



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HOPE • WAITING • LIGHT

GRACE NOTES

December 2025
Vol 43, Nbr 12

God draws us together into a welcoming community, embracing our curiosity and questions, to worship with creativity, learn from God's word, share our gifts, and grow in faith.

With gratitude and a spirit of adventure, we are sent to serve Christ in the world—spreading kindness to all and striving for justice grounded in God's boundless love.

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, Facebook and YouTube channel.

Waiting Well: An Invitation into Advent

Advent is a beautiful season—yet it often arrives wrapped in busyness. In these weeks leading up to Christmas, our days fill quickly with gatherings, errands, and preparations. And sometimes, in all the hubbub, the holy can slip quietly into the background.

This year at Grace Covenant, our Advent theme is Waiting Well. Together, we'll explore how to watch for God on the move. How do we make space to breathe before one more party or outing? How do we remember that we are people waiting—not just for a date on the calendar, but for the arrival of the Christ Child? We wait for the One who is both fully God and fully human, the One who came to redeem us. We wait for Emmanuel, God-With-Us.

You are invited to join us in this sacred waiting.

Come to **A Christmas Exclamation!**, where we'll celebrate the sounds of the season even as we listen for God's presence. Come to **The Longest Night Service**, a tender space to remember the ones we miss and to rest in God's comfort. And on **Christmas Eve**, come and welcome the Christ Child once again, the Light who shines in every darkness.

This Advent, may we learn to wait well—together.

Pastor Karen

Update on Rosehill Elementary

Thank you to everyone who has donated food and helped deliver it to Rosehill Elementary. The school has been deeply grateful for every carload of food, as well as the Hy-Vee gift cards that will be shared with some of the families most in need. Your generosity is making a real difference.

We will continue to take donated food over to the school throughout the season. In addition, the noisy offering on December 7 will go directly to support Rosehill students and families.

If you are interested in helping this become a more active and ongoing mission partnership, please speak with Pastor Karen. She is gathering a small group of people to meet with the principal and explore new ways to deepen our relationship with the school and serve alongside them.

Thank you for helping us show God's love in our community.

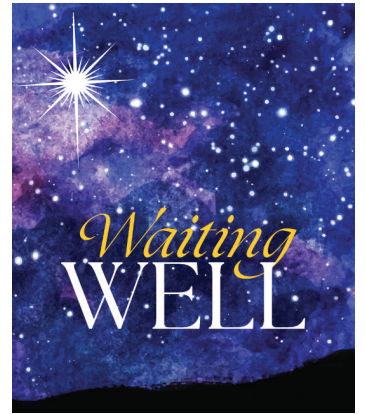


“Waiting Well” for Advent

We enter the season of Advent with the theme “Waiting Well.” Waiting does not come easily to most of us. In our hurried world, we prefer what is immediate and visible. Yet waiting—attentive, hopeful waiting—is at the very heart of Advent. It is the season of the “now and not yet,” when we live between promise and fulfillment. We begin by contemplating Christ’s promised return and then turn toward the story of Mary and Joseph as they waited for the birth of the Christ Child.

This Advent, our daily email devotions are meant to guide us through that sacred waiting. Written from a layperson’s perspective and shared with love, each reflection encourages us to engage more deeply with God’s Word and to draw near in prayer and contemplation. Each day’s entry is accompanied by a piece of visual art and a musical selection—many of which can be found on YouTube—to enrich our time of reflection.

Thank you to Harold Frye, who has compiled these devotions from members of our church. These devotions will be shared daily on Harold’s personal Facebook page from November 30, 2025 through January 6, 2026, at <https://www.facebook.com/hbfrye>. A PDF file of this booklet can be downloaded at gpc.org/advent. Printed booklets are available in the concourse.



The Longest Night (Service of Remembrance)

Sunday, December 21 , 7pm

The holiday season can be particularly challenging for those experiencing grief, loss, illness, or hardship. While many celebrate, some may feel a deeper sense of loneliness. Join us for a time of music, scripture, silence, and prayers.

This service offers a space to connect with God in comforting ways, honoring loved ones and sharing hope, as we turn toward welcoming the Christ Child. Those we love are never far from us, even though at the holidays it can feel that way. Feel free to bring a photo or remembrance item, and experience God’s love and find solace in community.

Christmas Eve Services

Join us for candlelight and carols
as we celebrate Jesus’ birth.

5:00pm Worship

Christmas Eve Children and Family Service

This family friendly service will feature our children and youth as they take us to the manger with Joseph and Mary and their newborn son. The youngest worshippers will join in lighting their own glo stick candle with the congregation to sing “Silent Night.” This joyful service will feature music from our Joy! Singers, Celebration! Choir, and others!

8:00pm Worship

Christmas Eve Traditional Service

This beautiful, traditional service of lessons and carols will celebrate the tenderness and joy of Jesus’ birth. The telling of the story will culminate with the lighting of candles as we sing “Silent Night.” This service will feature music from the Organ, Chancel Choir and GCPC Brass.

(No childcare available for these services.)



A New Year of Music!

A new year is just around the corner, bringing plenty of opportunities to fill our services with beautiful music. Do you have a hidden talent you've been waiting to share? We would love to hear from you and help share your gifts with the congregation! If you're interested in participating in worship music in 2026, please email patrick.ohalloran@gcpc.org.

Wind Ensemble Rehearsals

December 4 — 7–8pm

December 6 — 10–11am (Choir Room)

December 7 — Play in service (call time TBA)

December Music in Worship!

December 7 (2nd Sunday of Advent): The GCPC Winds will lead us in Songs of the Season during worship, joined by smaller instrumental ensembles from EncoreKC!.

December 7 – 6pm: Don't miss our Christmas Exclamation Program! Music will fill the sanctuary — and maybe even deck the halls—as we celebrate the joy of the season. Enjoy performances from our bell ensembles, Joy! and Celebration groups, several EncoreKC! ensembles, and a variety of instrumentalists and soloists.

December 14 (3rd Sunday of Advent): The Chancel Choir, along with several instrumentalists and soloist Allen York, will guide us in preparing for the coming of Christ. Featured selections include *I Shall Know Him When He Comes* (Douglas E. Wagner), *With Open Hearts, We Are Waiting* (Pepper Choplin), *Christmas Calls Us* (David Lantz II), *Sing Noel, Ring the Christmas Bell!* (Patrick M. Liebergen), and *The Work of Christmas* (Dan Forrest).

December 21 (4th Sunday of Advent): The Praise Team joins in the celebration with holiday favorites such as *The Carol of Joseph*, *All Is Well*, *O Come Let Us Adore Him*, *When Christmas Changed the World*, and more.

December 21 – 7pm: Join us for **The Longest Night**, a service of remembrance and reflection. This meaningful gathering offers music, scripture, silence, and prayer for all who need space during the holiday season.

Christmas Eve Services, December 24:

5pm Family Service: Our Joy! and Celebration! children's vocal and instrumental ensembles, along with soloists, will help tell the story of Christ's birth through music woven throughout the service.

8pm Traditional Service: A beautiful evening filled with music from the Chancel Choir, GCPC Brass, and other instrumentalists. Featured works include *O Little Town of Bethlehem* (Dan Forrest), *A Celtic Silent Night* (arr. Patrick Tierney), *Hark the Glad Sound!* (Craig Curry), and *Sing We Now of Christmas* (Mark Kellner).

December 28: Continue the joy and spirit of the season with **Lessons and Carols** led by Karen, Carrie, and Patrick.



A Christmas Exclamation!

An Evening of Christmas Carols & Songs, Sunday, December 7, 6:00pm.

Featuring our Joy! Singers, Celebration Choir, Jubilation!, and Charter ensembles — plus special guests from EncoreKC!

Come sing your favorite carols and share in the wonder of Christmas together! Pull out your ugly Christmas sweater, Santa hat, or jingle bells.

Bring your family and friends and join us for this fun and festive Christmas program! Join us for a joyful celebration of the season!



Dinners for 7 or 8: Sign Up for Winter Fellowship!

As we look ahead to the new year, GCPC is once again hosting Dinners for 7 or 8, a wonderful opportunity to build deeper connections within our church family. These monthly gatherings will take place January through April, offering a relaxed and enjoyable setting to get to know others over a shared meal.

Participants may choose between dinners hosted in homes or dining out at local restaurants—whichever option best fits your preference. After you sign up, Kathy Williams will send you your group's details before December 31.

Each group will coordinate their own four meeting dates and times, making it easy to find a schedule that works for everyone. If you have questions about how the program works, you may contact Kathy Williams at 913-485-1776 or kathykaskewilliams@gmail.com.

If you'd like to join in this year's fellowship, please let Kathy know by December 22—or even sooner!

Celebrating Lindsay Callender NextGen Under 30 Honoree!

We are delighted to share that our own Lindsay Callender has been named one of Kansas' NextGen Under 30 award recipients in the category of Policy & Public Service! She recently received this well-deserved recognition at the Honors Banquet in Wichita.



This award celebrates young adults across Kansas who demonstrate exceptional talent, leadership, and commitment to serving their communities. The mission of NextGen Under 30 is to honor innovative and driven young leaders and encourage them as they pursue their personal and professional goals here in Kansas.

We are so proud of Lindsay and celebrate this achievement with her, Christopher, Laurie, and her entire family. Congratulations, Lindsay—way to go!



Bingo! on January 23

Our annual GCPC Bingo event will be held on **Friday, January 23, 2026, 5:30–7:30pm**. Liz Chandler has graciously agreed to be our caller again! Pizza, veggies and cookies will be provided. Childcare for kids under age 4 will be available, and of course, prizes will be awarded to our BINGO winners.

You can sign up on January 11 and 18! Come beat the winter BLAHS with some lively BINGO!

Clerks Corner

Because of last month's schedule, we did not have a Clerk's Corner in the newsletter. Hopefully by now you have all heard that **Patrick O'Halloran is our Director of Music Ministry** — no "Interim" in front of that title! Effective January 1, he will also be a full-time staff member, and not just 3/4 time! Patrick has done amazing work in the six months he has been on staff; we are so excited to have his role in our congregation settled and to see how he will lead us into God's call through music.

At the December Session meeting we heard reports from most of our Teams. Most of their activities are elsewhere in this newsletter, in the midweek announcements, and in the Sunday bulletin announcements. The outpouring of generosity from this congregation to Rosehill School this month has been overwhelming!

The ongoing generosity and growth of the congregation are exciting, but we also have challenges. Some current opportunities for people to help are teaching Sunday school classes for children and youth, maintaining the kitchen, office volunteers, and ushering. If you are interested in helping with any of these things, please reach out to Karen or a Session member, and we will connect you to the opportunity!

We discussed how we vision for continued GROWTH — what is holding us back and what some of our opportunities are. We have strong Mission and Vision statements but need to figure out HOW to grow into them more fully. We know that communication is a piece of that puzzle and will continue to discuss these things in the coming months.

If you have questions about things that are happening in the church or the Session, please reach out to me or any Session member any time.

—Melanie Townsend, Clerk of Session

Generosity November Update

Our Generosity team meetings have changed to 6:30pm on the first Tuesday of each month in person or by Zoom. We are always glad to have new team members. The current team is Eileen Thomson, Jane Knoche, Rev. Karen Wright, Keith Langabee, Kim Krueger, and Tom Stroud. Mark December 2 on your calendar! Please contact Eileen if you are interested in being a part of the team, we have room for you! Our next agenda includes discussion of our 2026 pledge drive.



Generosity through the Generations

2025 Fulfillment Update: The Generosity Team is happy to share our 2025 fulfillment numbers as of November 12, 2025. We have received 85.9% of our total pledges and 83% of this year 2025 has gone by us. **We continue to appreciate everyone who has contributed to Grace Covenant.** Thank you for your faithfulness!

Here is our progress shown by numbers of pledges:

Submitted Pledges (136)	March 31st	June 6th	September 30th	November 12th
0-25% fulfilled	98	56	24	18
26-50% fulfilled	18	51	13	5
51-75% fulfilled	4	6	54	22
76-100% fulfilled	12	12	45	91
\$723,179	\$226,719	\$324,383	\$548,781	\$621,046

Four groupings are used to show giving progress and calendar relationship. They are 0–25%, 26–50%, 51–75%, 76–100%. Each pledge falls into one of these groups.

Your invitation to plant and grow

Let us be a congregation that plants abundantly, tends faithfully, and trusts God to give the growth. **Submit your pledge securely online at gcpc.org/generosity2026.**



Welcome New Members!

Please join us in welcoming new members Chris and Susan Culp!

Longtime residents of the area, they’ve called Lenexa home for over 30 years. Chris and Susan were members of Grace Covenant two decades ago, and some may remember Susan’s service as a Deacon. They’re grateful for the warm welcome they’ve received since returning.

Their children, Carolyn and David, are grown, making Chris and Susan proud empty nesters. Chris is licensed as a fire protection engineer at Henderson Engineers, while Susan serves as an occupational therapist in the Olathe School District.

Music is a big part of their lives — Chris plays the oboe, percussion, and more, while Susan plays the flute and piccolo. Both have performed in Grace Covenant’s orchestra and several community orchestras and bands. Beyond music, they enjoy fitness and home improvement projects. They’re excited to get more involved and discover new ways to participate in the life of GCPC.

December Adult Christian Education

November 30 - December 21, 10:45am

Join us for these two adult education classes during Advent: A study on the Advent theme, “Waiting Well,” meeting in Room 3, and Worship Reflections, led by church members, meeting in the concourse. A BIG THANK YOU to all of those who helped make education, not just possible, but also inspiring in 2025. We’re looking forward to all of the adult educational opportunities in the coming year!

KAIROS KLUES

December Is Universal Human Rights Month

This month is dedicated to recognizing fundamental human rights, promoting equality and justice, and encouraging education and advocacy for human dignity for all people worldwide. Let us pray for all God's creation especially all those made in his image

Did You Know...?

As we move into the colder months, here are a few simple, cozy ways to care for your home and yourself:

— Create a natural winter scent. Save your citrus and apple peels and simmer them on low in a small saucepan with water, along with broken pieces of cloves, cinnamon sticks, or any favorite baking spices. Your home will fill with the comforting fragrance of winter—without any harmful chemical vapors.

— Use the sun's warmth wisely. Close your window coverings at sunset to keep in the heat, and open them again when the sun is shining. This small habit helps warm your space naturally with the light God provides.

— Bundle up with love. When temperatures dip, reach for that favorite sweatshirt or jacket—and don't forget the quilt, blanket, or afghan someone made or gifted you. They warm your body and your heart as you settle in for those holiday movies.

It's Not Too Late to Purchase GCPC Totes!

KAIROS still has a few Grace Covenant Presbyterian grocery/tote bags you could purchase to place special gifts in for your gift giving or to deliver special meals and foods to your favorite food pantries. They are \$3 each. Stop by the church office, or contact Jo Randolph to purchase some for holiday gift-giving!

Congregations and individuals to use Inflation Reduction Act incentives for Solar and Energy improvements

According to Rev. Sherri Underwood, congregations can begin construction on solar projects before July 4, 2026 and end their projects by the end of 2027, to take advantage of the IRA incentives covering 30% of the costs if they pay at least 5% of the cost before December 31, 2025. Residential renewable and energy efficiency projects completed by December 31, 2025, are eligible for tax credits. Check out Kansas Interfaith Action Webinar at <https://bit.ly/3LRjEyS>

Be sure to check out the column posted on the KAIROS bulletin board: *"Kansans Are Being Squeezed from Every Direction"*

Daily Advent Devotions

Presbyterians for Earth Care has published Advent reflections in English and in Spanish. You can also sign up to receive daily advent devotions directly to your email. <https://bit.ly/48sPEC4>

"Mysteries, Yes" by Mary Oliver

Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous to be understood.

How grass can be nourishing in the mouths of the lambs.

How rivers and stones are forever in allegiance with gravity, while we ourselves dream of rising.

How two hands touch and the bonds will never be broken.

How people come from delight or the scars of damage, to the comfort of a poem.

Let me keep my distance, always, from those who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those who say "Look!" And laugh in astonishment and bow their heads.

The Cold by Wendell Berry

How exactly good it is to know myself in the solitude of winter,

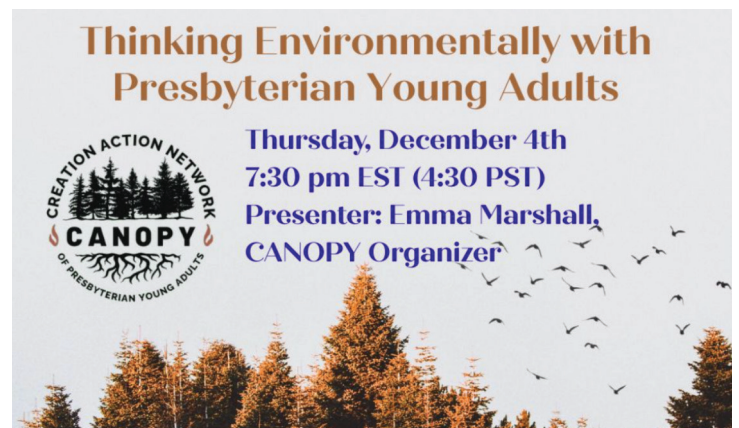
my body containing its own warmth, divided from all by the cold; and to go

separate and sure among the trees cleanly divided, thinking of you

perfect too in your solitude, your life withdrawn into your own keeping

— to be clear, poised in perfect self-suspension toward you, as though frozen

And having known fully the goodness of that, it will be good also to melt.



Webinar details here: <https://presbyearthcare.org/thinking-environmentally-presbyterian-young-adults/>

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

The GCPC Children's Team would like to wish our GCPC families a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Smash

In November, our SMASH participants continued their gatherings exploring the similarities to faith and the Winter Olympics! We talked about the importance of gratitude and how to practice it daily. A good reminder for all ages in these busy times!

Join us on December 14th from 4pm - 6pm for our next SMASH event. This month we will meet at Aberdeen Village at 4pm for a round of Christmas caroling with residents at Aberdeen Village. We ask parents to help escort their children to/from Aberdeen Village. We will return to GCPC after caroling for the rest of our SMASH time. We will have snack and continue to talk about how similar the journey of faith is to an Olympian's journey to the podium—and maybe we'll spread a little Christmas Cheer too! Parents are welcome to stay for our celebration. RSVP via our GCPC Children's group Facebook event or email gpcchildren@gmail.com.

Vacation Bible School - June 1-5, 9am-Noon

Get ready to turn your summer into an unforgettable adventure with **Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS 2026, June 1-5 from 9am-Noon!** Snowball Mountain Challenge invites kids to an exciting winter sports event where they become Challengers, gearing up for frosty games, snowy surprises, and hands-on lessons about resilience and faith. They will come to realize that with the strength God provides, they can share their gifts, be brave, give their all, pray, and hope. **Registration opens on January 1, 2026 at gpc.org/vbs.**

Children's Events in December

- Nov. 30 ATW, Music & Sunday School
- Dec. 7 ATW, All Music Sunday - then! Join us for "A Christmas Exclamation" at 6pm. (Joy! and Celebration Choirs will be performing)
- Dec. 14 ATW, Music & Sunday School and Smash from 4-6pm (Meeting at Aberdeen Village)
- Dec. 21 ATW, All Music Sunday and Christmas Eve rehearsal until 2pm—pizza lunch included.
- Dec. 24 4pm arrival for service participants.
5pm Family Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
8pm Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
- Dec. 29 No ATW or Sunday School for all ages

Looking ahead...Save the Date!

Saturday, January 31, 4-6pm, ALL AGES GCPC Olympic Games!

The Children's Department is hosting an awesome event where we will compete in Olympic feats with our families and chosen teams to see who will take to the podium! And also have a lot of laughs, fun, and fellowship with our awesome church family. ALL church members are invited and encouraged to come!

YOUTH MINISTRY

Warm Fires and Fun Friends

In November, our Youth Group went to Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church to hang out with other kiddos in our Presbytery and enjoy a warm bonfire on a very chilly night! It was a lot of fun and we look forward to hanging with them again!

Helping Others Helps our Spirit!

The youth group had a blast shopping for and wrapping up our Rad Bag contributions. It's always fun to help others while hanging with your church pals!

Join us on December 14th from 4pm - 6pm for YOUTH GROUP we will be preparing a meal for Project 10/20 (a cold weather shelter in JOCO). We'll prep most of the meal that night, freeze it, then get it ready to serve on December 21.

Vacation Bible School - June 1-5, 9am-Noon

Coming in January, the VBS 2026 registration will be open! PLEASE SIGN UP to help EARLY so we can get you in your preferred volunteering spot! We need ALL of the youth to help out, the kids LOVE having you! **Sign up to volunteer for VBS at gpc.org/vbsvolunteers.**

Youth Events in December

- Nov. 30 Worship and Sunday School
- Dec. 7 Worship Sunday School - THEN! Join us for "A Christmas Exclamation" at 6pm.
- Dec. 14 Worship and Sunday School and YOUTH GROUP Service Night from 4-6pm
- Dec. 21 Worship and Christmas Eve rehearsal until 2pm—pizza lunch included.
- Dec. 24 4pm arrival for service participants.
5pm Family Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
8pm Traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
- Dec. 29 No Sunday School

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GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Follow us on Social Media!

Facebook: facebook.com/GraceCovenantPresbyterian

Instagram: @gcpc_overlandpark • **YouTube:** @gracecovenant443

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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.....Vacant

ELDERS

Johnnie Baker	Frank Slovick
Paul Bruns	Jaylee Soule
Chris Cabe	Eileen Thomson
Debbie Campbell	Michala Walker
Barbara Douglas	Mary Ann Weyforth
Kevin Johnson	Melanie Townsend
Andrew Sellers	Session Clerk
Kristy Shaw	

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Mission Mikki Walker
Welcoming Kathy Williams

Supportive Ministry Unit Moderators
Facility Paul Bruns
Generosity Jane Knoche,
Eileen Thomson

Finance..... Beth Lillian
Personnel Kevin Mason

Worship Schedule

9:30am Worship

Streaming on YouTube, Facebook, gcpc.org
Visit gcpc.org/online for links

Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines

January 2026 Issue - Deadline December 16
February 2026 Issue - Deadline January 20