



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HOPEFUL. VITAL. GROWING.

GRACE NOTES

January 2026
Vol 44, Nbr 1

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.

Looking Forward with Gratitude

As we step into 2026, we give thanks for a remarkable year at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. In 2025, we celebrated our 40th anniversary — four decades of faithful ministry in Overland Park. We completed our staff team, welcomed gifted leaders, and witnessed meaningful ministry made possible through the dedication and service of this church family.

Even as we look back with gratitude, we look ahead with hope. There is an unmistakable energy in our congregation. We sense God stirring something new among us, and this desire to grow is a gift of the Spirit — evidence of vitality and vision.

As we begin the new year, I invite you to reflect on how God may be calling you to deepen your discipleship. Faith grows as we commit ourselves to worship, study, and service together. Whether through Bible study, small groups, mission opportunities, or faithful participation in worship, discipleship is something we practice as a community, growing in love of God and neighbor.

Growth brings both opportunity and challenge. It calls us to strengthen our welcome, deepen our commitment to one another, and clarify God's purpose for Grace Covenant in this season. Our Session and Deacons are engaged in prayerful visioning, and we invite you to join them in prayer as this work continues.

I also encourage you to be ambassadors for Grace Covenant. Invite friends to worship — online or in person. Share our ministries and service opportunities. Let others know this is a place where Christ is encountered and community is formed.

Let us continue to be a church where all experience the love of Christ, and where that love is carried into the world through service, grace, and lives shaped by the gospel.

The best days of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church are still ahead of us.

Let's walk into them together.

Grace and peace,

—*Pastor Karen*





GCPC Winter Olympics!

Get ready for some winter fun!

January 31, 4-6pm

Everyone is invited to the GCPC Winter Olympics on Saturday, January 31, 4-6pm.

Gather your crew and form a team to compete in a friendly showdown for **bronze, silver, and gold medals!**

Teams will take on **six Olympic-inspired events** — a mix of **three brain-teasing challenges** and **three action-packed physical events**. Teams can be any size, so bring your best thinkers and at least one teammate who's ready to get moving! Form a team of any kind. Your team might be comprised of your immediate family, part of your covenant group, church committee, those you sit by at worship or whomever you choose.

Don't miss the fun — sign up today and encourage others to join you. Let's make this an unforgettable event and **set an Olympic record for GCPC attendance!**

You can find more details on our registration form at gcpc.org/olympics

Please RSVP by January 24th
so we have time to prepare for the event.

Let us know if you have any questions!
Planning committee: Christy Soule,
Amy Sellers and Kristy Shaw.

Clerks Corner

At the December Session meeting we approved the formation of a task force to look into the need for Grace Covenant to create a **Safety Team** and to look into what the composition, responsibilities, and viability of that team would be. This conversation was sparked as we have had more people visiting the church who do not look and act the way that we expect in our daily lives. We acknowledge that they, too, are children of God but that we have a responsibility to ensure that our staff has a safe working environment and that our children are safe. Cindy Schendel will be coordinating this task force and Karen, and two Session members will be participating. If you have an interest in this issue, please talk to Cindy or Karen to share opinions or find out how to get involved.

We are excited that Karen is going to be working with a leadership coach in 2026 to help strengthen her skills to lead us to be a stronger congregation. Funds will come from her continuing education money and from some memorial funds. We look forward to seeing how Karen will lead us with this additional support — hopefully we can get past some of our organizational hurdles!

We heard reports from our standing committees, which do most of the work of the church; their activities are shared throughout this newsletter. We approved a budget for 2026. The nominating committee has been hard at work, and we will have a called Congregational Meeting on January 4, 2026 for the purpose of electing new Deacons, who will be installed later in the month. We will also hold our annual congregational meeting at the close of worship on Sunday, January 25; please plan to attend!

Grace Covenant is an active congregation. If you have questions, concerns, or IDEAS, please speak to a member of Session about them.

—Melanie Townsend, Clerk of Session

Coming in January - SouperBowl XL!

The Chiefs didn't make the playoffs this year, but GCPC can still win the **SOUPERBOWL of CARING!** From **January 1 to January 31**, we'll collect non-perishable food items for the Renewed Hope Food Pantry at New Hope SDA Church. About 10% of Johnson County households are food insecure, and many of those households make too much money to qualify for government assistance, leaving them reliant on private charities.



tacklehunger.org

In addition to helping our neighbors, we'll have fun settling some Great Food Debates, such as: Pancakes or Waffles? Pineapple on Pizza: Delicious or Disastrous? One donated item = one vote for whichever side you support!

Watch for announcements and information in the bulletins and midweek emails in January about where to leave donations and how to vote on the Great Food Debates!

MUSIC MINISTRY

With Grateful Hearts

The holiday season at GCPC was truly breathtaking, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the many hands and voices that made it so special. We want to extend a deep thank you to:

- The **Chancel Choir** and **Praise Team**
- **EncoreKC!**
- **Jubilation Ringers** and **Charter Ringers**
- Our **Children's Ensembles**
- The **Wind Ensemble**, **GCPC Brass**, and our gifted **Soloists**
- Our vital **Tech Crew** and **Music Team**
- The many **Volunteers** who worked behind the scenes

Your dedication filled our sanctuary with music and made our celebrations feel incredibly special. Thank you for sharing your time and talents to help us immerse ourselves in the meaning of the season.

January Music at GCPC

As we step into the New Year, our music ministry will guide us through a season of reflection, celebration, and community. Join us each Sunday in January as we lift our voices and hearts together.

January 4: Epiphany & Communion - We begin the month celebrating Epiphany with the sharing of Star Words and the Lord's Supper. Worship will be led by the organ, featuring a special solo by Beth Lillian. The music will center on the guiding light that leads us into this new season of grace.

January 11: Baptism of the Lord - Our service focuses on the Baptism of the Lord. Led by our Praise Team, our hymns and anthems will celebrate the gift of water and the spirit that calls us each by name.

January 18: MLK Sunday - This Sunday features a special Service of Readings, with music led by the Chancel Choir and organ. The music will be deeply woven into the spoken word as we honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the ongoing call for justice and peace.

January 25: Annual Meeting Sunday - The Praise Team returns to lead us as we gather for our Annual Meeting following worship. Our music this morning will celebrate our shared life as a congregation, grounding us in gratitude for the year past and hope for the year ahead.

Save the Date: Music Appreciation Sunday

You won't want to miss this special morning as we celebrate **Music Appreciation Sunday on February 8th!** We will give thanks for the many wonderful musicians who share their gifts with us throughout the year. This service will be a true showcase of their talents — mark your calendars for a morning of extraordinary music you won't want to miss.

We are honored to debut a commissioned anthem commemorating the music ministry of Rebecca Prater at GCPC. This piece serves as a beautiful tribute to the legacy of song and spirit she has cultivated within our walls.



Book Groups in January

The **As the Page Turns** book group will meet January 7 at 1:30pm in Room 3 at the church. The book selection is *Good Dirt* by Charmaine Wilkerson. Please join the group for discussion and fellowship.

The new year is almost here and hope you've had time to do some reading! **Page Turners** will meet at Johnnie Baker's house, Thursday, January 8, 7pm to discuss *Three Days in June* by Anne Taylor. Johnnie's address is 8608 W. 152nd Terr, Overland Park. (Carpooling suggested, since end of cul-de-sac! Also, adjacent driveway on the left is available that night.) Please RSVP to 913-219-3893 or johnniebkr@gmail.com. (Or, you can use the Bookclubs app or Facebook to RSVP.)



Bingo! on January 23

Get ready for another fantastic evening of fun and fellowship at GCPC! Join us **Friday, January 23, from 5:30–7:30 pm in Heartland Hall** for a night filled with laughter, community, and friendly competition.

Enjoy a pizza dinner (*plus veggies and cookies!*) before the Bingo action begins. Then grab your cards and settle in as the fabulous Liz Chandler returns to call the numbers—bringing her legendary energy and fun!

- Sign up after worship on January 11 & 18 or call the church office to reserve your spot.
- Childcare will be available for children under age 4.
- Prizes will be awarded to our lucky BINGO winners!

Let's fill the hall with joy, great company, and the thrill of shouting BINGO! Tell your Bingo buddies and help spread the word!

Sharing Christ's Love, One Red Bag at a Time

Thank you, Grace Covenant, for creating a wonderful Christmas for **30 foster children/youth!** Red Bag season at Grace Covenant is four weeks long but starts in September with social workers talking with the children/families for needs and gift ideas. Red Bag volunteers create organize the children's name and give to different organizations. When the gift list is received then a more specific gift list is created for each child. Grace Covenant gives nine gifts and a beautiful homemade Christmas stocking by the Piecemakers Group.

After the gifts are returned to church, wrapped in pretty paper and with the Post-it note attached they are stored in locked room. Next, the wonderful women in the Thursday morning Bible study volunteer on Monday or Tuesday to sort all the gifts by the child's name. The Post-it notes are removed, and all the gifts and stockings are packed into large Red Bags with the child's name on the outside of the bag. The final stage for Grace Covenant is getting the gifts from our church to the collection site in Olathe. The Red Bag organization distributes the Red Bags full of gifts to social workers who distribute the bags to foster families.

Red Bags gifts are a Christmas miracle. These gifts represent the love of Christ and plant seeds of love and hope. We only know the name and age of the child but, Jesus knows their pain and their future. Let us pray that our gifts inspire hope, joy and love for these children.



Generosity December Update

Our Generosity team meetings have changed to 6:30pm on the first Tuesday of each month in person or by Zoom. The current team is Eileen Thomson, Jane Knoche, Rev. Karen Wright, Keith Langabee, Kim Krueger, and Tom Stroud. We are always glad to have new team members. Our January 2026 meeting will be by e-mail. Please contact Eileen if you are interested — we have room for you! Thank you again to everyone that is planting and growing our ministry at Grace Covenant!



A LIVING LEGACY
CALLED TO PLANT. CALLED TO GROW.

Generosity through the Generations

2025 Fulfillment Update: The Generosity Team is happy to share our 2025 fulfillment numbers as of December 1, 2025. We have received 88.3% of our total pledges and 91% 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	December 1st
0-25% fulfilled	98	56	24	17
26-50% fulfilled	18	51	13	3
51-75% fulfilled	4	6	54	14
76-100% fulfilled	12	12	45	10
\$723,179	\$226,719	\$324,383	\$548,781	\$638,651

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 gpcp.org/generosity2026.**

Adult Education Sunday School Classes in 2026

The Adult Education Team continues to explore new and engaging opportunities for learning and faith formation within our congregation. This year, we continue to offer two Sunday School classes for adults: one that explores a variety of topics—from social justice and environmental concerns such as microplastics, to reflections on how music shapes and expresses our faith—and a second class that provides a thoughtful space to reflect on and discuss the worship service.

We invite adults of all ages to participate in either or both classes and to join us at any time throughout the year.

GCPC Weekend Crafter’s Winter Retreat

Join us Friday, January 16 (6–9pm) and Saturday, January 17 (9am–4pm) for our winter retreat.

This is a time for our GCPC family and friends to enjoy some crafty fellowship. Participants will bring their own projects to work on in Heartland Hall while we sip, snack, and create together.

We are working to put together a Make-and-Take Project for Saturday for a minimal fee (details soon).

REGISTER TO ATTEND by January 11th at gpcp.org/crafters

Join our Facebook group **GCPC Weekend Crafters** for community and fellowship online at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gpcpweekendcrafters>.

The DONATIONS TABLE is back!

Do you have craft supplies that you no longer need or use and would want to share/donate? Please bring items that are clean, usable, and in good condition—not dried out or damaged—and that would be valuable to others. If possible, we ask that donations be sorted and organized to help make sharing easy and enjoyable for everyone. Take whatever you wish from the Donations Table! Everything left over will either be shared with our Children’s Team or donated to charity. Fabric/sewing items shared with our Piecemakers quilting group. **NOTE:** Please bring bags/boxes to carry home your treasures.

If you have any questions, or want to help with planning, please contact Christy Soule, Kristy Shaw, or Kim Krueger.

KAIROS KLUES

As we look to the coming year 2026, let us be led by Matthew 25:35-40 and care for ALL God's blessed creations!

From Creation Justice Ministries: Congress is considering utilizing the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to strike down the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) 2024 Record of Decision (ROD) for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Coastal Plain Leasing Program. These decisions would significantly negatively impact the pristine wilderness of this sacred place. As Christians, we believe caring for Creation is a moral responsibility. Urge your Members of Congress to stand with Creation and our Indigenous neighbors and vote no against S.J.Res. X and H.J. RES.131 <https://www.creationjustice.org/alaska.html>

RECYCLE: Responsible recycling Holiday Lights and composting natural Christmas Trees, keeping BOTH out of the landfills.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS: Between December 26 and January 31, there will be numerous locations in the KC metropolitan area accepting holiday lights for recycling. These include:

- [Overland Park Recycling Center](#) (11921 Hardy, 913-901-6002, Tuesday-Friday, 8 am-4 pm).
- [Kansas City Mo. Recycling Center](#) (5200 E. Red Bridge Road, 816-561-1087, Wednesday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm).
- [Mack's True Value Hardware](#) (6004 Johnson Dr, Mission, KS, 913-432-3104, MTWTFs, 8 am-6 pm).
- [Sylvester Powell Community Center](#) (6200 Martway St, Mission, KS, 913-722-8200, 8 am-9 pm).
- [Midwest Recycling Center](#) (2000 E. 19 St. Kansas City, MO, 816-479-2949, M-F, 8:30 am-5 pm).
- [Westlake Ace Hardware](#) (check with your local Ace)

COMPOSTING CHRISTMAS TREES: There are four Johnson County Park & Recreation District drop-off locations until January 31. Tree composting is free and open to anyone regardless of residency. Drop off your tree at one of these JCPRD locations:

- [Theatre in the Park](#), 7710 Renner Road, Shawnee Mission (just north of the main entrance of Shawnee Mission Park).
- [Heritage Park](#), 16000 Pflumm Road, Olathe (Marina parking lot).
- [Kill Creek Park](#), 11670 Homestead Lane, Olathe (Marina parking lot).
- [Big Bull Creek Park](#), 20425 Sunflower Road, Edgerton.

These sites are open during regular winter park hours from 7:30am to 8pm. Only natural Christmas trees will be accepted. Before dropping off your tree, please remove all decorations, including lights, tinsel, and ornaments. Artificial trees are not accepted. [Learn more on the JCPRD website](#) or call 913-888-4713.

There are four Overland Park's 4 drop-off locations until January 14!

Leave your tree in the parking lots at:

- [Young's Park](#) – 7701 Antioch (5am-10pm).
- [Indian Creek Recreation Center](#) – 10308 Marty (5am-10pm).
- [Quivira Park](#) – 11901 Quivira (5am-10pm).
- [Overland Park Arboretum & Botanical Gardens](#) – 8909 W. 179th St. (9 am-5 pm).

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church Earth Care Congregation Renewal 2026

Our 15th-year paperwork renewal is due early February 2026. Notices have gone out to Team moderators for input for this year's audit paperwork. If you are interested in learning more and continuing this PCUSA certification, please contact the team moderator if you would like to help collect data for us. (*Education, Worship, Facilities and/or Outreach*) OR drop KAIROS an email at gcpckairos@gmail.com and let us know.

PCUSA General Assembly June 22 – July 2, 2026 Overtures We Know Are Coming

PEACE: On Seeking God's Peace Through Nuclear Disarmament In the 21st Century. For a copy of the overture contact the PPF Peace Church Working Group ppf-pcw@googlegroups.com

MISSION: Three overtures from the Presbytery of the James addressing the interim Unified Agency's decision to close the office of World Mission and terminate its employees. Read about them on Pgs 42-47 <https://presbyteryofthejames.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Section-II-Agenda-and-Reports-121st-Mtg-October-2025.pdf>

ENVIRONMENT: 1) Regenerative Agriculture/Farming Practice; 2) Changing Course for a Greener Future; 3) The Green Future Fund <https://presbyearthcare.org/general-assembly-2026/>

Be sure to check out the bulletin board outside of Heartland Hall for more information.

KAIROS: An ancient Greek word meaning 'the right or critical moment'. The following poem spoke to me; the time is NOW!

KAIROS KLUES

"First Coming"

— Madeleine L'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin
and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!



Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS

Find Your Strength in God!

Get ready for a faith-filled summer adventure at Snowball Mountain Challenge Vacation Bible School, happening **June 1–5, from 9am to Noon**, at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church. **Children ages 4 through 5th grade** are invited to become Challengers in this exciting winter-themed experience full of games, music, learning, and joy.

At Snowball Mountain Challenge, kids will explore what it means to rely on God's strength as they play frosty games, enjoy snowy surprises, and engage in hands-on lessons about resilience and faith. Guided each day by an energetic Activities Director and Ollie the Arctic Seal, children will connect Bible stories with real-life lessons using their Challenge Companion (the Bible), discovering that with God's help they can share their gifts, be brave, pray, give their best, and hope—living out the promise, *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13, NRSV).

Registration Details

- \$10 registration fee per child, due at the time of registration.
- Due to ordering deadlines, T-shirts will only be available for children who have been registered by May 1.
- **Sign up online at gcpc.org/vbs**

This mountaintop experience will be filled with laughter, meaningful lessons, and moments that help build lasting faith. Children will face challenges, discover God's strength, and create memories they'll carry with them long after the snow melts.

Volunteers Needed!

Snowball Mountain Challenge VBS wouldn't be possible without wonderful volunteers—and we would love for you to be part of the team! Opportunities are available for all ages and interests, including music, crafts, Bible stories, snacks, recreation, and science.

Our VBS planning team is forming now and will meet occasionally over the coming months to prepare for a fantastic week. Whether you enjoy leading, helping behind the scenes, or simply having fun with kids, there's a place for you. ****NOTE: Due to ordering deadlines, T-shirts will ONLY be available for volunteers who sign up BEFORE May 1, 2026.**

Sign up to volunteer at gcpc.org/vbsvolunteer

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

What an incredible Advent and Christmas! Shout out to our awesome music leaders and helpers in JOY! and CELEBRATION! Choirs who made it possible for our children to create and share wonderful music all advent and Christmas! And a super huge shout out to all the children and youth and families who helped make our Christmas Eve service so special and full of spirit.

Sundays in January

- January 4 (Epiphany Sunday) – Worship, ATW, Regular Programming with Music and Sunday School
- January 11 Worship, ATW, Regular Programming with Music and Sunday School
- January 18 Worship, ATW, Regular Programming with Music and Sunday School, and SMASH (K-5th Fellowship) from 4-6pm
- Friday, January 23 – ALL CHURCH BINGO
- January 25 Worship, ATW, Regular Programming with Music and Sunday School, then 2nd grade Communion Workshop until 2pm.
- Saturday, January 31— ALL CHURCH OLYMPIC EVENT
- February 1 Worship with 2nd graders taking Communion, ATW, ALL MUSIC SS for K-5th, regular SS for everyone else



YOUTH MINISTRY



Project 10/20 Youth Project

Our youth put love into action in December. The Youth Group prepped NINE deep-dish lasagnas (*and brownies and salad also*) for the cold-weather shelter meal on December 21 at Project 10/20 — and they did a GREAT job! Huge thanks to Jenny Stromberg for jumping in to help and support them. We're so proud of this group for serving with care and generosity. Project 10/20 provides shelter, support, and compassion to adults experiencing homelessness, while helping them connect with community resources and work toward their goals. Service, teamwork, and love — well done, youth!

Youth Program Schedule Every Sunday:

- 9:30am Worship
- 10:45-11:05am Youth Fellowship in Youth Lounge
- 11:05-11:45am Youth Sunday School in Room 19

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Presbytery Youth Day of Service & Fellowship

Monday, January 19, 9am-2:30pm

Spend MLK Jr. Day serving and having fun together in this multi-church event with other 6th - 12th graders.

We will **gather at 8am at GCPC** for coffee/donuts and then carpool together.

From **9am - Noon** we will visit **UNBOUND**, an organization working to create a world free from poverty. We will learn about their mission and lend a helping hand where we can.

From **12:30pm - 2:30pm** we will hang out at **Line Creek Ice Arena** for lunch and ice skating. Ice skating and hot dog lunch will be provided by Heartland Presbytery. (*There is a snack bar; bring your own money if you would like to purchase additional food*). We will carpool back to GCPC together.





Photos from 5pm Christmas Eve Worship by member, Keith Langabee





Photos from 8pm Christmas Eve Worship by member, Jeff DeVries





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Inclusive. Family Oriented. Welcoming.

11100 College Boulevard
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gcpc.org



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN 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

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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Worship and Music..... Kathy Bures,
Barbara Douglas

Education Ministry Unit Moderators
Adult Kevin Johnson
Children Kristy Shaw
Youth.....Chris Cabe

Reach Out Ministry Unit Moderators
Kairos Rick Randolph
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 for links

Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines

February 2026 Issue - Deadline January 20
March 2026 Issue - Deadline February 17