

NEWS FROM THE PLEASANT GROVE PEWS

JULY 2025

In the Sweet, Sweet Summertime

Ahh ... high summer in Hatton. What are your plans for July? We're excited to share ours with you.

As we celebrate our nation's 249th birthday this month, Pastor Paul Klepees is mulling over freedom — especially the ultimate freedom that we find in Christ. Read more on page 2.

Also on page 2, we look ahead to Pleasant Grove's back-to-school campaign to Fill The Cart with school supplies. Check out the list of items our local school children could use this next year.

Turn to page 7 to get the scoop on last month's Annual Conference and the special roles Pleasant Grove played in the gathering.

NextGen Minister Kris O'Neal is preparing to take a passel of teens to UNITE youth camp this month. With such a large group comes the inevitable divisions and angst, but Kris thinks we all just need a big dose of Jesus love to turn our "enemies" into friends in Christ. Read more on page 9.

You've seen the busy calendar on page 5; now get the details on page 13 for announcements about Men's Group, Sisters in Faith, UNITE camp, the new KFJ Summer Day launch and a trip to Branson for the On The Road

Again gang. And make sure to give a big Pleasant Grove welcome to Macy Storts, our new pastor of care and connection, who starts her ministry here July 1. Turn the page for more news from the pews — a sneak peek at some new playground equipment and Pastor Paul smooching with Bertha the Pig.

We have photos of Vacation Bible School fun on pages 16-19 and more good times at Country Friends Quilt Group's Bingo Night on pages 22-23. Check out the new outreach plans on page 25.

A big thank-you goes out to Margie Klepees, Brooke Dennison, Sarah Kennon, Paul Klepees, Sandy Montgomery and Terry Pope for all the great photos we have in this issue. As we enter our fourth year of *News from the Pleasant Grove Pews*, we are grateful to all the contributors who help us tell Pleasant Grove's story each month.

It's all about you, dear reader, so keep your news and photos coming. Send your ideas to Kathy Casteel at kcasteel@ktis.net and Betsy Bell at mammabell003@gmail.com. We can't wait to hear from you!

PLEASANT GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

3686 State Road E
Auxvasse, MO 65231
Office: 573-387-4822
MyPGUMC.org

Our Mission: To know Jesus Christ and to make Him known.

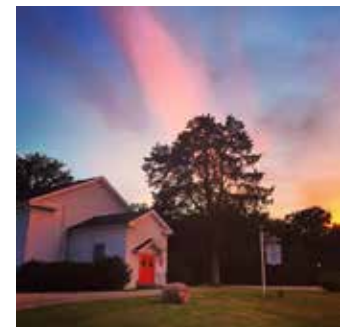
PASTOR
Paul Klepees
pastor@mypgumc.org

PASTOR OF CARE & CONNECTION
Macy Storts
macy@mypgumc.org

NEXTGEN MINISTER
Kris O'Neal
nextgen@mypgumc.org

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Kayla O'Neal
admin@mypgumc.org

For prayer requests, our Prayer Tree number is 573-808-0093, email mfansler@hotmail.com. For announcements or Information Tree: nalinville.church@gmail.com.



News from the Pleasant Grove Pews is published monthly by Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church.

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THE PASTOR'S PEACE



PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT FRONT: SPENCER, PAUL, GIBSON BACK: MARGIE, EZRA, AND MAVERICK KLEPEES

Freedom in Christ

BY PASTOR PAUL KLEPEES

I've always enjoyed Independence Day. Compared to other holidays, it feels refreshingly simple. No freezing fingers trying to hang lights. No crack-of-dawn candy hunts. Just family, gathered in Grandma's front yard, eating watermelon and watching the sky light up. As a kid, I'd itch for days from lying in the grass, mesmerized by the fireworks. Now I get to experience it all again through the eyes of my children.

But amid the joy and fun, it's easy to forget the deeper meaning behind this iconic day on the calendar.

Congress declared Independence Day a federal holiday in 1870, but celebrations have taken place since the very birth of our nation. On July 2, 1776, a group of determined individuals — dressed in wool and gathered in a hot, stuffy room — voted to change the course of history. They chose freedom, declaring independence from the British king. Two days later, on July 4, the 13 original colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, boldly stating that “all men are created equal” and “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Even then, the signers acknowledged a truth greater than their own signatures: freedom doesn't originate with governments or human will. It begins with the Creator — the One who spoke all things into being.

**IT IS FOR FREEDOM THAT CHRIST
HAS SET US FREE. STAND FIRM,
THEN, AND DO NOT LET YOUR-
SELVES BE BURDENED AGAIN BY A
YOKE OF SLAVERY.**

GALATIANS 5:1

Scripture affirms this truth. Our ultimate freedom — far deeper than anything enshrined in political documents — is found in Christ. Galatians reminds us that through Christ, we are freed from the yoke of sin and death. This kind of freedom — freedom of the soul — is a gift from above and can only be fully known through surrender to God and His will for our lives.

That truth reframes how we celebrate. As we give thanks for the brave men and women who sacrificed for our national freedom, we also remember the greater freedom secured for us by Christ. It's not either/or — it's both. We honor the cost of liberty in this world while also rejoicing in the eternal freedom that no earthly power can give or take away.

So not just on Independence Day, but every day, let us give thanks for those who have sacrificed to secure our freedom — both here on earth and eternally through Christ. May we live in a way that honors their sacrifice and reflects the true freedom we have in Jesus. And as we watch the skies light up this July, may we also pause to thank the One who gave us light, life and liberty — not just for a nation, but for every heart that turns to Him.

FILL THE CART

SCHOOL DAYS

It may be high summer right now, but school will be starting before you know it. Time to plan. It's exciting to prepare with new school supplies to get a good start on the new school year. But not everyone can afford all the supplies their children need. To help out, Pleasant Grove is collecting school supplies in July to distribute in August.

Common needs include pencils, erasers, crayons, markers, highlighters, colored pencils, pens, glue sticks, art boxes, scissors, construction paper, folders, loose-leaf ruled paper, protractors, composition books, spiral notebooks and binders.

Community items students will share include tissues, wet wipes, paper towels, zip-close bags (quart and gallon), index cards, sticky notes and graph paper.

All supplies collected will go to local schools in the North Callaway district. Let's help our kids start this new school year off right!



SCAN ME



KFJ

Kids For Jesus

Summer Day Program

Registration:

\$100

Grades K-5

Program runs from
7:45am-3:45pm daily



**Pleasant Grove
Methodist
Church**

3639 State Road E
Auxvasse, MO 65231



Sponsored in part by:



Callaway County Special Services

Join us for:

"The Life of Jesus"

July 14th - July 18th

**Experience the Bible come
to life with hands-on
crafts, STEM, games, and
more!**

www.mypgumc.org | Call Us 573-387-4822



PLEASANT GROVE MEN'S GROUP

**JOIN US ON TUESDAYS AT
PLEASANT GROVE**

**3686 STATE ROAD E
AUXVASSE, MO**

**JULY 1 & 15
7 P.M.**

CODY JONES

573-826-0926

BRANDON CRAWFORD

573-220-5347

CALENDAR & EVENTS

July 2025

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|-----|
| | | YOGA 8 A.M. MEN'S GROUP 7 P.M. | | | INDEPENDENCE DAY | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| WORSHIP 9 A.M. & 11 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:10 A.M. | SISTERS IN FAITH (AT JOYCE LOUTZENHISER'S) 7 P.M. | YOGA 8 A.M. | QUILT GROUP 7 P.M. | | | |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| WORSHIP 9 A.M. & 11 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:10 A.M. | KFJ SUMMER DAY PROGRAM 7:45 A.M.-3:45 P.M. | KFJ SUMMER DAY PROGRAM 7:45 A.M.-3:45 P.M. YOGA 8 A.M. MEN'S GROUP 7 P.M. | KFJ SUMMER DAY PROGRAM 7:45 A.M.-3:45 P.M. | KFJ SUMMER DAY PROGRAM 7:45 A.M.-3:45 P.M. BABY GRACE PICKUP 11 A.M.-2 P.M. SERVE FOOD BOX PICKUP 11 A.M.-2 P.M. COMMUNITY LUNCH 12 NOON | KFJ SUMMER DAY PROGRAM 7:45 A.M.-3:45 P.M. | |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| WORSHIP 9 A.M. & 11 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:10 A.M. | UNITE CAMP CMU | UNITE CAMP CMU YOGA 8 A.M. | UNITE CAMP CMU | UNITE CAMP CMU | UNITE CAMP CMU | |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| WORSHIP 9 A.M. & 11 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:10 A.M. | | | | | | |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |
| WORSHIP 9 A.M. & 11 A.M. SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:10 A.M. | | YOGA 8 A.M. | | | | |

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

Missouri Methodists urged to 'be the light.'



COLBIE FIELDER HELPED SERVE COMMUNION.



The early June gathering of the Missouri Annual Conference in St. Charles was one of the most hopeful and forward-looking conferences in recent memory. With a theme of “Illumine: Be the Light,” we had much to celebrate as the Missouri Annual Conference continues to stand out as one of the most stable conferences in the denomination.

Throughout the weekend, the usual meetings and reports were beautifully interwoven with worship and preaching that reached deep into the soul. The worship team, made up of leaders from across the state, came together to offer an inspiring experience that included hymns sung in multiple languages.

Delegates voted on several proposed constitutional changes addressing structural and administrative matters. The results of those votes will be released after the Council of Bishops meets in October.

Among this year’s highlights was our own Pastor Paul Klepees serving as the featured speaker for the small and rural church luncheon. Pleasant Grove’s ministry intern Colbie Fielder helped serve Communion. Even more exciting was the commissioning and appointment of Macy Storts as a provisional deacon. Macy will spend the next several years in a process of evaluation before ordination. In the meantime, she has been appointed to Pleasant Grove as Pastor of Care and Connection.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, THAT THEY MAY SEE

YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

MATTHEW 5:16



BISHOP BOB FARR INTRODUCED PASTOR PAUL AT THE SMALL AND RURAL CHURCH LUNCHEON.



MACY AND KALEB STORTS



MACY STORTS AND PASTOR PAUL KLEPEES



MACY STORTS' COMMISSIONING AS A PROVISIONAL DEACON



PASTOR PAUL SPOKE ON SMALL AND RURAL CHURCHES AT ANNUAL CONFERENCE. (SCHAFFER PHOTOGRAPHY)

ENCOUNTER

 **JULY 21-25**   **UNITE  2025**

CENTRAL METHODIST UNIVERSITY



PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT FRONT: KOURTNEY, KIERSTYN BACK: KAYLA, KRIS O'NEAL

Friends and Enemies

BY NEXTGEN MINISTER KRIS O'NEAL

Can enemies become friends?

As I prepare to take 90 kids to UNITE camp this year, I can't help but anticipate the uncomfortable social awkwardness that comes with so much diversity in teenagers who don't know each other very well. Enemies seem to get made early in the week.

We live in a world full of division — social, political, even personal. It's easy to write off someone as an "enemy" when they hurt us, disagree with us, or simply don't understand us. But what if God had done the same to us?

Colossians 1:21-22 says, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

Before we ever thought about God, He was already reaching out to make peace with us. While we were enemies in our hearts and minds, Jesus made the first move. Through the cross, we were offered not just a truce, but friendship and family.

As followers of Jesus, we're called to do the same: to forgive first, to reach across divides, and to believe that even broken relationships can be restored. Whether it's a classmate, a co-worker, or even someone in our own home, the power of Jesus' reconciliation isn't just something we receive — it's something we extend.

Throughout the week of UNITE we will lead our kids to do just that. Grace doesn't stop with us; it moves through us.

Because of Jesus, enemies don't have to stay enemies. In Him, they can become friends.

YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID, "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AND HATE YOUR ENEMY." BUT I TELL YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.



SISTERS IN FAITH

HOSTED BY

Joyce Lautzenhiser

1332 County Road 263

Auxvasse, MO

MONDAY, JULY 7

7 P.M.

Angie Raebel

Plote.hogan@gmail.com

573-416-6438



TIME TO TRAVEL

On The Road Again ... to Branson



JOIN US!

*The On The Road Again gang has a
fall trip to Branson planned for
Sept. 23-25.*

The itinerary includes the stage shows Frankie Valli's *New Jersey Nights*, *David — The Musical* and *Clay Cooper's Country Music Express*. The group will also tour Dogwood Canyon Nature Park in nearby Lampe and School of the Ozarks at Point Lookout.

Reservations are due Friday, Aug 1st. Pick up a handout from the church office with all the details. Or for more information, contact Jan Hankinson at 573-999-2139 or email janhankinson@gmail.com.

The PG App



Powered by Ministry One



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome, Macy!

We'd like to welcome Macy Storts, our new Pastor of Care and Connection, to Pleasant Grove. Commissioned at Annual Conference in June as a provisional deacon, Macy will be on the job as of July 1. On Sunday, July 6, she will preach at Pleasant Grove. Say hello to Macy when you see her out and about or in the church office. You can contact her by phone at 573-387-4822 or email macy@mypgumc.org.

Men's Group Meets

The Pleasant Grove Men's Group will meet this month on the first and third Tuesday, July 1 and 15, at the church. The group continues its study of The Bible Project YouTube series, led by Cody Jones and Brandon Crawford. All men are welcome to join. For more information, contact Cody at 573-826-0926 or Brandon at 573-220-5347.

UNITE Camp Set for July 21-25

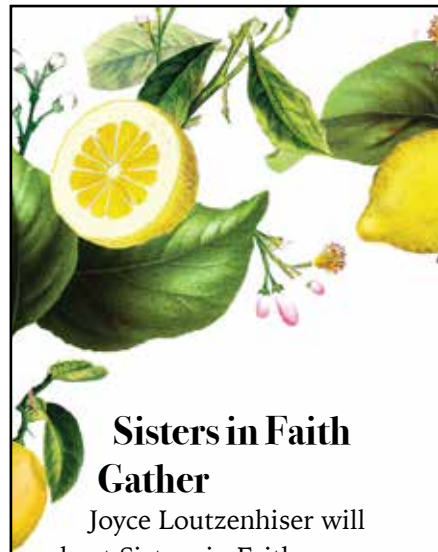
About 90 Pleasant Grove youth will set off for Central Methodist University in Fayette to attend the UNITE youth conference July 21-25. UNITE is a powerful week of camp experiences for incoming sixth graders to graduating high school seniors, focused on encountering God in a fresh, personal way.

All campers must complete their paperwork before UNITE week, says NextGen Minister Kris O'Neal. Check your email to get the latest updates from him as details are finalized. Adult chaperones will accompany the campers; currently there is an opening for one more female chaperone. If interested, contact the church office at 573-387-4822.

On The Road Again ... to Branson

The On The Road Again gang has a fall trip to Branson planned for Sept. 23-25. The itinerary includes the stage shows Frankie Valli's *New Jersey Nights*, *David — The Musical* and *Clay Cooper's Country Music Express*. The group will also tour Dogwood Canyon Nature Park in nearby Lampe and School of the Ozarks at Point Lookout.

Cost ranges from \$300 to \$472 per person, depending on hotel room occupancy. Reservations and a \$100 per person deposit are due Friday, Aug. 1 (make checks payable to: PGUMC – On the Road Again). Pick up a handout from the church office with all the details. For more information, contact Jan Hankinson at 573-999-2139 or email janhankinson@gmail.com.



Sisters in Faith Gather

Joyce Loutzenhiser will host Sisters in Faith on Monday, July 7, in her home at 1332 County Road 263 near Auxvasse. The meeting gets underway at 7 p.m. For more information about Sisters in Faith, contact Angie Raebel at 573-416-6438 or email Plote.hogan@gmail.com.

KFJ Summer Day Launches

Pleasant Grove's KFJ Summer Day program begins July 14 for a five-day run. Open to children in kindergarten through fifth grade, Summer Day features Bible-based, hands-on learning through crafts, STEM activities, games and more. Each session runs from 7:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Students will need a sack lunch and snack daily.

Through the generosity of the Missouri Conference and Callaway County Social Services, registration is now only \$100 per student. Due to limited capacity, the program has been reduced to one week only, July 14-18. For more information call the church office at 573-387-4822, or register online at www.MyPGUMC.org/what-we-do/kfj-summer-day.

MORE NEWS FROM THE PEWS

PUCKER UP

Kids For Jesus celebrated the end of the program year with a party at the Fulton Rec-Plex in May. Guest of honor was Brad and Sarah Kennon's pig Bertha, there to cash in on the KFJ fifth graders' prize for raising the most money for Pleasant Grove's Feed The Children program. Through weekly offerings over the program year, KFJ classes collected \$617.30 for Feed The Children; fifth graders brought in nearly a fourth of that amount — \$136.56. Their prize? They wanted Pastor Paul Klepees to kiss a pig; Bertha gladly accommodated them.

Now on summer hiatus, KFJ will resume in September. For more information about KFJ, contact Sarah Kennon at 573-397-8198 or email nanny4cj@yahoo.com.



PLAYGROUND PROGRESS

The church playground has upped its coolness factor this summer with new equipment for kids to enjoy. The new pieces installed so far have earned the Pleasant Grove kids' seal of approval. And there's more to come! Stay tuned for completion details and dedication plans.





SERVE and Baby Grace

Pleasant Grove is a mobile site for SERVE food pantry and Baby Grace.

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 11 A.M.-2 P.M.

(We are open every third Thursday of the month.)

If you are in need of a food box from SERVE,
please stop by! You can register that day and
participate in the food pantry.

The Baby Grace store offers free diapers, wipes and gently used or
new clothing for ages birth through 5 years.



COMMUNITY LUNCH

The Discipleship Sunday School class invites
you to join us for a homemade meal.
Stay for a game of cards, dominoes, or
bring a suggestion!

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 12 NOON



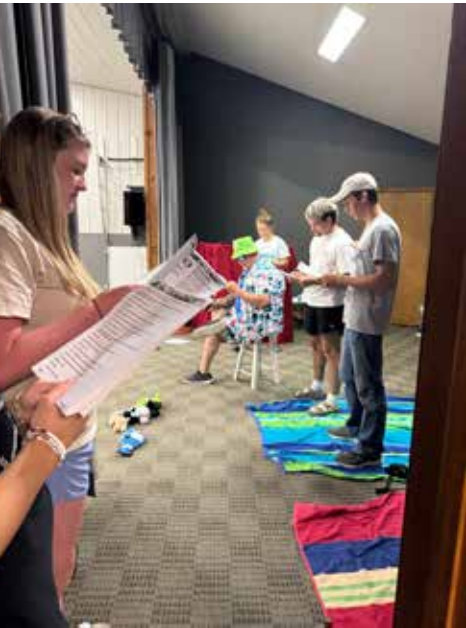
Road Trip



Vacation Bible School treks through a weekend with everyone's favorite travel buddy — God.

A weekend journey with God was in the offing for Vacation Bible School in June. Up to 22 kids showed up for the Friday and Saturday VBS sessions, capped off with a Sunday fun day after church. Assisted by 13-15 youth volunteers and some 14 adults, Margie Klepees and Brooke Dennison put together a jam-packed weekend of fun, food and timeless stories about travelers in the Bible and how they found their way with God's help.





THE LORD YOUR GOD IS WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.

JOSHUA 1:9





CONNECT WITH US!



MYPGUMC.ORG



FACEBOOK.COM/PGUMCHATTON



FACEBOOK.COM/LIMITLESS



INSTAGRAM.COM/MYPGUMC



MYPGUMC.ORG/YOUTUBE



PRAY WITH US

Let's support and uplift each other through the power of prayer.



4 Ways to Request Prayer

1. Submit your prayer requests through the PG App by tapping Contact and the Prayer tab. Fill out the brief form and submit.
2. On our website, MyPGUMC.org, click on the Prayer Request graphic on the home page or click on Prayer Concerns under the Stay Connected menu (MyPGUMC.org/stay-connected/prayer-concerns). Fill out the brief form and submit.
3. Contact the church office at 573-387-4822 or Pastor Paul Klepees at 816-752-3635.
4. Call the Prayer Tree at 573-808-0093 or email mfansler@hotmail.com.



Country Friends quilters raise a bundle for future projects.

Exultant calls of “BINGO!” reverberated through the Pleasant Grove gym time and again as 38 players gathered for the Country Friends Quilt Group Bingo Night last month. The group collected \$455 during the June 26 fundraiser, which members will use to purchase fabric for baby quilts in the Baby Grace ministry and comfort quilts.



The décor showcased some of the quilters’ handiwork as well as a quilt stand built by Denny Shryock for use in memorial services at the church. Mark Montgomery served as bingo caller.



Admission was \$5 plus three fat quarters (quilter lingo for a precut 18-by-22-inch piece of fabric). Winners of the first five rounds won booty from the heavy-laden prize table. Elizabeth Ward hit the jackpot in the sixth and final round, winning 134 fat quarters.





JOIN US FOR A NEW SERMON SERIES



CALLED IN

OUTREACH PLANS

Just a Phone Call Away

Spiritual needs don't always follow a time clock. If you need to reach Pleasant Grove's ministerial staff outside of regular business hours, we now have a dedicated After Hours phone line: 573-387-4822, select option 5. You'll be put in touch with the pastor on call, either Paul Klepees or Macy Storts.

Disaster Relief by the Numbers

It's been a busy spring for disaster relief in the Show-Me State. In 2025, Missouri's capricious weather has spawned damaging tornados, storms and floods. Methodists have heeded the call to help our neighbors.

- In 2025 so far, 13 new Early Response Team members have been trained, 11 recertified.
- Early Response Teams cleaned up five storm-damaged properties in Poplar Bluff and six tornado-ravaged properties in Springfield in April.
- After the May 16 tornado in St. Louis, Manchester UMC removed debris at Union Memorial UMC and in the surrounding community.
- The UMC disaster response hub at Woods Chapel delivered 320 cleaning buckets to the YMCA in O'Fallon.
- Grace UMC in St. Louis served as a Red Cross shelter and hosted flood bucket distribution on May 20 with 100 buckets available, adding more as needed.
- New Horizon UMC in St. Louis hosted Matthew 25 Ministries, a laundry/shower trailer and supply distribution, in their parking lot.
- Trinity UMC in Piedmont distributed 200 rakes, 200 totes, 200 flood buckets and 200 hygiene kits.
- First UMC in West Plains distributed 50 flood buckets.
- First UMC in Washington assisted at a multi-agency resource center in Pacific to distribute supplies in early April.
- The Annual Conference disaster response offering in June raised \$25,968.43 to help purchase and stock five disaster response trailers for local churches.

If you would like to get involved with disaster relief efforts, contact Conference Disaster Response Coordinator Bambi Wheeler at bwheeler@moumethodist.org.

Festival of Sharing Quilt Auction

The Festival of Sharing is gearing up for its annual quilt auction Nov. 2-8 to raise money for the Church World Service Blankets Program, which helps people rebuild their lives after disasters. Donations — wall hangings, crib quilts, throws and bed quilts from twin to king — are welcome. Mail or drop off donated items by Friday, Aug. 15, at the conference office, 3601 Amron Court, Columbia, MO 65202. For more information plus a list of desired items and a donation form, visit www.FestivalOfSharing.org/quilt-auction.

BLESSINGS

**BRING THE WHOLE TITHE
INTO THE STOREHOUSE
... AND SEE IF I WILL NOT
THROW OPEN THE FLOOD-
GATES OF HEAVEN AND POUR
OUT SO MUCH BLESSING
THERE WILL NOT BE ROOM
ENOUGH TO STORE IT.**

MALACHI 3:10

Join us in our mission to know Jesus Christ and make Him known. Your generosity enables us to help more and more people experience a life-changing relationship with Him. We are truly grateful for your donations and hope the convenience and simplicity of our ways of giving are helpful to you.

1. Try scanning our QR code.



2. To use mobile giving, download the "Church By Ministry One" app to your mobile device. Search for Pleasant Grove by entering the zip code 65231.
3. Online giving can be found at www.mypgumc.org/donate.
4. Text "GIVE" to 573-312-2909.
5. Cash and checks can be placed in the offering plates during worship services or mailed to the church office at 3686 State Road E, Auxvasse, MO 65231.
6. Give through your Venmo account through our electronic giving platforms.

Consider becoming a recurring giver. Church statistics show that churches with high numbers of recurring givers experience the most growth.

If you need assistance or have questions about our digital giving methods, please reach out to Kayla O'Neal in the church office Monday through Thursday, by phone at 573-387-4822 or email admin@mypgumc.org.



Pleasant Grove

W O R S H I P T I M E S

First Service 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Sunday School 10:10-10:50 a.m.

Second Service 11:00-Noon

