These are a couple of favorite quotes of mine, both of which shed some light on these trying times...

“I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed toward the sun, one’s feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.” — Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom: Autobiography of Nelson Mandela

“THESE are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated” — Thomas Paine, The Crisis

While neither writer is directly speaking in religious terms, faith in God is at the heart of both men’s feelings. Nelson Mandela fought against an oppressive society in South Africa for his entire life and could easily have given up. But he points out something that rings with truth. “I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.” When Jesus was in the wilderness, we tend to think of the individual temptations, but really he was taking on hopelessness and despair. He was hungry, thirsty, exhausted, but Jesus knew that turning away from God in despair was the opposite of life. I think of this as we look at the challenges that face us now, but also for many months ahead.

Thomas Paine, the great American patriot, reminds us of something else – these times of trial can lead us to becoming better versions of ourselves. We often forget that while Jesus was “fully divine,” he was also “fully human.” Jesus saw all kinds of disease and illness and accidents, and he gave us the model for how to live in the face of these challenges. We don’t believe God wants people to suffer and die because of this disease, but we do believe God wants us to us this time as an opportunity for us to live into our pledges as disciples of Jesus. “By this people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Hand in hand (after using hand sanitizer of course) we will make it through this crisis. We will not give in to despair; we will give fully to each other and to God.

Peace with you all, Rev. Mitch
Holy Week Online!

This year’s Holy Week Services will offer meaningful worship you can enjoy with us online.

Maundy Thursday

Revs. Sue and Mitch will tell the story of Jesus’ last night with his disciples. The video will be available all day on our website at gcpc.org and on our Facebook page. Watch at your convenience.

Good Friday

7:30pm on Zoom and Facebook. (See website for links) Join us as we remember the story of Christ’s passion through prayer, Scripture readings and the Chancel choir’s 2015 presentation of *Requiem for the Living* by Dan Forest.

Easter Sunday

10:00am – Our online worship service (Facebook and Zoom) will be a celebration of the resurrection with special music from a Chancel ensemble and the Praise Team. We are all going to take part in an online Sacrament of Communion. You will need to have your bread and drink ready at home and we will share in the hope of the Lord’s Supper in spirit.

Easter is a renewal of the promise, the hope that Jesus brings to us every day.

Consider his final blessing in John’s gospel: “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe.” There are many things our hearts hope for, so many things we wish we could see. Many things are still ahead of us, but we hold on to our dreams, our vision, the promise. We see with the eyes of faith. And it’s that holding on with courage and conviction – that visionary glancing ahead – that characterizes us as the kind of blessed people John’s gospel was talking about.

There is no place Sue and I would rather be for Holy Week and Easter than with you, with people of faith, with people that inspire us. You give us hope and a sense of the possibilities before us. For this resurrection blessing, we thank you. We hope that all of us will experience life at Grace Covenant as a place of hope and vision, not just at Easter, but every day!

Peace be with you, Mitch & Sue
Easter Egg Hunt

Although the April 4 Easter Egg Hunt has been canceled, we found some fun ideas you can enjoy at home with your family.

1. **Egg Rolling** – if you have a bit of a hill at your house, boil a bunch of eggs, have fun decorating them, then pack them up and head outside. From the top of the hill, take turns rolling your eggs down. The egg that travels the furthest wins!

2. **Reverse Egg Hunt** – Before the hunt, put treats in plastic bags to protect them from animals. Put enough treats to fill an egg in each bag. On the day of your hunt, give your child/children a basket of empty plastic eggs. Indoors or outdoors, scatter treats to fill your eggs and have fun collecting and filling your eggs. You can make it a competition to see who can fill their eggs first.

3. **Bunny Hop** – put on your favorite tunes and have a dance party! Wear your bunny ears if you have them.

4. **Have an Easter Parade** - Toddlers and preschoolers will love putting on their Easter bonnets, making fancy signs, decorating their ride-on toys, and walking, marching, riding, and scooting down your driveway or neighborhood sidewalk. You’ll find great bonnet ideas for all ages [HERE](#).

5. **Create an Animal Farm** - Either indoors or outdoors, pretend to be different animals with your child. Flap your arms like chicken wings and “fly” around obstacles. Hop on all fours like a frog and say “Ribbit-ribbit-ribbit”. Walk on hands and knees and pretend to be kittens saying “meow”. Hop on all fours like a bunny and wiggle your whiskers. Invent other animal ideas and noises. Variations: Ask your child to suggest an animal that you can both imitate. Benefits - This activity develops coordination and balance as kids try to imitate the movements of different animals.

6. **Remember the Easter Story** –
   a. In addition to the Growing in Grace and Gratitude curriculum suggestions [on the Children's Ministries page](#)
   b. You can find all kinds of activities to learn the story of Easter on Pinterest. [Try this link](#) or search for Christ-centered Easter Activities.
   c. [Watch Rev Sue’s favorite Easter video on YouTube](#). It is called “The Story of Easter (Jesus’ Sacrifice)” by Saddleback Kids. This is best for Elementary Kids. For Pre-school age kids, Bible: The Easter Story” by Zondervan.
   d. If you want the best of fun and religious values, check out “The Easter Carol”[Veggie Tales movie](#). It is labeled as “Easter Carol (Full Compilation)”

Have a wonderful Easter celebration!

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Thank You!

Please accept my immense gratitude for the cards, emails, meals, and prayers during my July rotator cuff surgery, January hospitalization, and February passing of my sister. Our congregation is truly a place of grace, comfort, and help.

Thank you — Rebecca Prater

Thanks to so many of you in my church family for your prayers and other expressions of care and concern, following the death of my mother, Phyllis Lindsay. All of those are very much appreciated.

— Chris Lindsay

Many thanks to my GCPC church family for all the get well wishes and phone calls during my recovering from surgery. Also, thank you for loaning me a walker from the church’s medical supply closet. It was good to have as I would have had to buy one. All your prayers made my recovery go well without complications.

— Donna Dearmore

Thank you for taking such good care of Kevin and me during my recuperation from surgery. After all the meals, cards, visits and rides, as well as the loan of crutches and the dearly beloved scooter, I have felt very pampered and well-loved. This church family really knows how to take care of people and I am truly grateful for your generous and loving spirits.

— Cheryl Johnson
Connections & Care Team

The Connections and Care Team guides the work of nurturing the members of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church by connecting to Jesus, one another, and to the world. This is accomplished through five focus areas: New Member Assimilation, Member Care, Inactive Member Care, Fellowship and Small Groups.

Below is a list of the sub-teams:

New Member Assimilation (Sub-Team Chair assigned)
- Follow-up with new members periodically throughout their first year of membership (3 months, 6 months, etc.) to verify they are connecting to the church and congregation.

Church Member Care (Sub-Team Chairs assigned)
- Care Team - Pastors, Deacons, Connections & Care (C&C) Team representatives and members of the congregation provide pastoral care with visits to hospitals, homes and extended care facilities; share church worship service with those unable to attend; and, oversee the Prayer Chain to ensure that individuals are interceding to God for the needs of members, their families and friends.

Inactive Member Care (Pastor directed)

Fellowship (Sub-team chair assigned)
- Provide opportunities for meaningful, impactful engagement among church members that assists with bringing members and spiritual support as well as exploring shared interests and friendships.

Small Group Ministry (Sub-team chair assigned)
- Maintain contact with all existing on-going groups within the church. Groups include fellowship, special interest, study, support and service.
- Keep an accurate list of all groups, including descriptions and contact persons.
- Promote participation in all groups.

The team meets monthly to review/discuss finances, sub-team reports and to plan for upcoming fellowship events.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Connections & Care Team, the team invites you to attend a meeting. The team meets the fourth Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in Room 5 or contact Lisa Feyh, lisafeyh@gmail.com, for additional information.
Earth Day
The first Earth Day in 1970 mobilized millions of Americans for the protection of the planet. On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans — 10% of the U.S. population at the time — took to the street, college campuses, and hundreds of cities to protest environmental ignorance and demand a new way forward for our planet. The first Earth Day is credited with launching the modern environmental movement.

Earth Day is now recognized as the planet’s largest civic event and it led to passage of landmark environmental laws in the United States, including the Clean Air, Clear Water and Endangered Species Acts. Many countries soon adopted similar laws, and in 2016, United Nations chose Earth Day as the day to sign the Paris climate agreement into force.

Earth Day Network urges everyone to assess their situation individually, take precautions and follow the recommendations and advice from the World Health Organization and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

50th Anniversary of Earth Day
The global conversation will be unified and tracked by the shared hashtags #EarthDay2020 and #EARTHRISE. Earth Day Network will provide live coverage of the global digital mobilizations from its social media accounts (@earthdaynetwork). Plans are also underway to develop a major global event, coordinated across digital platforms to mark the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22.

Climate Actions — Helen Rose, Faith Outreach Coordinator

11 Actions for the Planet during a Pandemic
Do an eco-friendly activity — no matter your age
• ALL ages – take a walk/ride outside
• Ages 4 & Up: Reduce Bird Collisions
• Ages 7 & Up: Make a Bee Condo
• Ages 10 & Up: Plan an Invasive Species Clean-Up
• Ages 12 & Up: Plan A Wildflower Garden
• Intergenerational Activity: Watershed Wilma/Wilbur Prayers

Send us (by April 15) what you are going to commit to do on APRIL 22! We will share what members of Grace Covenant Congregation is doing to care for GODS creations!

April Communion Offering
The April Communion Offering will be collected for “One Great Hour of Sharing” which will support the three programs: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People. Each organization will receive approximately one third of the funds raised.

April Donation Partner
Our April donation partner will be the GCPC Vacation Bible School. We will be collecting school supplies for Rosehill and Apache Elementary Schools. Needed items are crayons, markers, glue sticks, white glue, pencils, notebooks, rulers, folders, dry erase markers, sticky notes, headphones. Please gather your donations and bring to the church when it reopens.

Congratulations Grace Covenant!
You have been certified as an Earth Care Congregations for 2020! Your certificates designate you as a 10+ year congregation!!!

Check out the map for the 264 Earth Care Congregations HERE!
Children’s Ministries

In like a lamb, then ...

March came in like a lamb and then Covid-19 arrived! Our lives have changed so much since our last newsletter! Who could have imagined that we would have all been asked to stay home from school, work, and even church? We are living in hope that we will be back on schedule by the second week in April. However; everything is changing so quickly it is difficult to know. Just in case, I encourage you to check out the Grace Sightings and E-book for our Sunday school Curriculum. *(See information on the next page for the link)*

There is no better way to return to our routines than a celebration of the resurrection of Christ! The story of Jesus’ rising from the dead gives us joy and hope that there will be new life for us as well.

When we resume in person worship, we will have our Easter celebration worship services and there will not be Sunday school classes. The Session will set a date in consultation with the Johnson County Health Department recommendations. You will want to join us for our joyful celebration of praise. This year will be especially joyful as we gather after so many weeks of being separated! Watch for further details.

Children and Worship:

These activities will not be held until we resume worship services.

8:50 and 11:05am: Awakening to Worship

10am - Sunday school: 2-3 years old, Room 23; Preschool, Room 25; K-2nd, Room 14; 3rd-5th, Room 10; 10:45am - Celebration Choir rehearsal in Room 15

Awakening to Worship is our wonder and worship program for children ages 4-1st grade and meets following the children’s sermon weekly. We invite children in elementary school to continue participating and experiencing worship as they move into the sanctuary for worship with the wider family of Grace Covenant.

Worship Bags are in place to help busy hands and hearts.

Worship Bulletins are available from the ushers every week and are on two age levels.

Through the first chapters of Matthew, we follow Jesus from birth to his early ministry as crowds are drawn to him, to hear his word, to feel his touch. Their hearts and souls yearn for his good news. To those who have very little, he finds their blessings and encourages them to be a blessing to others—to be salt, flavor, and spice in a world in need, and to be light, illuminating God from the hilltops. Jesus sifts through the worries people carry to the kernel of truth—seeks first God’s kingdom and everything else will be all right. Through the metaphor and imagery—salt, light, birds of the air, dressed-up flowers in the fields, and specks and logs—Jesus knows where people are in need and how to capture their imaginations and their hearts.

In the final story of the quarter, Jesus tells of two house builders, a wise one and a foolish one, a house built on a sturdy foundation and a house that will be washed away in the storm. Jesus calls for his hearers to not only hear but also do what he has taught. His message is to bless others, be salt and light, seek God first, do not judge others, and follow his teachings. Will we be like the wise builder or the foolish one?

Celebration choir We are so excited to have Lara Schesser and Pam Smith Kelly leading the Celebration singers. The children are not only singing; they are ringing chimes!

Worship Leaders are invited to light the candle weekly, read in worship, and assist in other ways. If you would like to be a worship leader, please contact Rev. Sue. She is looking for you.
Introducing a New Model for K–5th Grade

The Children’s Team is working on a new Sunday school format that is sure to get our K-5th grade classes coming back for more! Imagine coming to church on Sunday to create a work of art, bake cookies to share with others, conduct a science experiment, or play relay games ALL while learning the stories of the Bible. That’s exactly what we want to do! We would like to create a workshop rotation program designed just for our church. You can watch the webinar led by Rev. Sue HERE. If you are interested in being a team leader or a shepherd (assists each week) please contact Rev. Sue at sue.trigger@gcpc.org.

Join Rev. Sue for SMASH on Zoom, April 19

God promised Abraham land and descendants. Those promises led to a great nation that became Israel. Come learn about the covenant between God and Abraham as we sing, play, and pray together. This month’s SMASH will feature the “Earth” stained glass window in the Sanctuary. SMASH is for 1st-5th graders.

Theme:
Earth, Covenant of a Nation
April 19, 4-6pm on Zoom!
Join Rev. Sue for some online fun!
Join in using this URL: https://zoom.us/j/439164038

Get Ready for a Journey to the North Castle!

Mark you calendar for VBS June 1-5.
Ages 4 yrs – 5th Grade
We are still planning on VBS, watch for details.

Want to volunteer?
Contact Lindsay Bucl at lindsaybucl@gmail.com.

Registration is now open and on our website: gcpc.org/vbs

Explore God’s Grace Each Day

When your children are at home, use these tools to explore God’s grace and gratitude each day. Find these tools at: www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads

Grace Sightings: the weekly Bible story and age appropriate activities for your family to do at home.

Audio Recordings: the weekly Bible story brought to life by endearing readings and sound effects.

E-books: the quarter’s colorful illustrations, Bible stories and Grace Sightings, in ibook and Kindle formats.
Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the March 16, 2020, Session meeting was held via the internet. Reverend Sue Trigger served as moderator and, in addition to the elders, ex-Treasurer Matt McBride, Director of Music Ministry Rebecca Prater, Director of Youth Ministry Miles McDonald and Zoom Proficient Professional David Sutherland were present. Sue opened the meeting with a prayer at 7:10 p.m.

**Special business:** There was a motion that Session approve meeting digitally and stating that unanimous consent would be used for voting on routine business and a roll call would be taken when needed. The motion passed. There was also a motion to alter the agenda to move the discussion of elders serving as moderators and Visioning Day to the April meeting, in light of the lengthy agenda for tonight's meeting. The motion passed.

**Consent agenda:** The minutes of the February stated Session meeting were approved, as well as approval of the electronic vote to allow youth to serve Communion on Youth Sunday and the electronic vote to approve setting up a coronavirus response team.

**Team minutes:** The Operating team submitted two motions: 1) Session should approve creating a “Members Corner” in the newsletter in which members can list upcoming charitable activities they are involved with, like a walk to raise money to cure a disease. The entries should be kept very brief, with just the date, time and a link for more information. 2) Session should approve updating the Operations Manual so that new church-wide activities, especially anytime a team is collecting funds or selling something is, be approved by Session. If it’s a yearly event, it would only need approval if the price changes or there’s another significant change. **Both motions passed.**

**Finance team:** Matt McBride, ex-Treasurer and Finance team member, discussed two invoices from Debbie Miller that were discussed at last month's meeting. The first invoice for training Tara Hyder had been paid at the approved rate. Matt showed Session a letter to Debbie terminating GCPC's relationship with her as of May 9, 2019 and asking her to forward invoices for hours worked. The second invoice in question wasn't received until the fall and the team felt there were significant lapses in job performance in May. The Finance team sent Debbie a letter stating this as the reason that invoice would not be paid. A motion was made to affirm the team's decision and it passed.

Cheryl Johnson stated that Treasurer Aaron Soule had sent her an email stating that the Finance team had reviewed Grace Covenant's insurance coverage.

Matt presented a revised 2020 budget, showing a decrease of $37,870.58 from the original asking budget, though it’s still a deficit budget. Most teams were assigned a decreased amount from their 2019 budget and the teams are being asked to decide how to implement that decrease. **The Finance team submitted a motion that Session approve the revised 2020 budget.** Discussion raised the point that the pledged amounts could be affected by the pandemic. But, since we can't predict the effects, we’ll have to just keep an eye on how revenues are going. Session agreed to distribute information about the budget to the congregation so that it understands the importance of paying pledges. The motion passed with one dissenting vote.
The Finance team recommended that Session approve appointing the Youth team as facilitators of the Reggie Reynolds Memorial Fund, and that it be used to award scholarships for youth who wish to attend the M&M trip, Masanetta, Montreat, Triennium, Heartland Camp or other youth activity. The motion carried.

Clerk’s report: We started the month with 404 members, but Sara and Michael Bratton have moved to St. Joseph, so we have 402 members now.

Co-Pastors’ report: Harold pointed out that Carol Frye’s name was spelled incorrectly. Other than that, there were no changes.

Deacons’ report: Anita Hadel was the deacon scheduled to attend the meeting but, because the clerk forgot to tell her we were meeting online, she was not in attendance.

New business: Coronavirus Response
Session decided to shut down the building at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17. The staff will be working from their homes, with Sue, Mitch, Tara and Patrick deciding who will come get the mail every day. All groups that meet in the church will be informed that the church is closing until around April 5.

For March 22, we will have an online service from the church sanctuary. The service location will be addressed on a week-by-week basis. If it’s decided not to use the sanctuary, Mitch and Sue could stream a service from their home. Patrick will email the church bulletin on Thursday.

For groups that meet outside of the church, like Page Turners and Dinners for 6 or 8, the groups should decide for themselves whether to meet.

There will be no indoor funerals, only graveside services, during the pandemic because of the guidelines against having more than 10 people together.

There was a motion to continue paying the KDO staff through the end of March. It received a second and passed. Nelson Townsend and Julie Passett called a Session meeting for Monday, March 23, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom, to assess and discuss the situation. Agenda items known at this time are: Paying KDO for April, Holy Week services, Communion, Pioneer preschool rent.

After sharing some joys and concerns of the congregation, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m. and Rev. Sue closed the meeting with a prayer.
GCPC Youth Ministry in the days of COVID-19

Things are changing daily and even hourly about what our best practices are for interfacing with our fellow human beings, but God still loves us and youth ministry at GCPC will still happen! At this point we are following the school recommendations and will not be having church related gatherings when schools are not. In the meantime, Connect will still take place on Sunday nights via Zoom so we can still “connect” with each other online and can even pray, study the Bible and even play games. Confirmation will also take place virtually as will Sunday School – in one form or another. Classes won’t be on Sunday mornings, but we will find a way to explore together how God is working in the world and even through us in these days of change and uncertainty.

Youth Sunday

Thanks to our students and especially our seniors for an amazing Youth Sunday experience on March 1! The theme of “Light the Fire” touches each of us in some way or another and we appreciate all the creative ways it was explored throughout the service! We had 32 students involved in worship leadership that day sharing music, technical skills, a children’s message, and all other aspects of worship. Sermons and full service are available online through the GCPC.org website.

Reggie Reynolds Scholarship Awards

Congratulations to Kat Mason and Amy Kowalczewski who were awarded Reggie Reynolds Memorial Scholarships by Donna Goeckler at the Youth Sunday service. The scholarships have been awarded in honor of Reggie Reynolds, beloved friend and member of GCPC remembered for her grace, kindness, compassion, and love of music.

Heartland Camp

If you have not yet registered for an amazing experience at Heartland Camp this summer, it’s not too late. Register online for youth that have completed 2nd through 12th grade. Family and Grandparent Camps are available too.
To our GCPC family and friends,

Please see the email below about “Serenade Kathy” - the team set up to support our longtime friend and GCPC member, Kathy Jonas, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer.

I hope you will consider joining the team or donating in support of Kathy. Our goals is to have one of the largest teams they have ever seen!

Please consider donating to team “Serenade Kathy” - click on the team page below to donate. Thank you in advance for your time and your donation!

— Doug Firebaugh

Dear Friends and Family,

I started a team for PurpleStride The Walk To End Pancreatic Cancer. Our team, “Serenade Kathy” virtually walks in support of our dear friend Kathy Jonas who has faced her diagnosis with courage, humor, strength and bravery.

Please join us in “VIRTUAL walking” on team “Serenade Kathy” on Saturday, May 2. The walk would have taken place at Frank A. Theis Park, but was canceled due to COVID-19.

May 2nd also happens to be Kathy’s birthday so what an amazing way to show support and love to her and Rob by supporting our team “Serenade Kathy.”

There are multiple ways you can participate:
• Join our team! Make a personal donation and fundraise!
• Invite your family and friends to join our team

We are in the process of creating “Serenade Kathy” team T-shirts so please stay tuned for more information.

My hope is to have a large team and raise a ton of money for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. The money we raise will advance research, support patients, and create hope for the pancreatic cancer community. We need your help so please do anything you can - join me or make a donation on our team “Serenade Kathy.”

Thank you so much for all of your support! Please let me know if you have any questions about registering, fundraising or making a donation.

Sincerely, Lindsey Bock, “Serenade Kathy” team captain;
lfire33@hotmail.com

Click here to view the team page for Serenade Kathy

Could Quarantine Be Your BEST Choice Opportunity?

Yes, it can! While you are going through your pantry supplies, you can take the opportunity to help support our Kid’s Day Out Program by taking the time to clip and save your Hen House and Price Chopper groceries that have the Best Choice Label barcode. They are worth 3 cents each and an envelope of them from every household will help offset some of the costs of KDO. Make it a family project! Cut the BEST Choice UPC barcode from labels, bags, or cartons. Don’t bother with Always Save labels or Boxtops – we will throw those away

Don’t forget to look for the Best Choice products usually available at Price Chopper and Hen House. Then consider buying these items. The quality is the same as name brand but are priced lower since they don’t carry the same advertising or promotional costs that name brand items do. Gather your labels at home in a plastic bag or envelope you might be recycling and put them in our doll house when the building is again open to the public.

Grace Covenant 2020 Walk Team Is on Its Way!

You are invited to join us on our VIRTUAL walk or donate to one of our team members! All MS Walks are virtual walks until June 30th this year. That hasn’t stopped our current three members from stepping out already – Please join Mike Battaglioli, Jodi Maynard and Jane Knoche in this vital effort! Here is the link for our team – Grace Covenant 2020. Thank you in advance for your wonderful support each year!
Worship Schedule
8:50am - Praise Team Led Worship
10am - Church School All Ages
11:05am - Choral Led Worship
Childcare is provided during Worship.