

GRACE COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FAITHFULNESS • CONFIDENCE • GRATITUDE

GRACE NOTES

November 2026
Vol 44, Nbr 11

God draws us together as a welcoming and faithful community, attentive to the Spirit's leading, to worship with joy, grow as disciples, and share our gifts in service to God and neighbor.

With gratitude for where we have been and hope for where God is leading us, we are sent to serve Christ in the world—extending Christ's love, strengthening community, and living out the gospel through lives of grace, justice, and compassion.

11100 College Blvd.
Overland Park, KS 66210
913-345-1256
office@gcpc.org
gcpc.org

In addition to in-person worship, our service is also livestreamed on our website home page, Facebook and YouTube channel.

Budgeting for the Future We Want



As we prepare the 2027 budget, it helps to know what we can expect. That is why we are hoping for 100% participation in our pledge campaign.

Session has been asking a bigger question than, "What can we afford?" We have been asking: How do we budget for the future we want? What do we hope our worship will feel like? Where do we dream of our programs growing? Who is God calling us to serve, in our building and beyond? A budget is more than a spreadsheet. The budget is a theological reflection of who we are and where we believe God is leading us.

This church has always been generous. In every season, you have given your time, talent, and treasure, and we are deeply grateful. Please know that your Session takes seriously the trust placed in us to be good stewards of all we have been given.

Every pledge, large or small, helps us plan with confidence rather than guesswork. When every household takes part, we all share in the work and the joy of this ministry.

Pledge cards remain available in the concourse, and you can go online to make your pledge. (Give online confidentially at gcpc.org/2027pledge) Pray about what you are able to give in 2027, we would like to get the rest of the cards in as soon as possible, so we have time to plan for the year ahead.

Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity. God is on the move at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. Excited to see where the Holy Spirit is leading!

In grace and gratitude,

Pastor Karen







Led by the Spirit, Growing in Grace

Where do you see growth happening at Grace Covenant? Where do you see energy, excitement, compassion, and a sense that the Spirit is moving among us?

These are the questions at the heart of our 2027 Stewardship Generosity Campaign, **Led by the Spirit, Growing in Grace**. As you consider your 2027 pledge, we invite you to ask not only, "What can I afford to give?" but also, "What is God calling me to share?" Giving is an act of trust and gratitude—a way of recognizing that all we have is gift. Perhaps the Spirit is inviting you to increase your financial giving, share a new talent, make more room for worship or service, or find another way to participate more deeply in the life of the church.

We are asking to hear from each member. Please turn in a pledge card even if you are unable to pledge at this time. You can also make your pledge confidentially online at gcpc.org/2027pledge.

We may not know exactly where the Spirit will lead us. But we can pay attention. We can be willing. We can give what we have been given. And together, we can trust that God is still growing something beautiful here.

Led by the Spirit. Growing in Grace. Together.

Download the Stewardship Booklet and Pledge Card at gcpc.org/growingingrace.

Clerks Corner

The October Session meeting began with sharing status updates of several members with long-term health issues and how we are and can support those folks.

We heard reports from our committees including an update on a grief support group, the need for teachers for children's Sunday school, a successful chili cookoff and TWO upcoming outdoor workdays. The Red Bag stockings will be here before we know it. We appreciate all the people who invest in the life of our community. The nominating committee has started looking for people to serve as Deacons; increasingly often this role is being shared between people who travel extensively. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, please reach out to Eileen Thomson or Gay Lee Ludwig-Bonney. If you receive a call, please prayerfully consider whether this might be a way you can support our congregation.

We authorized moving funds from the general fund to the facilities reserve fund. 2027 pledges have been coming in; by the time you read this, pledge dedication Sunday will have passed, and we will be rounding up those final pledges and using the total to develop the 2027 budget.

We spent time discussing the traffic flow and conversation patterns on Sunday mornings as well as the condition of our audio-visual equipment and things to consider as we think about replacing ageing equipment. We also look forward to welcoming ACOLYTES back in worship starting in Advent!

In addition to considering worship guidelines, we are also reviewing our building use policy. If you have thoughts about either of these items, please feel free to share them with any Session member.

—Melanie Townsend, Clerk of Session

GCPC Makes Recycling Easier!

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church has a new recycling bin available for members to use! This is a great opportunity to recycle while you're at church for worship, meetings, or other events and help us care for God's creation.

The recycling container accepts mixed recyclable materials, including clean cardboard, paper, aluminum cans, tin cans, plastic tubs, and plastic bottles. Please remember that glass and plastic bags are NOT accepted.

You'll find the recycling bin in the west corner of the parking lot, near the entrance to the west wing. The container is picked up every two weeks, making it easy to drop off your recyclables during your regular visits to GCPC.

Have questions? See Paul Bruns or a member of the Facilities Team. Together, we can take small steps toward caring for our community and the Earth!





Understanding Advent Blue

Reflections by Debbie Campbell, Worship Team

I grew up in a Presbyterian church where our advent wreath always had 3 purple candles and 1 rose candle. And GCPC has also used purple candles for Advent. So, I must admit that the introduction of blue candles and blue liturgical colors in the sanctuary at GCPC has always felt very foreign to me. Why did we switch from purple to blue? Perhaps you have been wondering too.



My discussion with Pastor Karen helped me understand the blue color and why she likes it for our Advent candles. The deep blue color is called **Sarum Blue**, which differentiates this shade of blue from other blues such as baby blue or navy blue. While purple is not incorrect, using Sarum Blue as the liturgical color for Advent allows us to differentiate the hopefulness of the Advent season from the liturgical color of purple which is used for the Lenten season and focuses on penitence. The Sarum Blue color reminds us of God's creation plan. Sarum Blue is described as the color of the sky just before dawn into which the light of Christ is about to break. And the Sarum Blue color reminds us of the sky on our own journey to Bethlehem.

This year as we light the 3 Sarum Blue advent candles, I hope that you will enjoy the symbolism behind the blue color that is both meaningful and spiritually beautiful.

Okay, why is there one pink or rose-colored candle on the advent wreath? **The third candle is called the Gaudette candle** which is the Latin translation for joy. And pink is truly a joyful color! The pink color reminds us that we are at the halfway point in our journey to Bethlehem and the Christ child. Our joyfulness is increasing in anticipation of the coming Emmanuel.



Fall Clean-Up Days at GCPC!

Join us on the GCPC campus for our Fall Cleanup Days on **Saturday, November 14, and Saturday, November 21, from 9am to noon.**

Come early at 8:30am for coffee and donuts before rolling up your sleeves to help with leaf pickup, iris planting, and shrub trimming.

On November 14, please bring rakes, lawn bags, and shovels. On November 21, bring loppers, pruning shears, and saws. Don't forget your work gloves!

All ages are welcome, including children and youth. Whether you can join us for one morning or both, your helping hands will make a difference in keeping our church grounds beautiful.

Sign up for November 14, November 21, or both dates at https://gcpc.org/calendar/fallcleanup.html. We hope you'll join us!

Thanksgiving Food Donations Needed!

Help **Renewed Hope Food Pantry** bring a little extra warmth and joy to Thanksgiving tables this holiday season! We're collecting the following items to help provide a delicious holiday meal:

- Cream of mushroom soup
- Boxed mashed potatoes
- Boxed stuffing mix
- French-fried onions
- Canned cranberries

Please place your donations in the Renewed Hope Food Pantry bin at the weekday entrance. Thank you for your continued generosity and for helping make Thanksgiving special for our neighbors in need!



MUSIC MINISTRY

Music Leadership in November

November brings us a wonderful variety of music at Grace Covenant, beginning with Fauré's *Requiem* on All Saints' Sunday and continuing through handbells, Praise Team, Chancel Choir, and the beginning of Advent. It's a month that moves from remembrance and gratitude toward the hope and anticipation of Christmas.

November 1 – All Saints' Sunday, Fauré's *Requiem*
The **Chancel Choir** will be joined by members of the **GCPC Orchestra**, along with guest soloists and musicians from our wider community, for Gabriel Fauré's beautiful *Requiem*. Our choir has spent much of the fall preparing this work, and I'm grateful for the dedication of our singers and the generosity of the instrumentalists joining us. Fauré's setting feels especially fitting for All Saints' Sunday. Rather than emphasizing fear or judgment, much of the music reaches toward rest, light, consolation, and peace.

It will be a special morning to remember those who have gone before us, give thanks for the lives that have shaped our own, and find comfort in the hope of God's enduring love.

November 8 – Handbells, Charter Ringers & Joy!, Celebration!
Our handbell musicians take the lead this Sunday, with the **Charter Ringers** and **Joy! & Celebration! Ensembles** participating in worship.

The Charter Ringers will share Anna Laura Page's arrangement of *The River*, which brings together two beloved hymns, *Shall We Gather at the River* and *Peace Like a River*. Coming just a week after All Saints' Sunday, these familiar melodies offer a beautiful continuation of our reflections on remembrance, peace, and the hope of being gathered together in God's presence.

November 15 – Praise Team
The **Praise Team** returns to lead worship as we continue through November.

November 22 – Chancel Choir
The **Chancel Choir** returns with Mary McDonald's *Coming Home*, a particularly meaningful selection as we approach Thanksgiving.

There is something deeply comforting about the idea of home, not simply as a place, but as a sense of belonging, welcome, and being known. As we approach Thanksgiving, the music also invites us to think about the kind of community we're called to create for others, one shaped by compassion, generosity, and the willingness to make room for one another. It's a fitting reflection as our congregation continues exploring what it means to live out our faith through care and service.

November 29 – First Sunday of Advent | Praise Team
The **Praise Team** leads us into the first Sunday of Advent as we begin our journey toward Christmas. This year's Advent worship will explore the familiar themes of hope, peace, and joy through carols, anthems, and congregational participation. We begin with hope, the first step in a season that will carry us through peace and joy toward Christmas.

The music of Advent holds a special place in our tradition. Some of our most beloved carols are not simply celebrations of Christmas, but expressions of longing, waiting, and trust in the promise of what is to come.

Youth Music Continues

Our **Spirit Singers** and **Spirit Ringers** begin another round of rehearsals in November, preparing for their next worship appearance on December 6.

It has been wonderful to have our young musicians making music together this fall. We're continuing to explore ways for them to learn, grow in confidence, enjoy creating something as a group, and discover that their gifts already have a place in the worship life of Grace Covenant.

Their next appearance leads into a particularly exciting day for our music ministry, with Christmas Exclamation! that evening.

Looking Ahead to Advent and Christmas

There is plenty of music to look forward to as we move into December!

2nd Sunday of Advent, December 6

Youth Music, GCPC Wind Ensemble & Christmas Exclamation!

Our **Spirit Singers** and **Spirit Ringers** will join the GCPC Wind Ensemble in morning worship as we continue our Advent journey.

That evening at 6pm, we'll gather for our annual **Christmas Exclamation! Concert**, featuring many of Grace Covenant's musical ensembles and musicians from our EncoreKC! community. It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the season together, enjoy the musical gifts of our congregation and community, and share in the joy of making music together. We hope you'll join us for both morning worship and the evening concert!

MUSIC MINISTRY

3rd Sunday of Advent, December 13
Chancel Choir

4th Sunday of Advent, December 20
Praise Team & Longest Night Service

The final Sunday before Christmas Eve will be led by our Praise Team, and that evening they will also lead music for Grace Covenant's special **Longest Night Service**, a quieter, more reflective opportunity for worship during a season that isn't always joyful for everyone.

Christmas can be especially difficult for those experiencing grief, loneliness, illness, or other challenges, and this service makes room for those feelings without the expectation that everything needs to be merry and bright. Through prayer, scripture, and reflective music, we'll gather to find comfort in God's presence and remember that even in our darkest moments, we are not alone. It's a gentle reminder that Christmas doesn't ask us to ignore the darkness, but offers the hope of light within it.

Christmas Eve – December 24
And, of course, our musicians are already preparing for Christmas Eve, with a mixture of familiar carols and new music to help us celebrate the season.

As we move through November, I'm especially grateful for the many people who make music at Grace Covenant possible. Whether you're singing in the choir, ringing a bell, playing an instrument, helping behind the scenes, or simply joining your voice with the congregation on Sunday morning, you're part of what makes this ministry so special.

There is always room to sing, ring, play, listen, and be part of it. —*Patrick O'Halloran , Director of Music Ministries*



KAIROS KLUES

We would love to welcome you at our next meeting, November 9 at 7:30pm. We usually meet via Zoom, so drop Andrew Sellers (*emmasmine@gmail.com*) a note, and he will put you on the invite list for meeting reminders.

NOVEMBER THOUGHTS:

HAVE YOU VOTED? If you vote early THANK YOU. If you still need to remember, November 3 is the LAST CHANCE you will have for this election cycle. Plan on voting before or on Tuesday, November 3! Once you have voted, would you mind posting your sticker on the bulletin board panel? It will remind us all to vote. GCPC WE CAN fill the poster with "I Voted" stickers!

Kairos has just donated to Boots on the Ground to purchase items for the detainees at the Leavenworth facility. This is an action from the documentary we showed on Immigration. These sisters and brothers have a need for Spanish-language Bibles, eye masks and earplugs (to help them sleep as lights and noise are constant 24/7). More possibilities will be available soon for those who are called to care for these individuals who may have NO FAMILY or friends nearby.

Speaking of Documentaries — KAIROS is discussing a documentary with panel discussion on Palestine coming early next spring. Would love to have you join and help to plan this opportunity.

After you wrote and mailed that **Bread for the World** letter to your government representative, now think about the special meal gathering at the end of this month! Many of us gather with friends and family to give thanks for the abundance of the last year and pray for an upcoming blessed year. LET US NOT forget those that may not have the or any pantry items to celebrate. Working with RENEWED HOPE FOOD PANTRY, let us bring special joy to their tables. DONATE in the Weekday Entrance bin items that can make that special meal such as cream of mushroom soup, French-fried onions, canned cranberry sauce, boxed stuffing, and anything else that may make your meal blessed and give joy and hope to neighbors in need!

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, you who supply your people with every blessing in abundance, lift our hearts in gratitude and thanksgiving this day.

FAMILY MINISTRIES *(Children and Youth)*

Counting Our Blessings!

As the calendar turns to another month, we are excited for this season of thanksgiving! The Children's and Youth Teams count our blessings this month. Our favorite thing to see is our children and youth filling our hallways and classrooms each Sunday. Their sweet voices and laughter bring smiles to all of us. We couldn't offer our great programs without our volunteers and we GIVE THANKS for all of our volunteers for the various ways you help make our programs a success too!

Trunks, Treats & Tons of Fun!

What do you get when you mix creative trunks, excited kiddos, mountains of candy, fun games, and hotdogs? One spook-tacular afternoon at GCPC! Our annual Trunk or Treat was held Sunday, October 25, and it was filled with smiles, laughter, costumes, candy, and memories sweeter than a bucket full of Halloween goodies! From decorated trunks and trick-or-treating to games, activities, and a yummy hotdog lunch, there was a little something for everyone!

A HUGE thank-you to our amazing GCPC Children's Team, everyone who decorated trunks and handed out candy, all the wonderful volunteers who helped with setup, cleanup, games, and activities, and everyone who donated candy and food for our hotdog lunch. You helped make the magic happen!

This annual tradition brings so much joy to our children, families, and church community, and we're grateful for every helping hand and generous heart that makes it possible to provide this free event. Until next year… may your candy stash be plentiful, your costumes be comfy, and your Halloween giggles last a little longer!

Sunday School

Our 2yo–12th graders are enjoying their Sunday school classes, including a NEW middle school Sunday school and music opportunities. ATW is also in full swing. Our children ages 4–1st grade enjoy a children's worship service together as they learn the common components of our worship service. A big thank you to our teachers and volunteers for helping us get started off with great success!

WE NEED MANY VOLUNTEERS! If you would like to sign up to help teach or assist, you can find more info out here: https://gcpc.org/children-youth/youareinvited.html

Bible Workshop for 3rd Grade Families on November 1

Do you know how many books are in the Bible? If you answered 66, you are right! On Sunday, November 1, our 3rd grade children and a beloved adult are invited to a Bible Workshop. At our workshop, we will learn some fun facts about the Bible along with how we can study the Bible so that we can become readers and doers of God's word. We will be gifted our Bibles in worship that Sunday at 9:30am. Then we will have our workshop after Sunday school. A light lunch will be served.

SMASH!

SMASH is our monthly fellowship for our K–5th grades! This year's SMASH theme reflects the theme from our upcoming 2027 VBS! We are learning from friendships we find in the Bible! In October, our SMASH program learned about Naomi and Ruth and how great friends stay with each other. We enjoyed games, service, and we remembered how good friends STICK together with our sticky caramel apple snack! **Join us November 15, 4–6pm in Heartland Hall.** RSVP via our GCPC Children's group Facebook event or email gcpcchildren@gmail.com, and if you would like to volunteer as a helper with SMASH, **sign up here:** https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0A45A4A722A4FC1-smash1











FAMILY MINISTRIES *(Children and Youth)*

Youth Group

Youth meet at the same time as SMASH, and at other various times. For the first Youth Group of the year, we started off by helping out our SMASH friends with their water play activities! We followed with a fun game night and then a hang-out at Knox Presbyterian. Then in October we prepped for our youth spooky house for Trunk or Treat … coming up … **BONFIRE night on November 8, 4–7pm**, and regular **youth group on November 15**!









November Children/Youth Events at a Glance

November 1 ATW, ALL MUSIC Sunday, 3rd Grade Bible Sunday

November 8 JOY! And CELEBRATION! Singers in Worship, ATW, Music & Sunday School, 4–7pm YOUTH Presbytery BONFIRE

November 15 ATW, Music & Sunday School, and SMASH and YOUTH GROUP, 4–6pm

November 22 ATW, Music & Sunday School

November 29 ATW, Music & Sunday School, First Sunday of Advent





Registration

Please register your child for our 2026–27 school year. This helps us serve your family.

Registration for Children:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfSrXYbPU_tyNXYVCYKlFyj_bb5im5Cs3XYPj49J6UjDvmo0A/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=107444223478701360234

Registration for Youth:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSePyvJkvKEO308tBlDnB8atZO0L-9tVE9dMJJjnC7VMXch_zw/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=107444223478701360234






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Today!
TRUNK OR TREAT
Food Pantry Donations


FRANKEN SHOT








Chiefs




Craft



HOLY SMOKES! What a Chili Cook-Off!

The GCPC Chili Cook-Off brought the heat, the flavor, and plenty of fun to Heartland Hall today! With more than 50 tasters, and 12 delicious chilis to sample, everyone took their judging duties seriously. Armed with small tasting ladles and compostable tasting cups, tasters sampled their way through the competition to find their favorites!

Congratulations to our People's Choice winners!

- 1st Place: Shirel York
- 2nd Place: Frank Slovick

Both winners took home special wooden spoons proudly labeled "GCPC Chili Cook-Off" — a perfect prize for some serious chili champions!

A big thank-you to Eloise Dixon and Brody Frye for announcing our winners and to the Care & Connections Team for hosting such a fun evening of delicious food, laughter, and fellowship.

From mild to spicy, smoky to secret-recipe special, our chili cooks brought their best, and our GCPC community brought their appetites!






















A Harvest Bounty of Gratitude

A heartfelt thank-you to Jan Rosche for designing and thoughtfully arranging our beautiful Harvest Bounty display in the sanctuary during October, and to Kathy Williams and Meredith Watson for their gracious assistance!

Your time, creativity, and care have brought the beauty of autumn into our worship space and created a lovely reminder of God's abundant blessings. We are so grateful for the hands and hearts that made this special display possible.

May this beautiful reminder inspire us all to pause, give thanks, and celebrate the many blessings we share.

It's Red Bag Season



It's the season of shopping, giving, and bringing joy and love to toddlers, preschoolers, children, and teens!

This is our Communion Offering and Donation Partner for November. Grace Covenant provides nine gifts and one Christmas stocking for each child, including clothing, shoes, toys, and books.

The Christmas stockings are made by our PieceMakers Quilting Group. They use cloth remnants to create a beautiful stocking gift.

How You Can Participate

1. Choose your gift in Heartland Hall TODAY! Select the gifts you would like to purchase from the children's wish lists. Take the **VERY IMPORTANT YELLOW POST-IT NOTE** attached to each selected item. Write your name, phone number, and email address on the note. We highly recommend taking a picture of it for your records!

2. Shop for the gifts. Be a strategic shopper and look for the best prices. When a child has requested a specific item, it will be noted on the list. Otherwise, choose an item based on the child's interests.

3. Wrap your gifts. Please assemble the gift, if needed and put in batteries; also include a gift receipt, especially with clothing purchases. If you bought a gift card, place it in a box and wrap the box so every gift is a surprise!

4. Label and return your gifts by Sunday, November 29. Attach the YELLOW POST-IT NOTE to the outside of each wrapped gift and bring it to church. Look for the collection boxes in the foyer. The yellow Post-it note is essential! It tells our volunteers what each gift is and which child should receive it.

5. Add your Red Bag child or youth to your prayer list. We do not know each child's individual circumstances, but we do know that every one of them is a dearly beloved child of God. Remembering your Red Bag child or youth in prayer throughout 2027 is an ongoing gift of love that extends far beyond Christmas morning.

Volunteers Needed for Gift Transportation

We need 5–6 volunteers with large vehicles (vans or trucks) to transport the gifts to the Ball Conference Center, 21350 W. 153rd St., Olathe, on Saturday, December 5, at approximately 10am.

No heavy lifting is required—just room in your vehicle to help deliver the gifts! If you can help, please contact Sandy Adams by text at 757-582-5292 or e-mail at sanadamsabc@gmail.com.

Adult Education — Growing Together in Faith

Adult Education is a place to explore our faith, ask questions, share perspectives, and grow together in community. If you haven't joined us recently — or have never attended — we'd love to have you! There's no need to have attended previous classes. Each Sunday offers a fresh opportunity to learn, reflect, and connect with one another.

November 1: Join George Bures for Reformed — and Still Being Reformed: *"The Communion of Saints."* On All Saints' Sunday, we'll explore what it means to be connected through faith — not only with one another, but also with those who have gone before us.

Upcoming:

November 8: *"Keep Awake"* — Led by Stephen Wing, part of Living Matthew 25: Envisioning a Different Kind of Kingdom.
November 15: *"Faithful Risk"* — Led by Sarah Evans, continuing Living Matthew 25.
November 22: *"Meeting Christ Among Us"* — Led by Harold Frye, continuing Living Matthew 25.
November 29: Beyond the Headlines: *"Stories of Healing and Hope from Ukraine"* — Led by Rick Randolph.

Come as you are, bring your curiosity, and join the conversation. There's always a place for you!









World Communion Sunday

A special thank you to Debbie Campbell and Jan Rosche for the beautiful decorations which adorned our chancel and for helping us celebrate the beauty and diversity of God's worldwide church.

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Praise Team Director. ..... Carrie DeVries
cdevriesbe@olatheschools.org

Organist ..... Linda Dover

Audio/Visual Director ..... Jason Turner
Email both addresses if you need a video or audio played in worship. Send on the Wednesday prior to Sunday's worship. darktrainfilms@gmail.com; gcpc.media@gmail.com

Praise Team Drummer ..... Jill Endaya-Allen
Child Care Coordinator ..... Carolyn Chaffin
Wedding Coordinator ..... Kristy Shaw
Funeral Coordinator ..... Caroline Becher, Ashley Jeffries

ELDERS

Sandy Adams
Gay Lee Ludwig-Bonney
Paul Bruns
Chris Cabe
Debbie Campbell
Bob Dover
Kevin Johnson
Laura Johnson
Andrew Sellers
Frank Slovick
Eileen Thomson
Melanie Townsend
Session Clerk

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Worship Schedule

9:30am Worship
Streaming on YouTube, Facebook, gcpc.org
Visit gcpc.org for links

Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines

December 2026 Issue - Deadline November 20
January 2027 Issue - Deadline December 18