



# GRACE TO YOU

February 2026

**Grace United  
Protestant Church**

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



Jennifer sang  
"Mary Did You Know?"



Ringalings Handbell Choir



Lighting the candle of Joy



Lighting the candle of Love

## **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](http://graceupc.org)**

## **UPCOMING CALENDAR**

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



## THE PASTOR'S PAGE

**February 2026      Renewed in Mercy: A Journey Toward New Life**

The January sermon series encouraged us to be rooted in Christ, helping us withstand life's storms. This foundation is especially important as we begin the Lenten season on **Ash Wednesday, February 18th**. Lent is a time for self-denial and spiritual growth, and this year, our focus will be on **"Renewed Mercy"** as we embark on this journey toward a new life.

During this Lenten season, you are invited to reflect deeply, aspire higher, and enrich your spiritual life, reaching beyond your previous limits. Lent is not only a time for introspection but also a call to action as we seek to embody the pilgrim people of God, pursuing God's kingdom and contributing to His kin-dom through worship and service. This Lent, we encourage you to experience the renewal that comes from God's infinite mercy and to walk with our Lord on a journey towards new life.

This month, we will celebrate both Black History Month and Valentine's Day! During our Sunday worship service, we will have a special moment dedicated to Black History to highlight the contributions of our African American brothers and sisters to the development of this nation. Remember that Valentine's Day is a time to honor and celebrate those who are dear to us.

**The upcoming Sermon Messages will concentrate on various aspects of Renewed Mercy.**

- February 18, 2026 \*Ash Wednesday – A Clean Heart
- February 22, 2026 – Mercy on the Wilderness Road
- March 01, 2026 – Guided by The Promise
- March 08, 2026 – Companion for the Journey
- March 15, 2026 – Journeying in Grace
- March 22, 2026 – Redemption Road
- April 02, 2026 - \*Maundy Thursday
- April 03, 2026 - \*Good Friday
- April 05, 2026 - Easter Day

**\*Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday worship services are at 7 PM.**

**The Virtual Winter/Lenten Bible Study will start on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, and run until March 31, 2026.** We will study the Gospel of John, which offers a powerful invitation to explore the mystery of Jesus' true identity, mission, and the importance of trusting in Him to receive eternal life. We invite you to join us every Tuesday at 7 p.m. via our church's Zoom link (sent on Mondays) for a chance to grow spiritually together!

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of our longtime member, Stan Moore, who transitioned into eternity on January 5, 2026, at the age of 97. May his soul rest in peace. We are keeping the family in our thoughts and prayers, wishing them comfort and strength at this time.

We celebrate our birthday and anniversary celebrants of this Month of Love, praying that God continues to bless them with many happy, joyful, and healthy years.

Please continue to pray for our members who cannot attend our family gathering in the sanctuary, so they may feel God's presence in their situations and challenges. Happy Valentine's Day!

Yours by His Grace,  
Pastor Amos Oladipo



**BE SURE TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

for a wonderful afternoon of Christian music!

**Sunday, March 1st**

**3:00 PM**

**We are excited to be hosting The Men of A-Chord !!**

The Men of A-Chord chorus was started in 1953 by a group of Christian men who shared the joy of singing. Now our extended family is composed of Christian men of various ages in all walks of life. We still share the joy of singing God's praises together and upholding each other in prayer on life's journey.

If you have ever heard them, you will know what an uplifting concert this is!

**Be sure to tell your friends and neighbors !**

A free-will offering will be taken.

**MISSION NEWS**

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18th, starting our annual support of Heifer International, which will continue through Easter Sunday on April 5th. The basic concept of Heifer is passing on the gift of sharing. Gifting animals, with the requirement that an offspring and training must be passed on, creates thriving families and communities. Additional information about Heifer will be in the March newsletter and on the literature tables. Save the afternoon of Palm Sunday, March 29th, for the Potato & Ice Cream Luncheon fundraiser.

Remember that our year-round local collections are:

- Area Food Pantries- shopping cart outside the office
- Pediatric Oncology Treasure Chest Foundation- toy box under coat rack
- Kids Above All- change jug at end of coat rack

Thanks to the extreme generosity of Grace members and friends, a total of \$9936 was collected for our 2025 missions. This includes our contribution to Boy Scouts of America Repair the Harm Fund. Our small congregation again has shown a strong commitment to helping our neighbors. Thank you all!



## WCA NEWS

WCA Board monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM in the parlor. All women are invited to attend any of the meetings.

### 2026 BOOK

The book for 2026 is ready for distribution. Please be sure to pick up your copy, if you don't have it yet!

### SAVE THE DATE!

**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!



### GAME DAY !

**Saturday, February 28th**

**2:00-5:00 PM**

We have such great times at our Game Days! Please join the fun! If you have a favorite game you would like to share, please bring it. Last time we had a couple of tables playing Dominos and other tables with different games. Then everyone joined in Bingo. What fun!

Feel free to bring snacks. This is a great way to get rid of the winter blues!

## Chat and Chew



**Tuesdays at 8 a.m.**

The men's Chat and Chew Breakfast is a long-standing tradition at Grace Church.

The group meets every Tuesday at 8:00 AM at:

Big Apple Pancake House

1425 Western Ave.

Chicago Heights, IL 60411

Please plan to join on any / every Tuesday for conversation and fellowship!

**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. Please email me with your contributions at llangmeyer@aol.com. Thank you! ~ Leslie**

From *Walking in Grace*

DOORS OF OUR LIFE: Front Door

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — John 1:12 (NIV)*

My front door and I share a frequent difference of opinion, as one of us adapts to weather changes better than the other. Made from a solid slab of Douglas fir, the door swells during humid summers and contracts in cooler months. In contrast, my need to enter and exit the house remains the same throughout the year.

Our disagreement spiked to a boiling point last summer when the heat and humidity reached record highs and the door refused to open. In frustration I called a locksmith, and he made adjustments so that the door would function regardless of weather conditions. After I paid the bill and scolded my door for causing problems, I stood back and admired its beauty. Despite its ornery nature, the handmade creation is a work of art with beveled edges and glass pane inserts, reminding me why I selected it for the front of my house.

Ouch. I just described myself as God might see me. He created me in His image knowing I would rebel, stumble, and fall on occasion. But He also offered His Son Jesus to rescue me from each failure and guide me back to Him. By accepting God's gift, I am who He says I am—His child forever, His handmade creation, chosen by Him to be exactly where I am.

As I opened the French doors leading to the screened porch, I realized every door in my house reflected an aspect of my walk with God. A journey filled with His love and grace, even if not always gracefully walked by me.

*God, thank you for opening the doors of my life to the purpose, peace, and joy You offer all Your children.*

~Jenny Lynn Keller

.....  
From *Jesus Listens* by Sarah Young

Jesus, my loving Companion,  
I am on an adventurous trail with You. This is not an easy time, but it is nonetheless good—full of blessings as well as struggles. Help me to be open to all that You're teaching me as I journey with You through challenging terrain. And enable me to let go of familiar comforts so I can say a wholehearted "Yes!" to this adventure.

I know You will give me everything I need to cope with the challenges I face. So I don't want to waste energy imagining myself in future situations—trying to walk through those "not yet" times in my mind. I realize this is a form of unbelief—doubting Your ability to provide what I need *when* I need it.

I want to make wise choices as I journey with You. I need to *pray continually* about these decisions, trusting in Your perfect wisdom. You know *everything*—including what lies ahead on my path. My busy mind tends to make various plans about the way I should go, but *You* are the One who *directs my steps and makes them sure*.

In Your infinitely wise Name, Amen.

**BIBLE TRIVIA**

Since it's Black History Month, Egypt is this month's trivia focus.

1. How many years were the Israelites in Egypt? (Exodus 12:40)
2. Who was brought down to Egypt and sold to a man named Potiphar? (Genesis 39:1)
3. Who stayed in Egypt until Herrod died? (Matthew 2:13-15)
4. What land did Moses flee to when he left Egypt? (Exodus 2:15)
5. What future King of Israel fled from Solomon and hid in Egypt? (1 Kings 11:40)

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 9.

**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 10:15 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.

**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](mailto:graceupchurch2@gmail.com) to tell Elaine Degenhart what you would like printed in the bulletin.** Thank you!





# GRACE TO YOU

## NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Page 7



The members and friends of Grace are blessed with incredible music! This year's Nine Lessons and Carols was especially beautiful! The Brilliant Etesian Ensemble joined the Jazz Band, the Voices of Grace Choir, and many readers for an inspiring and uplifting service.

Thank you to Valerie Nicholson for organizing this wonderful morning!



**CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**

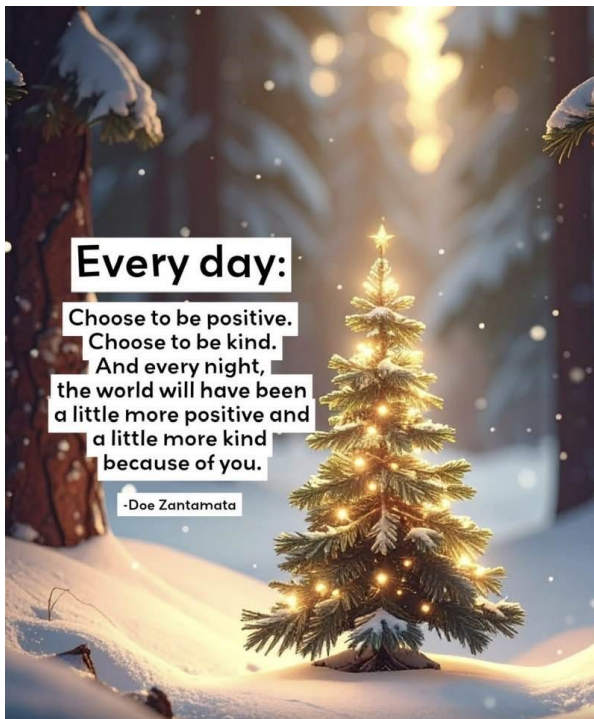
All children are invited to leave after the Children's Moment during Sunday worship for a class of Bible stories and activities. Our winter focus will be on the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. On the 1st Sunday of each month we will return to the sanctuary to participate in communion.

Parents and grandparents are always encouraged to join us anytime.

**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.

**DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE RECYCLE BOXES**

Our congregation is very "eco friendly." Everyone has been using the small recycle bins outside the Sanctuary and in the Office for paper and plastic. But, please remember the two boxes on the bookcase across from the Parlor. One is for used printer ink cartridges. The church treasury benefits from these recycled cartridges. The other box is for bottle caps. Our Boy Scout Troop #185 is collecting plastic bottle caps to make a park benches. Anything you can add to these boxes will be greatly appreciated.

Also, please note that the Park Forest Village Hall offers battery and eyeglass recycling services. There are boxes inside the front door on the table to the left. Walgreens in Olympia Fields also offers medicine disposal near the pharmacy.

**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 who 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](mailto: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.



CELEBRATIONS FOR FEBRUARY**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:**

Carolyn Estes—5th  
 Arrie Christain—8th  
 Maureen Cribbs—17th  
 Bea Chachakis—18th  
 Kristy Whitson—21st  
 Camille Forbes—26th  
 Brian Cummings—27th

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  
 Ray Abels  
 Nan Beard  
 Abby Burchill  
 Jackie Ceres  
 Gabe Chachakis  
 Daniel Christain  
 Elaine Degenhart  
 Ralph Duncan  
 Niki Juarez Cummings  
 Mona Earving  
 Malcolm Knox  
 Steven Krause  
 Blake Legu  
 Jim Lewis  
 The Family of Stan Moore

Helen Neel  
 Marge Neel  
 Forrest (Lee) Nelson  
 Ronan Nelson  
 Stacey Peterson  
 Kyla Jo Purvenas  
 Doug Smith  
 Szymanski Family  
 Alma White  
 Kristy Whitson  
 The Migrants, Immigrants, and  
 Refugees among us  
 The Victims of Gun Violence  
 The People of Israel and Gaza  
 The People of Ukraine

## Answers to Bible Trivia:

1. 430 years
2. Joseph
3. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus
4. Median
5. Jeroboam

**A THANK YOU**

A very heart-felt "Thank you!" to my Grace family for your prayers and good wishes before and after my surgery. I would like to especially thank my many "chauffeurs" who made it possible for me to get where I needed to be. I would also like to thank you for your generous Christmas gift. Bless you all!

~Elaine Degenhart

# ABOUT Scouts



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



Congratulations to Laec , Alijah and Enrique for their rank advancement to First class.



Congratulations to our new leadership team: Patrol 1 leader William, Electric Shock Patrol Leader Malaki, Senior Patrol Leader Alijah, Assistant Senior Patrol Leader Charlotte.

## GRACE CHURCH TREASURER'S REPORT FROM RICK WASNEY

	Amount Received	Amount Needed	Surplus/ Deficit
December 2025	\$ 6,767.88	\$ 6,375.00	\$ 392.88
Year to Date 2025	\$71,736.74	\$76,500.00	\$ 4763.26



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> Communion Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Choir Rehearsal 12:15 PM	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast <u>8:00 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00	<b>4</b> Prayer Group 9:30 AM	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15 AM</u> Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Bell Choir rehearsal 12:15 PM	<b>9</b> Rebekah Circle at the home of Leslie Langmeyer 7:00 PM	<b>10</b> Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast <u>8:00 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00 PM	<b>11</b> Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Scout Committee meeting 7:00 PM	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>  ART meeting in parlor 9:30 AM
<b>15</b> Jazz Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM.</u> Coffee & Fellowship following church	<b>16</b>  PRESIDENT'S DAY	<b>17</b> Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast <u>8:00 AM</u> Boy Scout meeting 7:00 PM	<b>18</b> Prayer Group <u>9:30 AM</u> Tabitha Circle in parlor <u>2:00 PM</u> Ash Wednesday Service 7:00 PM	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> WCA General Meeting— "Love Bags" 2:00 PM
<b>22</b> Choir Rehearsal <u>10:15 AM</u> Sunday Worship and Sunday School <u>11:00 AM</u> Bell Choir rehearsal 12:15 PM	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Men's Chat and Chew Breakfast <u>8:00 AM</u> Boy Scout <u>meeting 7:00 PM</u> Lenten Bible study 7:00 PM	<b>25</b> Prayer Group 9:30 AM	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Game Day 2:00-5:00 PM