



CONNECTING OUR GCC COMMUNITY SINCE 1941

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A WEARY WORLD REJOICES

Since college, Advent has seemed to bring a special sort of magic. I remember talking with one of my college friends, Rebekah, about Advent each year. We would chat about what felt unique to us that particular season; what was standing out to us that Advent.

Even now, though we live thousands of miles apart, we often still message each other during Advent to check in: *“What is God saying to you this Advent?”*

One year I remember focusing on joy amid sorrow and the irony of Advent and Christmas. I had attended a Lessons and Carols service at a large church in Grand Rapids; the music was phenomenal, featuring various musical groups from Calvin University and area churches. The theme for the service was “The Great Paradox.” I remember sitting in the back row of the large, full sanctuary next to a friend from church, her quietly passing me Kleenex from her purse as I tried to muffle my weeping.

That year, I had gone through a significant loss right at the beginning of Advent, and the message of the “paradox” of the season sank in, in a whole new way. Perhaps it was that year that I began marking each Advent with a particular meaning; a new spiritual learning each year; growing deeper in my faith and in my understanding of the profound potential of this season.

Recently, in preparation for this Advent season, the words, “the weary world rejoices” from the hymn, “O Holy Night,” popped into my head. What perfect words to capture this paradox.

The Paradox of Christmas: that the fully divine can become fully human. That the God of the universe can come as a small baby in a manger. That in the middle of unjust regimes and oppression, one can still have hope. That in a world where there is so much to make us weary, we might still choose to rejoice.

I find so much beauty in this paradox; in this irony, in the strangeness of this season. As the days grow shorter and darker, we choose to put up lights and create beauty. As we become more aware of the needs of the world, we choose generosity; giving of ourselves and our time. And even when things seem hopeless, we continue to keep hope.

I’m not sure what this Advent will bring, for me or for you. Perhaps I won’t really know until it’s over, when I can look back and see what it was God was teaching me in the season. But for now, I think I am simply trying to make space. I am trying to make space for God this Advent, to leave some emptiness in my schedule, in my day, and in my mind and heart for whatever it is that might show up this season.

My prayer for you, and for our church, is that we might all do the same: make space for whatever it is God longs to say to us in this time and place.

Who knows? God might just show up in the way we least expect.

Advent & Christmas blessings,
Rev. Abigail

SPEAKERS FORUM

The November Tom Amos Speakers Forum welcomed leaders of **Building Peaceful Bridges** who shared how they assist newcomers from different countries as they settle into their new lives in the Chicago area and strive to build independence. A highlight of the evening was a panel discussion with GCC's own Rev. Abigail and GCC teen Jackson Berry with the BPB children they are tutoring.



PATHWAYS CONFIRMATION CLASS

Our Pathways Confirmation class visited the Ismaili Jamatkhana in Glenview for a special interfaith learning experience. Students learned about the similarities and differences between our faith traditions and toured the beautiful facility with kindness and hospitality from our hosts. What a meaningful morning of understanding, connection, and shared faith!



JOYFUL RINGERS

This year marks a very special milestone, 40 years of beautiful music by the GCC Joyful Ringers bell choir.

The GCC bell choir was formed in 1985 with donations from congregants, and was under the direction of organist Norreen Klemens. It started with 4 octaves of bells and about 10 bell ringers. Marcia Van Oyen directed the group from 1995-2005, and Gary Wendt has been the director since 2005.

The ensemble was named "The Joyful Ringers" shortly after 2005, and gradually expanded to more than 5 octaves, with 14 full time ringers. In 2010, 5 octaves of chimes were added, and a second ensemble, "Tres Belles" (now called "Chime In"), was begun in 2022.



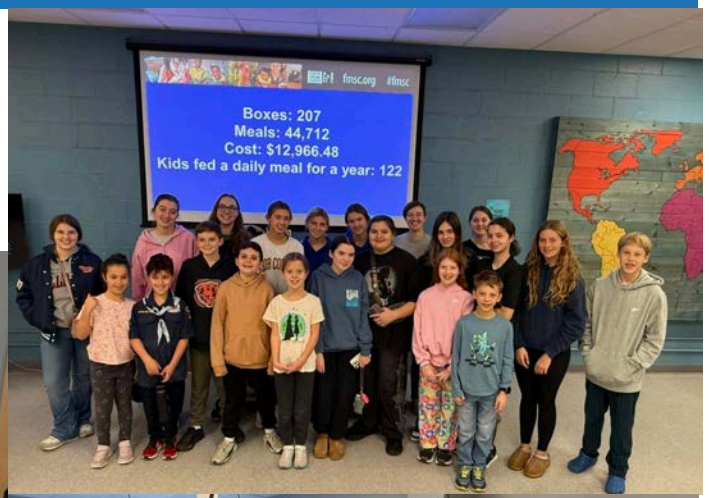
BOARDS AND BITES

Last Friday evening was everything we love about community, laughter across generations, friendly competition, and tables filled with snacks and conversation! At Boards and Bites, kids, teens, adults, and grandparents all came together to play, connect, and build relationships that truly make our church feel like home. From classic board games to new favorites, every table had its own energy and joy. Thank you to everyone who came out, brought treats, and made memories with us! Can't wait for the next one!



FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN

This morning, our GCC team joined together at **Feed My Starving Children** to pack meals for kids around the world. Together, we packed 207 boxes, totaling 44,712 meals, enough to feed 122 children a daily meal for an entire year. What an incredible impact! Thank you to everyone who showed up with servant hearts and helping hands. Your love in action truly makes a difference.



CELEBRATING GARY WENDT

This Fall marks 25 years of ministry at Glenview Community Church for Gary Wendt. For 25 years, Gary has poured his gifts, his heart, and his incredible musicianship into the ministry of GCC.

We celebrated this anniversary (along with Gary's 60th birthday) in worship on November 16! It was a joyful morning with special surprises for Gary and a wonderful reception in the Commons after worship.

Gary first joined GCC in the fall of 2000, leading our children's choir with enthusiasm and care for two seasons. After a brief time away, he returned in 2005 to serve as our Organist and Instrumental music director—roles he stepped into with the excellence and creativity we now know so well. Over time, his leadership grew into what we now treasure deeply: his ministry as our Minister for Music & Organist.

Across these 25 years, Gary has shaped and nurtured music for all ages—children, youth, and adults. He has led instrumental ensembles and our beloved bell choir, curated inspiring concert series, welcomed outstanding guest musicians, and supported every element of worship with professionalism, passion, kindness, and deep humility. His presence has elevated our worship and strengthened our community in ways that are hard to capture in words. Gary is well-loved by all who serve alongside him. He is a remarkable colleague, a steady leader, a creative spirit, and truly a gift to this congregation.





Advent & Christmas at Glenview Community Church

Seasonal Outreach: Bless others this season by decorating our Mission Tree with winter clothing for The Night Ministry or by supporting hygiene-kit supplies for MLK Day through a gift to The Grace Network.

Sun. Nov. 30, 10 a.m. Worship: First Sunday of Advent- stay after worship to help us decorate our sanctuary!

Sat. Dec. 6, 7 p.m.: A Toy-ful Celebration~ GCC's annual holiday concert benefiting Toys for Tots. Bring a new, unwrapped toy to donate!

***Sat. Dec. 6, 2:30 p.m. and Sun. Dec. 7, 2:30 p.m.:** New Tradition Chorus Christmas Concert.

Sun. Dec 7, 10 a.m. Worship: Second Sunday of Advent~ With Communion & Puppets presentation for Church School .

Wed. Dec. 10, 7 p.m.: Amos Speakers' Forum- "Deck the Halls with DIY: Holiday Decorating & Floral Magic"

Fri. Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Church wide Christmas Celebration & Dinner with Santa

***Sat. Dec. 13, 7:30 p.m. and Sun. Dec. 14, 3 p.m.:** Chicago Master Singers Christmas Concert

Sun. Dec. 14, 10 a.m. Worship~ Third Sunday of Advent~ Jazz Advent

Sun. Dec. 14, 4-6 p.m.: Youth Group Christmas Celebration

Sun. Dec. 21, 10 a.m. Worship: Fourth Sunday of Advent~ Pageant Music Sunday

Wed. Dec 24: Christmas Eve
4 p.m. Family Service
8 p.m. Choral Service
11 p.m. Candlelight Service

(*denotes non GCC events hosted at GCC)

STEWARDSHIP

To the many GCC members who have already pledged for 2026- thank you! Remember it is never too late to get your pledge in to help ensure a strong GCC for 2026 and beyond. I have included the link to the pledge information on the website to make it as easy as possible for you to get in your pledge: Glenview Community Church: 2026 Pledge- A Commitment to Belonging . If you have any questions, please reach out to Linda Crowder at lcrowder@comcast.net or 847-922-6827. I look forward to working with you and your family to build a community of belonging at Glenview Community Church.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE TEAM

I'm excited to announce that we're reviving the Congregational Care Team. What is the CC Team? It is a communication conduit for those needing care. The goal of this team is to serve as a support resource for the congregation, helping members and their families identify those in need of care or celebrating important life events. Whether someone could use a minister's visit, a phone call, a card, a meal, altar flower delivery, or seasonal flowers like poinsettias and Easter lilies, this is the team that will help. We invite you to join us! If you enjoy writing notes, preparing meals, delivering flowers, or making phone calls, we would love your help! Interested in getting involved and learning more? Contact Laura O'Mera at lauraomera@gmail.com or call/text 847.814.1565.

TWO OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE GOD'S LOVE

The Mission Tree

We can be a "God Moment" to someone who is facing a harsh Chicago winter with inadequate clothing. The Mission Tree is an opportunity to donate much needed clothing items that will be distributed through **The Night Ministry** to those suffering from poverty and homelessness. Most of The Night Ministry's clients are men. Please limit donated clothing items to the list below. Only new items are being accepted. Bring your donations to church and leave them in boxes provided by the Christmas tree in the Narthex or in the box by the office. Donations will be accepted from December 8 through January 5.

- New men's thermal long underwear sets (sizes M-XXL)
- New winter beanie hats (dark colors preferred)
- New stretchy gloves (dark colors preferred)
- New winter coats (sizes M-XL, dark colors preferred)
- New men's t-shirts (sizes M-2XL; short and long sleeve)
- New men's sweatpants (sizes M-2XL)
- New adult-size sweatshirts/hoodies (sizes M to 2XL; dark colors preferred)
- New gym shoes (not slides) and boots (men's sizes 10 to 14; women's sizes 7 to 9)

Hygiene Kit Supplies

Help us prepare for Martin Luther King Day of Service on January 19! On that day we will be assembling hygiene kits for **The Grace Network**, which works with over 150+ schools in Chicago to support thousands of students facing hygiene insecurity. The network's school partners stock care closets full of health and hygiene items to ensure students always have access to everyday necessities.

You can help by making a monetary donation to GCC with MLK Day Kits on the check memo line or in the electronic donation form comments section. **The Grace Network** will purchase supplies from wholesalers and deliver them to us on January 19. Please NO hygiene items from home or from travels. Donations will be accepted from December 8 through January 15. And, of course, please join us on January 19 to assemble the kits!



EVENT VOLUNTEERING

It's that time of year again when I shout into the void and get no response. Dave Aki, our Building Operations Manager, works 7 days a week. And to be blunt, Dave is no spring chicken and he needs to rest like everyone else. As unsuccessful as I have been in asking for help over the past two years, I have to ask again because Dave goes above and beyond daily.

If you can help with the set up of an event, like putting chairs up or rearranging the furniture in the Commons, or the take down of an event, like cleaning up and putting tables away after the event, please let Riley in the office know. There is always something to be done and Dave shouldn't have to work 7 days a week. No one should have to, but I like Dave and he deserves better. If anyone in the congregation can find it in their heart to actually give back to church they attend in a meaningful way, that would be a great start. Please, for the love of God, give Dave Aki a break.



MISSION & OUTREACH MINISTRY: EXTENDING CHRIST'S LOVE THROUGH SERVICE, ADVOCACY, AND GIVING

GCC has so much love and so many resources to share. The Mission & Outreach Ministry helps our members channel these gifts and turn our faith into concrete actions. Ministry teams focus on advocating for justice and distributing the church's financial gifts, while the ministry as a whole works with our outreach partners to assist neighbors in need. With the generous support of many volunteers, the Mission and Outreach Ministry works to ensure that GCC's abundance of time, talent, and treasure makes a meaningful difference in our community, nation, and world.

Ministry Activities

The Mission & Outreach Ministry supports local and global partners, organizes hands-on volunteer projects, and funds programs that bring hope, encouragement, and much-needed financial support to many. Throughout the year, we invite GCC members and friends to participate in service opportunities and projects. These include:

- Preparing meals for **Feed My Starving Children** in November
- Serving lunch twice a month at **A Just Harvest**
- "Food on the First" collection for the **Northfield Food Pantry** and San Lucas UCC
- Packing food at the **Greater Chicago Food Depository**
- Painting apartments for **Good News Partners**
- Doing home and yard maintenance for homeowners in need of help with **Rebuilding Together**
- Preparing and serving dinner for **Youth Services of Glenview/Northbrook**
- Collecting clothing for **The Night Ministry** and other organizations serving people without housing
- Sponsoring programs and discussions on social justice, public health, and interfaith understanding

Faith in Action Team (FIAT)

The members who formed the Faith in Action Team in 2013 were inspired by Luke 4:18-19: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because God has anointed me to proclaim relief to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." FIAT focuses on advocacy and education. The team seeks to amplify the voices of groups seeking just treatment for marginalized groups, public safety, and environmental stewardship. FIAT partners with other GCC ministries and with organizations such as the League of Women Voters, Greener Glenview, Cook County United Against Hate, and the Illinois Alliance for the Prevention of Gun Violence. In partnership with these groups, FIAT promotes education and discussion on topics including:

- Gun violence prevention
- Countering racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia
- LGBTQIA+ inclusion and rights
- Climate change and environmental protection
- Voting rights
- Criminal justice reform
- Workers' rights and affordable housing

Through events such as the Gun Safety Fair, Transgender Youth Panel, and Earth Day Is Every Day with Greener Glenview, FIAT transforms GCC's gifts into action for a more just and loving world.

Mission Allocations Team

Did you know that 8% of your annual pledge is dedicated to GCC's mission of uplifting communities and sharing resources with those in need? Thanks to the generosity of the congregation and some funding from additional sources, in 2025 the Mission Allocations Team determined how to distribute \$77,000 to agencies serving the needs of the local and larger communities. Every year, the Mission Allocations Team:

- Meets to discuss emerging and pressing needs in the community
- Contacts our mission partners to learn about their current activities and financial needs and to ensure that the agencies' work is in harmony with GCC's values
- Determines how to best allocate GCC's annual charitable donation budget among mission partners
- Recommends final allocations for Spiritual Council approval
- Identifies groups to receive the special holiday offerings
- Agencies receiving mission allocation funds include Building Peaceful Bridges, Doctors Without Borders, the Night Ministry, Onward House, and the Northfield Food Pantry.

A Welcome for All

The Mission & Outreach Ministry coordinates with other GCC ministries to provide unique education and outreach opportunities for the congregation and the wider Glenview community.

- In coordination with the Faith Formation ministry, we sponsor speakers for the monthly Amos Speakers Forum, which is open to everyone inside and outside of the congregation.
- In 2026, the Mission & Outreach and Congregational Life Ministries will once again co-sponsor a Day of Service event in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. GCC and community members will be invited to join us for a variety of hands-on service projects in support of several mission partners.

Join Us

The Mission & Outreach Ministry welcomes everyone to participate, whether through hands-on volunteering, joining advocacy efforts, or helping direct benevolence funds. Together, we live our faith by serving others and working toward justice and compassion for all. For information or to get involved, contact Betsy Martin at betsywisemartin@att.net

A JUST HARVEST

Volunteer for Fall Lunch Service at **A Just Harvest**. Please consider volunteering to serve lunch from 11-2:30 at **A Just Harvest** this fall on Sundays or Wednesdays. This fall **A Just Harvest** needs teams of two people to serve lunch at their site in Rogers Park, where they fight poverty and hunger by providing nutritious meals daily to those in need. GCC volunteers will work on the following dates: Sundays November 7, and December 7, or Wednesdays November 19, or December 17.

A volunteer team could be made up of 2 GCC members, a member and family member or neighborhood friend, 2 members of a Women's Association Chapter, 2 members of the Men's Ministry, or GCC youth with an adult supervisor/driver.

If you are interested in making up a team or being part of a team this fall, please contact Betsy Martin at betsywisemartin@att.net or 847-562-6166. We will sign you up for a date that fits your schedule and will send you the information you need to volunteer.

The Outreach Ministry Team

HEALTHY HINTS

As the holiday season approaches, many of us find ourselves busy with preparations and striving to make Christmas memorable. While this can be exciting, it often brings stress and anxiety, which may lead to feeling unwell and missing out on the festivities. To help you enjoy a vibrant and stress-free holiday, consider these six practical tips:

1. Make Sleep a Priority

- Aim for 7–8 hours of restful sleep each night. Establish a calming routine an hour before bedtime to help your body unwind.

2. Choose Nutritious Foods

- Focus on fresh meats and vegetables, and steer clear of processed and fast foods. Stay hydrated with water, limit sugary drinks, and keep caffeine to a minimum.

3. Stay Active

- Try to walk or jog for 30 minutes, three times a week. Embrace the winter weather—bundle up and get outside!

4. Explore Creativity

- Engage in activities that spark joy, such as playing music, decorating, or baking treats.

5. Connect with Loved Ones

- Spend quality time with friends and family, cherishing every moment together.

6. Take Time to Relax

- Schedule moments for meditation, yoga, or deep breathing. Attend church services and reflect on the meaning and wonder of Christmas.



This year, remember to include yourself on your Christmas list. Give yourself the invaluable gift of good health and wellness—something that can't be wrapped but will enrich your holiday season

For all questions or complimentary Health Coaching, please contact Laura O'Mera, Integrative Nutrition Health Coach at 847.814.1565, laura@bramhall.health or visit www.bramhall.health.

MODERATOR MENTIONS

As we gather to celebrate the holidays and spend time with our loved ones, I am prompted to pause and reflect on the amazing place GCC has become in recent years. We continue to grow in our new membership, our programming, and our outreach. Thanks to the hard work of Rev. Jim and Dave Aki, our building is bustling and we have become home to many different groups for many different purposes. Most recently, a small Muslim group has asked to use GCC as a place for daily prayers and I am excited that they will invite us to their Iftar meals during Ramadan and offer the chance to participate in other interfaith activities with them. We had other recent interfaith opportunities when Rev. Jim and Rabbi Bruce Elder had a clergy swap the weekend before Thanksgiving and GCC was invited to attend the interfaith Thanksgiving service at the Glenview United Methodist Church. Personally, I have also enjoyed the broad-ranging topics at the Amos Speaker's Forum and had a lot of fun at Boards & Bites in November. These have all been great opportunities to share experiences with people a little farther out than my typical social circles and I am so grateful for that. It's been a beautiful reminder to me of how much we all have in common while still being beautifully diverse and how grateful I am to belong to this community.

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“Road to Versailles at Louveciennes” 1869, by Camille Pissarro