



REAL FAITH | REAL STORIES | REAL GRACE

# GRACE NOTES

## A Joyous Advent and Christmas Season to All!

It is hard for us to believe, but we have come to the end of another year. It doesn't seem all that different from the beginning of 2022 when we had our final brief suspension of in-person worship. Today we're hearing news of increased cases of influenza, RSV, and COVID, and many of us are going back to wearing masks in public, as much for the health of loved ones and friends as for ourselves. With the continued news of violence around the world, mass shootings in the USA, and political division and in-fighting, it would be easy to overlook and fail to appreciate the true gift of Christmas.

As Christians, we celebrate this season for the gift God gave us in his Son, Jesus. That is not as simple as it sounds. People who don't regularly attend church will find themselves attending services during the holidays, especially on Christmas Eve. Even people who will never set foot inside a church will be glad it's Christmas time. It's because there is a feeling associated with this time of year that we all need – hope.

Sometimes Christians complain that Christmas has become too commercialized and that we're missing the real meaning of Christmas. Yet we've found that in the stories about Santa Claus or Rudolph or even the Grinch, there are messages that reflect what the birth and life of Jesus was all about. They are stories that show people learning to care for each other, people learning to respect each other in spite of (and because of) their differences, and people learning that to be truly happy is based on more than just receiving presents. They are stories that remind us of what we all truly want this world to be like. Our job – yours and ours – is to share the message with everyone that this world they long for, a world of peace and justice and love, is possible because of the birth of a tiny child. A very special child.

We hope that this season of beginnings will be a time of new beginnings for all of us. As we celebrate Christ's birth, may we all feel renewed in our hopes and strive to make our families, our church, and our community true reflections of God's love for us and hope for us. As we celebrate the season and give presents to one another, please remember to give a very important present. As the last verse of the Christmas carol "In the Bleak Midwinter" puts it so eloquently....

"What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part,  
Yet what I can, I give him: Give my heart."

May the knowledge of the love of God be with you all and with those you love. —Mitch & Sue



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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[gcpc.org](http://gcpc.org)

In-Person Worship and Online Worship every Sunday on Facebook and Zoom.

Visit [gcpc.org/online](http://gcpc.org/online) for links!



# The Songs of Christmas

## A Song-filled Advent!

You probably read this title and thought, “we always have a song-filled Advent/Christmas at Grace Covenant” and you’d be right. But this title describes our Advent sermon series The Songs of Christmas – a look at the biblical songs in the story of Jesus’ birth.

A lot of Scripture passages are the words of songs sung by prophets, kings, messengers, and more, but we don’t recognize them that way – they don’t read or look like songs we know. That may be true, but they are songs just the same and there are songs that mark the important moments in the story of Jesus’ birth found in the Gospel of Luke.

Exploring these biblical songs will only add to our musical emphasis during the Season of Advent.

**December 4:** The Second Sunday of Advent  
*A Song of Hope* (Luke 1:67-79); Songs will be shared in worship by GCPC Orchestra, Pam Smith Kelly, director

**December 11:** The Third Sunday of Advent  
*A Song of Good News* (Luke 3:1-18); Songs will be shared in worship by Grace Mountain, Christopher Callender, director and by Praise Team, Carrie DeVries, director

**December 18:** The Fourth Sunday of Advent  
*A Song of Joy* (Luke 2:14); Songs will be shared in worship by Chancel & Exaltation! Singers and Instrumentalists, Rebecca Prater, director

**Christmas Day, December 25:** *A Song of Peace* (Luke 2:28-32); Organ Led with Kate, Sue, Charlie, and Mitch Trigger, quartet

## Christmas Eve Services

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

### 5:00pm Worship

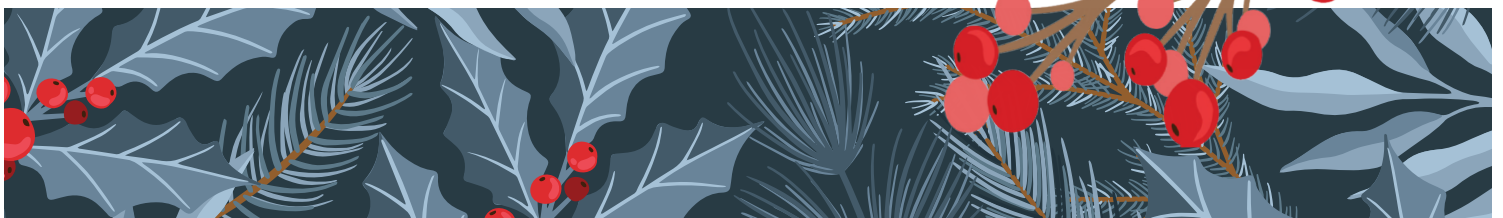
This family friendly service will feature our children and youth as they take us to the manger with Joseph and Mary and their newborn son. The youngest worshippers will join in lighting their own glo stick candle with the congregation to sing Silent Night. Music will include Lindsay & Christopher Callender, Joy! Singers, Celebration! Choir, and Christopher Callender, guitar, will lead “Silent Night.”

### 8:00pm Worship

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.” Music will be provided by Chancel and Exaltation! Singers and instrumentalists.

## Pajama Sunday! Christmas Day, 9:30am

Wear your holiday pj’s (or other comfy clothes) and join us Christmas morning as we celebrate Jesus’ coming into the world. This joyful service will be filled with carols and storytelling. The Trigger family quartet will share a special Croatian carol in their matching jammies of course.





## The Longest Night (Blue Christmas)

**Sunday, December 18, 7pm**

The Christmas season is often marked by expressions of joy, excitement, and happiness. It's a time for family to gather and for churches to worship pointing to the hope that is found in the coming of the Christ child. However, this time of joy and expectation can often overshadow the pain and hurt many experience during this season, when the world's merriment puts their grief and sorrow in stark relief.

One of the greatest acts of pastoral care in the Advent season is to offer a service known as a Service of the Longest Night or a Blue Christmas Service. It's a worship service scheduled around the winter solstice (*the longest night of the calendar year*) and it just happens to fall on or around December 21st every year. There's a connection between the long nights just before Christmas, and the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with loss. This service is not only for those of us grieving the loss of a loved one, but also for those people facing the challenges of illnesses, troubles with relationships or work situations, or any other difficulty that makes it hard to be joyful.

Including this service amid the hustle and bustle of your other Christmas services, rituals, parties, and obligations is a tremendous witness to those who are struggling in our community. It's a witness to them that the Christ child comes as a sign of hope in the face of despair. And it's a witness that their church is intentional about upholding members of the community in whatever season of life they may find them.



**Carols  
Cookies &  
Cocoa**

**Everyone is invited!**  
**Sunday, December 11**

Meet in Heartland Hall at 5pm to divide into groups. We will carol at homes around the neighborhood, then return to the church by 6pm for cookies and cocoa.

Wear a Victorian costume or hat, or wear something festive!

Contact Rev. Sue for more information.  
Sponsored by Connections and Care, Children's Team and Staff.

## December Office Hours

The church offices will be closed Monday and Tuesday, December 26 and 27. Mitch and Sue will be enjoying the Christmas week off.

In addition, several staff members will be taking vacation time that and the following week. Please call ahead if you plan to come to the church to make sure the building is open. Thank you!

## Sunday School Notice

There will be no Sunday school classes on December 25 or January 1st.

We'll see you next year on January 8, 2023.







# MUSIC NOTES

**The Seasons of Advent and Christmas are upon us!**

**As a part of “*The Songs of Christmas*”  
the Music Ministry will present the following:**

**December 4th – the 2nd Sunday of Advent**

songs will be shared in worship by

**GCPC Orchestra**

Pam Smith Kelly, director

*“Symphonic Prelude on ADESTE FIDELIS”*

by Claude T. Smith, arr. Joseph Benjamin Earp

*“Greensleeves”*

by Claude T. Smith, arr. Joseph Benjamin Earp

*“Finale from ‘Rhapsody on Christmas Carols’”*

by Claude T. Smith

**December 11th – the 3rd Sunday of Advent**

songs will be shared in worship by

**Praise Team**

Carrie DeVries, director

*“Prepare Him Room”*

by Rebecca Elliott & Dave Fournier

as sung by Sovereign Grace

*“Come Lord Jesus”*

by Diane Thiel-Sharp, Vineyard Worship

*“Light of the World,”*

as sung by We the Kingdom

Click link below to listen to the playlist of  
Praise Team’s songs to familiarize  
yourself with them.

[Grace PT Dec 11 2022 - YouTube](#)

**GCPC’s Grace Mountain**

Christopher Callender, director

*“Christmas Time’s A-Comin’”*

by Benjamin “Tex” Logan

as sung by Rhonda Vincent

**December 18th – the 4th Sunday of Advent**

songs will be shared in worship by

**Chancel & Exaltation! Singers  
& Instrumentalists**

Rebecca Prater, director

*“On This Day Earth Shall Sing”*

arr. Bryan L. Greer

Linda Dover, organ – Chris Krug, piano

*“Sing We Now of Christmas”*

arr. Kyle Pederson

Bob Dover, clarinet

*“Angels from the Realms of Glory”*

arr. Dan Forrest

Linda Dover & Edwin Fukunaga, piano four-hands

Chris Lindsay, violin

*“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”*

arr. Marianne Forman

Chris Lindsay, violin

*“Brightest and Best”*

arr. Shawn Kirchner

Chris Lindsay, violin – Trey Bures, string bass

***Please see “The Songs of Christmas” article on page 2  
for details on December 24th Christmas Eve Music.***

## Wishing Daniel Cole Godspeed

After 9 years as our Contemporary Music Drummer, Daniel Cole’s last Sunday with us will be December 11th. As you know, Daniel is an exceptional drummer and as such he plays for several bands around the city. His busy performing career is leading him now to focus his time more exclusively on performance. Daniel has not only played with our Praise Team leading worship, but he’s also often played with many of our other ensembles (e.g., Dixieland Band, Orchestra, Chancel Choir, Exaltation!, & Charter Ringers). He will be greatly missed. Please join me in wishing Daniel blessings in his journey. —Rebecca Prater







Mark your calendars for  
**Sunday, December 4th at 6pm**  
**"A Christmas Exclamation!"**

Hear our 4-year-olds through adults  
sing & ring Christmas favorites then join  
in with the congregation to sing  
Christmas carols and songs.

We'll also have some fun videos and treats for the kids.  
**This fun holiday program is a "don't miss event!"**

## Rebecca Prater's Upcoming Surgery and Recovery

About one year ago I was diagnosed with an inner-ear disorder, Ménière's disease. This disorder has progressed to the point where I will be having an inner ear procedure followed by receiving a cochlear implant on Tuesday, December 27th. The recovery time for the two procedures will be approximately six weeks. In my absence you will be in very capable hands. Patrick O'Halloran will be directing Chancel & Exaltation! Singers. Katie Hearn, Music Team Moderator and Kathy Bures, Worship Team Moderator as well as Music Team members and Staff will be overseeing many of the administrative duties.

I am grateful for a congregation who is supportive and caring during times like these. I am especially thankful for your prayers.

—Rebecca Prater, Director of Music Ministries

## Clerk's Corner

**Session met on November 21.** We heard many reports and took a few actions.

Here are some of the highlights:

**Music Team** is prepared for the fact that Katie Hearn will have a baby about the time that Rebecca Prater has surgery. Most plans for the first quarter are in place already. Patrick O'Halloran will direct choirs in Rebecca's absence and Celia Nicholas and Kathy Bures have agreed to fill any team leadership voids that might occur.

**Finance Team** has started looking at budget requests from teams and are anticipating needing about \$840,000 to meet those requests as opposed to \$707,000 last year. They will have a budget for Session to consider at the December meeting. Session passed resolutions allowing for Aaron Soule (*Treasurer*) and Terri Monrad (*Trustee*) to receive duplicates of the bank statements for our general accounts and Bob Bonney (*Endowment Moderator*) to receive duplicate bank statements for our endowment fund account. This is simply good practice so that our Finance Secretary is not the only person who sees the statements on a regular basis.

**Generosity Team** has received 67 pledges totaling \$392,581 as of November 20.

**Facilities Team** delivered a "state of the building" report, summarizing tasks achieved in 2022 and listing project to come in 2023. Two significant projects will be updating our Fire Protection System (which is currently not behaving properly) and addressing the humidity and mold issues on the lower level before summer.

**Nominating Team** is working on finding Deacons to serve in the new year. Because we've had a few Deacons stay on for an extra year and had a gap, they are currently seeking SIX members to serve as Deacons for the next term. Please consider prayerfully when they call.

**Personnel Team** reported the resignation of Daniel Cole. His last Sunday with us will be December 11. Session passed a motion from Personnel team adding Juneteenth as a staff holiday.

**The Annual Meeting** will be held on January 29, 2023, right after worship.

**Visioning Day** will be held on February 4, from 9-noon. We seem to have some momentum going as a congregation, so this is an opportunity to set goals and evaluate the resources we have (and need) to achieve those goals.

If you have any questions, feel free to call or e-mail me!  
—Melanie Townsend, Clerk of Session

# Grace Studies: For Kids

## Pre-school 2-4 years:

Pre-school children will grow in grace and gratitude this year! They will gather to explore and respond to God's grace and be sent out to love and serve God.



When our children are at home, families can use these tools to explore God's grace and gratitude each day:

- Grace Sightings: the weekly Bible story with age-appropriate activities for your family to do at home.
- Audio Recordings: the weekly Bible story brought to life by endearing readings and sound effects.
- E-book: the quarter's colorful illustrations, Bible stories, and Grace Sightings in iBook and Kindle formats.

Find these tools at:

[www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads).

## K- 5/6th Grace Makers:

At Grace Covenant, our elementary grades enjoy a program that is unique to GCPC. We create our own lesson plans that encourage learning through a variety of learning modes: art, music, drama, science, cooking, kinesthetic learning and more. During December, classes will focus on the story of Jesus' birth. We are excited to introduce our first computer lab into the workshop rotation!



# Generosity Team Announcement

*A message shared in our November 20th Sunday Service, during the Stewardship Time from Dave Sutherland, chair of Generosity Team.*

So we've had a big bump in the number of pledges made in the past week. Thank you very much, it is very much appreciated from all of us on the Generosity team.

There are two more weeks to go until we lock in the pledges. We've been working with the Finance team to get ready a budget ready for Session in December.

One thing we have been looking at too, is how people have been giving this year. So our financial system breaks it down by those who have not given anything against their pledge this year, 0%, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51%-75%, 76%-99% and 100%. My wife Susan and I are in the 76% - 99% since we give monthly. Once next month hits, we will bump to the 100%. We do have a number of people who are still at 0%, both people who rolled over their pledge and people who also submitted a pledge. So please if you are able to, catch up as best you can. If you can't, let us know. That's okay too, we understand all circumstances. It helps us to take into account when we do the rollovers this year, should we count that as a rollover if you are unable to give this last year.

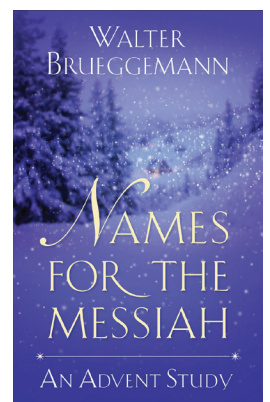
Thank you very much again for giving, it is so, so, so appreciated. We look forward to sharing more news in two weeks!

# Grace Studies: Adult Study Opportunity

## ***Names for the Messiah* by Walter Brueggemann**

**Sundays through December 18**

Isaiah 9:6 pronounces four titles for the coming Messiah: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Brueggemann, one of our most admired Old Testament scholars, reconstructs the first-century Jewish expectations for a deliverer, then evaluates how Jesus did and did not fulfill them. Join Joel Ilten for this uplifting study. You will be able to observe the study by remaining on the worship Zoom link. Look for the link on our website at: <https://gcpc.org/worship/online-worship> or in the Midweek Announcement email.





# Youth Page

## November Reconnect and Service projects

We have had three Reconnect events this November and they have been a blast. We played games, enjoyed delicious meals together, and dived into Old Testament stories. This month we were able to shop, pack and pass out M&M tubes in hopes to serve our community and church; here are some of the projects we worked on:

- Our youth loaded packages including small gifts and notes from many in our congregation and sent them to our recent high school graduates. We were also able to pass out our M&M tubes for our annual youth fundraiser. Contributions to our summer trips are encouraged!
- We purchased gifts for our Red Bag recipient, a 12-year-old boy named Jacob, and have wrapped the gifts that he will be able to open on Christmas morning.
- We also wrapped gifts for other Red Bag recipients as a fundraiser for the Red Bag project

## Homeless Night!

We had our annual homeless night event November 19 – 20. We did not let the extreme cold get in the way of having an amazing and educational time! We were able to build cardboard boxes to sleep in, make over 100 sandwiches and other food for the organization Free Hot Soup to hand out, discuss homelessness, and worship together. This year we took a fieldtrip to a spot below a bridge overpass to hear the story of a young woman who was previously homeless. We intended to eat some extra PB&J sandwiches for dinner but instead were graciously offered a place at the Arabic Fellowship table – we were surprised and blessed by their hospitality! You could say we had a cool time, or we were chilling with the homies, or we were frozen with joy.

## Upcoming Events!

We have some exciting events coming up in December!

- **Reconnect** will take place in December on each Sunday that we don't have an evening event. We will meet from 10:45am - 12:45pm to enjoy games, bible lessons, and lunch.
- **Progressive Dinner and Gift Exchange.** We are still determining the date for progressive dinner and would like all of our students to let us know which date is best for them (December 11, December 18, or January 8).
- **A Christmas Exclamation** Is coming up on December 4th. We would love to see everyone there. We look forward to supporting our middle and high school singers and ringers!







## GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**Inclusive. Family Oriented. Welcoming.**

11100 College Boulevard  
Overland Park, KS 66210  
Phone: 913-345-1256

**gcpc.org**

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Facebook: [facebook.com/GraceCovenantPresbyterian](https://facebook.com/GraceCovenantPresbyterian)

Instagram: @gcpc\_overlandpark



## CELEBRATING GOD'S ALL ENCOMPASSING LOVE!

### CHURCH STAFF

#### Co Pastors

- Office hours: Monday-Thursday  
Mitch Trigger, [mitch.trigger@gcpc.org](mailto:mitch.trigger@gcpc.org) .....ext.18  
Sue Trigger, [sue.trigger@gcpc.org](mailto:sue.trigger@gcpc.org) .....ext.15

#### Director of Music Ministries

- Office hours: Monday-Wednesday, Friday  
Rebecca Prater, [rebecca.prater@gcpc.org](mailto:rebecca.prater@gcpc.org) .. ext. 13

#### Church Administrator

- Office hours: Monday-Friday  
Patrick Bell, [patrick.bell@gcpc.org](mailto:patrick.bell@gcpc.org) ..... ext. 10

#### Director of Youth Ministries

**Technical Director of Worship**  
- Office hours: Monday-Thursday  
Miles McDonald, [miles.mcdonald@gcpc.org](mailto:miles.mcdonald@gcpc.org) .. ext. 17

**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 Coordinator** .....Mary Sue Thomas

### ELDERS

Jim Byrd	Angela Krug
Ric Cummings	Jake Schmidt
Miles Dalton (youth)	Terri Monrad
Andrew Frye	Joy Circo
Katie Hearn	Tom Stroud
Melanie Townsend	Lara Schesser
Jane Knoche	Bill Turner

### SUPPORT STAFF

Deacon Moderator .....Meredith Watson  
Operating Committee..... Terri Monrad,  
Ric Cummings, Katie Hearn, Angela Krug  
Newsletter Editor/Marketing..... Kim Krueger  
Prayer Chain ..... Cheryl Johnson  
Website Administrators ..... Kim Krueger,  
Patrick Bell

### MINISTRY UNITS

#### Congregational Nurture Unit Moderators

Connections and Care.....Jake Schmidt  
Worship and Music..... Kathy Bures,  
Katie Hearn

#### Education Ministry Unit Moderators

Adult ..... Tom Stroud  
Children .....Erin Frye, Angela Krug  
Youth..... Bill Turner

#### Reach Out Ministry Unit Moderators

Kairos ..... Rick Randolph  
Mission ..... Mikki Walker  
Welcoming ..... Kathy Williams

#### Supportive Ministry Unit Moderators

Facility ..... Liz Chandler  
Generosity ..... David Sutherland  
Finance..... Jim Byrd  
Personnel ..... Kevin Mason

### Worship Schedule

9:30am Worship  
In-Person, Facebook & Zoom  
Visit [gcpc.org/online](https://gcpc.org/online) for links

### Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines

January 2023 issue - Deadline, December 20  
February 2023 issue - Deadline, January 20