



GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest;
to all who mourn and long for comfort;
to all who struggle and desire victory;
to all who sin and need a Savior;
to all who are strangers and want fellowship;
to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness;
and to all who will come,
this church opens wide her doors
and offers welcome
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Church Staff & Officers

Brad Wright

Lead Pastor

Kyle Bobos

Associate Pastor

Jaime Jimenez

Assistant Pastor

Caleb McDuffee

Student Ministries

Elders

Brent Allmon

Dan Brink

Jon Green

Rob McIntosh

Mark Moore

Damon Webster

Andy Yung

Diaconal Ministry Team

Byron Bevers

Matt Bradshaw

Ann Green

Mark Hill

Scott Johnston

Jennifer McIntosh

Bev Moncla

Mike Ryan

Joe Tison

Sunny Yung

Grace Church is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

Reflections

“A prison cell, in which one waits, hopes...and is completely dependent on the fact that the door of freedom has to be opened from the outside, is not a bad picture of Advent.”

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1943

Advent is patience. It's how God has made us a people of promise, in a world of impatience.

— Stanley Hauerwas

I marvel at the Lord, the Creator of the universe, who is born, not surrounded by gold and silver, but by mud and clay.

— St. Jerome of Bethlehem (340-420)
Proclaiming the Christmas Gospel

+ ADVENT + CHRISTMAS + EPIPHANY + LENT + EASTER + PENTECOST +

ADVENT SEASON

Advent marks the beginning of the church calendar as we reenter the story of anticipating the birth of the promised newborn King. In Advent, we celebrate the beginning and ending of Christ's victory over the powers of evil. We call upon God to accomplish that victory in our own lives, to break in on us, to be born in our hearts, and to create us anew. The Older Testament looks forward to the coming of the King and we experience again waiting for him as Christmas morning approaches. Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, anticipation, preparation, and longing.

Grace Presbyterian Church

December 8, 2023

10:30 AM

Second Sunday in Advent

Prelude

Words of Welcome¹

Praise

Call to Worship

Luke 2:10-14

Minister: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

People: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Minister: This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

People: (Loudly) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹ As a courtesy, please program all communication devices to silent mode. Thank you!

Song of Praise

Angels We Have Heard On High

Edward Shippen Barnes and James Chadwick

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing o'er the plains
And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains

Chorus:
Gloria
In excelsis Deo
Gloria
In excelsis Deo

Shepherds why this jubilee
Why your joyous strains prolong
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song (chorus)

Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing
Come adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord the newborn King (chorus)

Prayer of Adoration

Lighting of the Advent Candle²

The Harder Family

Leader: The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end. It is a symbol of God's unending love and faithfulness.

People: Its light reminds us of Jesus, the light of the world. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Leader: Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.

People: If we walk in the light, as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Leader: We are all children of the light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness.

ALL: Jesus said, "Everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness."

²Lighting the Advent wreath originated in Germany in the nineteenth century, based on a Roman custom of the ceremonial entrance of a ruler to a province or city as his 'advent' (from the Latin *adventus*: 'arrival'). The wreath consists of four candles on the outside of the wreath and one candle in the center. One candle is lit the first Sunday of Advent. Two are lit the 2nd Sunday, and so on. Each of the candles has special significance: The first is the prophecy candle; the second is the Bethlehem candle; the third is the Angel's candle; the 4th is the Shepherd's candle; and the center candle is the Christ candle, lit at Christmas.

Song of Response

Come Oh Redeemer Come

Fernando Ortega

Father enthroned on high
Holy holy
Ancient eternal light
Hear our prayer

Chorus:
Come oh Redeemer come
Grant us mercy
Come oh Redeemer come
Grant us peace

Lord save us from the dark
Of our striving
Faithless and troubled hearts
Weighed down (chorus)

Renewal

Call to Renewal

Romans 13:8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Confession of Sin

*Minister &
People:*

*Merciful God, always with us, always coming:
We confess that we do not know how to prepare for your Advent.
We have forgotten how to hope in miracles;
we have ignored the promise of your kingdom;
we get distracted by all the busyness of this season.*

*Forgive us, God.
Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,
the intelligent courage of the Magi,
and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph,
that we may journey with them to Bethlehem
and find the good news of a child born for us.*

*Now, in the quiet of our hearts,
we ask you to make us ready for his coming.
In Jesus name we pray, Amen.*

Private Reflection and Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Leader: All who believe in Christ receive forgiveness of sins through his name.

People: *Thanks be to God for his forgiveness!*

Song of Thanksgiving

His Mercy Is More

Matt Boswell and Matt Papa

What love could remember no wrongs we have done
Omniscient, all knowing, He counts not their sum
Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

What patience would wait as we constantly roam
What Father, so tender, is calling us home
He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

Chorus:

Praise the Lord His mercy is more
Stronger than darkness new every morn
Our sins they are many His mercy is more

What riches of kindness He lavished on us
His blood was the payment, His life was the cost
We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more (chorus)

The Prayers of the People *(concluded with the Lord's prayer)*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen!

Peace of God

Minister: May the peace of Christ be with you!

People: And also with you.

*If parents prefer, children 4 years old – 2nd grade
are invited to attend Children's Church in the Education Building at this time.*

Doxology

Thomas Ken & Bob Kauflin

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
In heaven above and earth below:
Praise God the Father and the Son,
Praise God the Spirit, three-in-one.

Announcements

Commitment

The Offering

The offering is a way for members and friends of Grace Church to support the church's mission and ministry. If you are our guest today, please feel under no compulsion to give.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Minister: This is the Word of the LORD.

People: Thanks be to God!

Sermon

Pastor Brad Wright

The Magi's Hope
LIVING INTO ADVENT HOPE

Communion

Guidelines for Reception of Communion

Communion is a family meal for Christians. We welcome all committed followers of Jesus Christ to partake of this sacrament: those who are baptized members of a congregation which proclaims the gospel, who are at peace with God and with their neighbor, and who seek strength to live more faithfully for Christ. If you are not a Christian, or if you are not prepared to share in this meal, we encourage you to spend this time in prayer using the prayers that follow as guidelines. We hope that this time is helpful as you consider your relationship with Jesus Christ, and with his people, the church.

The Great Thanksgiving

Minister: Therefore, lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord!

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise!

Minister: Together we proclaim the mystery of faith.

All: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

Song of Communion

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Henry Sloane Coffin, John Mason Neale, and Thomas Helmore

O come O come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

Chorus:
Rejoice rejoice Emmanuel
Shall come to thee O Israel

O come, thou Rod of Jesse free
thine own from Satan's tyranny
from depths of hell thy people save
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave (chorus)

O come Thou Dayspring from on high
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight (chorus)

Prayer of Consecration and the Words of Institution

Prayer for those not communing:

Prayer for Covenant Children (Not Yet Confirmed)

Lord Jesus, thank you for placing me inside your family, the church. Help me more and more to know you, to love you, and to follow you as your faithful disciple. Amen.

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth and the life. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but, through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared to hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior. Amen.

Prayer for Those Struggling with Sin

Lord Jesus, grant that I may see in you the fulfillment of all my needs, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and run with perseverance the race set before me, looking only to you, the author and finisher of my faith. Amen.

Prayer of Commitment

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism and in a life of committed discipleship in your church. Grant that I may take the necessary steps to be one with your people, and live in the fullness of your Spirit. Amen.

Distribution of the Bread and the Cup

Once the stations are ready, please come forward, row by row, to receive the elements. Once everyone has returned to their seat, we will stand together and sing the final verse from our Song of Commitment.

Song of Commitment

O Come O Come Emmanuel

Henry Sloane Coffin, John Mason Neale, and Thomas Helmore

O come thou Key of David come
And open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the way the leads on high
And close the path to misery

Chorus:
Rejoice rejoice Emmanuel
Shall come to thee O Israel

Benediction³

Isaiah 40:10

Minister: See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him and his reward accompanies him.

People: *Amen! Rejoice, the King is coming!*

Dismissal

Minister: Now, let us go forth to serve this community and the world as those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: *Thanks be to God!*

The pastoral staff and other church leaders are available following the service to pray with you or to answer your questions about the Christian faith or Grace Church

³The benediction is much more than a wish or even a prayer. It is a renewed ordination of the people of God to their service to each other, to their community and the world. God declares his own favor toward his people.

Worship Music

Joe Beam, percussion
Fang Daniels, cello
Rae Moses, piano
Jennifer Reddick, flute
Stephanie Taylor, vocalist
Timothy Taylor, guitar & vocalist

_____ Welcome, Guests! _____

Welcome to Grace Presbyterian Church! If you would like us to keep you in the loop with what's going on at GPC, *please take a moment to fill out the visitor information form by using the QR code.* We would be happy to meet you!



Ways to Connect at Grace where you can explore, engage, and get involved throughout the week.

- **Church Center App** (GPC Woodlands), use this QR code for a quick link to the app.
- **Our church website**, <https://www.gracewoodlands.org/>



_____ Announcements _____

Our Grace Guest wifi password is *GraceGuest*.

Stewardship Update: Grace thanks you so much for your generous gifts and offerings to our Savior for 2024.

General Fund Giving for November: \$111,816

\$1,092,232: Jan. - Nov. 2024 General Fund Budget

\$1,027,448: Jan. - Nov. 2024 Actual General Fund Income

(\$64,784): 2024 Variance

*2024 GF Budget \$1,191,526

Children's Ministries:

- **Parents of Infants-Three-Yr Olds:** Our nursery classes (ages 8 weeks thru 3 years) provide a warm, nurturing, and well-supervised environment. Our Staff welcomes the opportunity to love your child! When using the nursery, please check-in and label all items (bags, cups, etc.) with your child's name. Contact our Families Pastor, Kyle Bobos, at kyle@gpcwoodlands.org if you have any questions about the nursery.
- **Children's Church is for children ages 4 through 2nd grade.** During the passing of the peace, the children line up with their leader in the back of the sanctuary to exit worship. During the song of communion, children will rejoin their families to observe communion with the rest of the church body. We will gather in room 108 in the Education Building to sing songs, pray, and hear a children's sermon.

Banners Explained: Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. The primary color is Purple. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. This color is also the color of suffering and points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing.

The banner on the left comes from Isaiah 11:1 "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." The prophet Isaiah looks forward to a time when Jesus, a king far mightier than David Jesse's son, would come to rule the world with justice, mercy, and love.

The banner on the right depicts an advent wreath. The green leaves and holly symbolize life brought to us in Jesus, and each Sunday a candle is lit in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah. The white center candle is lit on Christmas eve, and symbolizes purity and truth.