



GRACE TO YOU

January 2026

**Grace United
Protestant Church**

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

Hanging of the Greens



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.

Website: graceupc.org

UPCOMING CALENDAR

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



Lighting the candle of Hope



Lighting the candle of Peace



THE PASTOR'S PAGE

January 2026

How Deep is Your Root?

A new year has arrived, and we give glory to God for allowing us to see it. As we look forward to the exciting adventures ahead, we must remember that what this year brings largely depends on what we bring to it. I wonder how we would respond to God's open offer to King Solomon when God asked him in 1 Kings 3:4, "Ask, what should I give you?" It's as if God was saying, "Solomon, you fill it out, and it's yours."

If you had the opportunity, what is one thing you would ask God to grant you in 2026? I encourage you to reflect on the hymn "Guide My Feet, While I Run This Race." As we journey together as people of faith, it's important to acknowledge the practices that help us navigate this path effectively. We have been on this journey for many years, and I urge everyone not to neglect these valuable practices that enable us to run this race well.

This month's sermon series will focus on the importance of being "Rooted" in our faith. Having deep roots in our beliefs is essential for weathering the various challenges that may arise, just as the early Christians faced difficulties. These challenges can include the devil's cunning tactics aimed at discouraging you from continuing on your journey.

Common questions might arise, such as: "You have been a member for a long time; what are you gaining from it?" or "Your church membership isn't increasing—why not find a larger church with more opportunities to serve and connect with others?" You may also hear, "How long will you stay in this church without young people?"

In this sermon series, we will explore the significance of tree roots and apply these lessons to our daily lives as Christians. We will encourage one another to reflect on our mission and consider how we can strengthen our relationships while attracting others to God's kingdom.

Please mark your calendars for these important messages:

- **January 4, 2026: Get Rooted for the New Year**
- **January 11, 2026: The Root of Everything**
- **January 18, 2026: Rooted in New Life**
- **January 25, 2026: Rooted in the Mission**

We will take a winter break from Bible Study in January. We will resume Bible Study during Lent (February 24 – March 31, 2026).

We prayed for the families of Bruce Neel, Jivini Hayes-Williams, and Wylladene Nelson, who passed away in 2025. May God continue to be with them, and may their souls rest in peace.

We rejoice with our January birthday and anniversary celebrants! May the wings of Almighty God continue to protect you and grant you the desires of your hearts.



I urge you to make 2026 a year when we witness God doing amazing things in our lives and within our church family. I pray that God grants you His grace so you can spend more time in His presence in the sanctuary in 2026.

Wishing you a joyful and meaningful 2026.

Yours by His Grace, Pastor Amos Oladipo

WCA NEWS

There is no WCA Board meeting in January. The next meeting is Thursday, February 5th at 10:00 AM in the parlor. All women are invited to attend any of the meetings.

2026 BOOK

The book for 2026 will be ready for distribution after December 29th. Please be sure to pick up your copy!

*** PANERA BREAD FUNDRAISER ***

This Sunday, December 14th please plan to have dinner anytime from 4:00-8:00 PM at Panera Bread in Matteson! Hand them the coupon on page 10 and Panera will donate 30% 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! Or Leslie can email you a flyer that you can show digitally. Contact her at llangmeyer@aol.com There is also a flyer on page 10 of this GTY that you can print!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

FEBRUARY 21ST

2:00 PM

ALL WOMEN AND MEN ARE INVITED



A new tradition has been born! This is the third year that we share love by making “Love Bags” (goody bags) to take to senior and rehab centers. Alice Knox takes the bags with her when she visits these locations. It has been so successful that we’re out of bags for Alice to take! So, we are going to make more! Please bring any item: toiletries, socks, grooming items, etc. that you feel a person at a senior center would like to have. Also enjoyed are puzzle books and pens. Use your imagination!

We will have small bags available for you to fill with the items you bring. And, of course, because we all like food and fellowship to add to the fun, there will be refreshments afterward!

STAFF GIFTS

During the holiday season we show appreciation to our staff for their dedication to the life of Grace Church with a monetary gift. Pastor Amos Oladipo, Elaine Degenhart (administrative assistant), Val Nicholson (music director) and Sean Gorman (custodian) all work to maintain this spiritual home for worship and service. Donations can be given to Chris Long, Leslie Langmeyer, or Glennace Rocker **before December 28th**. Thank you!

At the Peace Light from Bethlehem Service, we prayed for the peace of Christ in the World.



MISSION NEWS

As we embrace the excitement of a new year, many among us continue to struggle with the challenges of limited income and opportunities. Please support our ongoing local organizations that work year-round to help our neighbors.

**Rich Township Food Pantry: Non-perishables can be left in the grocery cart across from the office.

**Respond Now: Monetary donations assist in their mission to provide temporary assistance for daily needs of south suburban residents.

**Pediatric Oncology Treasure Chest Foundation: New toys are sent around the country from their warehouse in Orland Park to cancer treatment centers so a child can pick out a toy from the treasure chest, bringing a smile during their treatment. Our toy box is at the coat rack with a list of suggested items.

**Kids Above All: Bring your coins to the jug in the hallway for this organization that provides assistance to families of young children through education, counseling and a safe home environment.

The blue envelopes in the sanctuary can be used for your donation and checks should be payable to Grace Church. Be sure to indicate which organization you wish to sponsor. If you'd like additional information about any of the charities supported by Grace, please contact Chris Long at 708-606-9143 or longabc51@gmail.com. Thank you for your generosity.

BIBLE TRIVIA

Get your Bibles out because we are starting Bible Trivia of the month!

Since it's January and the first month of the year, we will start with firsts that happened in the Bible. These are from the King James Version, but use your favorite Bible to play along.

1. What king had the first birthday party in the Bible? (Genesis 40:20)
2. Who was the first person to fall asleep during a sermon? (Glad it wasn't me!) (Acts 20:9)
3. Who was the first disciple chosen by Jesus? (John 1:42)
4. Who was the first shepherdess? (Genesis 29:9)
Who was the first shepherd? (Genesis 4:2)
5. Where did Jesus work his first miracle? (John 2:1-11)
6. Who was the first drunk? (Genesis 9:21)

The answers are on page 6.

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

Thank you to Sue Dukes for compiling this!

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

All children are invited to leave after the Children's Moment during Sunday worship for a class of Bible stories and activities. Our winter focus will be on the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. On the 1st Sunday of each month we will return to the sanctuary to participate in communion.

**Please note that there will be no class on December 21st so everyone can enjoy or participate in the service of Nine Lessons & Carols.

WE (YOU) DID IT!

As you know our plumber found some cracked sewer pipe in the front yard of our church earlier this year. Therefore, we needed to have part of the front yard dug up and the original pipe needed to be replaced with new pipe. This cost was \$13,000 for the whole project.

With your help, reached our goal! We appreciate all of you! It was with your help that we were able to cover this expense!

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! May God bless you all!

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.

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.*

Pastor Amos emails the Zoom link each Sunday morning for anyone would like to have it. Please let the office know if you want to have him send the link to you. Email the office at graceupchurch2@gmail.com.

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.



MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES AT GRACE!



VOICES OF GRACE

Do you love to sing? Do you hum with any music you hear? Do you find yourself tapping your foot in time to music? There is a place for you with the "Voices of Grace," our wonderful Grace Church choir.

Rehearsals are the first Sunday of the month after church and the second and fourth Sundays before church at 10:00 AM.

RINGALINGS

The Grace Church "Ringalings" Handbell Choir rehearse every second and fourth Sunday after church. All are welcome regardless of age or prior experience.

HOLIDAY SING-ALONG

Join other church members and Chicagoans on Friday, December 19th to celebrate the season in song. A local musical group will lead us from 6-7pm at Cloud Gate (The Bean) in Millennium Park. A small group from Grace attended last year and had a great time. We'll take the 3 pm Metra train to look at decorations and eat before the sing-along then take the 7:20 return train. This is standing room only (unless you can find a ledge to sit on or bring a chair) and it likely will be cold so bundle up and wear warm comfortable shoes. If you'd rather drive, Grant Park North or Millennium Park garages are close but still require some walking. Contact Chris Long, 708-606-9143, if interested.



PLEASE NOTE

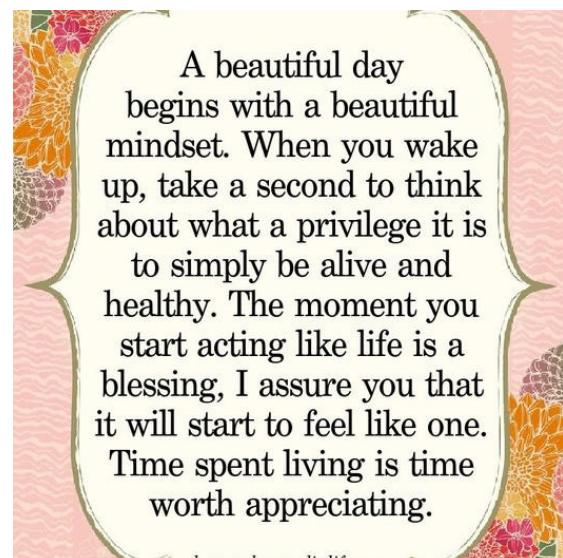
Some members have been saving stamps to send for missions. We no longer have a place to send the stamps. So, unless someone has a place where they can be sent, we will simply have to put them in the recycling bin. If you know of a place to send them, please let the church office know. Thank you!

CALENDAR MEETING

A meeting has been scheduled for Saturday, January 3rd to set the church calendar for 2026. Everyone is invited to attend at 9:30 AM in the parlor.

Answers to Bible Trivia:

1. Pharaoh, at the time Jesus was in Egypt.
2. Eutychus, who dozed off and fell out of a window during Paul's sermon.
3. Simon Peter
4. a) Rachel
b) Abel
5. Cana
6. Noah, who planted a vineyard after leaving the Ark.



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 Jesus Calling

Remember that joy is not dependent on your circumstances. Some of the world's most miserable people are those whose circumstance seem the most enviable. People who reach the top of the ladder career-wise are often surprised to find emptiness awaiting them.. True Joy is a by-product of living in My Presence. Therefore you can experience it in palaces, in prisons...anywhere.

Do not judge a day as devoid of Joy just because it contains difficulties. Instead, concentrate on staying in communication with Me. Many of the problems that clamor for your attention will resolve themselves. Other matters you must deal with, but I will help you with them. If you make problem solving secondary to the goal of living close to Me, you can find Joy even in your most difficult days.

11. *What is the primary purpose of the U.S. Constitution?*

From God's Way — *Day by Day*

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ~1 John 1:9

Your salvation occurred the moment you accept that Jesus died on the cross for your sins. His indwelling Holy Spirit continues to convict you of areas that need changing in your life—habits that need to be dropped or acquired; attitudes that need to be altered; automatic responses that need to be transformed to line up with God's Word and the life of Christ. You don't need to plead with God to save you or to forgive you or to change you. He responds to you the moment you turn to Him to receive His love. He then begins a renewal work that is ongoing in you the rest of your life.

Thank you to Alice Wasney for sharing this from the book Common Prayer

A FRANCISCAN BLESSING

AMERICAN BLESSING
May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may wish for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

From God's Way — *Day by Day*

I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.

~*Philippians 4:12*

God is in command. When a job is terminated, a mate quits, a friend deserts, God is quietly but sovereignly at work for your good. You are not a victim of the economy or another's decision.

You can be content in any circumstance when you are sure of God's unceasing care and absolute control over every detail. Rest in His ability, and contentment will follow.

CELEBRATIONS FOR JANUARY**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:**

Bill Langmeyer—4th
 Rick Wasney—10th
 Peyton Forbes—14th
 Glenn Gilbert—17th
 James Singer—17th
 William Singer—17th
 Dan Chachakis—25th
 Steve Jacobson—27th

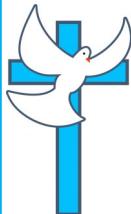
**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:**

Bill and Leslie Langmeyer—17th

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.



Barbara Abels	Marge Neel
Nan Beard	Lee Nelson
Jackie Ceres	Ronan Nelson
Gabe Chachakis	The family of Wylladene Nelson
Daniel Christain	Stacey Peterson
Elaine Degenhart	Kyla Jo Purvenas
Ralph Duncan	Szymanski Family
Niki Juarez Cummings	Alma White
Mona Earving	The Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees among us
The family of Officer Tim Jones	The Victims of Gun Violence
Malcolm Knox	The People of Israel and Gaza
Jim Lewis	The People of Ukraine
Patty McLeod	
Helen Neel	

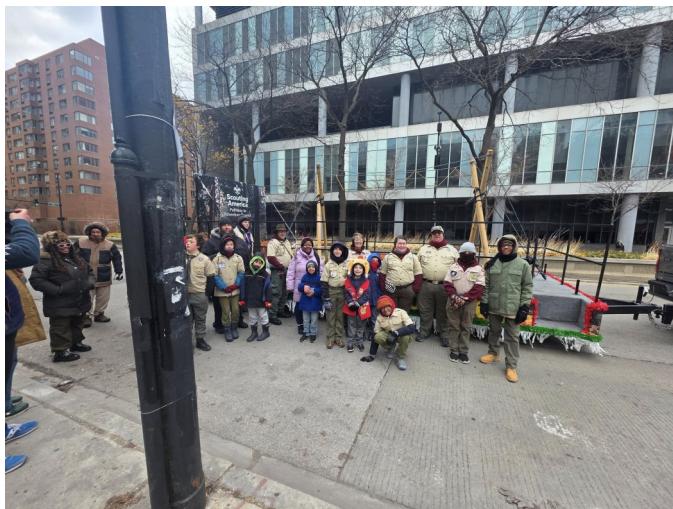
Congratulations Malaki (Tenderfoot) and James (first class) for earning their next rank .



Congratulations to Laec , Alijah and Enrique for their rank advancement



Chicago Thanksgiving Day Parade





We're raising dough!

GRACE UNITED PROTESTANT CHURCH

**December 14, 2025
4:00 pm to 8:00 pm
4864 211th Street, Matteson, IL**

30%
OF NET SALES
WILL BE
DONATED*

Use code **FUND4U** at panerabread.com, in the Panera App,
or at the kiosk in-cafe.

Online orders placed all day at your event cafe will count toward your total sales.

Bring this flyer or show a digital copy to your
cashier when ordering at the cafe to ensure your
organization gets a portion of the net sales.

Panera
FUNDRAISING

*20% fundraiser: Up to 20% of net sales from your designated and registered fundraising event will be donated to your approved organization. Minimum sales of \$100 on the specified date, time and location required to receive 20% donation. 25% fundraiser: Up to 25% of net sales from your designated and registered fundraising event will be donated to your approved organization. Minimum sales of \$150 on the specified date, time and location required to receive 25% donation. General terms: Details on percentage of net sales to be donated and the minimum sales requirement will be provided during the event registration process. Fundraising events available only at participating US bakery-cafes. Fundraising event details and available dates and times for fundraising events will vary by bakery-cafe. Gift card purchases, catering orders, and orders placed on third party delivery sites are excluded and will not count towards the total net sales from your designated fundraising event. This offer will be void if flyer is distributed in or near the participating bakery-cafe on the night of the event. Fundraising events may be cancelled without notice due to abuse, error, fraud, computer error, electronic or technical malfunctions, or other unforeseen or unintended circumstances. Other restrictions may apply. For more information on how our fundraising events work, please visit: <https://fundraising.panerabread.com/faq>.

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January 2026

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