

The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

From Pastor Lisa Schrott

Living into the 2030 Vision: Let's Start With Why

In the prayer after communion, I often share these words: Thank you, O Christ, for this feast of life. We are fed by your love; we are strengthened by your life. We are sent forth into this world to live into the visions God has laid on our hearts. We are now commissioned to: feed as we have been fed, forgive as we have been forgiven, love as we have been loved.

This prayer is a reminder for me of why... why we gather as a community to celebrate rites of passages ... why we give of ourselves in service and resources ... why we sing and ring with passion, share meals around a table and build relationships across the generations... and yes, a reminder of why we have meetings.

This summer I have been fed by the gifts you have shared in our worship series based around contemplative practices. You have opened yourselves up and been vulnerable; shared your photos and your words, your memories and insights. You have filled our Offering Tree with leaves of hopes, and prayers, and promises. You have fed me. Thank you for offering windows into your souls.

As Play and Pray July fades into August, the church calendar will again become populated with meetings and events. My hope and prayer is that we can keep up this spirit of openness to meet God in new ways. In this issue you will find more information about the ways we are living into our Journey to 2030 vision to:

- ◆ Open our doors wide in welcome, inviting all to join us in community, worship, service, and fellowship.
- ◆ Embark together on a life-long journey of faith formation.
- ◆ Partner with other faith groups and local organizations to pool resources, form community, and work together in service of God's love and justice.

On August 10 we will partner four other faith communities to host the first ecumenical Meridian Township Pride Worship Service. Later in the day we will have a table at the Pride Festival.

On August 11 We need your voices to help shape our faith formation program for children, youth and adults. Join us for our Education Retreat following worship.

On August 17 we will build friendships across the generations as we watch the Lansing Lugnuts play the West Michigan Whitecaps.

(more info on the three events above on next page)

Bring your enthusiasm, passion, and your "wouldn't be cool if..." ideas to our All Church Planning Retreat on Wednesday, **August 28** from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. (includes dinner!). This is for everyone in the church – not just those who are serving on committees.

May this be a season where we truly embrace these words: "We are sent forth into this world to live into the visions God has laid on our hearts." **Pastor Lisa**



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**Deadline for the
September Grapevine
is Thursday, August 22nd**

COMMUNITY PRIDE WORSHIP SERVICE

*A little something for everyone
– queer and allies –
not just church folk*

Sat. Aug. 10 at 11am
Central Park Pavilion
5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos,
MI 48864

Hosted By
Faith Lutheran Church | Haslett Community Church
Okemos Community Church
Presbyterian Church of Okemos
Canterbury Episcopal Student Ministry

Women's Dinner Out in August

Our next Women's Dinner Out is scheduled for **Monday, August 5**, at 5:30 p.m. at Hop Cat, 300 Grove St., East Lansing.

If you will be attending, please notify Candy Boldrey by Sunday, August 4. Her email address is *cbold67 at gmail dot com* (standard email setup) and phone number is (859) 421-0014.

This is our chance to try a restaurant close to campus while the MSU students are on summer break.

Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our August Birthdays on **Sunday, August 18**. Happy August Birthday, Dear Leos and Virgos! If you celebrate your birthday in August, please check the Birthday List posted on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall and add your name by Sunday, August 11, if it is not there.

PCO Out on the Town: Lansing Lugnuts

Join fellow PCO parishioners on to cheer on the Lansing Lugnuts on **Saturday, August 17 at 7:05 p.m.** . In addition to the game (against the West Michigan Whitecaps, by the way), the evening is a Faith & Family Night, including a pre-game Faith All-Star lineup! Hint: you might recognize a member of our church on the field! To cap it all off, there will be a spectacular LAFCU Fireworks show following the game.

Tickets are approximately \$13. To facilitate a group booking, please let us know how many in your party by or contacting Deb Major or a member of Parish Life Committee by **Sunday, August 11**. We'll collect money for tickets closer to the event.



Adult Education Survey

The Adult Christian Education Committee would love your feedback on our programs as we look toward future planning. Please fill out the survey here: <https://tinyurl.com/mwafzfcx> before August 5! Thank you!

The Children & Youth and Adult Education Committees Invite YOU

Christian Education Retreat
August 11, 2024
11:30am-2pm
PCO Fellowship Hall

- Consider how our Vision Statement impacts our educational programs
- Learn the whys and hows of inter-generational Faith Formation
- Imagine how Christian Education at all ages might look on Sundays and through the week

Lunch Provided

Please RSVP to the church office by August 7



MONTREAT YOUTH CONFERENCE



What a true gift it is to have traveled to Montreat, NC and spend a week with more than 600 Presbyterian youth! Through keynotes, small groups, and worship we explored what it means to Plant Peace in the world and in our lives. We examined themes of planting, pruning, and persisting as we tend gardens of peace. We sang, danced, hiked, played, and ate together. We shed some tears, laughed a lot, and spent good time with our new friends from New Hope Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, NC.

THANK YOU for your prayers, notes of encouragement, pieces of art, snacks, and monetary donations. Your support of youth ministry provides these opportunities for youth to grow in relationship with one another, the Church, and the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer God.

Becca, Lucas, Maddie, Jennifer and Rebecca



Youth Parents' Night Out monthly meetings resume in August on the third Thursdays at 8:00 p.m. at Joe's on Jolly, 2364 Jolly Road, Okemos. (August 15, September 19, October 17, November 15)

**Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy:
Update and Training
Sunday, August 25, 2024—11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.**

PCO's Policy on caring for minors and vulnerable adults is being updated. Come and learn our policies and procedures for caring for these populations, volunteers, and the Church. Open to everyone, required for those who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The hour will include education on the policy and how to identify potential red flags. Youth and children welcome. Please see Zach Krawczyk or Rebecca Mattern for more information.

Adult Christian Education & Fellowship Opportunities

Some PCO groups will begin meeting again in August, while others are waiting until September. Password for most Zoom meetings is 48864. Here's who's meeting this month as of this writing:

SUNDAYS

Writing Life's Stories—Monthly, 1st Sundays, 2:00 p.m. Zoom # 848 6124 7191. Next meeting is **Sunday, August 4**.

Adult Education—Weekly, 11:30 a.m. in person and on Zoom 434 304 558 resumes on **Sunday, August 11 at 11:30 a.m.**

TUESDAYS

Men's Group on Zoom at 8:00 a.m. every week on **Tuesday**. Zoom #813 7514 8286

WEDNESDAYS

Caregiver Support Group-Monthly, 4th Wednesdays at 5:00 p.m. on Zoom. **Wednesday, August 21**. Zoom # 517-329-2320; **Passcode hello**

THURSDAYS

Adult Bible Study— Weekly, 9:30 a.m. Scheduled to resume on **Thursday, August 15** Zoom: <https://msu.zoom.us/j/5147440526>

PCO All Church Planning Retreat



***You do not need to be serving on a committee to participate.**

Celebrating the Ministry of Rev. Peggy Casteel-Hutson

Pastor Peggy Casteel-Hutson, PCO's former interim Pastor (2020 – 2021), has officially retired from active ministry. Peggy's retirement will be recognized by the Presbytery of Lake Michigan at its **September 14** meeting. Pastor Lisa and three Elders from our Session will be on hand to celebrate this ministry milestone.

If you would like to pass on a card or note of celebration for Pastor Peggy, please drop it off at the church office by Thursday, September 12 and Pastor Lisa will deliver them to Peggy at the Presbytery meeting.



Pastor Peggy led PCO through a pandemic and the process of selecting a called and installed permanent pastor. She has retired from active ministry.

Confirmation Class

Youth 8th grade and older

Interest Meeting for Parents and Youth:

August 25 at 5:00 p.m.

The tradition of confirmation has long been to welcome youth into membership into the church. Often, they join and disappear. This year's mission—based curriculum approaches confirmation as:

- A beginning point, rather than an ending point
- Building relationships and a sense of belonging
- Confirming youth into a lifelong journey of faith formation
- Engaging the world through a lens of Christian faith

Confirmation Sunday is September 8 as we bless students into their journey of learning what it means to follow Christ. Classes will meet monthly on the first Sunday and there will be retreats built in as well.

Please Contact Pastor Lisa Schrott or Rebecca Mattern for more information and to sign up!



PCO Library News

Take a look at the round table in the PCO Library! You will find ten new books added this summer. Here are brief descriptions of four of the titles (all quotes are from the publishers):

Reading Genesis by Marilynne Robinson

"One of our greatest novelists and thinkers presents a radiant, thrilling interpretation of the book of Genesis. Robinson's *Reading Genesis* is a powerful consideration of the profound meanings and promise of God's enduring covenant with humanity. This magisterial book radiates gratitude for the constancy and benevolence of God's abiding faith in Creation."

Solito: A Memoir by Javier Zamora

"A young poet tells the inspiring story of his migration from El Salvador to the United States at the age of nine in this gripping memoir of bravery, hope, and finding family. A memoir as gripping as it is moving, *Solito* provides an immediate and intimate account not only of a treacherous and near-impossible journey, but also of the miraculous kindness and love delivered at the most unexpected moments."

Zero at the Bone: Fifty Entries Against Despair by Christian Wiman

"Few contemporary writers ask the questions about faith, morality, and God that Wiman does, and even fewer—perhaps none—do so with his urgency and eloquence. He lays the motion of his mind on the page in this genre-defying work, an indivisible blend of poetry, criticism, theology, and searing memoir."

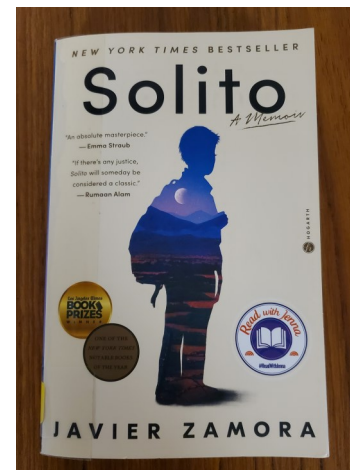
In the Margins: A Transgender Man's Journey with Scripture

by Shannon T.L. Kearns

"Moving the conversation beyond transgender inclusion to demonstrate the unique and vital theological insights transgender Christians can provide the church. In each chapter, Shannon shows how Bible stories have helped him make sense of his own identity, and how those same stories can unlock the transformative power of faith for those willing to listen with an open mind."

This is just a sampling of our exciting new books! We also added new titles by John Pavlovitz, Anne Lamott, Christine Blasey Ford, Beth Nguyen, Amy Butler, and Sarah McCammon. As always, these new books are available for you to borrow. Please follow the simple instructions posted in the library.

Kathi Cook



***Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora is one of several new books available.**

Policy Report By Ellen Hoekstra

State legislators have finalized the state's budget. Under Michigan's constitution, the governor has the authority to delete specific items from the budget prior to signing the legislation. To give a hypothetical (and frivolous) example, if there were a \$500,000 line item to finance a museum dedicated to the study of albino deer, she can literally take her pen and cross it out.

Unusually, the biggest controversy regarding this year's budget has been the school aid budget. Across the state, superintendents have been dismayed that for the first time since the 2020-2021 school year, per pupil funding was not increased and reductions were made in school-based mental health funding. The total school aid budget will be \$20.6 billion, compared to \$21.5 billion in the current budget year, caused in part by the decline in K-12 enrollment. Legislators and the governor have defended the budget, stating that the reduction in how much districts have to contribute to school employee retirement is equal to a 3.9% increase in the per pupil (foundation) allowance. On the bright side, funding for students defined as "at risk" has increased by \$83 million. Also funding for English language learners increased by \$10 million (26%) and will now total \$50.2 million.

In other parts of the budget, some funding will meet needs for low income people in our area, including \$15 million to Ingham County for housing programs such as down payment assistance and \$1 million for the Lansing City Rescue Mission.

The total budget devoted to purposes other than education amounts to \$59.1 billion. The \$15 million that Ingham County will receive is part of \$100 million for affordable housing to address statewide shortages. This funding had not been part of the Governor's original budget proposal but was added by legislators. The executive budget proposal had originally recommended adding \$5 million to fund 28 new employees to the Department of Civil Rights to address a case backlog, with complaints of alleged discrimination taking an average of 19 months to complete. Ultimately, the legislature agreed to adding \$2 million.

Other items of concern:

- Indigent families receiving food assistance are increasingly being robbed of their much needed benefits. During the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023, the state has received and replaced benefits for nearly 600 residents; this year, the number of reports of stolen benefits has already doubled. Criminals are using card cloning, skimming, and phishing to defraud people of much needed food assistance. Several states have responded to this problem by implementing cards with chips.
- Simbolei Academy, which PCO has supported, recently had a different form of "food theft." Andrea and Richard Kaitany raise cows to provide milk for their growing teenaged students, one means to keep their school self-sustaining as possible to maintain low tuition. Sadly, someone has stolen one of Simbolei's cows.

Mission Collections

Running through August 11, the Mission Committee hopes to collect 500 college-ruled spiral notebooks — the kind that are narrowly ruled for Communities in Schools Michigan. CISM received a generous donation of backpacks for the students they serve in Ingham County. They are now seeking items needed to fill the backpacks.

Thanks to those who have already donated. If you haven't please consider picking up a few extra notebooks during your back-to-school shopping trips. If you would like to help but don't have time to shop, Committee members will transform any cash dropped into the bin into notebooks for needy students.



Beginning on Sunday, August 4 and running through Friday, August 30, the Mission Committee will also be collecting personal hygiene items for EVE (End Violent Encounters). EVE supports domestic and sexual abuse survivors on their journey of healing. They are requesting hair care products, body and face washes, beauty products, cotton swabs and pads, lotion, and first aid items. Please drop off any donations in the bin in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings or during regular church office hours (Tuesdays - Fridays 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)

BOOK NOOK

By Ron Dorr

A River Runs through It and Other Stories

by Norman Maclean

A month ago, I watched A River Runs through It for the third time. Directed by Robert Redford, the movie appeared in 1992. It is one of the top ten movies that I have ever seen.

The film is based on Norman Maclean's book, A River Runs through It and Other Stories, published in 1976. In Kenneth Pierce's words, the book "is a masterpiece. It is cast as the story of the author's relationship to his brother, Paul, but it is a narrative of great sweep as well as beauty. Here the many facets of Maclean (he is a kid from Montana, a student of history and theology, a celebrant of the lyric poem, and an apprentice to arts of all kinds, a laconic and imperfect servant of brother love) come together. This is more than stunning fiction: It is a lyric record of a time and of a life," celebrating art "in nature, in personality, in social intercourse, in fly fishing. . . . This is an extraordinary story."

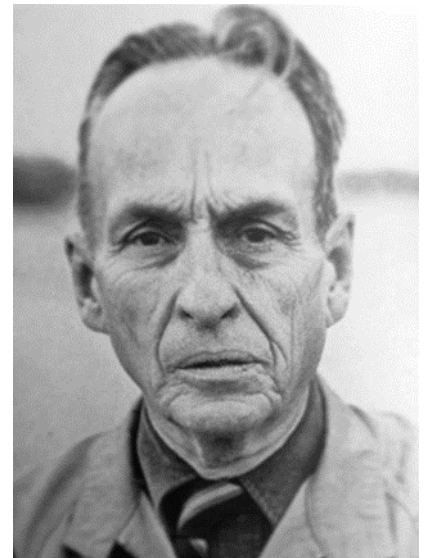
The story concerns a troubled but caring family, a family in which "there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing." The two principal characters are the author as a youth and his brother, Paul, three years younger. Although quite different, both boys are tough, taught the Westminster Catechism and the art of fishing by their father, loved and re-loved by the women in their lives. Paul, the reporter, is the prodigal son—a heavy drinker and fighter—so this Scottish-Presbyterian family has to struggle with sin and leaving and returning home.

The heart of A River Runs through It comes in the words by the Presbyterian minister and father of Paul. "We can seldom help anybody. Either we don't know what part to give or maybe we don't like to give any part of ourselves. Then, more often than not, the part that is needed is not wanted. And even more often, we don't have the part that is needed." No one can help Paul. "But you can love completely without complete understanding," the older brother says. Hovering over all of the love and understanding and humor and care and forgiveness lies the mystery of life.

In The New Yorker of July 8, 2024, writer Kathryn Schulz introduces Rebecca McCarthy's new book, Norman Maclean: A Life of Letters and Rivers, "the first full-length biography" of Maclean, which was "long overdue." Schulz's five-page review is better than McCarthy's 250-page book. In clear and exquisite prose of her own, providing one specific detail after another, Schulz answers three questions about Maclean's prose: How does he write so well? What kind of person could write this work? And what is the heart of what Maclean is saying? McCarthy wanted "to find out something about Norman's life and to place him in the two worlds he straddled." Maclean, however, straddled three worlds—outdoorsman in Montana, incredible teacher at the University of Chicago, and something larger than professional, or creative writer. McCarthy's writing is diffuse, like a leaky firehose spouting everywhere. Though informative, she lacks telling evidence to pertinent questions. How did his mother influence Norman? How did he teach so well? What specific revisions did Maclean make in his works?

Absorbing these works in the order in which I have presented them—Redford's movie, the novella itself, Schulz's review in The New Yorker, and McCarthy's full-length biography of Maclean—might lead you to Norman Maclean's other masterpiece, published posthumously.

Young Men and Fire (1992) is multi-layered—several stories packed into one solid and wondrous book. The first story is the catastrophe of 13 Forest Service smokejumpers who lost their lives fighting a forest fire in Mann Gulch, Montana, in August, 1949. The second story is that of an inadequate investigation. The third story is a detective story. Who or what caused the disaster? How did the crew leader and two smokejumpers survive? Norman Maclean's answers to these questions make the story a tragedy and elegy of doomed young men. By the end, the story becomes a religious inquiry about identity, mortality, and immortality. Such nuanced writing is "the brilliance and brevity of Norman Maclean's work."



**Norman Maclean—author
and professor—1902—1990**

Summary of Action From the 226th General Assembly of the PC(USA)

*At times lively, with bursts of dancing and joy, and - at times - pin-drop quiet as commissioners and observers listened to the voices at the mics, General Assembly 226 – themed **Live into Hope** – was an ever-faithful time for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to ask profound questions about the shape and future of Christ's church.*

LIVE *into* HOPE

► New stated clerk, co-moderators

The **Rev. CeCe Armstrong** and the **Rev. Tony Larson**, both of South Carolina, were [elected co-moderators of the 226th GA](#), and the **Rev. Jihyun Oh**, born in South Korea and reared in Kansas, [was elected stated clerk](#), the highest ecclesial office of the denomination.

Elected the night before business proceedings began, Armstrong and Larson presided over the day-to-day business, but [in an overhaul of standing rules](#), the **moderatorial election will move to the end** of the assembly instead of the beginning in 2026. The overhaul also eliminates “mission advisory delegates,” creating partner advisory delegates instead.



► Sexual orientation, gender identity protections

Commissioners approved a two-part inclusivity change to the *Book of Order*, [adding gender identity and sexual orientation](#) to the list of the “rich diversity” reflected in the church’s membership (recommendation 1, section F-1.0403) and then recommending [an examination of these principles for ordination and installation](#) (recommendation 2, section G-2.0104b) that could determine a “candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation ...” If POL-01 is approved by more than 50% of presbyteries, these changes will be added to the *Book of Order*.

► Unifying budget of OGA and PMA

GA adopted a **\$94.9 million budget for 2025 and \$95 million for 2026**, [resulting in a 14.8% increase in per capita](#) over the two-year span. In 2025, per capita will be \$10.84, and \$11.26 in 2026, increasing from \$9.80 this year. Because of an earlier decision by the Commission on the Unification of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, all the budget items added at this assembly (\$600,000+ per year) were charged to the per capita budget, regardless of how they would be spent.

► Fossil fuels and climate justice

After a protracted debate on alternative recommendations for [aligning the values of the PC\(USA\) with its investments in fossil fuels](#), the GA initially approved overture ENV-02 encouraging categorical divestment in fossil fuels and other efforts to respond to climate change. However, in a historic turnabout, the assembly reversed its decision, disapproving ENV-02 and approving ENV-06, which directs **further engagement with greenhouse gas emitters and the fossil fuel industry**.

Summary of Action from PC(USA) GA cont. from previous page

► Medical coverage, small church flexibility

GAEC-28 asks mid councils to work with the Board of Pensions to [explore adjustments to be made to medical dues plans](#) for Pastors and Spouse or Families to **help alleviate the burden on small congregations and present medical coverage options** for pastoral leaders needing family, spousal, or child coverage in 2026 and beyond.

GA unanimously agreed to develop educational resources for faith formation for congregational use and to meet the needs of the small church.

► Divestment from occupier countries

GA unanimously adopted a commissioner's resolution asking The Presbyterian Foundation and the Board of Pensions, the two primary investing arms of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to "prayerfully consider" [ending their investments in government debt](#) from countries "engaged in prolonged military occupation," currently defined by the United Nations as Israel, Morocco and Turkey.

► Prison justice

GA unanimously passed DOE-02, **encouraging ratification of a U.S. Constitutional amendment [abolishing the exception clause in the 13th Amendment that allows any person convicted of any crime to be enslaved](#)**, and also passed a commissioner's resolution urging Presbyterians to call upon elected officials to enact legislative or administrative reforms ending prolonged

solitary confinement in jails, prisons, and detention centers.

► Protecting children from gun violence

DOE-03, an overture calling for action [so that children can live free from gun violence](#), passed easily in committee but was removed from the consent agenda so the entire assembly could hear testimony about it. Following heart-wrenching witness, co-moderator Tony Larson spoke and said, "[The stories are important, but they are hard](#). They are important because they have residence in our communities." DOE-03 passed the assembly unanimously.

► Changes to special offerings

The [four special offerings currently received by the PC\(USA\) will be reduced to three](#), and proceeds will be distributed to causes instead of programs. The changes in FIN-12, which take effect for the 2026 offerings, include eliminating the Pentecost Offering and moving the ministries it has supported to a restructured Christmas Joy Offering.

► The rejection of Christian Zionism

The GA passed on consensus the [update and expansion of the resolution confronting Christian Zionism](#) approved in 2004. Through the Office of Theology, Formation and Evangelism, GA calls on the denomination to reject Christian Zionism in all its forms, acknowledge the expansion of Christian Zionism in all its forms, and issue a study document that addresses the expansion of Christian Zionism since the 2004 policy.



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Presbyterian Church of Okemos

2258 Bennett Road
Okemos, MI 48864
Phone: (517) 349-9536
www.okemospres.org

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Staff

REV. DR. LISA SCHROTT, PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF

REBECCA MATTERN, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF FAITH

FORMATION

DR. MARLENE BREWBAKER, ORGANIST

WESTIN SORREL, CHOIR DIRECTOR

EDWARD ENNEN, SEXTON

ANNA THIEL, OFFICE MANAGER

GABRIELLE SHELTON, MEDIA SPECIALIST

Phone: 517-349-9536

<https://instagram.com/okemospres>

<https://www.facebook.com/OkemosPresbyterian/>

Website: <https://okemospres.org>

Email: office@okemospres.org

