



GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FAITH, SERVICE, CONNECTION

GRACE NOTES

July 2026
Vol 44, Nbr 7

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.

Reports from the Field

Summer gives us an opportunity to slow down a bit, and this year we are spending the season hearing *"Reports from the Field."* Throughout the summer, various ministry teams at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church are helping us reflect on why we do what we do and how each of us can participate in the life and ministry of the church.



It is easy within any community to assume everyone shares the same knowledge and history. But part of being the church is telling the story again and again — remembering why these ministries matter and how they help us live out our faith together. Every ministry of the church is rooted in theology. We are not simply maintaining programs or filling committee assignments. We are responding to God's grace and participating in God's work in the world.

In June, we heard from **KAIROS** about advocacy and from our **Mission Team** about joining God's work in the world. In July, we will explore how our building serves God's kingdom, the theology behind stewardship and generosity, the importance of faith formation, and why caring for one another is central to who we are.

In August, we will hear about worship and music and the ways they shape our lives of faith. Then, on **August 9**, we will bless backpacks and gather for our annual **Ministry Fair** — a chance to learn more about the many ways God is at work through Grace Covenant and the many ways each of us can become involved.

I invite you to spend the summer learning about the opportunities for service and prayerfully considering how your own gifts might be offered for the sake of Christ's ministry. Come hear the reports from the field — and perhaps discover where God is inviting you to join the work.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Karen

A Gift from Our Sister Church

We are deeply grateful to **Overland Park Presbyterian Church**, who blessed us with a **generous financial gift** as they completed their ministry as a congregation. Many of their members have already visited us here at Grace Covenant, and several are planning to join our congregation in the coming months — we look forward to welcoming them! The gift was given *"for the continued ministry of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church,"* and the Finance Committee and Session are now prayerfully considering how it can best serve our church's needs going forward. We'll share updates as those plans take shape.

MUSIC MINISTRY

Celebrating the Joy of Music and Community

Before we look ahead to July, **thank you to EncoreKC!** for sharing their gifts and providing wonderful music leadership in worship during June. We are grateful for the beauty, energy, and generosity they brought to our congregation.

A heartfelt thank you as well to everyone who participated in **Table for Five...Thousand!** From our children and youth to our adult singers, readers, helpers, musicians, and behind-the-scenes volunteers, this project was a beautiful reminder of what can happen when many people offer their gifts together. Hopefully the excitement around this project will help propel us into a joyful and music-filled summer at GCPC, and perhaps even open the door for more opportunities like this in the future.

Music in July

July 5: GCPC Brass We begin July with the joyful and festive sound of GCPC Brass leading us in worship. Coming just after Independence Day, this Sunday gives us a chance to offer gratitude for the blessings of freedom while remembering that our deepest hope and allegiance are found in Christ.

July 12: Praise Team On July 12, the Praise Team will lead us in worship with songs that invite the congregation to sing with energy, prayer, and openness to the Spirit. In this season after Pentecost, our music helps us respond to Christ's call with faith and joy.

July 19: Summer Choir Our Summer Choir returns on July 19, with Allen York also sharing special music. Summer Choir is a wonderful, low-pressure way for singers to help lead worship and a reminder that the church's song belongs to the whole congregation.

July 26: Summer Choir We close the month with Summer Choir singing the beloved anthem "Come Away" by Ken Medema. Chris Krug will lead from the organ and piano, and Chris and Katie Hearn will offer a special piano and flute duet.



Music Wing Upgrades

If you have walked through the Music Wing recently, you may have noticed that some exciting updates are underway. One of the most visible additions will be a new mural painted by Kristin O'Halloran. Kristin is generously sharing her artistic gifts to help bring color, warmth, and creativity to the space where so much of GCPC's music begins each week. Special thanks to Paul Bruns, Bob and Linda Dover, Nelson Townsend, Meredith Watson, Kelly Scarborough, and Donna Heer for their help with walls, painting logistics, and preparation. Thank you also to the Music Team for their help with planning and dreaming about how this space can better reflect the life of our music ministry. More updates are still to come!

Celebrating GCPC: Music & Photos

Do you have any favorite photos of our music ensembles leading worship, singing in concerts, playing instruments, rehearsing, or sharing music together at GCPC? We would love to include photos that help tell the story of music in our congregation. Please send photos to Patrick at patrick.ohalloran@gcpc.org.



MUSIC MINISTRY MOMENTS



KAIROS Klues:

Staying Engaged in Our Community and World

As we celebrate Independence Day on Saturday, July 4, we remember the gathering of the Second Continental Congress in 1776 and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. This year marks the 250th anniversary of that historic moment. For those interested in learning more about the document and the history behind it, the National Archives offers online resources, including a [transcript of the Declaration of Independence](#) and [special July 4 programming](#).

Another thoughtful resource for exploring our nation's story is **Letter from an American**, written by historian and Boston College professor *Heather Cox Richardson*. Since 2019, Richardson and her team have shared daily reflections focused on the health of our democracy. Their [short video series, 250 to 250](#), offers brief insights into the events and ideas that have shaped our country.

PC(USA) & More: Opportunities to Learn, Engage, and Advocate

As people of faith, we are called to live out God's justice, peace, and care for creation in our communities and in the world. **The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** offers many resources and opportunities to learn more about advocacy, social justice, and faithful action.

Explore the work of the [PC\(USA\) through Justice and Peace ministries](#), which provide resources and information on ways Presbyterians are responding to issues of justice, peace, and community well-being.

[The PC\(USA\) Washington Office of Public Witness](#) also helps connect faith and public policy by advocating for policies rooted in Presbyterian values and the General Assembly's social witness commitments.

Looking for ways to continue learning? [Presbyterians for Earth Care \(PEC\)](#) offers ongoing webinars and resources focused on environmental justice and caring for God's creation. Two of the newest webinar offerings include "Climate Injustice" and "A Review of General Assembly." These webinars are available to view and explore anytime.

[Upcoming PEC Webinars](#): (click name above for links)

A Review of General Assembly – A PEC Webinar

Wednesday, July 8, 2026, 6:30pm CST; Presenter: Fred Milligan, PEC Advocacy Committee

Climate Migrants: Neglected Victims of Climate Injustice – A PEC Webinar, Tuesday, June 9, 2026 at 6:30pm CST;

Presenter: Dr. Paul Clements, Western Michigan University

These opportunities invite us to stay informed, deepen our faith, and consider how we can participate in God's work of justice, peace, and creation care.

The Importance of Local Elections

As we prepare for the Kansas and Missouri primary elections on August 4, this is a good time to remember the importance of participating in local democracy. Fewer than half of registered voters participate in many primary elections, meaning our voices can have a significant impact.

Local elections shape many parts of our daily lives, from community leadership to policies that affect our neighborhoods. Resources such as [Everyday Civics](#), [Ballotpedia](#), and [voter information guides](#) can help us learn about candidates, issues, and ways to participate.

Being engaged in our communities is one way we live out our call to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.



Mission Team Movie Night

Grace Covenant was filled with meaningful conversation and community on Tuesday, June 23, as 40 people gathered in the sanctuary for a special screening of the documentary **Charity Redefined**. Inspired by the work of SowHope, the film invited us to reflect on a different approach to service—one centered on dignity, empowerment, and walking alongside communities as partners. We were grateful to welcome **Mary Daley, founder of SowHope**, who joined us for the evening and shared insights into the organization's mission and the stories behind the work. Before the film, many gathered in Heartland Hall for a shared meal and fellowship, creating a warm and welcoming space for connection.

Thank you to the Mission Team, and everyone who attended and helped make this a memorable evening of learning, compassion, and community.

Ministry Fair on August 9!

Save the date, August 9, for the Ministry Fair to be held in Heartland Hall after church. This is a time to see the selection of all the small interest groups and the productive teams that help make our church so dynamic. This is your time to join a group or team.

Clerks Corner

At the June Session meeting we thanked our four retiring Elders for their three years of service and welcomed four new Elders to the Session. If you have the opportunity, please extend your thanks to **Mary Ann Weyforth, Kristy Shaw, Mikki Walker, and Barbara Douglas** for their thoughtful leadership on Session over the last three years.

As we continue envisioning how God is calling GCPC to grow, we discussed hopes and expectations of our Director of Christian Education and Director of Music Ministry. Teams will also be focusing this summer on coordinating with other teams and preventing silos of information and activities. Hopefully the conversational sermon series will also help different ministries work together more effectively.

We passed three motions brought to us by the personnel team:

- Updates to the job description for the childcare director to better align with current needs and practice
- Approved the use of a payroll service, which will provide security and redundancy to our payroll systems
- Established a Youth Program Coordinator, a part-time position which we hope to fill by this fall.

We discussed the creation of a Kitchen Committee to oversee kitchen operations. That motion was tabled for further discussion in July. If you have thoughts about how the kitchen should be managed, please share them with any current Session member by mid-July so your thoughts and ideas can be incorporated into any action we take.

All of our teams continue to be busy, as you can see throughout the newsletter, the Sunday bulletin, and conversations around the congregation.

—Melanie Townsend, Clerk of Session

Thank you Church Family

Grace Covenant, Thank God and thank you for your outpouring of love, kindness and support during our losses (Nathan's brother-in-law and cousin) and Nathan's illness. The many prayers and cards, a prayer shawl, flowers, an Easter basket and confetti, visits, a gift card, and technology assistance were much enjoyed. We found very helpful the Meal Train and the Transportation Crew volunteers that were organized by our deacon, Lauren Bond. Nathan continues to be in treatment(s) and shows some progress. We are grateful for all of our blessings in this difficult time.

—Sylvia and Nathan Littlejohn

Generosity Fulfillment June 2026 Update — Generosity through the Generations

The figures are in for Grace Covenant's generosity through May 2026. The Generosity Team is pleased to share our 2026 fulfillment numbers as of June 2. We have received nearly 53% of our total pledges and only 42% of this year has gone by us. **We are appreciative of everyone who has contributed to Grace Covenant.**

Here is our progress shown by numbers of pledges:

Submitted Pledges (130)	February 23rd	June 2	Amount Received
0-25% fulfilled	120	36	\$8,400
26-50% fulfilled	4	64	\$137,468
51-75% fulfilled	0	4	\$11,116
51-75% fulfilled	0	4	\$11,116
76-100% fulfilled	5	26*	\$213,264
\$689,012	\$226,719	\$370,248	

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. *The asterisk denotes several pledges being overpaid.

Our Generosity team meets on July 7 at 6:30pm in person or via Zoom. We are always glad to have new team members. The current team is Eileen Thomson, Jane Knoche, Rev. Karen Wright, Keith Langabee, Tom Stroud and Kim Krueger. Our 2027 stewardship campaign theme will be *"Led by the Spirit, Growing in Grace."* We are planning our Town Hall on Sunday September 27, following worship. Please contact Eileen or Jane if you are interested — we have room for You!

Become an Acolyte! Calling all 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders!

Are you interested in being an acolyte at the beginning and end of Sunday morning worship services? This meaningful tradition is returning to Grace Covenant on November 29 — the first Sunday of the new liturgical year. As an acolyte, you would bring the light of Christ into the sanctuary to light candles using GCPC's candlelighter at the beginning of the worship service and then take the light out into the world at the end of the service.

If you are interested in signing up to be an acolyte, stop by the Worship Team booth at the Ministry Fair in Heartland Hall on Sunday, August 9, after worship. Look for our ribbon chandelier or contact Debbie Campbell at: dlcampbell1106@gmail.com. YOU are part of Worship!

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

VBS 2026: A Flurry of Faith, Friendship, and Fun!

What an incredible journey we shared at the beginning of our summer! This year's Vacation Bible School brought together **82 amazing VBS kiddos and 76 wonderful volunteers** for a week filled with faith, fun, and friendship.

The **Snowball Mountain Challenge** was a flurry of frozen-themed adventures where our Challengers discovered that we can share our gifts, be brave, give our all, pray anytime, and have hope because God gives us strength (*Philippians 4:13*). Through energetic songs, exciting science experiments, creative crafts, lively games, delicious snacks, and enough enthusiasm to melt a glacier, children and volunteers filled the halls of Grace Covenant with joy and faith.

Throughout the week, our VBS community also collected donations for **Project 10/20, putting hope into action and caring for our neighbors**. Thank you to every child, volunteer, leader, and supporter who helped make this unforgettable week possible. Because of you, Snowball Mountain Challenge was a mountain of memories and a celebration of God's love!

Children & Youth Ministry: A New School Year Begins!

Children's Ministry

The new school year will be here before we know it, and we are excited for another year of growing, learning, and sharing God's love with our children and youth!

We invite you to prayerfully consider volunteering in our children's ministry. We are looking for Sunday School teachers, guides, music helpers, children's team members, Awaken to Worship storytellers, SMASH helpers, and more. There are so many ways to share your gifts and help create a welcoming, faith-filled environment for our youngest disciples. We can't wait to see where God is calling you to plug in and be part of this amazing ministry!

August 9: Blessing of the Backpacks and Ministry Fair

August 16: Sunday School Kick-Off and first SMASH (K–5th grade fellowship) of the school year!

Youth Ministry

A huge thank you to our amazing youth for helping make VBS such a success! Your energy, leadership, and willingness to serve made a tremendous impact. Our VBS friends loved having you alongside them, and we are so grateful for the ways you shared your gifts and helped lead the week.

As we look ahead to a new school year, we invite all youth to join us as we continue building community, growing in faith, having fun together!

August 9: Blessing of the Backpacks and Ministry Fair

August 16: Sunday School Kick-Off and first Youth Group (6th–12th grade) of the school year!





You're Invited!

Have you ever wondered how you can make a lasting difference in the life of a child? The answer might be simpler than you think... we invite **YOU** to be part of our **Children's Ministry!**

At Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church, we believe some of the most important moments in faith happen when children are encouraged, supported, and shown God's love in ways they can understand. And that's where our amazing volunteers come in.

The truth is, you don't need to be a teacher, have all the answers, or have years of experience working with children. What matters most is simply having a willing heart and a desire to help create a welcoming, fun, and faith-filled environment where children can grow in their faith.

Whether you can help once a month, assist during special events, support Sunday mornings, lend a hand with activities, or simply be another caring adult presence, there is a place for you here.

Serving in Children's Ministry isn't just about what you give – it's also about what you receive. The special relationship that you build with the children of our Church. Being greeted on Sunday morning with a big smile and a wave from a small hand. The opportunity to witness faith growing right before your eyes is something truly special.

Grace Covenant does not just make a Baptismal Promise to our children, we live that Promise every day. We help plant the seeds of faith that starts today and will last a lifetime because our children are not just the future of the church...they are a vital part of the church right now.



Save the Date

Awakening to Worship (ATW) Storyteller and Greeter Training

Date: Sunday, August 2

Time: 10:45am - 11:30am

Where: ATW Room 12, downstairs

RSVP: kshaw96@yahoo.com



Passing the Torch!

At the June Children's Ministry Team meeting, we celebrated a meaningful "passing of the torch" as Kristy Shaw officially handed leadership to Laura Johnson, who will serve as our new Children's Team Moderator.

We are incredibly grateful for Kristy's faithful leadership, dedication, and heart for nurturing the faith of our youngest disciples. Her impact on our children's ministry has been a true blessing. At the same time, we are excited to welcome Laura into this new role and look forward to all God will do through her leadership in continuing to help our children grow in faith, friendship, and the love of Christ.

Our children's ministry continues to thrive because of amazing leaders who answer the call to serve the next generation. Join us in saying **THANK YOU, Kristy and WELCOME, Laura!**

A Mountain of Thanks for Our VBS Volunteers!

A BIG, BIG thank you goes out to all of our amazing volunteers who gave their all to make GCPC's Snowball Mountain Challenge an incredible week! From the planning and preparation to the final celebration, every person who shared their time, energy, creativity, and love helped create a mountain-top experience for our children.

A special thank you goes to our VBS leaders, Emily Nelson Dixon, Amy Sellers and Keith Langabee, along with our decorating extraordinaires, Kristy Shaw and Christy Soule, whose dedication and creativity helped transform our church into a place of adventure, discovery, and joy. Our Challengers learned that "I CAN GIVE MY ALL," and we are so grateful for the many people who modeled that message throughout the week. Because of you, our VBS participants felt welcomed, encouraged, celebrated, safe, seen, and loved.

This special week would not have been possible without the many hands that helped plan, decorate, teach, lead, serve, support, and encourage. **Planning and execution were led by** DCE Emily Nelson Dixon, Amy Sellers, Keith Langabee, and Christy Soule. **Our decoration leaders**, Christy Soule and Kristy Shaw, worked alongside a wonderful team of decorators including Aaron Armbricht, Lindsay Callender, Eloise and Margo Armbricht, Emily Baker, Sarah Byrd, Kimberly Deerberry, Emily Nelson Dixon and family, Donna Goeckler, the Hearn Family, Linda Hoffman, Kim Krueger, Keith Langabee, Gay Lee Ludwig-Bonney, Mary Lee, Beth Purvis, Cindy Schendel, Amy Sellers and family, Maggie Shaw, Sophie Shaw, Patty Smithson, the Soule family, Eileen Thomson, Meredith Watson, Mary Ann Weyforth, Jerel and Kathy Williams, Ginny Wirtz, Karen Wright, and all the many volunteers who helped take down decorations after worship on Sunday, June 7.

Our hosts and emcees, Pastor Karen Wright and DCE Emily Nelson Dixon, helped guide us through the week, while Carter Bucl brought stories to life through puppetry. Keith Langabee captured special moments through **photography**, and our **behind-the-scenes communications and technology team** helped share the joy through Kim Krueger's online media and newsletter work, Jason Turner's audio/visual support, and Patrick Bell's newsletter printing and facilities support.

Our preschool groups were guided by incredible leaders who created a caring and welcoming environment for our youngest Challengers. The **Pink Polar Bears** were led by Kristy Shaw, Mary Ann Weyforth, Elizabeth McKell, Jerel Williams, Lee Mattix, Kate-Haaf Circo, and Carolyn Chaffin. The **Green Golden Eagles** were led by Jane Knoche, Kelly Scarborough, Caitlin Hussey, and Sarah Byrd. The **Purple Penguins** were led by Nancy Wilson, Maggie Shaw, and Mattix. The **Orange Owls** were led by Barbara Douglas, Hilary Schmidt, Meredith Cabe, Eloise Dixon, and Bonnie Golson.

Our elementary groups also had wonderful leaders who encouraged and supported each child. The **Pink Pikas** were led by Laura Johnson, Riley Savage, and Ethan Stromberg. The **Green Grizzlies** were led by Rebecca Reece, Bob Bonney, and Jack Dolan. The **Purple Puffins** were led by Jenny Stromberg, Cindy Huston, Bradley Stromberg, and Jim Byrd. The **Orange Orcas** were led by Debbie Soule, Jaylee Soule, Marcie Monrad, and Mike Mattix. The **Teal Timberwolves** were led by Angela Krug and Brandon Hearn.





Every activity station was filled with creativity, learning, and fun thanks to our dedicated volunteers. **Crafts were led by** Kathy Williams, Ginny Wirtz, Mary Lee, Emily Baker, and Nini Golston-Circo. **Bible stories were shared by** Gay Lee Ludwig-Bonney, Kimberly Dereberry, Katie Hearn, and Xander Circo. **Science experiments were guided by** Steve Becher, Patty Smithson, Michelle Gailliez, and Harrison Stromberg. **Recreation was led by** Jake Schmidt, Carter Bucl, Reece Hayden, Emily Hussey, Max Grube, and Morgan Krug. **Music came alive through the leadership of** Patrick O'Halloran, Esme Dixon, Azaria Hann-Richardson, Lara Schesser, and Conor Schesser.



Our snack teams helped keep everyone fueled and ready for adventure! Thank you to Cheryl Johnson, Linda Hoffman, Cindy Monshizadeh, Janice Spence, Pam Hearn, and Kevin Johnson for serving all groups, and to Christine Hutchins and Maggie Blankers for caring for our volunteer snack room.

We are also grateful for our utility helpers who stepped in wherever needed, including Sophia Shaw, Melo Circo, and Josiah, as well as all of our junior leaders who shared their gifts and energy throughout the week.

Snowball Mountain Challenge was truly a success because of the incredible generosity and commitment of our volunteers. Thank you for giving your all and for showing our children what it means to live out God's love through service, kindness, and community!



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2026



SNOWBALL MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE





GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Inclusive. Family Oriented. Welcoming.

11100 College Boulevard
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GRACE COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Finance Administrator.....Tara Hyder
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Director of Music Ministries.... Patrick O'Halloran
patrick.ohalloran@gcpc.orgext. 20

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 CoordinatorCaroline Becher,
Ashley Jeffries

ELDERS

Sandy Adams	Laura Johnson
Johnnie Baker	Andrew Sellers
Gay Lee Ludwig-Bonney	Frank Slovick
Paul Bruns	Jaylee Soule
Chris Cabe	Eileen Thomson
Debbie Campbell	Melanie Townsend
Bob Dover	Session Clerk
Kevin Johnson	

SUPPORT STAFF

Deacon Moderator Ginny Wirtz

Operating Committee..... Paul Bruns,
Chris Cabe, Debbie Campbell, Johnnie Baker,
Melanie Townsend, and Rev. Karen Wright

Newsletter Editor/Marketing..... Kim Krueger

Prayer Chain Cheryl Johnson

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Patrick Bell

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MINISTRY UNITS

Congregational Nurture Unit Moderators

Care and Connections.....Gay Lee
Ludwig-Bonney

Worship and Music.....Debbie Campbell,
Barbara Douglas

Education Ministry Unit Moderators

Adult Kevin Johnson

Children Laura Johnson

Youth.....Chris Cabe

Reach Out Ministry Unit Moderators

Kairos Andrew Sellers

Mission Sandy Adams

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

August 2026 Issue - Deadline July 19

September 2026 Issue - Deadline August 21