, both churches held celebrations for our prior Pastor Diana Lucas to thank her for her 2.5 years of service. Ash Creek held a potluck gathering at the Ash Creek church mid-month.

Willow Valley’s congregants Joe and Lori Pizer and their family, including Tara Jo and Eric Weigel, offered and arranged for the June 29 service to take place at The Willows, the prior German residence on German Lane that they have renovated into a short-term rental property.

The service was followed by a potluck. Photos from the service can be found on page 5. Thank you to the Pizer and Weigel families for their generosity in offering the property to us, and thank you to all of the church staff that helped in making the service possible!

Before Pastor Grace moved into the Richland Center area, both churches had a week of guest pulpit fill. At Ash Creek, Allen Unbehaun gave the sermon. At Willow Valley, Don Willis — Donnabel Willis' brother-in-law and my great-uncle — gave a guest presentation. The subject of his sermon was his Uncle Don, the brother of his mother Fern and who had fallen in combat in France during World War II. His personal correspondence with Fern, his parents, and his wife were shared in this presentation as well as a few of his personal artifacts enclosed in displayed booklets. As part of his own discover process, Don Willis took a carefully-trip to France that traced his Uncle Don's steps through multiple battalions throughout France. Thank you to Allen and Don for your pulpit fill!

On July 10, there was a birthday party for Allen Unbehaun's 90th birthday. In order to avoid the road construction on Highway O, the party was held at the Richland Center UMC building (the former Trinity UMC). Attendees were able to come in at any time that afternoon and celebrate one of Ash Creek's long-standing patriarchs for reaching the impressive milestone. Congratulations, Allen!

July 13 was the first date that Pastor Grace served in the pulpit for the churches. Her

sermon was from the Gospel of John 21:15-19 (a snippet of which is included in her letter this month). In this sermon, she shared her call to the clergy, using John 21 to illustrate her path to feed His lambs. We're glad to have you, Pastor Grace!

Nearing the end of July, Willow Valley hosted its Vacation Bible School. As Willow Valley's Christian Education Chair Heather Dickey noted, there were a total of 32 students registered over the course of July 28 through 31, and the attendance peaked at 29 students. Selected photos can be found on page 6. Heather and the Willow Valley church would like to thank our many teachers and helpers: Pastor Grace, Marj and Courtney Willis, Jaxon Louis, Mary Larsen, Hewsten Boland, Ari and Bri Louis, Elise Nelson, Madison Hackl, and Annette Louis. Thank you to you all; your efforts made the entire week possible!

On August 1, Pastor Grace held an open house for all congregants of the Ash Creek, Richland Center, and Willow Valley congregants at her parsonage. Although some of our prior pastors have attempted to arrange them, this was the first time one had been held in recent memory. We appreciate your commitment to a warm welcome, Pastor Grace!

The Month Ahead

With as busy as the past two months have been, the next two months aren't looking any less active! Firstly, the churches are hosting some of their own events. Willow Valley will be hosting

its annual Hog Roast & Corn Boil on August 23 from 4:30pm to 7:00pm. Held in the Willow Valley church basement, you can come on by to get your fill of sweet corn and pulled pork sandwiches, which have been made available by the efforts of the Willow Valley United Methodist Men and the Willow Valley United Women in Faith. This is all available for a free-will donation to the church. The flyer can be found on page 7 of the newsletter. We hope to see you there!

Now with VBS having completed, Growing in God is right around the corner! Heather has announced that GIG will resume on Wednesday, September 17. The time will remain 5:15pm through to 7:00pm. Online registration can be found [here](#) or through the Willow Valley Church Facebook page.

In some of our affiliated United Methodist area friends, the Schmitt Woodland Hills senior living facility is hosting a celebration for its 60th year of faithful service. The celebration, held at Schmitt Woodland Hills, will begin at 11:00am and will feature a picnic lunch, live music, and guided tours of the independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing communities. Please come out and support them!

There will also be some local performances that would be worth your time to attend. On August 16, the Richland Center Community Choir will host its yearly summer concert. Hosted at the Richland Center High School Auditorium, the concert will begin at 4:00pm and feature songs of hope for times of uncertainty.

There is no admittance cost. We hope to see you there!

On August 17, the Richland Concert Association will be hosting a concert to kick off its 60th anniversary. The Richland Concert Association, a nonprofit group that hosts classical concerts, began in 1966 and has been hosting concerts nonstop during the past 60 years. This opening concert, comprising entirely of local talents, is offered for free to all attendees and is dedicated to the 60 years of board members who have helped the group to thrive. Among other groups and performers, I and my wife Chay will be jointly performing a new composition I wrote for her. I hope you can come out and hear it and many other talented performers!

On August 24, the Little Brown Church in Bear Valley will be hosting a performance by the Quartessence String Quartet. These quartet members from the Madison Symphony Orchestra and Madison Chamber Orchestra will begin at 2:00pm on Sunday, August 24. This concert is freely offered to the community. I hope you can make it!

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

Willow Valley at The Willows



Vacation Bible School!



The Willow Valley United Methodist Men present:

Hog Roast & Corn Boil

Saturday, August 23

4:30pm—7:00pm

**Sweet Corn, Pulled Pork Sandwich, Coleslaw,
Beans, Dessert, Lemonade, and Water!**

All this for a free-will donation!



**Willow Valley UMC
24811 State Hwy 58**

In Beautiful Downtown Ithaca!

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Creeks & Valleys Page 8

ASH CREEK

Birthdays:

Jerry Sims—8/05
Levi Heisz—8/08
Reese Johnson—8/11
Mila Ziegahn—8/13
Schyler Clary—8/14
Kirk Stibbbe—8/15
David Un behaun—8/15
Jim Un behaun—8/15
David Ziegahn—8/15
Cindy Deckert—8/21
Will Gher—8/25
Sefia Ziegahn—8/27
Roslynn Johnson—8/28
Brittany Anderson—9/02
Allison Un behaun—9/03
Nancy Gher—9/04
Geoff Ziegahn—9/04
Macy Seifert—9/06
Brittany Niemeyer—9/07
Mercedes Clary—9/08
Morgan Twedt—9/24
Deb Klinzing—9/30

Anniversaries:

Jerry & Donna Sims—8/03
David & Cathy Un behaun—8/08
Geoff & Antje Ziegahn—8/09
Bill & Nancy Gher—8/25
James & Tonya Kadousek—8/28
Bob & Jan Stibbe—9/07
Barry & Kay Ziegahn—9/09
Kirk & Shelly Stibbe—9/14
Mark & Rochelle Schmidt—9/19
Elliot & Brittany Anderson—9/28

WILLOW VALLEY

Birthdays:

8/06—Tom King
8/07—Casey Pomerding
8/11—Asher Nelson
8/13—Rhonda Louis
8/13—Shelly Maxwell
8/13—Annette Louis
8/15—Wyatt Willis
8/17—Jaxon Louis
8/17—Brinley Wanless
8/18—Marty Richards
8/22—Dawn Marchwick
8/24—Karia Brown
8/29—Austin Clary
8/31—Barb Clary
9/01—Trudy Kinyon
9/04—Normand Bedard
9/04—Vickie Bedard
9/06—Deb Manning
9/08—Ken Anderson
9/09—Emelia Dickey
9/11—Leah Richards
9/19—Dakota Wiedenfeld
9/21—Stetson Clary
9/26—Briggs Maxwell

Anniversaries:

8/09—John & Linda Peterson
8/24—Ken & Carolyn Anderson
9/13—Brad & Rhonda Louis
9/19—Paul & Barb Denman

August

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AC 8:00 AM RC 9:30 AM WV 11:00 AM						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
AC 8:00 AM RC 9:30 AM WV 11:00 AM						Richland Center Communi- ty Choir @ RCHS @ 4:00pm
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
AC 8:00 AM RC 9:30 AM WV 11:00 AM RCA Concert: 60th Anniversary Celebration @ 2:00pm						Schmitt 60th Celebration @ 11:00am WV Corn Boil @ 4:30pm- 7:00pm
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
AC 8:00 AM RC 9:30 AM WV 11:00 AM Quartessence String Quartet @ Little Brown Church @ 2:00pm						
31	Sept. 1	2	3	4	5	6
AC 8:00 AM RC 9:30 AM WV 11:00 AM						

Ash Creek & Willow Valley United Methodist Churches

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Ash Creek UMC

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Creeks & Valleys
August 2025

Address Service Requested

Upcoming Administrative Council Meetings:

Ash Creek:

Next Meeting TBA

Willow Valley:

Next Meeting is September 15 @ 6:00pm

AC Worship Time:

Sundays at 8:00 a.m.

WV Worship Time:

Sundays at 11:00 a.m.

G.I.G. Time:

Wednesdays 5:15 p.m.—7:00pm
(September—May)