



*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.*

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**Church Staff & Officers**

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**David J. Wilcher**

*Lead Pastor*

**Kyle Bobos**

*Pastor of Children's Ministries*

**Todd Crusey**

*Pastor of Community Life*

**Grayson Baird**

*Director of Student Ministries*

**Elders**

*Dan Brink*

*Jon Green*

*Mike Hume*

*Mark Moore*

*Andy Yung*

**Deacons**

*Matt Bradshaw*

*Mike Bellin*

*Amy Bottorff*

*Matt Bottorff*

*Justin Chandler*

*Jeff Cranford*

*Mark Hill*

*Scott Johnston*

*Steve Kovach*

*Rob McIntosh*

*Mike Ryan*

*Sunny Yung*

Grace Church is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

## Reflections

It's good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when it's mighty Founder was a child Himself.

– Charles Dickens

Nothing but a child could wash these tears away  
Or guide a weary world into the light of day  
And nothing but a child could help erase these miles  
So once again we all can be children for awhile

– Steve Earle  
*Nothing But a Child*

Advent: When Emmanuel came, he disappointed the expectations of many; they failed to see that the reality was better than their expectations.

– Miroslav Volf

The Almighty appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation.

– J.I. Packer

# Grace Presbyterian Church

*The First Sunday of Advent*

December 3, 2017

10:30 a.m.

**Prelude**

**Words of Welcome**

**Preparation for Worship<sup>1</sup>**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Praise* \_\_\_\_\_

**Call to Worship**

- based on **Joel 2:1**

Blow the trumpet in Zion;  
Sound the alarm on my holy hill.  
Let all who live in the land tremble,  
For the day of the Lord is coming.  
It is close at hand.  
Come, let us worship God.

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

**Song of Praise**

*Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus*

**Prayer of Adoration**

**Song of Adoration**

*Doxology*

**Private Adoration and Praise**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Renewal* \_\_\_\_\_

**Scripture Reading**

**Isaiah 11:1-2**

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;  
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.  
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him —  
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and of might,  
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

**Confession of Sin**

*Leader &  
People:*

*O promised Christ:  
We are a world at war.  
Our peace depends on your coming.  
We are a sinful people.  
Our pardon depends on your coming.  
We are full of good intentions but weak at keeping promises;  
our only hope of doing God's will  
is that you should come and help us do it.  
Lord Christ, Word made flesh,  
our world waits  
for your peace,  
for your pardon,  
and for your grace.  
Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

## Words of Encouragement

— based on **Isaiah 40:1-2**

**Leader:** Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.  
Your sins are pardoned.  
The penalty is paid.

**All:** *Thanks be to God.*

## The Peace of God and Announcements

**Isaiah 9:6,7**

**Minister:** For to us a child is born,  
To us a son is given,  
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and peace  
There will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
And over his kingdom,  
Establishing and upholding it  
With justice and righteousness  
From that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
Will accomplish this.  
The peace of Christ 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 Candle<sup>2</sup>

Sandra and Thomas Walrath

**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:** *The prophet Isaiah said, The Lord himself will give you a sign:  
the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

**Leader:** The angel Gabriel said to Mary, "Greetings you who are highly favored!  
The Lord is with you."

**People:** *We rejoice that we, too, have found favor with God.*

**ALL:** *God's mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation.*

## Song of Response

*Come, O Redeemer, Come*

## 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.

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<sup>2</sup> 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

Luke 1:5-25

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. 22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Sermon

Mr. David Wilcher

*AN OLD PRIEST*

### THE SKEPTICS OF CHRISTMAS

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#### *Communion*

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#### *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

*Behold the Lamb*

## 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. Please hold the elements until all have received so we can celebrate this meal together.

## Song of Commitment

*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*

## Benediction<sup>3</sup>

**Romans 15:12-13**

Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## 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!*

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 Music<sup>4</sup>

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

Brent Allmon, saxophone  
T.J. Darst, bass  
David Fox, keyboard  
Damon Henrichs, guitar

David Kang, violin  
Debra Moses, flute  
Rae Moses, piano  
Jennifer Reddick, flute

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> All 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

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*Sermon Notes*

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**Luke 1:5-25**

*AN OLD PRIEST*

**THE SKEPTICS OF CHRISTMAS**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Grace Presbyterian Bulletin Board* \_\_\_\_\_

**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, Natalie Webster, at [nursery@gracewoodlands.org](mailto:nursery@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 Singers** are invited to gather to rehearse special music for the Advent season. Anyone who would like to sing please join us! Music reading helpful but not necessary. We meet in room 108 at 9:00 am. For further information contact Debra Moses.

**Lessons and Carols: Join us at at 10:30 am or 5:30 pm for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.** Based on a Service of Lessons and Carols, first crafted by Anglican Bishop William Benson in 1880, this service joins biblical texts about the birth of Christ with carols that highlight the themes of those texts. Universally beloved, this service is used with some variation all over the world.

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

**Community Groups:** To be part of the church is to be part of a community. Community is where we connect, build relationships, study, and serve together. Groups consist of 8-15 people meeting regularly in homes, restaurants, coffee shops, etc. Most groups meet on Sunday nights, but other times are also available. *Community Groups are currently on a Holiday Hiatus, but will resume in early January.* If you'd like to learn more community life at Grace, please contact Todd Crusey at [todd@gracewoodlands.org](mailto:todd@gracewoodlands.org).

**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** is on holiday break and will resume in the New Year.

- **Advent Rehearsals** for children ages 4 through 6th grade will be tonight, December 3rd and next Sunday, the 10th, from 4:00-5:00 pm. Our children's Advent Program will be on December 17th at the beginning of worship. Sign up your children in the narthex or see Kyle for more info.
- **PlayGroup** is an gathering of moms and dads making space for fun, friendship, and adventure for our young children. We meet on the 2nd & 4th Friday of the month. To get involved, contact Deborah Kovach or Natalie Webster. Since locations and times can change, please join the PlayGroup for updates in the church directory. **Dec 8th-** Christmas Playgroup at The Bodden's Home.

#### **Student Ministry:**

- **Christian Education & SNF (Sunday Night Fellowship):** We are on break over the holiday season and will resume on January 14th.
- **Boxes of Blessing Service Project: This Saturday, December 9th,** Grace families are invited to join Christ The King as they host a service project from 8:30 am-12:30 pm. Join us for this wonderful community-wide effort where we fill boxes with enough food to feed a family for one week during the Christmas holiday in the Houston area. This is a tangible way to demonstrate the love of Christ and truly get into the Christmas spirit. It's a great way to serve as a family- all ages are welcome. The address is 1201 Oliver, Houston 77007. For more information, talk to Grayson.
- **Caroling at Autumn Grove:** a group from Grace will be caroling at local assisted living residence after church on December 10th at 1:15 pm. Flex your vocal skills and bring some joy!
- **Christmas Party:** Add December 17th to your calendar for our Fa-La-La-La-Luau Christmas Party. Join us for a time of festivity and fun before holiday travels begin. More information to follow.

**Women's Ministry Events and More!** Please join the Women's Ministry on E-Connect to get involved.

- **Girls' Night Out:** Join us at the Black Walnut Cafe (9000 New Trails), Thursday, December 7th we'll meet at 6:30 pm. Come and go as you like! Questions, contact Kristen Power.

#### **Men's Fraternal:**

- **Brew Night:** Our next monthly men's gathering is set for Tuesday, December 19th. Join us at Goode Co. (8865 Six Pines Dr, Suite 100, Shenandoah) for dinner and fellowship starting at 6:30 pm. Come and go as you like.
- **Men's Discipleship Breakfast:** Our next twice monthly men's breakfast will be at **6:30 am on Tuesday,** November 28th at the Egg & I on Research Forest. A breakfast buffet will be available at \$10 per person. Steve Wilmoth is teaching a study on the book of James.

#### **GraceCares:**

- **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. **We will be Christmas Caroling at Autumn Grove on December 10th, following the service at 1:15. We welcome anyone and everyone!**
- **Meals Ministry:** There are many seasons and 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 and other means of support. If you are in need of meals, or would like to help provide meals for others, please contact our Meals Coordinator, Rhonnie Bellin.
- **Serve and Care for Grace Church members and congregation.** If you would like to know the best way to support and help those who might have financial or physical 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 Partner Prayer:** Please join the Missions Leadership Team in praying for these two mission partners throughout the month of December.

- Shirley Grimes, Tamina Community Center
- Denise Apostolo and Dana Garcia, Montgomery County Women's Center

- **Annual Tamina Tree! - It's here!** Today and on Dec. 10th look for the Christmas tree in the narthex decorated with special tags for children from the Tamina Community Center, one of our oldest missions 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). Then, attach the tag to the gift and place the unwrapped gift under the tree. 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 December 17th. Please contact Laurel Stevens with any questions. 832-373-8993 or laurel.stevens37@gmail.com

- **Local Mission Partners**

Tamina Community Center | Conroe, TX  
 Montgomery County Women's Center | Montgomery County, TX  
 Cornerstone Recovery | The Woodlands, TX  
 Interfaith Family Services | The Woodlands, TX  
 Pregnancy Assistance Center North | The Woodlands, TX  
 Redeemed Ministries | The Woodlands, TX  
 Three Local Refugee Pastors: Pastor Thong Lun & Pastor Mang Tiak -Greater Houston Burmese Christian Fellowship, Pastor Bhadra Rai & wife, Ruth -Canaan Bhutanese Church of Houston, Pastor "Andre" Onokoko Shang -International Ministries for the Propagation of the Gospel | Houston, TX  
 Blake & Ryan Arnoult | RUF | University of Houston  
 Juan Carlos & Samara Martínez | RUF | Rice University  
 Open position | RUF | Texas A&M University  
 Dennis & Jane Hermerding | King's Cross Church | Cypress, TX  
 Leo & Ellen Schuster | City Church | Houston, TX  
 Bill Thomas | PCA Southwest Church Planting Network | Dallas, TX  
 Oaklawn Presbyterian Church | Houston, TX  
 Grace Presbyterian Diaconate

- **National Mission Partners**

Way & Amy Rutherford | RUF | Baylor University  
 John & Chrissy Trapp | RUF | University of Texas  
 Ryan & Laura Anderson | RUF | Texas Christian University  
 Wil & Mary Nettleton | RUF | Trinity University  
 Nathan & Falon Moretto | New City Presbyterian Church | Royal Oak, MI  
 David & Kelly Richter | Christ the King Presbyterian Church | Somerville, MA  
 Francis A. Schaeffer Institute | Covenant Theological Seminary | Saint Louis, MO  
 Reformed University Fellowship (RUF) | Atlanta, GA  
 Curtis & Marian Castleberry | RUF | University of Texas at San Antonio

- **International Mission Partners**

Jason & Sarah Pickard | RUF International | Texas A&M University  
 Open position | RUF International | University of Texas  
 Joe & Felicity Congdon | MTW | Toyosu, Tokyo, Japan  
 Charlie & Bonita Davidson | MTW | Monterrey, Mexico  
 Andy & Missy Shadburne | MTW | Fremantle, Perth, Australia  
 David & Eowyn Stoddard | MTW | Berlin, Germany

Arab Baptist Theological Seminary | Beirut, Lebanon  
Kay Burklin | MTW | Refugee Liaison, Europe  
Mission to The World (MTW) | Atlanta, GA

**Stewardship Update:** Grace thanks you so much for your generous gifts and offerings to our Savior for October 2017.

	<u>October</u>	<u>YTD</u>	
Projected Budget*	68,150	681,500	
Actual General Fund	53,288	608,102	
Variance	(14,862)	(73,398)	*Based on a 2017 budget of \$817,800

Grace receives more gifts in December than any other month of the year. Therefore, this is taken into account in our annual budgeting. Please keep Grace prayerfully in mind as you consider your year-end giving. If you would like to give securities or need other gift related assistance, please contact Mike Ryan.

**Find & Interact with Members and Online Giving:**

- **Grace Online Directory:** The link for member login can be found on the church website under the Connect tab. In addition to accessing the church directory, you can join groups and review your giving history. If you did not receive login instructions or would like to be added to the church directory, contact Dianna in the office at [admin@gracewoodlands.org](mailto:admin@gracewoodlands.org) or 281-296-0911.
- **Grace Online Giving Portal.** If you would like to give online, you will need to setup an account. The link can be found on our website under the Care/Give tab.
- **Grace Church Mobile App (Elexio Community by Elexio)** is available for iPhone and Android and can be found by clicking the Apple App Store and Google Play icons on the church website. In addition to giving users access to the church directory and events, the mobile app also offers a mobile check-in option for the Nursery. To log on, replace "Domain" with [gracewoodlands](http://gracewoodlands.org) and use your directory username and password for the app.

**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 left is the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, the Alpha and the Omega. These letters became a symbol for Christ due to His being called "the First and the Last" and speaks of his eternity. This oldest of symbols has been found in the Catacombs, Christian signet rings, post-Constantine coins, and the frescoes and mosaics of ancient churches.

On the right, the circle of the Celtic Cross is a symbol of eternity as well but emphasizing the endlessness of God's love as shown through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Each of the panels symbolizes a different theme of Christ's coming, his Advent.

Both banners are adorned with holly and ivy. They are evergreens and look alive even in the middle of a frigid winter, when other trees and shrubs look dead. For ancient Christians, this symbolized the unchanging nature of our God, and reminds us of the everlasting life that is ours through Christ. Early Christians placed evergreens in their windows to indicate that Christ had entered the home. Holly became widely used in church celebrations, as the bush with its red berries is considered by some as representing the burning bush. The Holly bush reminds others of Mary, aglow with the Holy Spirit. The red berries represent the blood drops from the cruel thorns in the crown of Jesus.

**Missed a Recent Sunday Worship?** MP3s of Sunday morning messages are available on the website at [www.gracewoodlands.org](http://www.gracewoodlands.org) under Media. You can listen online, download them or subscribe to the Podcast. If you need help or are having trouble, please contact the church office @ 281-296-0911.

**Church Office Information:** Office Hours 8:30 am-3pm M - F | Phone: 281.296.0911 | Fax: 281.419.4345  
Email: [admin@gracewoodlands.org](mailto:admin@gracewoodlands.org) | Website: [www.gracewoodlands.org](http://www.gracewoodlands.org)

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse & Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Children & 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

Prayer Request:

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

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

*Prayer of Belief...*

*Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful that 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.*