



REAL FAITH | REAL STORIES | REAL GRACE

GRACE NOTES

"Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." —from "Shawshank Redemption"

Hope is the focus of our Advent season at Grace Covenant as we begin a new church year anticipating the second coming of Christ and putting the finishing touches on another secular calendar year.

While 2021 has not been quite as demanding as 2020, it's been our first full year dealing with the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been some small steps towards the way of life we knew before the beginning of the pandemic, but it remains a time for reflection on our past, present, and future. Many of us have experienced challenges and losses, and if there is anything all of us (all of humanity) can use right now, it's a healthy dose of **hope**.

Having **hope** links your past and present to the future. You have a vision for what you hope will happen. Whether it does not, just envisioning it can make you feel better. And if it's something you can somewhat control, then hope can motivate you to take whatever steps you need to take.

Having hope is important to the very act of being a human being. As Dr. Judith Rich writes, ***"Hope is a match in a dark tunnel, a moment of light, just enough to reveal the path ahead and ultimately the way out."***

Through our shared faith, we help one another have hope in our own lives, but just as we are called to be bearers of Christ's light into the world, we believe it's important for us to be bearers of hope into our world and our community. Despite the struggles we have seen around us, we have also seen many people sharing the love of Christ in hundreds, if not thousands of meaningful ways. We have been blessed with hope. Our prayer is that we all experience that same hope for God's kingdom to become real and present in our personal lives, the life of Grace Covenant, and in this world that needs hope so much.

Peace and blessings to us all, —Sue & Mitch

HOPE
beyond
hope



Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church celebrates God's unbounded grace and all-inclusive love.

God gathers us in a welcoming community, with our curiosity and questions, to worship creatively, learn from God's word, share our gifts, and deepen our faith.

With grateful hearts and a spirit of adventure, we go to serve Christ in the world, sharing kindness with everyone, and working for justice rooted in God's love.

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In-Person Worship and Online Worship every Sunday on Facebook Live and Zoom. Visit gcpc.org/online for links!

Clerk's Corner

The **November 15, 2021 Session meeting** was called to order at 7:00pm with Reverend Mitch Trigger serving as moderator. In addition to the ruling elders, deacon Knute Rosche, Reverend Sue Trigger, Rebecca Prater and Miles McDonald were in attendance. Andrew Frye shared a devotion, based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9, about the priority that should be placed on children's ministry in a healthy congregation. Afterward, he offered a prayer.

Open Forum: Bill Turner relayed a request from parents of young children to remove the ink stamps from the children's worship bags.

Consent agenda: The minutes of the October 18 Session meeting were approved, as well as a request to remove the Firebaughs from membership.

Team Minutes: Youth team: The Reggie Reynolds Scholarship funds will now be available to youth in grades 9-12, who may apply for funds to participate in youth activities. Kairos Team: Session approved having GCPC listed as the drop-off point for donated shoes on the Soles for Souls website. Music Team: Session approved allowing the orchestra to play in church on December 12, with musicians wearing masks when not performing and using bell covers. Personnel Team: The team updated position descriptions for staff and will provide copies to Session with the changes flagged for next month. Generosity Team: So far, we have received 60 pledges for a total of \$345, 104. Last year, we had 145 pledging units. Finance Team: Session approved Terri Monrad, Aaron Soule and Cathy Nance as signatories on the GCPC bank accounts, as well as approving investing funds in New Covenant Funds.

Clerk's report: We have 396 members. The dates for the 2022 Presbytery meetings have been set.

Co-pastors' report: There were no questions about the co-pastors' report submitted by Rev. Mitch Trigger. He served communion to Dave and Dorothy Stalling at their home.

Deacons' report: Knute Rosche said deacons are still having trouble hearing back from church members. The KCK Hot Lunch program is still in need of volunteers to serve. The covenant groups will be reorganized for 2022. Katie Hearn developed a QR code that members and visitors can scan which will let them record their attendance.

Old business: The pastors and elders have heard from people that they want to stop wearing masks and they want to be able to sing the hymns. Because young children cannot be vaccinated yet and people will be inside more because of winter, Session felt that masks are still necessary, especially since there's been an uptick in the number of COVID cases. However, after review of current expert opinions, it was decided that the congregation will be able to sing along with the hymns and join in corporate prayers.

New business: After Visioning Day on Saturday, four people volunteered to update the GCPC core values. (See article in this newsletter)

After sharing joys and concerns, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m. and Rev. Mitch Trigger closed with a prayer.

December

SMASH

Service, Music, Art, Sports, Hangtime

A Birthday Party for Jesus!

We're going to celebrate the birth of Jesus at our **December SMASH on Sunday, December 19, from 4–6pm.**

K-5th/6th grade kids are invited to come and play games, make crafts, and enjoy a tasty snack. It will be all about giving thanks for the birth of the Savior!

We'll meet in Heartland Hall. Please RSVP to help us safely prepare for supplies. RSVP to Rev. Sue at sue.trigger@gcpc.org. Please let her know how many children will attend.

Thank you!

For whatever reason, COVID decided to pay us an unwelcome visit. The texts, phone calls, and inspirational cards from our GCPC family brightened each day as we recuperated. Our lives have been richly blessed by your friendship, love, and compassion. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and God's blessings to all of you! Grace and Peace,

—Rosemary and Richard Gibson

Growing in Faith Together

This year's stewardship theme, "GIFT – Growing in Faith Together," reminds us of a continued commitment to one another, and our commitment to God to continue growing in our Christian faith.

Visit gcpc.org/gift2022 to enter your 2022 pledge. If we haven't heard from you by December 6, we will assume your pledge will remain the same for 2022.

2022 VISION

Visioning Day 2022 was a very valuable time as we focused on our core values and healthy congregation practices. Our mission was to look at our core values and identify those that are embodied in all that we do. We did this with some information gathering. We answered the question, *"If you met someone who had never been to GCPC, and they asked for a story about GCPC, what story would you tell?"* We made lists of how our calendar and budget reveal what areas are priorities. From these lists we began to form core values that reflect the passions and priorities of GCPC. Among these values are: inclusiveness, engagement, service, education, discipleship, music and worship, Interfaith openness, denominational involvement, community.

What does this have to do with a strategy for the future? Laura Stephens-Reed, clergy and congregational coach, answers saying, *"While many churches are shrinking in members and money, the best response is not to double down on what we've always done or try to be something we're not. It is to claim our purpose and live toward it. This is not a magic recipe for growth in numbers, but it is a key ingredient in increasing our impact on those who need to know about Christ's love for us all."*

We have a team of volunteers who will be working to fine tune our list into a document that can be used to guide our ministry and inform the community about the unique and inspiring congregation of GCPC.

Watch for more information.

The Season of Advent

Hope is waiting in faith, and this will be the focus of worship this Advent season. In Romans 4:18, the apostle Paul reminded the church that Abraham held on to hope beyond hope. In the time we have been living, we too, need Paul's reminder to hold on to hope beyond hope. Each Sunday, our themes will listen to biblical stories from the prophets and teachers who encouraged the people to place their hope in God, even though they were weary.

We will consider the expansive contours of hope through word, music, and the lighting of the Advent candles, with the themes below.

Services at 9:30am, In-Person, Facebook and Zoom.

Hear Hope

November 28, The First Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 9:2,6-7, John 1:14

See Hope

December 5, The Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 9:2, John 1:1-5

Share Hope

December 12, The Third Sunday of Advent – Mark 2:1-12

Proclaim Hope

December 19, The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Luke 4:16-21, John 6:28-35

HOPE beyond hope

The Longest Night (*Blue Christmas*)

Sunday, December 19, 7pm; In-Person, Facebook and Zoom

This service is for those who find the holidays less joyous because of missing loved ones, or experiencing life circumstances that are difficult. Find compassion, understanding, and support through hope and love. The Praise Team will share their songs.

Christmas Eve Services

Friday, December 24; In-Person, Facebook and Zoom

5:00pm - Family Service; A creative telling of the ancient story with puppets and children. Joy!, Celebration!, and Exaltation! Singers will share their songs.

8:00pm – A Service of Lessons and Carols with candlelight as we rejoice in our savior's birth; Chancel & Exaltation! Singers will share their songs.

The First Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, December 26, 9:30am; In-Person, Facebook and Zoom

Wear your comfy clothes and come enjoy singing Christmas carols and storytelling. There will be no Sunday school. Enjoy some hot chocolate and treats in Heartland Hall after worship.

Epiphany Sunday

January 2, 9:30am; In-Person, Facebook and Zoom

It's a new year and a time to seek God's revelation to us for 2022. We will start the new year with the Sacrament of Communion and the receiving of star words. Stay for Sunday school in where **our adult classes will combine in Heartland Hall to create a journal or time capsule** to commemorate our faith journey through the global pandemic.

December Sunday School Classes

There is nothing more necessary in these days than hope! When chaos imposes fear on our unsuspecting lives, it is hope that pulls us up and guides us forward. And in helpless seasons when we find there is nothing left within ourselves to rely on, we encounter the depth and fortitude of “hoping against hope” —Romans 4:18.

Throughout the season of Advent, we will focus on the Biblical tradition of hope. The Bible is full of searching people yearning for home. Our Follow Me and Grace Makers Sunday school classes will take a look at some of these stories and learn practices that can help us hear, see, share and proclaim hope.

Adult Education

When Jesus says, “Follow me,” we are being invited into God’s reality of reconciling love. When we choose to follow Jesus, to become a disciple, we are choosing to be taught and formed into someone who is Christlike. Jesus shows us what we are choosing; restored fellowship with God and one another.



Follow Me is a Biblical study of the practices of faith in a whole new learning format. The curriculum is divided into 4–6 week units that address a particular faith practice.

The Advent study will focus on, “Hope.”

Come for a unit, come for a class, or come every Sunday! The adult class meets in Room 3.

Take a look at what’s coming up:

December 5–December 19 **Hope:** Hope is Waiting in Faith

There will be no Sunday School on December 26. Join us for worship at 9:30am.

January 2 **The Practice of Memory:** Come make a journal or time capsule with your story of faith and the pandemic. (adult classes only, in Heartland Hall)

January 9–February 6 **Baptize:** Remember Your Baptism; Cross the Divide; Die and Rise; Honor the Body

You can Zoom in at: <https://tinyurl.com/yanmupj9>.

Follow Me Café Conversations

If you are looking for a more reflective, light conversation about discipleship, join Rev. Mitch for a Café Conversation. These conversations provide brief information and invite a self-guided study. **This class meets in Room 21.**

Church (PCUSA) and Society Adult Education Class

December 5 - 19, Room 4.

Appropriately for the Advent Season the Church and Society adult education class will be “**The Troubled Land of Jesus’ Birth.**”

Dating from the establishment of modern day Israel in 1948, there has been constant turmoil in the area of Israel-Palestine. What is the history? What has the PCUSA had to say about this issue?

Pastor Mitch travelled to this area in 2014 and will share his perspectives along with discussion leader Dave Pack. Others who have travelled to this area are encouraged to share their experiences.

We often speak of Jesus as the “prince of peace,” but the land of his birth has known little peace in modern days.

Bring your Bible. The class will meet in Room 4. You can Zoom in at: <https://tinyurl.com/krd5pz84>.



Join the Sunday School Team!

We are in need of Sunday school teachers for our 2’s and 3’s Sunday school class as well as substitute teachers for all grades.

If you love working with children and would like to be part of this program, please contact Rev. Sue at sue.trigger@gcpc.org.



MUSIC NOTES

MUSIC IN WORSHIP FOR ADVENT 2021 & EPIPHANY 2022



Attend in-person, or watch on Facebook or Zoom.

***We missed this special program last year,
but in 2021...it's back!***

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.

You'll hear our children, youth, and adults singing and ringing some of our Christmas favorites. We'll also throw in some funny Christmas videos and **YOU will get to sing some carols & songs!**

It's a "don't miss event!"

Other Special Music Services:

Sunday, December 12th

3rd Sunday of Advent

- Chancel Quartet and the GCPC Orchestra will share their songs

*A safety note about this instrumental presentation:
GCPC's Orchestra will present their songs LIVE in the sanctuary from the choir loft. All instrumentalists are fully vaccinated, will be masked, and will be distanced from each other and the congregation. In addition, wind instruments will have the safety precaution of having a bell cover over the bell of their instruments. As always, this worship service will also be available online to view and participate in.

Sunday, January 2nd

Epiphany Sunday

- Kat Mason, flute and Bob Dover, clarinet duet; Christopher Callender, acoustic guitar solo; and Chancel Quartet will share their songs.

MORE MUSIC DETAILS TO COME FOR 2022!

Sunday, December 5th, 9:30am

2nd Sunday of ADVENT

Presented by Praise Team – Carrie DeVries, director

Songs include:

"O Come, O Come Emmanuel" by KING & COUNTRY

"Be Born In Me (MARY)"

from music inspired by The Story by Francesca Battistelli

"Joseph's Lullaby" by Mercy Me

"Light of the Stable" by Selah

*"Gloria/Angels We Have Heard on High" by Casting Crowns
and on*

Sunday, December 19th at 9:30am

The 4th Sunday of ADVENT

**by Chancel & Exaltation! Singers and
Instrumentalists***

– Linda Dover, organist, Rebecca Prater
and Patrick O'Halloran, directors

Songs include:

"Rise, Shine!" by Marques L. A. Garrett & Tom Trenney

"What Strangers Are These?"

*arr. Dan Forrest with Katie Hearn, flute
and Christopher Callender, guitar*

*"Shepherd, Play Your Pipes Tonight"
by Mark Shepperd – with Bob Dover, clarinet*

*"Angels We Have Heard on High"
arr. Mack Wilberg – with Linda Dover, organ*

"Peace On Earth" by Christopher G. Krug

*A safety note about this choral presentation:

Chancel Choir & Exaltation! Singers I, II, & III will combine to present their songs LIVE in the sanctuary from the choir loft. All singers are fully vaccinated, will be masked, and will be distanced from each other and the congregation. As always, this worship service will also be available online to view and participate in.

Youth Page

Recent Activities

November was a big month for us! We had a hayride and bonfire at Heartland Camp, adopted a young person for Red Bag who we shopped for, and had our homeless night event! We also had a gift-wrapping fundraiser for Red Bag KC. A good mix of service work and fun!

Homeless Night 2021

On November 20th we hosted our annual homeless night event. This year we went to the Veteran's Community Project on 89th and Troost to tour their tiny home village and learn about their amazing program. Then we returned to church to engage in a poverty simulation activity to get a feel for some of the issues people deal with when trying to obtain housing, employment, food, and health with a limited or no income. The students had to buy their own dinners with fake money that they earned in the activity. Finally, we ended by sleeping in cardboard boxes on the concrete drive in front of the church to help imagine ourselves in the shoes of those without homes. We thank our God that we all had warm homes to return to on Sunday and pray we can make a difference in the lives of those who do not.

Coming Up

In December we will take part in the Christmas Exclamation! Event and have a Christmas Party with youth from Knox Presbyterian among other things.

M&M

We are in the beginning stages of planning our high school M&M trip for 2022!

Who: GCPC youth currently in 8th grade or above – we are extending the top limit to include recent grads.

When: Either the 2nd or 3rd full week of June 2022 (somewhere between June 10-25).

Where: Location TBD but the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota is high on the list.

Details: We will travel by bus or van and serve various organizations for 4-5 days with one fun day. Our musicians provide 4-5 performances throughout the week.

Photos:

- Homeless Night, November 20
- Hope beyond Hope Advent Fair, November 28







GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Inclusive. Family Oriented. Welcoming.

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gcpc.org



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Twitter: @GraceCovPres

Instagram: @gcpc_overlandpark

CELEBRATING GOD'S ALL ENCOMPASSING LOVE!

CHURCH STAFF

Co Pastors

- Office hours: Monday-Thursday
Mitch Trigger, mitch.trigger@gcpc.orgext.18
Sue Trigger, sue.trigger@gcpc.orgext.15

Director of Music Ministries

- Office hours: Monday-Wednesday, Friday
Rebecca Prater, rebecca.prater@gcpc.org .. ext. 13

Church Administrator

- Office hours: Monday-Friday
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Director of Youth Ministries

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Finance Administrator..... Tara Hyder
Mon. 8-4; Tues./Weds. 8-12; /Thurs./Fri. by Appt.

Organist Linda Dover

Contemporary Music Coord. Carrie DeVries

Contemporary Music Drummer.....Daniel Cole

Child Care Coordinator.....Carolyn Chaffin

Wedding Coordinator.....Lara Schesser

Funeral CoordinatorMary Sue Thomas

ELDERS

Jim Byrd	Angela Krug
Ric Cummings	Mike Mattix
Miles Dalton (youth)	Terri Monrad
Andrew Frye	Diane Schmit
Katie Hearn	Kylie Sutherland (youth)
Cheryl Johnson	Susan Sutherland
Jane Knoche	Bill Turner

SUPPORT STAFF

Deacon ModeratorAnita Hadel
Operating Committee.....Susan Sutherland,
Mike Mattix, Terri Monrad, Ric Cummings
Newsletter Editor/Marketing..... Kim Krueger
Prayer ChainCheryl Johnson
Website AdministratorsKim Krueger,
Patrick Bell

MINISTRY UNITS

Congregational Nurture Unit Moderators
Connections and Care..... Diane Schmit
Worship and Music..... Melanie Townsend,
Katie Hearn

Education Ministry Unit Moderators
AdultMaggie Blankers
ChildrenErin Frye, Angela Krug
Youth.....Kaki Conti

Reach Out Ministry Unit Moderators
Kairos Rick Randolph
MissionMikki Walker
WelcomingVacant

Supportive Ministry Unit Moderators
FacilityMarc Feyh
GenerosityDavid Sutherland
Finance.....Jim Byrd
Personnel Kevin Mason

Worship Schedule

9:30am In-Person & Online Worship
Visit gcpc.org/online for links

Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines

January 2022 issue - Deadline, December 17
February 2022 issue - Deadline, January 18