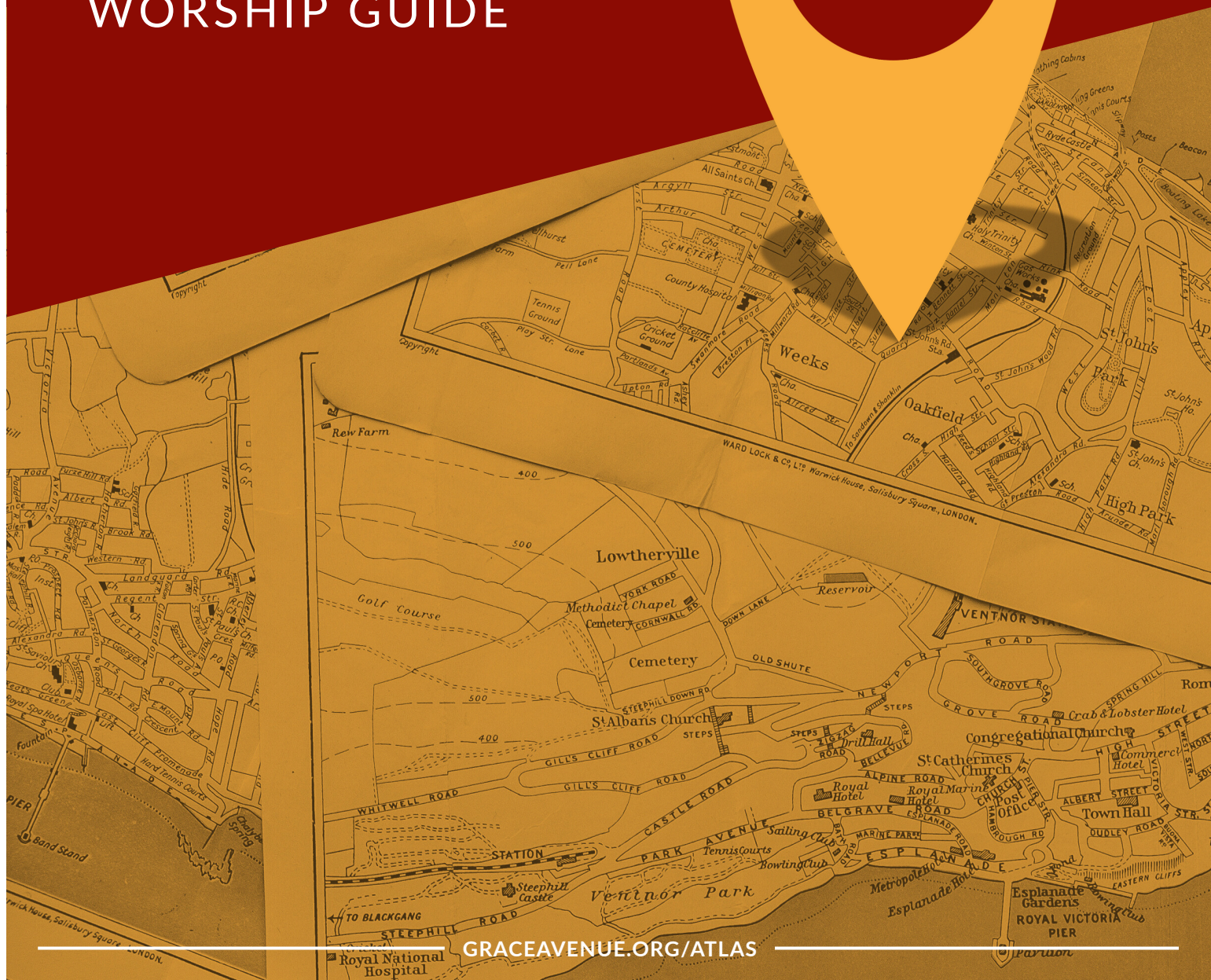


GRACE AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2025-2026

ATLAS

WORSHIP GUIDE



GRACEAVENUE.ORG/ATLAS

WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG?



We begin this series with a Blessing of Backpacks, but before we fill our bags with notebooks, pens, laptops and calculators, let's consider what God invites us to carry into the fall.

Whether we are going back to school, into the workplace, or meeting a neighbor in the community, what's in your bag?

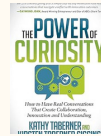
What if we intentionally packed a spirit of compassion that helps us see one another's needs and an inquisitive mind that asks questions without judgment? Could imagination stir the work before us with joy and wonder? Will we let courage guide our steps into the new season?

This four-week series invites us to pack our bags more intentionally for the journey ahead.

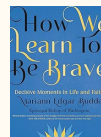
BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS Sunday, August 10

As we get ready for school to start back up, we will have a time during worship to pray for our students, parents, teachers, administrators, and all others heading back to school or starting a new year. All will receive special tags to put on your backpack or work bag to remember that God goes with you.

RESOURCES



The Power of Curiosity
by Kathy Taberner &
Kirsten Taberner Siggins



How We Learn to be Brave
by Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde



The Tears of Things
by Richard Rohr



Braving the Wilderness
by Brene Brown



What to Keep
by Karen Kaiser



The Dot
by Peter H. Reynolds



The Girl with the Big, Big Questions
by Britney Winn Lee

August 10	Compassion	Colossians 3:12-17
August 17	Curiosity	Luke 11:9-13
August 24	Creativity	Psalms 8 & Isaiah 64:8
August 31	Courage	Joshua 1:1-9

Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:





In a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, digital personas, and curated perfection, how do we live lives that are real, grounded, and grace-filled?

This series explores the tension between what is artificial and what is authentic, both around us and within us.

Using the life of David as a guide, we'll ask essential questions about identity, influence, inquiry, and integrity in an age of filtered realities and synthetic truths.

This is not a series about technology. It's a series about truth-telling, unmasking the artificial, and embracing the messy beauty of real faith.

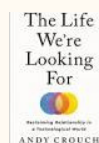
The world doesn't need more curated images or cleverly coded responses, it needs people who are rooted in God's grace and who dare to live authentic lives.

WOMEN'S RETREAT

September 20-21 | Lake Texoma

Save the date for our fall women's retreat! This will be an off-campus, overnight retreat for us to gather and experience life "Unfiltered." No pretense. No polish. Just space to show up fully and honestly as yourself.

RESOURCES



The Life We're Looking For
by Andy Crouch



In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit
by Noreen Herzfeld



Reclaiming Conversation
by Sherry Turkle



The Wisdom of the Wilderness
by Gerald G. May



"Truth is Subjective...Even in the Bible"
The Bible for Normal People, Ep. 81



"Connected, but alone?"
TED Talk by Sherry Turkle



The Social Dilemma
Netflix Documentary (PG-13)

September 7	Artificial/Authentic Identity	1 Samuel 16:1-13
September 14	Artificial/Authentic Influence	1 Samuel 19: 1-7
September 21	Artificial/Authentic Inquiry	2 Samuel 7:18-29
September 28	Artificial/Authentic Integrity	2 Samuel 12:1-10a, 13

Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:



STRANGER THINGS

Have you ever stumbled across a story in scripture that made you pause and say, "Wait... what?"

The bible is full of strange, spooky, and downright bizarre moments—stories we rarely read in church, much less preach about.

Like the hit TV show that blends mystery with the supernatural, this October series will explore lesser-known passages that feel unsettling, confusing, or just plain odd.

In doing so, we will shine a light on the truth beneath the strangeness—discovering that even in the most unexpected corners of scripture, God is at work, revealing wisdom, patience, and grace.

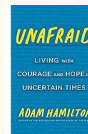
PUMPKINS ON THE PRAIRIE October 1 - 31

Our annual pumpkin patch opens on October 1 and offers fun for the whole family every day throughout the month of October. The patch offers hay rides, bounce houses, face painting, and more to get you in the spooky spirit.

FALL FESTIVAL Sunday, October 26

Enjoy the pumpkin patch, trunk-or-treat, and more at our annual Fall Festival!

RESOURCES



Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times
by Adam Hamilton



The Bible Tells Me So
by Peter Enns



Texts of Terror
by Phyllis Trible



Inspired
by Rachel Held Evans



The Meaning of the Bible
by Douglas Knight & Amy-Jill Levine



Bible Stories for Grown-Ups
by Josh Scott



Reading the Bible Again For the First Time
by Marcus J. Borg

October 12	Jephthah's Daughter	Judges 11:29-40
October 19	The Original Talking Donkey	Numbers 22:21-31
October 26	Handwriting on the Wall	Daniel 5:2-9

Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:





What does it really mean to be a community shaped by the Spirit? Is it enough to merely open our doors, or are we being called into deeper, braver forms of belonging? In our series, “More than Welcome,” we’re moving beyond surface-level hospitality and into the heart of what it means to be the church.

We will begin with a focus on the awe-filled togetherness of the early believers and Paul’s bold bridge-building across fear and skepticism. Peter’s world-altering realization that the Holy Spirit isn’t reserved for a select few moves us to a story of advocacy rooted in active love. Through each of these stories, the Spirit will help reshape our expectations of welcome.

Each week, we’ll explore a key expression of God’s radical hospitality. Through scripture, storytelling, and reflection, we’ll look at what it takes to live as people who don’t just say “you’re welcome here” but who actively demonstrate that every person is more than welcome in the family of God.

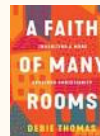
A CHURCH FOR ALL

We continue to work towards being an inclusive and expansive church through our A Church for ALL initiative. Learn more about this campaign and how you can still get involved at graceavenue.org/achurchforall.

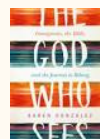
RESOURCES



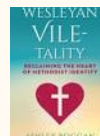
Be the Bridge: Pursuing God’s Heart for Racial Reconciliation
by Latasha Morrison



A Faith of Many Rooms: Inhabiting a More Spacious Christianity
by Debie Thomas



The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong
by Karen Gonzalez



Wesleyan Vile-tality: Reclaiming the Heart of Methodist Identity
by Ashley Boggan



My Body is Not a Prayer Request: Disability Justice in the Church
by Amy Kenny



Outside the Lines: How Embracing Queerness Will Transform Your Faith
by Rev. Mihee Kim-Kort



A Church for All
by Gayle Pitman (children’s book)

November 2	Community	Acts 2:43-47
November 9	Bridges	Acts 9:26-30
November 16	Space	Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18
November 23	Advocacy	Acts 16:11-17

Scan to view & find links to the full list of resources:





When a piece of furniture is restored, the old layers of paint or stickers the kids put on it have to first be stripped away. The piece has to be taken back to its original state before it can be re-stained, repainted, and restored. It takes time, patience, and intention. Parts have to be sanded, hardware has to be repurposed, and pieces of it may even need to be rebuilt. The old layers have to be taken away for the original piece to be uncovered.

Just like with a piece of restored furniture, we are invited to reimagine this Advent and Christmas season. We can peel away the layers of consumerism, expectations, pressure, and perfection to uncover an Advent season that is honest and real.

Advent is a time of preparation. It offers the reality of God becoming human to step into the messy and imperfect world that we live in. We acknowledge that the world is not as it should be, and that we need God's presence with us not just in the picture-perfect moments, but in the raw and real moments of humanity.

This Advent season you are invited to reclaim hope, restore peace, resound joy, and repurpose love so that we can reimagine Advent and celebrate Christmas to be something honest and true. Let's reimagine Advent together.

RESOURCES



All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings
by Gayle Boss



All Creation Waits (Children's Edition)
by Gayle Boss



Honest Advent
by Scott Erickson



Shadow and Light
by TSH Oxenreider



Tinsel: A Search for America's Christmas Present
by Hank Stuever



The Repair Shop
(BBC TV Show)



How the Grinch Stole Christmas
(1966 movie)

November 30	Hope Reclaimed	Matthew 24:36-44
December 7	Peace Restored	Isaiah 2:1-5
December 14	Joy Resounds	Music Sunday
December 21	Love Repurposed	Matthew 1:18-25

Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:



BLESSINGS FLOW

As we begin a new year, we are invited into a fresh season of spiritual grounding with our sermon series, “Blessings Flow.” Inspired by the familiar words of the Doxology, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow,” this series explores how our lives can become a living Doxology: an offering of gratitude, generosity, and grace.

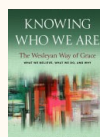
In this series, we will reflect on how God’s blessings are not just for us to receive, but to release – flowing through us to renew others and restore the world.

“Blessings Flow” invites us to rediscover the basics of Christian stewardship, not as a duty, but as a joyful expression of discipleship. With guidance from our Wesleyan heritage, we’ll explore how God’s grace empowers us to give freely, serve faithfully, and live with open hearts and hands.

Whether it’s Jacob waking to the presence of God in an unexpected place, Jesus standing in solidarity at the Jordan River, a child offering loaves and fish, or streams of water flowing in a desert – each moment reminds us that when we trust God with what we have, blessings multiply and lives are transformed.

Join us as we begin 2026 by remembering who we are, whose we are, and how by God’s grace, our lives can become instruments through which blessings flow.

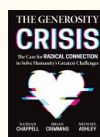
RESOURCES



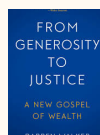
Knowing Who We Are: The Wesleyan Way of Grace
by Lacey C. Warner



Who We Are and What We Believe: 50 Questions about the UMC
by Lacey C. Warner



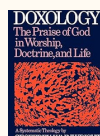
The Generosity Crisis
by Nathan Chappell, Brian Crimmins, and Michael Ashley



From Generosity to Justice: A New Gospel of Wealth
by Darren Walker



Infectious Generosity
by Chris Anderson



Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life
by Geoffrey Wainwright



Saving Grace: A Guide to Financial Well-Being
by Abingdon Press

January 4	From Old Barriers to New Beginnings	Genesis 28:10-22
January 11	From Occasion to Vocation	Matthew 3:13-17
January 18	From Eating to Feasting	John 6:1-14
January 25	From Settled to Flowing	Isaiah 41:17-20

Scan to view & find links to the full list of resources:





“Spiritual practice begins with the body and depends on the body. In stillness or in motion, we are in our bodies. Alone or together, we are in our bodies....On some very deep level we know that our spiritual lives are fully integrated with our bodies.” – Rev. Jane Vennard

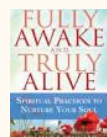
Explore with us the ways God calls us to care for our minds, bodies, and spirits as we seek to bring wholeness, healing and hope to our lives. Learn strategies and techniques to help you on the journey of self-care and discover how the spiritual practice of intentional care can lead you into a more abundant life. Discover how caring for ourselves can also bring transformation and restoration to all of God’s creation. We will hear stories from members of Grace Avenue sharing the positive changes in their lives resulting from prioritizing care.

Join us in becoming fully awake and truly alive!

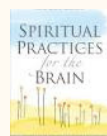
ABUNDANT HEALTH

This 5-week class will help us take an integrative approach to caring for our bodies, minds, and spirits. Building on principles from the Blue Zones combined with resources from the Institute for Functional Medicine, we will explore healthy lifestyle choices to live vibrant, purpose-filled lives. If you’re interested, contact Rev. Handi Jo Dolloff-Holt at handijo@graceavenue.org for more information.

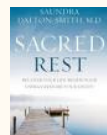
RESOURCES



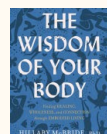
Fully Awake and Truly Alive
by Rev. Jane E. Vennard



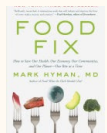
Spiritual Practices for the Brain: Caring for Mind, Body, and Soul
by Anne Kertz Kernion



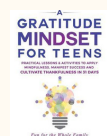
Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity
by Sandra Dalton-Smith, MD



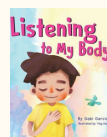
The Wisdom of Your Body
by Hillary L. McBride, PhD



Food Fix
by Mark Hyman, MD



A Gratitude Mindset for Teens
by Sydney Sheppard



Listening to My Body
by Gabi Garcia (children's book)

February 1	Mind	Romans 12:1-2 & Psalm 143:5-6
February 8	Body	John 10:10 & 1 Corinthians 10:31
February 15	Spirit	Ezekiel 37

Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:



SCANDAL OF THE KINDOM

A BOLD EXPLORATION OF THE RADICAL & UNSETTLING PARABLES OF JESUS

During the season of Lent, we enter a sacred time of reflection, repentance, and renewal. This year our Lenten sermon series is entitled "The Scandal of the Kindom*," a bold exploration of the radical and often unsettling parables of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Matthew.

Far from being quaint stories with easy morals, Jesus' parables are deeply disruptive. They challenge our assumptions, upend our values, and invite us into the scandalous grace and justice of God's Kindom – a beloved community where mercy overrides merit, where the last are first, and where grace is not earned, but freely given.

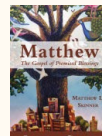
Throughout this series, we will focus on the parables not merely as teaching tools, but as invitations to transformation. Each week, we'll be called to deeper prayer, honest discernment, courageous repentance, and the kind of spiritual growth that leads to a reimagined life of discipleship.

Jesus doesn't call us to comfort; he calls us to the cross. In these scandalous stories of new wineskins, soils, unforgiving servants, late-coming laborers, sheep/goats, and unexpected invitations, we discover what it truly means to live as citizens of the Kindom of God. Join us this Lent as we listen, wrestle, and respond to the scandalous love of Christ, one parable at a time.

RESOURCES



The Scandal of the Kindom: How the Parables of Jesus Revolutionize Life with God
by Dallas Willard



Matthew: The Gospel of Promised Blessings
by Matthew L. Skinner



The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage
by Richard Rohr

*WHAT IS KINDOM?

It's not a typo! The word "kindom" was coined by mujerista theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. By intentionally removing the "g" from the word "kingdom," the kindom worldview offers an alternative to the hierarchical structures of power that often divide and oppress. Instead, kindom speaks to the full inclusion and interdependent relationships among all people. Kindom invites us to see the ways we are interconnected and made better together when we relate as kin, or family, to one another.

February 22	New Wineskins	Matthew 9:16-17
March 1	The Sower	Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23
March 8	The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18:23-35
March 15	The Laborers in the Vineyard	Matthew 20:1-16
March 22	The Sheeps + Goats	Matthew 25:31-46
March 29	Palm Sunday	Matthew 21:1-11



Scan to view & find links to the full list of resources:



Life has a way of throwing curveballs, doesn't it? One minute, everything feels sturdy and sure, and the next, a tough question, a sudden loss, or a long season of waiting hits, and everything starts to wobble.

What do we do when the version of faith we've inherited or assembled no longer feels like it can carry the weight of our real lives?

In this series, "Sustainable Faith," we're diving deep into the stories that follow the resurrection of Jesus.

All are invited to ask the hard questions, wrestle with our assumptions, and consider what it means to cultivate a faith that doesn't shatter under pressure but grows deeper, stronger, and more compassionate.

This series is for anyone who has ever asked, "is this enough?" and dares to believe that Jesus meets us in the tension.

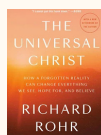
Come with your doubts. Come with your hope. Let's build something sustainable together.

EASTER SUNDAY

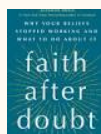
Sunday, April 5

April 5	Sudden Truth	Matthew 28:1-10
April 12	Omitted Truth	Matthew 28:11-15
April 19	Recognized Truth	Luke 24:13-35
April 26	Shared Truth	Matthew 28:16-20

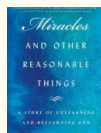
RESOURCES



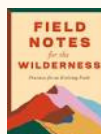
The Universal Christ
by Richard Rohr



Faith After Doubt
by Brian D. McLaren



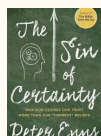
Miracles and Other Reasonable Things
by Sarah Bessey



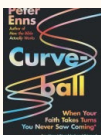
Field Notes for the Wilderness
by Sarah Bessy



Learning to Walk in the Dark
by Barbara Brown Taylor



The Sin of Certainty
by Peter Enns



Curve Ball: When Your Faith Takes a Turn You Never Saw Coming
by Peter Enns



Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:

Generational Wisdom

In this worship series, we explore the rich tapestry of generational truth woven through the lives of the young and old alike.

From the hard-earned insights of elders to the bold clarity of youth, God speaks through every season of life.

We'll celebrate the wisdom of women whose faith and resilience shape communities and our world.

Together, we'll seek a deeper understanding of how God's truth is passed down, shared, and made new across generations.

CELEBRATION SUNDAYS

We always end the school year with celebrations of our High School Seniors as they graduate and begin a new adventure. These celebrations often coincide with Mother's Day and the celebration of the women in our lives. This year, we want to celebrate our children and senior adults as well, honoring wisdom across ages and throughout our community.

May 3 - Children & Senior Adults

May 10 - Mother's Day

May 17 - Senior Sunday

RESOURCES



It's Just a Phase--So Don't Miss It
by Reggie Joiner & Kristen Ivy



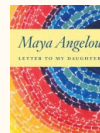
Becoming Better Grownups
by Brad Montague



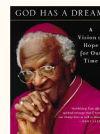
We Pray with Her
by Emily Peck-McClain, Danyelle Trexler, et. al



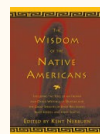
The Book of Gutsy Women
by Hillary Rodham Clinton & Chelsea Clinton



Letter to my Daughter
by Maya Angelou



God has a Dream
by Desmond Tutu



The Wisdom of Native Americans
edited by Kent Nerburn

May 3	Wisdom Across the Ages	Joel 2:28-29
May 10	Wisdom of Women	2 Timothy 1:3-7
May 17	Wisdom of Youth	Jeremiah 1:4-10

Scan to view & find
links to the full list
of resources:



LOOKING TO GO DEEPER?

JOIN A STUDY OR GROUP

There are several bible studies, small groups, and classes that dive deeper into each worship series as we move through the Atlas. Read about each one at graceavenue.org/studies, or scan the QR code to the right.



WORSHIP WITH US

SUNDAY MORNINGS IN PERSON OR ONLINE



SANCTUARY WORSHIP
9:15 & 10:30 in the Sanctuary



MODERN WORSHIP
9:15 A Different Door in the Worship Center
10:30 in the Worship Center



LIVE STREAMING & ON-DEMAND SERMONS

Stream & watch all services at graceavenue.org/worship/streaming

HOLY COMMUNION

Communion is celebrated in all services on the first Sunday of each month. On all other Sundays of the month, communion is offered at 9:00am in the Sanctuary before the 9:15am worship services.



GRACE AVENUE
United Methodist Church

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