Doing what is right sometimes involves choices that don’t feel right

In mid-July, writer Nikki Pennington, of the blog Grief to Hope, was facing the same difficult choices that many parents are facing right now as they try to make the right decisions for their children and family regarding school attendance. She wrote a post titled “Nothing feels right,” and it immediately connected with thousands of other parents. She wrote:

“Nothing I choose feels right
School doesn’t feel right
Homeschool doesn’t feel right
Virtual school doesn’t feel right
Hybrid school doesn’t feel right”
Delaying school doesn’t feel right
Starting school on time doesn’t feel right
Getting temperature checks doesn’t feel right
Having my child wear a mask in school doesn’t feel right
Having to choose between my children’s health and education doesn’t feel right”

Even though Sue and I don’t have to worry about a school-age child anymore, I still resonate with everything Nikki wrote. We (the GCPC staff and the Session) face many of the same challenges as we wrestle with the use of our building for worship and ministry. As we look back to when we closed the church building on March 17, we recognize that conditions haven’t improved. If anything, our community is facing conditions that are much worse.

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As I write this, we’re experiencing an upsurge in cases and hospitalizations in Johnson County. In-person church worship services are considered to be one of the riskiest activities, even with precautions. Staff and Session members are grappling with future plans and it’s not clear what our direction should be.

(continued on page 2)
To paraphrase Nikki’s writing:

Nothing we choose feels right
Church as usual doesn’t feel right
Our closed building doesn’t feel right
In-person worship doesn’t feel right
Virtual worship doesn’t feel right
Hybrid worship doesn’t feel right
Masks in worship doesn’t right
Hugging each other doesn’t feel right
Social distancing doesn’t feel right
Zoom meetings don’t feel right
Meetings in small rooms don’t feel right
Having to choose between worship and ministry and
the health of our members and staff doesn’t feel right

Doing what is right sometimes involves choices that don’t feel right.

At our July Session meeting, we discussed our hoped for “re-opening” for in-person worship on September 6 in the light of the continually changing conditions. Other churches in our presbytery have tried returning to in-person worship, only to find themselves re-closing. **Out of concern for both members and staff, we decided to postpone the re-opening of our GCPC building for worship and ministry indefinitely, revisiting that decision on a month-to-month basis.**

We recognize that this will be disappointing for some of us and a relief to others. It remains an uncomfortable situation, but we can promise you this: the staff and Teams will give renewed effort to finding the safest ways possible to find new avenues for ministry and fellowship. Our Tech crew has been steadily improving the quality of our online services, with more upgrades on the way. In the meantime, know that your staff, teams, and fellow church members will continue to pray and serve each other in every way possible.

Peace be with you all, —Sue and Mitch

New Coordinator needed for Uplift Meals

The Page Turners bookgroup has prepared meals for Uplift, a KC homeless relief agency, for nearly 30 years. Lee Mattix is retiring from her long service as coordinator of those efforts — thank you Lee! — and a new coordinator needs to be identified for GCPC to continue to be involved in this mission work.

The coordinator would organize the work of many volunteers to plan, shop for, and prepare a casserole-type meal in the church kitchen, and then deliver it in thermal containers (provided by Uplift) on the 4th Saturday of each month. The funding is provided as part of the Mission Team budget. Lee would share the benefit of her experience and provide her extensive notes and expertise to the new coordinator, plus many of the members of PageTurners would continue as volunteers (although new volunteers are also needed and welcome).

Please contact Mikki Walker at michala.walker@gmail.com if you are interested in this important mission work.

August Communion Offering

Our August donation partner is Catholic Charities, and we are collecting non-perishable food to be donated to the food pantry at the Family Support Center in Overland Park.

These items are requested: canned vegetables, canned soups, peanut butter, canned chicken and tuna, low sugar cereals, macaroni and cheese, pasta, and snack bars.

Your donations will be collected at GCPC during a drive-by drop off event on Saturday, August 29. Also being collected that day are **shoes for Soles4Souls**, a project of the Kairos Team.

Please watch the mid-week announcements, upcoming bulletins, and Facebook for more details on the drop-off time.
The July 20, 2020, Session meeting was held via Zoom with Reverend Mitch Trigger serving as moderator. In addition to the ruling elders, deacon Julie Webb and church staff members Miles McDonald, Rebecca Prater, and Patrick Bell were in attendance. Mitch opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m., and Mike Mattix shared a devotion based on Micah 6:8, and led us in prayer.

**Special business:** In consideration of the increase in COVID cases in Johnson County, it was decided not to allow members to enter the church building to record music videos for the virtual concert.

**Consent agenda:** The minutes of the June 15 Session meeting were approved.

**Team minutes:** The Personnel team budget made a motion that its budget not be reduced further and it passed. A motion was made to start a reserve fund for technological needs arising from having to broadcast the service.

**Clerk’s report:** Carol Frye’s death was not reflected earlier, so now we have 397 members.

**Co-Pastors’ report:** There were no questions with the co-pastors’ report. Sue reported attending the Committee on Office of General Assembly meeting—which she found interesting.

**Deacons’ report:** Julie Webb reported that deacons are trying to maintain contact with their groups. Many deacons have said they would not be comfortable attending in-person services, at which the deacons will be on the frontline.

**Old business:** Opening the church: The next week to host IHN starts August 2. They will be limited to the basement floor of the education wing with all guests and volunteers using the basement doors. No one will be allowed in the basement for 10 days afterwards.

Primary election will be in the concourse on August 4.

Because of spikes in COVID cases, there are only two children registered for KDO. We will research the cost/benefits of closing. A motion was made to refund the money for people who registered and decided not to attend.

Pioneer Preschool teachers will be able to access the building to get to their classrooms. Until the local school districts make a decision, Geri hasn’t decided what to do about preschool yet. Because we have a contract with PPS, we need to let them enter the building.

AA is meeting on the grounds but do not enter the building.

Other than that, the building will be closed through the end of September. Session will revisit the subject of opening on a month-by-month basis.

**New business:** We will discuss becoming a Matthew 25 church at the August meeting. Jenna Soule presented her Girl Scout Gold Award Project. She is going to set up a community food bank on the church premises, much like the community libraries where people share books. Jenna will be talking to the Facilities team about placement and to the Youth and Mission teams about monitoring it.

Rev. Sue Trigger closed the meeting with a prayer, and we adjourned at 9:40 p.m.
Possibilities for GCPC’s Music Ministry in a Time of Uncertainty – Fall 2020

Children’s Music
We have purchased a virtual/digital music curriculum for the Fall through Chorister’s Guild titled “Keep On Singing” in the Growing in Grace series. We are very excited about it!

Here is a preview of the Preschool digital curriculum for our 4s-K children: View a video preview here! GCPC Director/Facilitator - Emily Hussey (assisted by Katie Hearn, as needed) Schedule TBA

Here is a preview of the Elementary digital curriculum for our 1st-5th graders: Preview video here! GCPC Director/Facilitator and Schedule TBA

Possibilities for Handbells
• 12 Bell Music – with 4-6 ringers
• Each ringer has 2 bells (or some might ring 4-in-hand)
• There is no sharing of bells and no tables used
• Each ringer always wears a mask and gloves
• Ringers each ring from their own music stand and are at least 6 ft. apart
• Music will be rehearsed and then pre-recorded for sharing in worship
• Interested ringers will rotate as the music piece changes
• Rehearsal schedule is TBD

Exact plan for each bell choir will be determined and communicated by their director(s)
• Charter Ringers (Adults and College aged)
  – Chris Krug and Celia Nicholas, co-directors
• Jubilation! Ringers (Adults and College aged)
  – Kathy Bures, director
• Exaltation! Ringers (8th - 12th grades)
  – Trey Bures, director

Possibilities for Singers
• Chancel Choir (Adults and College aged)
  – Rebecca Prater, director
• Praise Team (Adults, College, and Youth aged)
  – Donna Goeckler, director and Carrie DeVries, interim accompanist and vocals
• Exaltation! Singers (8th - 12th grades)
  – Rebecca Prater, director
• Youth Band (6th - 12th grades)
  – Christopher Callender, director

As long as we continue with Online Worship Only Chancel Ensemble (6 singers) and Praise Team will continue to rotate Sundays and lead online worship music

For the Other Ensembles While Singing In-Person Is Not Considered Safe
• Rebecca Prater will continue to seek out and share the most up-to-date research with Music Team and Staff as it becomes available.
• Music Team will then make decisions on how to proceed based on the most recent science.
• Currently the research is still “preliminary data on singing (and playing wind instruments) and aerosols.”
• At the end of July 2020, the next installment on data looking at singing and playing wind instruments and aerosol transmission is being made public from environmental engineers at UC Boulder and the University of Maryland.
• In the meantime, Chancel Choir members have been meeting in “Chancel Chats” on Zoom.
• Youth – Adult Choral singers have been receiving a weekly Choral Anthem and Full Recording of choral music published by Beckenhorst Press (BP) so they can “Sing at Home.” BP has given us permission to share music via email we already own in our music library.
• Rebecca Prater is continuing to spend time previewing various “virtual choir kits” that are coming on the market and trying to decide on what might work best for our choral singers.

So, while everything isn’t “figured out,” yet – we are making progress in how to make and share music at home or at GCPC during these uncertain times.

Rebecca, Directors, and Music Team continue to request your prayers for guidance and wisdom as we make decisions. Our music is now and always will be to the glory of God. — Rebecca
15th Annual Reggie Reynolds Golf Tournament & Fundraiser Announcement

Announcing the 15th Annual Reggie Reynolds Golf Tournament and Fundraiser. The Scramble will take place on Sunday, August 23, beginning at 1:30pm at the Falcon Valley Golf Course. The entry fee for the scramble will be $42, with a separate donation to the Reggie Reynolds Scholarship Fund (recommended $25).

If you are interested, contact Bill Turner at 99wdturner@gmail.com or 913-515-5994, and he will provide official entry forms.

The rapid changes that have come with the pandemic have had a great impact on our ministries. We are working on ideas designed to keep everyone connected.

Our Mid Week announcements offer important information about what is going on at GCPC.

Visit our website to sign-up to be added to our mailing list.

Reggie Reynolds Memorial Scholarship Change of Focus

Originally, the Regina Reynolds Memorial Scholarship fund was established in memory of Reggie Reynolds (a longtime member of Grace Covenant) with donations received from her family and friends after Reggie’s untimely death from cancer in February 2006. She has been described by many who knew her as a woman whose considerable faith and inner strength were matched by her incomparable grace and generosity towards all she met. One of the favorite passages marked in her Bible was Micah 6:8 “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” She was the embodiment of all those things. During her years at Grace Covenant, Reggie was an Elder, Moderator of Worship Team, a member of Chancel Choir and other performing groups, and the accompanist for the New Spirit Singers for 10 years.

When her parents donated the funds for the beginnings of this award, they wanted it to be used to help a senior transition to college. At their first meeting, the Scholarship committee members hoped to be able to make the funds last 10 years. It was decided to award two $1500 scholarships annually to two graduating seniors from the church who had been active in Youth and/or Music Activities during their high school years. This scholarship was intended to reward and recognize students who embodied Reggie’s commitment to church, community service/mission, and education. Thanks to the original donation and funds raised through donations and the annual golf scramble over the past 14 years, we have been able to award $45,000 worth of scholarships to the youth of this congregation.

With the scholarships awarded earlier this year, we have come to a point of transition for the fund. There is not a sufficient amount of money left in the fund to continue the tradition we have had since its founding. In the spring, Donna Goeckler approached the Finance Team and requested that going forward the remaining funds and future donations would be used to help youth members of the church who wanted to further their faith by attending one of the many camp/conference opportunities in which our church participates annually, such as Montreat, Masannetta, Heartland Pres. Camp, and Triennium. Reggie loved working with the middle school choir for all those years and was a second mom to many of her daughters’ friends from church. She would be so happy to have something in her honor be used to help enhance the faith journey of the youth of our congregation.

Session has approved this change in the direction of the Memorial Fund. Going forward the fund will be administered on an as needed basis by Miles and the Youth Team. If you are interested in requesting funds, please contact Miles. If you have a desire to continue this tradition of helping our youth, please consider participating in the annual golf scramble, or making a donation to the church at any time in the future that is convenient for you.

Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to the participants of the Scholarship Committee who have so willingly given their time over the last 14 years to read and judge essays, and administer this fund. In addition to Donna as the organizer of the group, those members have been: Heather Buckley (Reggie’s elder daughter), Cathie Bunn, Cheryl Johnson, Kim Krueger, Celia Nicholas, Alysia Rich, Linda Starrett, Anne Stroud, and Rich Zak.
Spotlight on Youth Team

**Programs:** The Youth Team oversees 4 primary programs.

- **Confirmation:** An overview of how the church works, what a Presbyterian Christian believes, and an exploration of personal faith. Students are exposed to all basic elements of church life.
- **Music:** Exaltation! choir and bell choir for high school students and our youth praise band are year-long music opportunities. We add middle school choir and bells when possible and always encourage sharing music individually.
- **Christian Education:** Sunday morning classes are our main education opportunity, but we also provide education in Connect and small groups.
- **Connect:** Sometimes called youth group, Connect is our primary reoccurring opportunity to gather as a full group for fellowship, service, worship, education, and fun!

**Small Groups:** In most years there are 3 small groups that meet regularly and sometimes we add a leadership group or a specific Bible study.

- **Peer Ministry:** A group comprised of students wanting to learn more about how to support and minister to their peers. Professionals from the community are brought in to explore challenging topics.
- **Youth Band:** Our student led praise band usually meets weekly to rehearse. They share their talents at Connect and various special events.
- **Senior Small Group:** Our seniors gather to share thoughts and expectations about life after high school as well as to plan the basic structure of Youth Sunday.

**Trips:** There are several trips planned each year for our youth to experience faith and service outside of our community.

- **Mission and Music Trip:** This weeklong experience is planned by a sub-team of students and adults who pick a different destination each year. On M&M our students serve others through their music as well as with their hands.
- **Massanetta, Montreat, and Triennium:** These Youth Conferences are opportunities to connect with a smaller group of GCPC students and a larger group of Presbyterian students from around the country.
- **Youth Weekend:** This is comprised of a series of local fun and service activities.
- **Middle School Mission Adventure:** Designed for students too young for M&M this experience is a series of local service projects and fun events including an overnight at church.
- **Ski/Tubing Trip:** When possible we have taken ski trips to Colorado over MLK weekend. In recent years we have joined other groups for a service project and tubing and/or skiing at Snow Creek in Weston, Kansas.

**Events:** In addition to our regular programs, each year there are several special events.

- **Lock-Ins:** Sometimes we do lock-ins over the summer or spring break and most years we kick off our fall with a lock-in at Emerald City gymnastics.
- **Retreats:** Often more focused than a lock-in we usually do 2 retreats with our Confirmation class and regularly do others a small group or the full presbytery.
- **Sexuality Workshops:** An opportunity to explore sexuality from a Christian perspective rather than at school, we offer these workshops regularly but not necessarily every year.
- **Service Events:** In addition to Connect, we regularly schedule service projects at irregular times to meet the needs of those around us.
- **Homeless Night:** An opportunity to sleep outside in a cardboard box, often in very cold weather, we generally include some service and education about what it is like to be homeless.
Intergenerational Events: Youth are always encouraged to take an active role in events which include all age groups.

- **International Trip**: Designed for high school juniors, seniors, and older adults, the International Trip has taken us on amazing service-based adventures to Mexico, Belize, Haiti, and Kenya.
- **Worship**: Youth plan and lead all of worship on Youth Sunday and regularly support worship throughout the year with music, scripture reading and more.
- **Vacation Bible School**: Youth take leadership roles in VBS, guiding and supporting younger children and interacting with adult leaders.

Through coordinating adult leaders, and planning trips, events, programs, and projects, our Youth Team does its best to connect youth with God …for life!

The Youth Team consists of: Danielle Dalton, Jenna Soule, Jody Mason, Julie Passett, Julie Webb, Kaki Conti, Kylie Sutherland, Miles McDonald, Pat Kowalczewski, and Susan Sutherland.
GCPC Youth Events for Summer 2020

This summer we have gradually adapted to a system of alternating fun outdoor events with outdoor service projects for our youth. We vary the schedule to accommodate when most students can attend each week and are careful to maintain social distancing. In July we cleaned a stream one week and went paddle boarding the next. We did much gardening, weeding, and mulching in Nutter Park in the Ivanhoe neighborhood one week and played “extreme croquet” the next. Coming up we are planning for some potato digging in a nearby community garden run by Colonial Presbyterian.

No Heartland Mission Experience

With rising concern over the COVID situation and low number of RSVPs our Youth Team decided we should not attend the Heartland Mission Experience we had planned for the last week of August. This was a difficult decision emotionally, but our concern for the safety and health of our students needed to outweigh our desire for that experience.

The Fall?

It certainly would be nice to share our detailed plans for our youth program this fall, but we are currently working through thoughts and contingency plans.

One thing we know is that God will be present, and we will have a great ministry to, for, and with our Grace Covenant Youth this fall and beyond.

We need another teacher or two (your suggestions are welcome) but do have some great leaders lined up and are preparing for the ability to present Christian education virtually as well as in person if possible.

We are not planning our traditional August lock-in at Emerald City Gymnastics but do feel blessed to have good outdoor space for socially distanced youth events and a large fellowship hall for future use when indoor group gatherings are possible weather is not conducive to being outside.
At the beginning of July, we took a week of vacation which was a classic “stay-cation.” If 2020 had been “normal,” we would have traveled to Baltimore to attend the General Assembly. Instead, we attended the virtual Assembly online and when it was over, our daughter, son-in-law, and grandson came from Louisville to visit us. Even though we rarely left the house, it was a real treat for these grandparents that really only see Kate, McClain, and Deen in person twice a year.

This month we’re going to do something we haven’t done in 30+ years – take vacation time that doesn’t involve church work or visiting family. After church on August 9, we’re driving out to Colorado for the week, camping next to a beautiful lake, and hiking in the Rocky Mountain National Park. It also happens to be the week of our 35th wedding anniversary. Not only do we look forward to the trip itself, we’re also looking forward to returning mentally rested and with renewed creativity.

We’d like to thank Marcia and Bill Turner for already making that same trip and giving us the heads up on what trails to check out. Please keep us in your prayers for safe travels and take care of each other during these especially tough times.

— Mitch & Sue
Children’s Education

Children’s Ministry
Beginning September 13

Since we will not resume in person programs for the time being, the Children’s Team is creating an online Sunday school program.

We will have classes for 2’s and 3’s, pre-school – 1st and 2nd – 5th grades. The classes will include a rotation of traditional learning, music, and mission opportunities.

We are still working out the details, but we will have some pre-recorded sessions for our younger children. **There will be a Zoom class for 2nd – 5th grades at 9 a.m. beginning September 13.** All classes will be recorded and available for viewing on our YouTube page. We’ll make the links available to you. **Watch for more information.**

Adult Education

Adult Education is Zooming in on Fall

We’re back (sort-of) and excited to offer a slate of classes for the fall that are designed for Young Adults, Seniors and anyone who wants to enjoy several quality classes.

We’re still Zooming in on dates, but they will probably be offered on Sunday evenings and/or Tuesday evenings. The classes will include a discussion component, which will enrich the content. But if you can’t make one of the classes, it will be available later for your convenience. (Dates currently are tentative.)


“Christianity and American Politics” (September-November 3) – Dave Pack and Pastor Sue are developing the class to be offered in September or October, before the General Election.

“Holy Currencies: Blessings That Begin with Giving” (beginning Tuesday, September 8, at 7:00pm) This six-week course led by Pastor Mitch encourages stewardship and congregational vitality using the blessings of: (1) Relationship, (2) Truth, (3) Wellness, (4) Gracious leadership, (5) Time and Place, and (6) Money.

“Doors to Paradise” – (October) By popular request, this class led by Jan Cummings is a repeat with some new material added in. It’s planned for October-November. Our hope would be to complete our plans to visit the Nelson Art Gallery, but, as with all things, COVID-19 will decide.

SMASH

SERVICE • MUSIC • ART
SPORTS • HANGOUT

We’re Having Another Water SMASH Sunday!
August 30, 4-6pm

It’s hot and we need to have some fun!
Children entering Kindergarten – 5th grade are invited to put on their bathing suits and sunscreen to splash and play in the church garden. We recommend bringing bug spray, towels, and any other water gear you need. Individually packaged beverages and popsicles provided. You will need to enter the garden area from outside. Walk around the church on the east side and you’ll find us behind the church pre-school playground.

AUGUST 23 | 6PM

grace + family
a virtual concert of hope
Could you snap a photo or selfie of your family OUTSIDE on your porch, front steps, or patio for a special project?

Take a classic photo or have fun and be creative. Dress in your best quarantine PJs or crazy quarantine attire; highlight your crazy hair, your stash of TP, or whatever you else you can think of to bring humor and levity to your isolation. Perhaps, even, have a sign displaying an inspiration message or Bible verse to incorporate in the photo.

The caveat…we’d like to ask that all participants agree to let us use your image for a special GCPC faith community project. It is important to include as many members as possible.

No matter whether you have family surrounding you, or you are quarantined alone, we would love to include everyone in this project. If you are unable to take a photo yourself, please contact Sue & Mitch who will come take a photo, at a distance, for you! Contact Rev. Sue (973-970-5752 or sue.trigger@gcpc.org) or Rev. Mitch (973-970-5751 or mitch.trigger@gcpc.org).

UPLOAD your photo to our website by August 14 at midnight: gcpc.org/porch

We will be spotlighting photos in a number of ways on Sunday, August 23 in online worship and through a special Facebook Live/Zoom event.

Like so many other things that have changed during the current pandemic, we have gone through various adaptations to our audio and video equipment setup and how we use it for worship.

Prior to March we were not capable of streaming audio and video from our sound booth onto the Internet, so we used our cell phone cameras to share worship with our congregation. In a few short weeks, however, we were able to purchase the necessary equipment to connect our camera, sound board, and related equipment with the online world. Since that time, we have been experimenting, learning, and doing our best to share a high-quality worship experience with anyone who can connect to Zoom or Facebook. Most weeks Eric Lee and I (Miles McDonald) bring in additional laptops to facilitate the process.

Our current goal is to improve our quality and make it sustainable for our amazing Tech Crew volunteers to operate for the indefinite future.

Thanks to donations from some of our crew and others who have been involved, we have purchased a new computer that will be capable of multiple tasks at once. We are also in the process of upgrading our video switcher and recording capabilities. Our next steps are to purchase a few more microphones and ideally install a second camera so that we will be able to change angles and capture scenes that we cannot from our single cameral location.

Session has approved the creation of a fund for technology improvements that we can use for this purpose. Nobody wanted a pandemic to be the reason for improving our audio and video technology and procedures but as is often the case, God will help us realize positive outcomes from negative situations.

Thank you to: Kim Krueger who creates our amazing graphics and monitors our Facebook Live worship experience; to Eric Lee, for sharing his talent and computer expertise and being with us every Sunday in the sound booth; to Ray Kowalczewski, Trey and Jesse Bures who started to learn our new procedures and run audio and video for worship. We are anxious to train the rest of our amazing crew soon!
Worship Schedule
10am Online Worship until otherwise announced.
Visit gcpc.org/online for links

Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines
September Issue - Deadline, August 21
October Issue - Deadline, September 22