



GRACE TO YOU

September 2026

**Grace United
Protestant Church**

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

OUTDOOR WORSHIP SERVICE – July 26th

It was a hot day, but members enjoyed a wonderful outdoor worship experience complete with a gentle breeze.



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, 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.***

Website: graceupc.org

UPCOMING CALENDAR

**PLEASE CHECK OUT THE
CALENDAR ON PAGE 11.**



September 2026

Experience Joy Always!

Summer has ended! We thank God for His constant presence during our activities and travels. It was a season filled with joyful celebrations like birthdays and graduations, but also challenging due to thunderstorms, floods, and power outages. Despite these trials, we have much to be thankful for.

Last month, our sermon series on the five books of Psalms encouraged us to deepen our roots in God and reflect on God's faithfulness. I appreciated the positive feedback on this series.

This month, let's embrace Paul's call to "Rejoice always." Joy is not just a mood or a reaction to our circumstances; it is rooted in God's unshakeable character. To rejoice means making a conscious choice based on God's faithfulness. This joy serves as a powerful act of resistance against life's challenges, reminding us that God is always present and sovereign. This is why Paul can confidently say "always." The consistency of Christ makes enduring joy possible.

Rejoicing in this way is not denial; it is defiance. It faces anxiety, uncertainty, and hardship and declares, "You do not get the final word." Let this command shape our attitude. Choose joy not because everything is easy, but because the Lord is near. Choose joy because grace is still sufficient. Choose joy because the gospel is still true. Rejoice in the Lord—not occasionally, not selectively, but always.

Let the joy of the Lord be your strength always, even during difficult times, because joy empowers believers to endure trials, helps the church remain steadfast, lifts the weary, and encourages the discouraged to rediscover hope. While human resolve may falter, divine joy sustains us. A joyful Christian does not ignore reality; instead, they interpret it through the lens of God's sovereignty. Joy is a powerful testimony: God is still good, Christ is still risen, the Spirit is still at work, and hope is still alive.

September brings various activities aimed at church growth. First, we celebrate Rally Day on September 13, 2026, by welcoming our children back to Sunday school, emphasizing the importance of Christian education, and instilling Christian values in them to guide their future endeavors.

Second, our Fall Adult Bible Study begins on September 8, 2026, focusing on the five books of the Psalms and exploring their history, theology, and contemporary relevance. Please invite friends to join this virtual study; the Zoom link and topics will be emailed weekly on Mondays.

Third, we will participate in the nationwide "Back to Church" outreach on September 20, 2026. Our church is recognized on the national map for this program. Let's spread the word about God's love and get ready to welcome visitors as we pray for our congregation's growth.

We extend our condolences to the family of Allan Smith, who passed away on July 29, 2026. May God comfort and strengthen them at this time, and may his soul rest in peace.

We pray for the success of all students returning to school and celebrate those with birthdays and anniversaries, wishing them continued joy and good health.

We send our thoughts and prayers to those in need of healing and support, especially those impacted by the thunderstorms.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for prayer requests and pastoral concerns.

Yours by His Grace,
Pastor Amos



WCA NEWS

WCA Board monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month in the parlor. The next meeting will be on Thursday, September 3rd at 10:00 AM. All women are invited and encouraged to attend.

FALL SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Saturday, September 26th — 10:30 AM

This year, our Spiritual Retreat will be at the church with the movie St. John in Exile. There will be a discussion following; this proves to be a wonderful retreat. We will plan to go to Peachtree Restaurant in Matteson following the retreat. **Everyone is welcome!**

THANK YOU!

With everyone's support for the summer fundraisers, we were able to realize over \$200: \$87.50 from Nothing Bundt Cakes and \$115.19 from Panera. This is enough for more than **two** of our budgeted missions!

Thank you! Thank you!



Chris Long visited with Charlotte Earving while Charlotte's son, Eddie Green, and his wife, Lauren, were in town.

Also, while on a trip in Virginia, Chris was able to visit with Lynne and Bob Boyer! What a great opportunity!



UNICEF

Around the world, children caught in conflict and disaster face challenges they didn't create and cannot control. Their lives are being uprooted by violence, the threat of famine and extreme weather. In many place, the essential services children need to survive – like health care and education – have failed or are inaccessible.

UNICEF knows how to reach these children. Whether it's delivering lifesaving supplies, creating safe spaces to learn or providing safe water, UNICEF is on the ground to assist families in the greatest need.

But even as children's needs have soared, the funding situation remains bleak. Massive cuts to humanitarian funding are putting UNICEF's core protection and support programs under strain, as children face deepening instability around the world. Across UNICEF nutrition programming alone, a 72 percent funding gap in 2025 forced cuts in 20 priority countries.

During the months of September and October, Grace Church will be collecting for UNICEF. Please give as you are able, putting UNICEF in the memo line if you are paying by check and/or using the blue mission envelope.

Find more information about this wonderful cause at <https://www.unicefusa.org>

GO TEAM TRAINING

"The mission of the Lake South District of the Northern Illinois Conference is to encourage, equip, connect and support our local churches in their call to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World."

In keeping with this, Dr. Audrea Nanabray invites you to scheduled Zoom meetings, for Go Team training for members and friends of the church.

The next one will be held Saturday, September 5th at 10:30 AM. The topic for the morning will be "God doesn't want anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance (2Peter 3:9)

The Zoom link is [Zoom Link](#), Meeting ID 964 1732 9893, Passcode 081053

AFTER-CHURCH COFFEES



Everyone enjoys fellowship time at the coffees on Jazz Sunday. But, it seems as though the same people donate food and time each month. **The new sign-up sheet is on the table in the narthex** and we are asking that everyone takes a turn. Men, too! You don't have to bake or cook! Store-bought items are fine! If two people sign up for a month, there will be less to do!

Please pick a month. There will be a WCA board member to help you find plates, napkins, etc. and will help set-up and clean-up. But, it's not just up to the board to provide goodies! Thank you for your help!

INSPIRATION PAGE

Please share your devotions, readings, and inspirations that are special to you so that others can be inspired, too. Please email me with your contributions at llangmeyer@aol.com. Thank you!

~ Leslie

From *Jesus Listens* by Sarah Young

Glorious Lord,

You are training me not only to endure my difficulties but to collaborate with You as You transform them into Glory. This is a supernatural feat—requiring the help of Your Spirit. When problems are weighing heavily on me, my natural tendency is to speed up my pace, frantically searching for answers. But what I really need at such times is to slow down, *seek Your Face*, and discuss my difficulties with You. Your Word instructs me to *lay my requests before You and wait in expectation*.

Even though I'm waiting expectantly, I realize You may not answer my prayers for a long time. You are always doing something important in my life—far beyond simply solving my problems. You've been showing me that my struggles are part of a much larger battle, and the way I handle them can contribute to significant outcomes. I want to glorify You by trusting You and *praying with thanksgiving*. Moreover, this practice of praying persistently will eventually make a difference in me, as Your Spirit works to *transform me into Your image with ever-increasing Glory!*

In Your wondrous Name, Jesus, Amen

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From *The Upper Room* written by Merce C. (Texas)

RENEWED STRENGTH

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. —Isaiah 40:31

It's easy to feel overwhelmed and worn out. Our days are filled with responsibilities, challenges, and endless demands on our time and energy. Sometimes it can feel like we're running a race with no finish line in sight. However, Isaiah 40:31 offers a powerful reminder: "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength."

This verse paints a beautiful picture of what it looks like to rely on God. Like an eagle soaring effortlessly through the sky, we can rise above the challenges and trials of life. Eagles don't just fly; they glide on the wind, using air currents to carry them without having to expend unnecessary energy. When we trust in God, we don't have to strive and struggle alone, relying only on our strength. Instead, we're invited to lean on God, allowing God's power to sustain us.

When we feel weary, we can take a moment to pause and place our hope in God, surrendering our burdens and exhaustion. And we can trust that God will lift us up. Just as an eagle soars on the wind, we can rise above our circumstances because we're sustained by the One who never grows tired or weary. Letting God's strength be our strength, we can find rest in God's promise to carry us through every challenge.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for being our strength and for renewing our energy. Help us to rely on you so that we may soar like eagles. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Who built ancient Babylon? (Genesis 10:8-10)
2. Who rebuilt Babylon on a grand scale? (Daniel 4:30)
3. Who built the walls of Jerusalem? (1 Kings 9:15)
4. What tent was made according to God's specifications? (Exodus 26:1-4)
5. Who pitched a tent in Jerusalem to house the Ark of the Covenant? (1 Chronicles 11:6)
6. What king of Judah built up the defenses of Bethlehem? (2 Chronicles 11:6)

This info was taken from *The Complete Book of Trivia* by J. Stephen Lang.

Thank you to Sue Dukes for compiling this!

Answers are on page 8.

FLOWERS

Flowers on the piano/altar help to brighten the sanctuary each Sunday. The 2026 flower chart has been posted in the narthex. Be sure to pick your special date(s) and sign up to beautify our sanctuary before your date is gone.

We are asking that you either supply your own flowers...there are vases at the church...or contact our flower chairperson, Sue Cassara at 708-785-5186, 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 to tell Elaine Degenhart what you would like printed in the bulletin.** Thank you!



GRACE CHURCH TREASURER'S REPORT FROM RICK WASNEY

	Amount Received	Amount Needed	Surplus/ Deficit
January 2026	\$ 10,466.87	\$ 13,246.00	\$ 2,779.13
February 2026	\$14,016.79	\$13,246.00	\$ 770.79
March 2026	\$11,026.28	\$13,246.00	\$ 2,219.72
April 2026	\$12,805.23	\$13,246.00	\$ 440.77
May 2026	\$ 9,941.40	\$13,246.00	\$ 3,304.60
June 2026	\$11,578.88	\$13,246.00	\$ 1,667.12
July 2026	\$10,923.61	\$13,246.00	\$ 2,322.39
Year to Date 2026	\$69,835.45	\$79,476.00	\$ 9,640.55



CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday school class returns on September 13th following the Children's Moment in worship.

While the lessons are geared to 3-12 year olds, we welcome our older students to join anytime.

The theme for September/October is "Fall Faith" including Bible verses that express our faith.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT...

Grace Church has a Pastor's Discretionary Fund, which as the name states, is used at the Pastor's discretion.

There are a few immediate needs that Pastor Amos hopes can be met.

Please feel free to donate to this fund making sure that you designate your donation for the Pastor's Discretionary Fund.

Thank you for your generosity and the willingness to help others.

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.

Please let Alice Wasney or the church office know of any prayer needs.

LAST PEACE VIGIL

The last Peace Vigil will be held in Somonauk Park
on

Wednesday, September 2nd
at 6:00 PM.

It will last approximately 20 minutes.

Please plan to join us for this meaningful prayer time.





HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Becky Oladipo—3rd
Jen Whitson—6th
Will Whitson—7th
Kitty Smith—13th
MarcyJo Chachakis—28th



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

Doyle and Caroline Estes—12th



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.



Ray Abels	Becky Meyery
Nan Beard	Marge Neel
Brian Butler	Forrest (Lee) Nelson
Jackie Ceres	Ronan Nelson
Gabe Chachakis	The Family of Allan Smith
Daniel Christain	Jeff Steiner
Magda Condon	Alma White
Frank D.	Kristy Whitson
The Family of Ray Dunbar	The Migrants, Immigrants, and
Charlotte Earving	Refugees among us
Melissa Harms	The Victims of Gun Violence
Niki Juarez-Cummings	The People of Iran
Alice Knox	The People of Israel and Gaza
Malcolm Knox	The People of Ukraine
Pat MacInnes	

Look for
something
positive in every
day, even if some
days you have
to look a little
harder.

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www.listen.com

Answers to Bible Trivia:

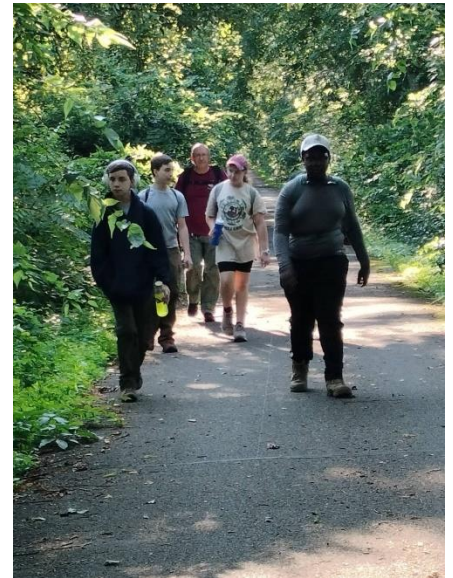
1. Nimrod
2. Nebuchadnezzar
3. Solomon
4. The tabernacle
5. David
6. Rehoboam



Congratulations to Blaise, Caleb, and Lucas for earning their Tenderfoot rank.



They are off on their 20 mile hike. The weather couldn't be better: 62°, clear and sunny. It was a great day for their last hike for the hiking merit badge.



What a great camping trip with almost perfect weather and a great time on the water



“An Evening with Martin Luther” performance returns to Crete

You're invited to Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1610 S. Main St., Crete, IL on Sunday, September 20, 2026 at 4p.m. to watch Dr. Dwight Johnson reprise his role as Dr. Martin Luther. God, through this 16th century reformer, affected dramatic change around the world; sparking a completely new category of Christianity – Protestantism, and changing the politics and policies of countries that still impact us today.

Last year, we saw “Luther Speaks” and “Luther Marries.” In this year's 2-act play, Dr. Johnson will highlight two different aspects of Martin Luther's life and work: his thoughts as a hymnwriter, in “Luther Sings,” and his reminiscences of posting the 95-thesis on the door of Wittenburg Castle Church in Johnson's newest act, “Luther Posts.”

A light reception will follow the performance. Zion Crete OWLS is pleased to host the event and all proceeds will be donated to the performer's chosen charity, the Lutheran Military Support Group. You can donate electronically at zioncrete.org/donations.

If you have any questions about the event, contact Sandy Parker by email at events@parkerlings.com.



STAYING INFORMED (from UMC Lake South District Lay Leader)

Good morning.

Praying that each of us is able to stay out of harm's way with the heat and the smoke in the air.

There is much going on in our district and our conference. Sometimes it's difficult to keep up with it all. One of the more convenient ways is to sign up for eNews. The district editions are once monthly; the conference editions are twice each month. Keep up to date with ministerial appointments, education and training opportunities, mission work, upcoming events, and much more. Go to www.umcnic.org then click the button for "Subscribe to our E-Newsletter". Fill in the form, select which eNews editions you wish to receive, and click on the sign-up bar at the bottom. You can unsubscribe at any time.

I also suggest you publish this information in your bulletins, your newsletters, and perhaps even in your churches announcements.

These are just more tools available to us to assist us in doing His work.

You may already be doing this or have done it. If so, please disregard and accept this in the spirit in which it is intended.

Thank you.

Dale Carver 762-218-7657



SEPTEMBER 2026



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Men's Chat and Chew at Big Apple 8:00 AM	2 Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Last Peace Vigil 6:00 PM	3 WCA Board meeting 10:00 AM	4	5 Go Team training on Zoom 10:30 AM
6 Communion Sunday Worship 11:00 AM	7 Labor Day Park Forest Parade 6:00 PM	8 Men's Chat and Chew at Big Apple <u>8:00 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	9 Prayer Group 9:30 AM	10	11	12 ART meeting 9:30 AM
13 Sunday Worship and Sunday School 11:00 AM	14	15 Men's Chat and Chew at Big Apple <u>8:00 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	16 Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Tabitha Circle 2:00 PM in parlor	17	18	19
20 Jazz Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Coffee & Fellowship following church	21	22 Men's Chat and Chew at Big Apple <u>8:00 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	23 Prayer Group 9:30 AM	24	25	26 WCA Spiritual Retreat at church 10:30 AM followed by a self-paid lunch at Peachtree Restaurant
27 Sunday Worship and Sunday School 11:00 AM	28	29 Men's Chat and Chew at Big Apple <u>8:00 AM</u> Virtual Bible Study 7:00 PM	30 Prayer Group 9:30 AM			