



# GRACE TO YOU

May 2025

Grace United  
Protestant Church

266 Somonauk St.  
Park Forest, IL 60466  
Phone: 708-748-4567

## FAMILY FUN NIGHTS

Every two months, Grace Church has sponsored a  
Family Fun Night.

Each night had a theme:

In January, we had Game Night and a Spaghetti Dinner.

March was Tacos and Trivia.

Look at the fun we've had and **plan to join us on May 31st!**



## Mission Statement of Our Reconciling Ministries:

Through God's grace and as apprentices of Christ's living example, we stand united in our commitment to welcome and embrace the diversity of all children of God, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, and wish to reach out to those underserved to provide a safe space for spiritual growth. We strive to create an inclusive fellowship welcoming of the LGBTQ+ community, their families, and support networks, and to foster fairness, justice, peace, love, and understanding among all as is reflected in our name—Grace United Protestant Church.



*A spiritual home for  
worship and service.*

## UPCOMING CALENDAR

**PLEASE CHECK OUT THE  
CALENDAR ON PAGE 12.**

**THE CALENDAR CAN BE  
PRINTED AND POSTED  
FOR REMINDERS!**



## THE PASTOR'S PAGE

May 2025

The Joyful Church

This month is declared a joyful month to remind us that we are a joyful church that rejoices in every circumstance of life! I love our church because it embodies joy, as evident in our Sunday gatherings and during any church activities. As Nehemiah 8:10 says, "For the joy of the Lord is our strength!" I am grateful to serve a church that is filled with joy.

**This month's sermon series will focus on the nature of joy in light of our contemporary situation and how we can live joyfully in spite of...** Did you know that joy is the birthright of every child of God? Every believer should experience a conscious, conspicuous, continuous, and contagious joy. Any Christian who does not live joyfully is missing out on the privileges that come with their faith. Numerous passages in the Bible support this idea. For instance, Isaiah 61 describes the joyful life that God desires for His followers. This joy is not dependent on our circumstances; rather, it is a state of mind characterized by peace and stability, even amid life's challenges. Do you possess this joy—true joy, everlasting joy?

As part of our sermon series on joy, **our virtual Bible study on Wednesdays from May 7 – June 11, 2025, will explore the Book of Nehemiah.** Nehemiah recounts the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls. We will specifically focus on the themes of restoration, reconciliation, and rebuilding, which are central to the redemptive story. Restoration, Reconciliation, Rebuilding—that was not just the plan for Nehemiah; it was not just the hope of the people at that time that God would restore, reconcile, and rebuild them. It's the hope of every human being who has ever drawn breath, hoping for reconciliation, restoration, and rebuilding. These teachings are particularly relevant as we navigate the current global situation.

**On May 11th, we will celebrate and honor our mothers** during the worship service. We will acknowledge them in all the roles God has blessed them with—biological, surrogate, adoptive, foster, and more. We will also honor the women for whom "mother" may not be a noun but certainly applies as a verb, as they have truly "mothered" children with their love. We invite you to bring your families and friends to share this special day with us.

We extend our special congratulations to our birthday and anniversary celebrants! We rejoice with them and pray that God continues to bless them with many happy and healthy years.

We continue to pray for our brothers and sisters experiencing health and other life challenges for healing and God's presence in their situations.

Let us always remember that "the joy of the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10) in any situation!

Happy Mother's Day and enjoy it!

Yours By His Grace,  
Pastor Amos



## WCA NEWS

WCA Board monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM in the church parlor. All women are invited to attend any of the meetings. We welcome new input and vitality!

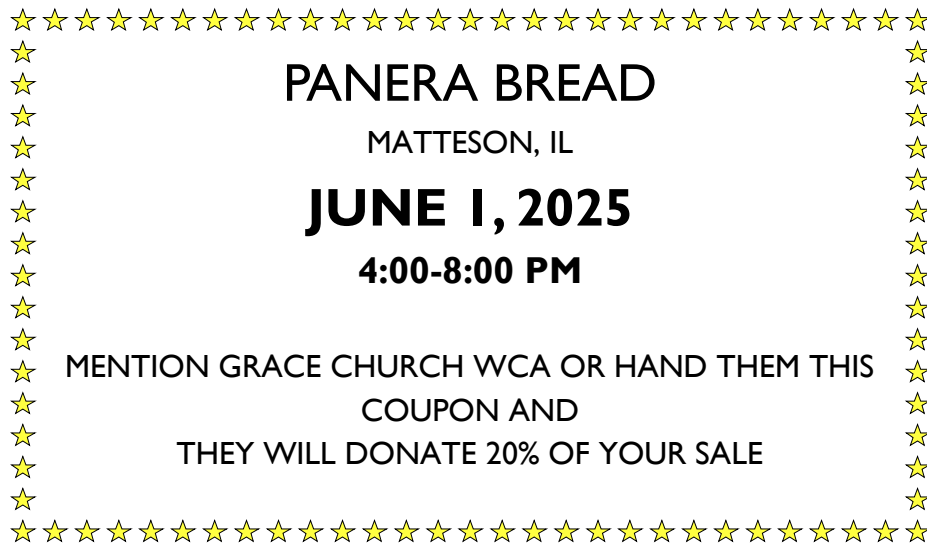
### SUMMER FUNDRAISERS

**You have two new opportunities to help the WCA raise funds for missions!**

**On June 1st, please plan to have dinner at**

**Panera Bread in Matteson!**

Mention Grace Church WCA or hand them the coupon below and Panera will donate 20% of the total net sales to the WCA. There will be plenty of coupons at the church on the table in the narthex so you can hand them out to your families and friends!



And then:

**A fun new WCA fundraiser is coming your way!**

We will be taking orders for **Nothing Bundt Cakes in July!**

Watch for details in the June Grace to You!

## FLOWERS

There are several dates left on the 2025 Flower Chart in the narthex. Be sure to pick the date you want to help beautify our sanctuary.

**There's a slightly different protocol:** we are asking that you either supply your own flowers...there are vases at the church...or contact our flower chairperson, Sue Cassara, and she will purchase the flowers for you. The cost will be \$20.

**We are also asking that you contact the church office at 708-748-4567 or [graceupchurch2@gmail.com](mailto:graceupchurch2@gmail.com) to tell Elaine Degenhart what you would like printed in the bulletin. Thank you!**





# GRACE TO YOU

## CELEBRATIONS FOR MAY

Page 4



### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Ray Van Dyke—1st  
Daniel Christain—15th  
Gloria Whitson—18th  
Jane Stover—24th  
Sue Dukes—27th.



### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

Carl and Jane Stover—14th  
Amos and Becky Oladipo—19th  
Brian and Jennifer Forbes—19



We love celebrating your birthday with you! There are many people whose birthdays we don't have and would like to include in the celebration list! **If you haven't seen your name in the last year, please** just jot me a quick email with your birthday (anniversary, too) so I can add it to the incomplete list that I have. Thank you! Leslie Langmeyer: [llangmeyer@aol.com](mailto:llangmeyer@aol.com)

### PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

***We thank God for many answered prayers as we continue to pray for:***

The Members of our church, near and far, Our Veterans, our Troops, and our Country  
World Peace, that the hungry can be fed, and the end of violence



Helen Abels  
Bailey Backand  
Nan Beard  
Jackie Ceres  
Gabe Chachakis  
Arrie Christain  
Daniel Christain  
Ralph Duncan  
Charlotte Earving  
The Garlick/Degenhart Family  
Officer Tim Jones  
Niki Juarez Cummings  
Malcolm Knox  
Patty McLeod

Marge Neel  
Lee Nelson  
Wylladene Nelson  
Kyla Jo Purvenas  
Allan Smith  
Jennifer Steiner  
Szymanski Family  
Alma White  
Steve Winefka  
The Migrants, Immigrants, and  
Refugees among us  
The Victims of Gun Violence  
The People of Israel and Gaza  
The People of Ukraine

**WEEKLY PRAYER GROUP**

The prayer group meets on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 in the Banner Room (room 116). Everyone with concerns for the church, the community, the country, or themselves, is welcome and encouraged to join this informal group.

**MISSION NEWS**

Grace Church has been an active supporter of Heifer for over 40 years through our mission offerings and profit from the annual Potato/Salad/Ice Cream Luncheon. Pastor Amos, in his 2/23/25 sermon, summarized the philosophy of our congregation. "Our generosity reflects an understanding of God's grace and glory, recognizing God as the creator and provider of all we have."

Please be sure to check out the next page.

Make checks payable to Grace Church, noting the amount desired for Heifer, or use a blue mission envelope marking it for Heifer. Thank you for your generosity as we reach out to those less fortunate, spreading God's love.

**CHURCH CHOIR REHEARSALS**

**Choir rehearsals for singers** are held on Thursday afternoons at 4:30 in Trinity Hall and Sunday mornings at 10:15 in the Sanctuary. All singers are welcome to join!

**The Bell Choir** practices right after the worship service. Rehearsals are in Trinity Hall.

**CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**

May 18th is the last Sunday School class before summer break. The class will return on September 7th. Look for new material and books in the library to use during worship and room 103 is always open if properly monitored and cleaned.

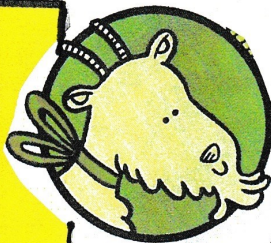
Watch for details on the summer Family Fun nights including July 15-17 activities.

**POTATO LUNCH**

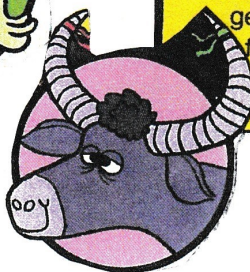
A special thank you to everyone who supported the Palm Sunday fundraiser for Heifer International with your food donations and presence. Several guests attended and \$400 was collected from the freewill offering to add to the church contribution.

**Did You Know?**

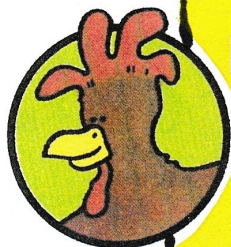
Goat's milk is the most consumed milk in the world, and it can be made into products like butter or soap. Shop your local farmers market for goat products to try.

**Did You Know?**

A farmer can plant four times more with a water buffalo than by hand — generating added income to use for clothing, medicine, school and home improvements.

**Did You Know?**

A chicken egg contains up to 6 grams of protein. Make eggs a healthy part of your breakfast.

**Did You Know?**

Access to safe water sources and proper sanitation could save the lives of up to 1.5 million children a year.

**Your gift of Water for Life will bring life-changing solar-powered wells, water kiosks and irrigation systems.**

**Bees are essential to our planet!**

Put a shallow container of water in your garden so bees have a place to rehydrate.

The April/May designated mission at Grace is Heifer International. Heifer's philosophy of "Passing on the Gift" means each family promises to pass on the first female offspring of their animal to another family, along with training. This unique approach creates a ripple effect that transforms lives and communities. Our donations don't just provide farm animals to needy families around the world. Heifer also supports innovative agroecology programs including reversing deforestation and improving renewable energy systems.

Heifer will double all gifts made through the church this spring so please give as you are able. Write your check to Grace, indicating donation to Heifer, or use a mission envelope. The freewill offering that was collected at the Palm Sunday lunch will also be added to our congregation Heifer donation.

Thank you for your generosity as we reach out to those less fortunate, spreading God's love.



## PALM SUNDAY AT GRACE CHURCH

We celebrated Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem.

The Choir and Bell Choir were outstanding!

We welcomed friends from Oak Lawn and Lombard.

We had so much fun...and good food...at the annual Potato Luncheon!



**Although I find devotions from my daily readings that I like to share, it's always from the same sources. I would love some other contributions to this page! Please** share your devotions, readings, and inspirations that are special to you so that others can be inspired, too. I hope that this will be a page that everyone will enjoy and contribute to. Please email me with your contributions at llangmeyer@aol.com. Thank you!

From *The Upper Room*

## LIGHT OF HOPE

*From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. He said: "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me."*  
~Jonah 2:1-2

For several days now I have been feeling depressed—as if life is weighing me down, as if I can't breathe fresh air, as if I were at the bottom of the sea. Outwardly, I am all smiles, but inside I feel a knot in my chest. Still, deep within me I trust in God and God's plan. Though today it seems like I have run into a dead end, God's purpose will be fulfilled.

I believe it is important to share and speak of the difficult moments we endure as well as the joy of the miracles we receive. Every new morning signals an invitation for us to be grateful for at least one thing, to trust in God's promises and not to lose heart. After all, God protected Daniel in the lion's den, watched over Joseph when his brothers threw him into a well, and brought Jonah out of the great fish. Dark moments and distress will continue to test our faith, but we will be victorious when we remain anchored in our faith and seek God's light of hope.

*Prayer:* Light of the world, guide us with love through each day. As you help us move forward, we pray with confidence and renewed hope the prayer Jesus taught us: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. Amen

*Thought for the Day:* God's light will shine through any darkness.

.....

From Mother Teresa

Prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of himself. Ask and seek, and your heart will grow big enough to receive him and to keep him as your own. Wherever God has put you, that is your vocation. It is not what we do but how much love we put into it.

I tell my sisters,

"Let us not love in words but let us love until it hurts. It hurt Jesus to love us: he died for us. And today it is your turn and my turn to love one another as Jesus loved us. Do not be afraid to say yes to Jesus."

Faithfulness to the little things will help us to grow in love. We have all been given a lighted lamp and it is for us to keep it burning. We can keep it burning only if we keep on pouring oil inside. That oil comes from our acts of love.

When someone tells me that the sisters have not started any big work, that they are quietly doing small things, I say that even if they helped one person, that was enough. Jesus would have died for one person, for one sinner.



**TREASURER'S REPORT FROM BRUCE NEEL****OFFERING**

	<u>MONTH</u>	<u>YEAR TO DATE</u>
	MARCH	MARCH 31, 2025
Amount Needed	\$ 11,063	\$ 40,314
Amount Received	\$ 12,333	\$ 40,090
Surplus / Deficit	\$ 1,270	\$ (224)

~Bruce Neel, Treasurer

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**HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT**

the Grace Church website?!! **It's spectacular!** (Thank you, Kate Curran!)

Please take the time to peruse the site and its many links. Also encourage your friends and families (in and out of the church) to visit it. There's a lot of information with a lot of possibilities!



**graceupc.org**

**THE LINK FOR THE SUNDAY VIRTUAL SERVICE**

Each Sunday, the church service is available virtually on Zoom. The service is live. *The bulletin and the words to the songs are on your screen each week. If you join by phone and want the bulletin emailed to you, please let the church office know.*

The link for the service is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81653139195?pwd=SDNiRy9VY0pDcEtYRIQ4OFpHUFIkdz09>

If you are joining by phone, please call 312-626-6799; ID# 816-5313-9195; password 740463 when prompted.

A gentle reminder: It's wonderful to be able to socialize before and after the service, but with the new virtual system in place, we need to mute our own computers during the service. As a courtesy to others, please remember to mute during the service.

# GRACE TO YOU **ABOUT** Scouts

What a great Court of Honor! Five scouts earned a new rank and nine merit badges were earned. In addition, patches from the camporee and Potowatomi hike were distributed.



We had a great hike and campout at the Indiana Dunes . It was Zamir and Zaiden's first campout and they did great!



Welcome Malachi, we hope you had fun on the hike...although no one ordered the snow!





A note from Sue Dukes in 2020 when she sent these wonderful messages:  
In honor of Mother's Day, I'm sending this picture of a mother's love from one of the most ferocious animals in the world!  
Send out positive thoughts and words!

## Chompers

The Nile crocodile boasts the strongest jaws on earth.

Its chomp is 7 times more powerful than a great white shark's, and 15 times mightier than a Rottweiler's.

This African croc brings down wildebeests, zebras ... and people. Its jaws kill hundreds of people every year; very few humans survive a croc attack. In fact, crocodiles are considered the wild kingdom's most prolific predator of humans.

And yet...those same killer jaws cradle the croc's newly hatched babes. When the tiny crocs begin breaking out of their shells, the mother hears their "peeping," and unearths the nest. She might even help the 8-inch youngsters emerge by delicately rolling and squeezing the egg in her mouth until the shell breaks. Mama croc then loads the 24 hatchlings into her gaping jaws ~ lined with more than 5 dozen teeth ~ and gently transports them from the riverbank nest to the water nearby. There, she will protect her family for several months.

That croc's mouth holds the power of life and death.

Ours mouths have that power too: Words that build up or tear down ... Conversations filled with hope or discouragement ... Lips that praise God or curse Him. When you glide the morning toothbrush over your own "chompers," think of the Nile croc, and then utter King David's prayer, "Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."

~Psalm 141:3

***"The tongue has the power of life and death..." ~Proverbs 18:21***


Thank you to Sue Dukes for sharing all these wonderful inspirations from Carol "Scout" Ruhter & Marty "Acorn" Ramey, Trailbound Trips.





# May 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 WCA Board meeting in parlor <u>10:00 AM</u> Choir Rehearsal 4:30 PM	2	3
4 Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15 AM</u> Communion Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Bell Choir Rehearsal 12:00	5	6 Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast at Big Apple <u>8:15 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00 PM	7 Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	8 Choir Rehearsal 4:30 PM	9	10 ART meeting— virtual 9:30 AM
11 Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15 AM</u> Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Bell Choir Rehearsal 12:00 Happy Mother's Day	12	13 Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast at Big Apple <u>8:15 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00 PM	14 Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	15 Choir Rehearsal 4:30 PM	16	17
18 Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15 AM</u> Sunday Worship and Sunday School 11:00 AM Coffee & Fellowship following church	19	20 Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast at Big Apple <u>8:15 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00 PM	21 Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Tabitha Circle In church parlor <u>2:00 PM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	22 Choir Rehearsal 4:30 PM	23	24
25 Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15 AM</u> Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Bell Choir Rehearsal 12:00	26 	27 Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast at Big Apple <u>8:15 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00 PM	28 Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	29 Choir Rehearsal 4:30 PM	30	31