



*To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest;
to all who mourn and long for comfort;
to all who struggle and desire victory;
to all who sin and need a Savior;
to all who are strangers and want fellowship;
to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness;
and to all who will come,
this church opens wide her doors
and offers welcome
in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Church Staff & Officers

David J. Wilcher

Lead Pastor

Kyle Bobos

Children's Ministries

Caleb McDuffee

Student Ministries

Elders

Brent Allmon

Dan Brink

Jon Green

Rob McIntosh

Mark Moore

Andy Yung

Deacons

Matt Bradshaw

Mike Bellin

Rhonnie Bellin

Jeff Cranford

Mark Hill

Scott Johnston

Mike Ryan

Joe Tison

Sunny Yung

Reflections

There are four words I wish we would never forget, and they are, "God keeps his word."

— Charles R. Swindoll
The Promise of Christmas

Christmas, then, is not a dream, a moment of escapism. Christmas is the reality, which shows up the rest of "reality." And for Christmas, here, read Christianity. Either Jesus is the Lord of the world, and all reality makes sense in his light, or he is dangerously irrelevant to the problems and possibilities of today's world. There is no middle ground. Either Jesus was, and is, the Word of God, or he, and the stories Christians tell about him, are lies.

— N.T. Wright
For All God's Worth

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace...to make music in the heart.

— Howard Thurman (1899-1981)
American author, civil rights leader, and theologian

I marvel at the Lord, the Creator of the universe, who is born, not surrounded by gold and silver, but by mud and clay.

— St. Jerome of Bethlehem (340-420)
Proclaiming the Christmas Gospel

Grace Presbyterian Church

The Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2019

10:30 a.m.

Prelude

Words of Welcome

Preparation for Worship¹

_____ *Praise* _____

Call to Worship

- based on **Luke 2**

Leader: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

People: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

Leader: This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

People: (Loudly) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

¹ As a courtesy, please program all communication devices to silent mode. Thank you!

Song of Praise

Angels We Have Heard on High

Prayer of Adoration

Song of Adoration

Doxology

Private Adoration and Praise

Renewal

Scripture Reading

Luke 2:17-19

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Confession of Sin

*Leader &
People:*

*Merciful God, always with us, always coming:
We confess that we do not know how to prepare for your Advent.
We have forgotten how to hope in miracles;
we have ignored the promise of your kingdom;
we get distracted by all the busyness of this season.
Forgive us, God.
Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,
the intelligent courage of the Magi,
and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph,
that we may journey with them to Bethlehem
and find the good news of a child born for us.
Now, in the quiet of our hearts, we ask you to make us ready for his coming.*

Words of Encouragement

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Sing, Daughter Zion;
shout aloud, Israel!
Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
Daughter Jerusalem!
The Lord has taken away your punishment,
he has turned back your enemy.
The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.
On that day
they will say to Jerusalem,
"Do not fear, Zion;
do not let your hands hang limp.
The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing."
"I will remove from you
all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals,
which is a burden and reproach for you."

The Peace of God and Announcements

Minister: He [Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. The peace of the Lord be with you!

People: And also with you.

*If parents prefer, children 4 years old – 2nd grade
are invited to attend Children's Church in the Education Building at this time.*

Lighting of the Advent Candle²

Barbara & Al Adams

Leader: The Advent wreath is a circle with no beginning and no end.
It is a symbol of God's unending love and faithfulness.

People: *Its light reminds us of Jesus, the light of the world.
In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Leader: Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.
Live as children of light.

People: *If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Leader: We are all children of the light and children of the day;
we are not of the night or of darkness.

ALL: *Jesus said, Everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness.*

Song of Response

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

The Prayers of the People *(concluded with the Lord's prayer)*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen!

_____ *Commitment* _____

The Offering

The offering is a way for members and friends of Grace Church to support the church's mission and ministry. If you are our guest today, please feel under no compulsion to give.

² Lighting the Advent wreath originated in Germany in the nineteenth century, based on a Roman custom of the ceremonial entrance of a ruler to a province or city as his 'advent' (from the Latin *adventus*: 'arrival'). The wreath consists of four candles on the outside of the wreath and one candle in the center. One candle is lit the first Sunday of Advent. Two are lit the 2nd Sunday, and so on. Each of the candles has special significance: The first is the prophecy candle; the second is the Bethlehem candle; the third is the Angel's candle; the 4th is the Shepherd's candle; and the center candle is the Christ candle, lit at Christmas.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Sermon

Mr. Brad Wright

THE MAGI'S HOPE **THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS**

Communion

Guidelines for Reception of Communion

Communion is a family meal for Christians. We welcome all committed followers of Jesus Christ to partake of this sacrament: those who are baptized members of a congregation which proclaims the gospel, who are at peace with God and with their neighbor, and who seek strength to live more faithfully for Christ. If you are not a Christian, or if you are not prepared to share in this meal, we encourage you to spend this time in prayer using the prayers that follow as guidelines. We hope that this time is helpful as you consider your relationship with Jesus Christ, and with his people, the church.

The Great Thanksgiving

Minister: Therefore, lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord!

Minister: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise!

Song of Communion

Come Weary Souls

Prayer of Consecration and the Words of Institution

Prayer for those not communing:

Prayer for Covenant Children (Not Yet Confirmed)

Lord Jesus, thank you for placing me inside your family, the church. Help me more and more to know you, to love you, and to follow you as your faithful disciple. Amen.

Prayer for Those Searching for Truth

Lord Jesus, you claim to be the way, the truth and the life. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open to me the reality of who you are. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you, as I consider the reasons for doing so. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent, convincing, and that leads to the life that you promise. Amen.

Prayer of Belief

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever before believed, but, through you, I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared to hope. I thank you for paying my debt, bearing my punishment on the cross and offering forgiveness and new life. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior. Amen.

Prayer for Those Struggling with Sin

Lord Jesus, grant that I may see in you the fulfillment of all my needs, and may turn from every false satisfaction to feed on you, the true and living bread. Enable me to lay aside the sin that clings so closely, and run with perseverance the race set before me, looking only to you, the author and finisher of my faith. Amen.

Prayer of Commitment

Lord Jesus, you have called us to follow you in baptism and in a life of committed discipleship in your church. Grant that I may take the necessary steps to be one with your people, and live in the fullness of your Spirit. Amen.

Distribution of the Bread and the Cup

Grace Presbyterian uses wine in the celebration of Holy Communion. If you prefer non-alcoholic grape juice, please take a cup from the outer circle of the tray. Gluten-free wafers are provided in cups in the center of the cup trays. Please hold the elements until all have received so we can celebrate this meal together.

Song of Commitment

The First Noel

Benediction³

Minister: See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward is with him and his reward accompanies him.

People: (Loudly) Amen! (Louder still) Rejoice, the King is coming!

Minister: Let us go forth into the world to love and serve our God!

People: Thanks be to God!

Dismissal

Minister: Now, let us go forth to serve this community and the world as those who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

³ The benediction is much more than a wish or even a prayer. It is a renewed ordination of the people of God to their service to each other, to their community and the world. God declares his own favor toward his people.

The pastoral staff and other church leaders are available following the service to pray with you or to answer your questions about the Christian faith or Grace Church.

Worship Music⁴

Thank you for sharing your gifts and talents with Grace Presbyterian Church.

Brent Allmon, saxophone
Debra Moses, flute
David Fox, keyboard

Rae Moses, piano
Damon Henrichs, guitar
Jennifer Reddick, flute

⁴All songs except hymns are copied under CCL # 1214497. The hymns are reprinted from *Trinity Hymnal* (© 1990, Great Commission Publications). Used by permission. All Scripture is quoted from, unless otherwise indicated, the *THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION*®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission

Sermon Notes

Matthew 2:1-12

THE MAGI'S HOPE

THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS

Welcome, Guests! We are excited you're here with us today. We hope that you were warmly welcomed and would love for you to be a part of Grace. Please take a moment to fill out the visitor information on the back of the bulletin, tear it off and drop it in the offering plate or give it on to an usher.

Parents of Infants - Three-Yr Olds: Our nursery and early-childhood classes provide a warm, nurturing, and well-supervised environment. Our workers welcome the opportunity to love your child! When using the nursery, please check in and label all items (bags, cups, etc.) with your child's name. If you need assistance or have any questions about the Nursery, please contact our Nursery Coordinator, Kate Weimar, at mothersdayout@gracewoodlands.org.

Cry Room: A cry room is available for the comfort of our new parents in order to ensure that everyone enjoys our services. It is located in the back of the sanctuary and it is well equipped (comfortable rockers, changing table, etc.) but if you are in need of anything, one of our ushers will be glad to assist.

Sunday Mornings at Grace

8:30 am Prayer
9:30 am Christian Education Classes
10:15 am Coffee Break

10:30 am Worship
11:45 am Intercession

Sunday Morning Prayer Ministry: To clasp hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world. We would like to invite you to be a part of this uprising at 8:30 each Sunday morning in the Prayer Room (114). Join us as we pray for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

Advent Choir: Any interested singers, high school through adult, are invited to join us to rehearse special music for the Advent season. Music reading is helpful but not required. We meet in room 108 at 9 am on Sunday mornings and would love to have you! For further information contact Debra Moses.

All Christian Education Classes and Community Groups are on holiday break and will resume in the New Year.

Children's Ministries:

- **Children's Christian Education** classes are offered for Preschoolers (2-3yrs old), Pre-K and Kindergarten, 1st-2nd Grade, 3rd-4th Grade, and 5th-6th Grade. Classes meet in the Education Building at 9:30 am 2nd Grade and under are on the 1st floor, 3rd Grade and above meet on the 2nd floor.
- **Children's Church** is offered for children ages 4 years old through 2nd grade. During passing of the peace, the children line up with their leader in the back of the sanctuary to exit worship. During the song of communion, children will rejoin their families to observe communion with the rest of the church body. We gather in room 108 in the Education Building to sing songs, pray, and hear a children's sermon. We also collect a children's offering during the service. This format is designed to model worship for our children and teach them the importance of meeting together as the body of Christ.
- **SNiCK and 56ers** are on holiday break and will resume in the New Year.
- **Advent Program:** Please sign up your children (ages 4-6th grade) for our Advent Program. Rehearsals will be on Dec. 8th & 15th at 9:30 am at Grace so you don't have to come back in the afternoon for rehearsal. The Advent Program will be on Sunday, Dec. 22nd. We will need 5th and 6th graders to be readers!
- **56ers Christmas Party** will be on Dec. 20th, from 3-5:00 pm at Grace. We will celebrate and snack together. Bring a friend and a gift (\$10 or less) for our White Elephant Gift Exchange.

Student Ministries is designed for students 7th grade through 12th grade. If you would like to be put on the mailing list for Student Ministries, or would like more information about an upcoming youth event, or have any questions at all, contact Caleb McDuffee at caleb@gracewoodlands.org. Have your student connect with us on Instagram (called GPCyouth) or ask to be put in our Youth group GroupMe to hear about upcoming youth group events!

- **Christian Education:** On Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:15 am, we gather to know more deeply about our Lord and Savior and who we are in Christ. Join us on Sunday mornings in room 206. Currently we are on break until January 12th
- **Youth Group** on Wednesday nights is on break until January 15th.
- **Christmas Party:** Our Youth Group Christmas party this year will be a Progressive Dinner held on Friday, Dec 13th, starting at 6 pm! At each house, we stop at we will do an activity and have one course of our meal. The first house on our four-house Schedule will be the Pirkle's home, where we will have appetizers. Our last stop of the evening will be at the Brink's home where we will have dessert and a White Elephant gift exchange! Contact Caleb for more info or if you can be involved with providing food/drinks in any way!
- **Boys and Girls Country Christmas Drive:** This year, our students have an opportunity to love on those less fortunate than themselves by preparing gift packages for other kids their age and younger who are currently living at the Boys and Girls Country, a home for children coming out of difficult living situations. Our Sr. High students served at their facilities during our Sr. High retreat. These gift packages will contain some practical items as well as fun gifts for the students there whose Christmas gifts are almost wholly dependent upon private donations. Grab a brochure on your way out for detailed information and encourage your student to make their own gift package to donate to Boys and Girls Country. These are due by our Christmas party on the 13th of Dec.

Women's Ministry Events and More! If you have any questions about Women's Ministry contact Natalie Webster or join the Women's Ministry on E-Connect to get involved.

- **Women's Bible Study** is on holiday break and will resume in the New Year.
- **Rain Walks** is a grief support group for women who are dealing with the loss of a loved one, either recently or in the past. Please come to listen (and share if you like) as we discuss our journeys and ways to "walk" through our loss. Rain Walks meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 8:30 am at Black Walnut Cafe in The Woodlands. Contact Sabrina Amell for more information.

Men's Fraternal: We are looking for men who would like to support the men's events and planning. Please contact John, with interest and to learn more on the specific needs.

- **Brew Night:** Our next monthly men's gathering is set for Thursday, Dec. 19th for dinner and fellowship starting at 6:30 pm. Join us at Wings 'N More (16580 I-45 South) for dinner and fellowship starting at 6:30 pm.

GraceCares: Caring for the church and the community. If you are interested in helping with GraceCares and the needs of the church and the community, please contact Joe Tison.

- **Autumn Grove:** Just a few minutes drive from Grace, Autumn Grove Cottage, a sixteen resident assisted living home, provides care to men and women with Alzheimer's. A small group from Grace visits roughly once a month for about 30 minutes or so to sing, pray and visit with the residents. Contact Laurel Stevens or Dan Brink for more information. We will be **Christmas Caroling** at Autumn Grove on **Dec. 15th**, following the service at 1:15. We welcome anyone and everyone.
- **Meals Ministry:** There are events in life when we all need the help and encouragement of our community. The Meals Ministry seeks to enter into these times by providing meals. If you are in need of meals, or would like to help provide meals for others, please contact our Meals Coordinator, Rhonnie Bellin.
- **Giving:** If you would like to know the best way to support those who might have needs in our church and community, we would encourage you to consider giving to the Deacon's Fund. It is through the deacons and their ministry that Grace church provides for, supports and comes alongside those who are in need. If you have questions, please contact Matt Bradshaw.
- **Prayer Ministry:** Our desire at Grace is that we take seriously the privilege of prayer and there are several ways you can participate. If you become aware of a prayer need, please communicate this to us in one of the following ways:
 - **In writing:** Fill out the back page of the bulletin and place it in the offering plate.
 - **By phone:** 281-296-0911 (Church Office)

Your requests will be communicated to our Church Staff, Officers, and our Prayer Team. If you would like to be on our Prayer Team, please let us know.

Missions Service Opportunities & Events: Contact John Zeigler for more information or to be added to our GraceMissions email list or to connect with a missions team advocate.

- **December Prayer Partners**

- Grace Presbyterian Diaconate
- Wil and Mary Nettleton, RUF @ Trinity University

- **Annual Tamina Tree!** - Look for the Christmas Tree in the narthex decorated with special tags for children from the Tamina Community Center, one of our oldest mission partners. Please take home one or more tags and buy an appropriate gift for each tag (there is more than one tag for each child, so 1 tag = 1 gift). Some tags have specific gifts listed on them. Then, attach the tag to the **unwrapped gift, and place on the gift table or in the church office.** We will deliver the gifts to TCC and parents will be able to choose items for their children. Your generosity will truly bless these precious children of the Tamina neighborhood. All gifts must be at the church no later than **Dec. 15th.** Please contact Mechele Tison with any questions.

- **Local Missions Partners**

- Cornerstone of Houston Team Counseling | The Woodlands, TX
- Interfaith Family Services | The Woodlands, TX
- Montgomery County Women's Center | Montgomery County, TX
- Pregnancy Assistance Center North | The Woodlands, TX
- Redeemed Ministries | The Woodlands, TX
- Tamina Community Center | Conroe, TX
- Oaklawn Presbyterian Church | Houston, TX
- Juan Carlos & Samara Martínez | RUF | Rice University
- Brooks & Meredith Harwood | RUF | University of Houston
- Grace Presbyterian ESL Ministry
- Grace Presbyterian Diaconate

- **National Missions Partners**

- Robbie & Kelly Mills | New City Fellowship Dallas | Dallas, TX
- David & Kelly Richter | Somerville Project | Boston, MA
- Way & Amy Rutherford | RUF | Baylor University
- William & Katherine Bondurant | RUF | Texas A & M University
- Ryan & Laura Anderson | RUF | Texas Christian University
- Wil & Mary Nettleton | RUF | Trinity University
- John & Chrissy Trapp | RUF | University of Texas
- Curtis & Marian Castleberry | RUF | University of Texas at San Antonio
- Francis A. Schaeffer Institute, Covenant Theological Seminary | St. Louis, MO
- Southwest Church Planting Network | Dallas, TX

- **International Missions Partners**

- Arab Baptist Theological Seminary / Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development | Beirut, Lebanon
- Titus & Crystal Bagby | RUF International | Texas A & M University
- Terry & Mary Rose Dykstra | RUF International | University of Texas
- Charles & Bonita Davidson | MTW | Monterrey, Mexico
- Joe & Felicity Congdon | MTW | Yokkaichi, Japan
- Andy & Missy Shadburne | MTW | Fremantle, Perth, Australia
- David & Eowyn Stoddard | MTW | Berlin, Germany
- Kay Burklin | MTW | Refugee Liaison, Europe
- Mission to The World | Atlanta, GA

Banners Explained: Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. The primary color is Purple. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. This color is also the color of suffering and points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing.

The banner on the left comes from Isaiah 11:1 "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit." The prophet Isaiah looks forward to a time when

Jesus, a king far mightier than David Jesse's son, would come to rule the world with justice, mercy, and love.

The banner on the right depicts an advent wreath. The green leaves and holly symbolize life brought to us in Jesus, and each Sunday a candle is lit in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah. The white center candle is lit on Christmas eve, and symbolizes purity and truth.

Stewardship Update: Grace thanks you so much for your generous gifts and offerings to our Savior for November 2019.

	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Budget	62,666	689,326
Actual General Fund	63,721	708,813
Variance	1,055	19,487

If you plan to make a tax-deductible donation for 2019, the donation deadlines for 2019 are as follows:

- Checks must be dated and postmarked no later than Tuesday, December 31st.
- Hand-delivered donations must be received in the office no later than Tuesday, December 31st. The office closes at 3 pm.
- Online donations must be completed by Tuesday, December 31st, 2019 at 11:59 pm CST.
- If you would like to give securities or need other gifts related assistance, please contact Mike Ryan at mike@stagepolymers.com.

Grace Online gives users access to the church directory and event calendar. Users can also join groups, print giving statements and give online. If you need any online instructions contact Dianna in the office at 281-296-0911 or admin@gracewoodlands.org.

- **Website:** Grace Online directory link, gracewoodlands.org under the Connect tab.
- **Mobile App (Elexio Community)** can be found by clicking the Apple App Store and Google Play icons on the church website. To log on, replace "Domain" with [gracewoodlands](http://gracewoodlands.org) and use your directory username and password for the app.
- **Online Giving:** If you would like to give online, you will need to set up an account, the link is under the Care tab on our website.

We are glad to have you as our guest today. Please use this page to let us know of your visit and to make us aware of any ideas, suggestions or concerns you may have. You may deposit this page in the offering plate as it comes by, or give it to an usher or greeter. Have confidence that no one will call or drop by your home; this is for us to have a record of your visit or your prayer requests.

Name, Email & Cell Number: _____

Spouse, Email & Cell Number: _____

Home Address: _____

Children, Age & Grade: _____

Please let us know if you are:

☐ Visitor

☐ Regular Attendee

☐ One time visit from out of town

I am interested in learning about:

☐ Community Groups

☐ Music

☐ Usher, Greeter

☐ Sunday Volunteer

☐ Children's Ministry

☐ Women's Ministry

☐ Student Ministry

☐ Men's Ministry

☐ Membership

Prayer Request:

☐ I would like to speak with someone about this prayer request or other spiritual concern; please have someone contact me at: _____.

☐ I would like the prayer team to pray for the following needs or concerns:

Prayer of Belief...

*Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more
sinful than I ever before believed, but through you, I am
more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope.*

*I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, bearing my
punishment and offering forgiveness.*

*Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn
from my sins and receive you as Savior and Lord. Amen.*