

# The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

**From Pastor Lisa Schrott**

## **Lent 2024: Leaning into Our Hungers**

*The Lord has told you, O mortal, what is good,  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice and to love kindness  
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:8

Each year we mark our journey to the cross with a season of preparation known as Lent. Last year, we experienced a particularly poignant Lent, as gun violence at MSU and the threat of gun violence at Okemos High School occurred just prior. As we mark the one-year anniversary of these events, we acknowledge the places in our life where we still hunger. We hunger for healing, for justice, for a world where our children and youth do not grow up under the shadow of gun violence. We hunger for a deeper relationship with God and with each other. We hunger to be more like Jesus – walking in compassion, embracing welcome, and building bonds of community at the table. We hunger for the winds of the Holy Spirit to sweep us from complacency and stir in us a will to be disciples with purpose and passion.

This year I invite you to lean into your hunger and experience Lent in all of its dimensions. Below and throughout the Grapevine are opportunities to go deeper this season. Let us pause, reflect, acknowledge our pain and places of discomfort, challenge ourselves to see the world through someone else's eyes and commit to being in community.

## **Remembering February 13, 2023**

**MSU:** An evening remembrance gathering will offer members of the MSU and local community a place to come together in commemoration, support and recognition of the events last year. It is scheduled for 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. and will take place outdoors north of Spartan Stadium, near The Spartan Statue. The event will be open to the public.

**Faith Communities:** Okemos Community Church will have a contemplative space open during the day with clergy present to pray with those attending. The People's Church will be hosting an ecumenical prayer service. We will provide more details as they become available.

**PCO:** The chapel will be open with material available for personal prayer and reflection. Rebecca and I will be available during the day for prayer and conversation.

**Cont. on pg. 2**



## **Inside This Issue**

- *Jazz Weekend Info—pg. 2*
- *Lenten Study Info—pg. 3*
- *Fellowship Opportunities— pgs. 3 & 4*
- *APCE annual event recap—pg. 5*

Cont. from pg. 1

## Worship in Lent

**Ash Wednesday, February 14:** Imposition of Ashes will be available from 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. and from 5:00– 5:30 p.m. in the PCO Circle Drive. Worship including prayer, music, a mediation and imposition of ashes will occur in the PCO sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.

**Sundays in Lent:** The scriptures and messages in Lent will follow the passages from the Gospel of Luke used in the Hunger for Home Lenten Supper and Small Group Discussions.

## Devotional Practices

**Lenten Supper and Small Group:** Join us on Thursdays February 15 – March 21, 2024 6:00 – 7:15 pm for an opportunity to draw closer to God and each other. Over a light meal, we will explore stories of feeding in the Gospel of Luke (see page 3 for more details).

**Lenten Devotionals.** We will seek to *Tread Lightly During Lent*. Using material from The Presbyterian Hunger Program we will slow down, take time, and examine our spiritual lives and the way we live out our Christian faith in the world around us. This devotional calendar will be available online and via a hard copy to help us make sustainable choices that restore and protect all of God’s children and creation.

**Spiritual Practices - Education Hour.** Beginning February 25, there will be opportunities to intentionally draw closer to God using a variety of spiritual practices. Prayer stations will be setup throughout the PCO facility based on the Scripture for each week, with opportunities to respond through music, art, labyrinths, and interactive prayers.

*Pastor Lisa*

### Save These Dates

**Saturday & Sunday, February 10 & 11**

**JAZZ Weekend**

*Saturday at 7:00 p.m.—*

**Jazz Concert Featuring Diego Rivera Quintet**

*Sunday at 10:00 a.m.—*

**Worship service followed by pancake breakfast**

**Tuesday, February 13**

*Marks one year since the shooting at MSU Chapel will be open for prayer and reflection  
From 8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.*

**Wednesday, February 14**

**Ash Wednesday**

**Imposition of ashes at 8:30 a.m. & 5:00 p.m.**

*in the circle drive*

**Service at 7:00 p.m. in Sanctuary**

**Thursdays in Lent**

**February 15—March 21**

**Lenten Supper & Small Group discussions**

*6:00—7:15 p.m.*

*(more information on page 3)*

### Jazz Weekend is February 10 & 11

Mark your calendars and prepare to enjoy music, fun, fellowship and food during PCO’s 11th Jazz Weekend, taking place Saturday and Sunday, February 10 & 11.

A free jazz concert featuring the Diego Rivera Quintet is scheduled for **Saturday at 7:00 p.m.** Rivera was raised in East Lansing, attended Michigan State University and served as an associate professor and associate director at MSU’s College of Music. He is currently the Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Texas at Austin’s Butler School of Music.

The worship service on Sunday, February 11 will include special music by Diego Rivera, Arlene McDaniel and vocalist Tiffany Gridiron. The service will be followed by a free pancake breakfast. All are welcome at the breakfast.



**Musician and professor Diego Rivera**

## What's Happening with Youth Group

### Youth Souper Sunday and Bowl Auction

**March 3, 2024** after worship

Congregational help needed: Making soup on Saturday with youth and clean up Sunday

### Youth Group

February 4: 5:00-7:00 p.m. at Conroy-Krutz home

February 11: No youth group

February 18: No youth group - youth on break

February 25: Middle School only youth group

March 2-3: Senior High Retreat

March 3: No youth group - Souper Sunday and Bowl Auction after worship

Coffee with Senior Highs continues each Wednesday after school until 4:00 p.m.

**Senior High Youth:** No youth group through Lent (February 18-March 24) - practice Sabbath and enjoy family time. Join Thursday evening meal and Bible Study instead!

## Hunger for Home: Lenten Supper and Small Groups

**Thursdays, February 15 – March 21, 2024 6:00 – 7:15 p.m.**

This Lent we are offering an invitation to feast at the table of God's word and to share a simple meal with others on this journey. Bread is more than simply fuel for getting through the day. It is also a call to be present with everyone God is calling to the banquet.

We will be using a curriculum based on the book *The Hunger for Home* by Matthew Croasmun and Miroslav Volf. The church library has a copy, but it is not necessary to read the book to take part in the discussions.

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, we find Jesus teaching and enacting fellowship over a meal. Over a light supper, we will explore the relationship between who Jesus is and who we are called to be in relation to Jesus, our faith community and the world. Relevant material will be provided at each session. No preparation is needed.

We are looking for people to provide meals during the six weeks of sessions. If you, your family, or a group you are involved in would like to provide a simple meal of soup, salad, and bread, please sign up on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall or let Pastor Lisa or Rebecca know.

Please note that this will be an in-person only discussion and meal. If there is interest in an on-line small group, material can be provided and led by participants. Please contact Pastor Lisa or Rebecca if you are interested in this option.

## February Women's Connection

We will meet **Sunday, February 25, 12:30 p.m.** Please mark your calendar now and plan to join us for a time of fellowship and lunch.

Speaker will be Jill Tribell, a PCO Charter Member who will add to the excitement of our upcoming 60th anniversary as she tells of being with our church since the beginning, along with sharing stories of her life and faith journey.

All women are welcome and encouraged to invite friends. Questions? Contact Shirley Rumminger at 655-4123 or *srumminger at yahoo dot com* (standard email set-up).

## Adult Education in Lent

Adult Ed on Sundays throughout Lent will offer prayer stations based on the Scripture for each week and opportunities to consider and respond to the text through prayer in a variety of ways including music, art, labyrinths, interactive prayers and more. **Faith formation takes many forms, as does education, and these stations give opportunity for another way to learn and grow.**

## A Thank You & an Update

As Anne Kutak's sister I thank the church for sending Anne the beautiful blanket she received in December. I saw her on Christmas day and the beautiful blanket was on her lap. It is very kind of those who sent it to remember her. Times are difficult with her health but the family and friends keep her moving.

I am also resigning from the archive's duties, so, if there is anyone interested in continuing with the albums, please contact the church. I so enjoyed working with the church, but my time has come to a close. Thank you, again.

**Mary Lou Gifford**

*(Pastor Lisa wanted to add "And a big thank you to you, Mary Lou, for all of your work on the scrapbooks through the years. What a gift these are! We will be drawing from them for our 60th Anniversary celebration coming up in May. ")*

## Retirees in Winter

The Retirees will meet on **Monday, February 26** at 12 noon on Zoom # 711-799-804, password 48864. *(This is a date change due to a conflict.)* We will talk about what deepens our faith, especially in the last decades of our lives. Are there books you have found meaningful? Do you attend groups and participate in discussions that bring new insight? Are there individuals in your life with whom you have a spiritual connection? How can we better utilize resources to continue our faith journey?

## Caregiver Support Group

The group meets at 5:00 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of the month using Zoom #517-329- 2320, password hello. **February's meeting is on the 28th.** Anyone who finds themselves providing support and care for a loved one is welcome to attend. We bring our joys and concerns and offer resources, share experiences and support each other.

## Conversation and Contemplation

Contemplation and Conversation Class The group continues to meet weekly on Wednesdays from 10:00 -11:30am on Zoom #905- 709-104 password 48864. Prayer concerns are shared, followed by meditation and opening prayer. We then participate in Lectio Devina, focusing on the lectionary scripture for the week. This practice alternates with a book study.

Our new book is *Learning to Walk in the Dark* by Barbara Brown Taylor. The book is available at Schuler's Book Store on the Book Club table. We hope to begin studying the book on **February 14.** Members of the group share leadership in all aspects of the C&C group.

## Women's Dinner Out

The February Women's Dinner Out is scheduled for **Monday, February 5**, at 5:30 p.m. at Ozzie's Kabob Restaurant, 3536 Meridian Crossings, Okemos. If you will be attending, please notify Candy Boldrey by Sunday, February 4. Her email address is *cbold67 at gmail dot com* (standard email setup) and her phone number is (859) 421-0014

\* *A winter weather reminder —If Okemos Public Schools are closed due to weather, PCO will be closed as well. On a Sunday morning, we will notify you through email and/or social media if worship will be online only.*

## Adult Christian Education & Fellowship

**Password for Zoom meetings unless otherwise noted is 48864.** *Days and times subject to change. Please watch Friday e-Announcements for changes.*

### SUNDAYS

**Adult Education**—Weekly, **11:30 a.m.** in person & on Zoom 434 304 558 (*check the Sunday bulletin for topics. Enjoy a time of fellowship after worship when no adult ed is scheduled*)

**Writing Life's Stories** — 1<sup>st</sup> Sundays, **2:00 p.m.**, Zoom 848 6124 7191— **next meeting is February 4.**

**Birthday Cake Sunday**—3rd Sundays following worship unless otherwise noted. This month will be on **February 18th.**

**Women's Connection**— 4th Sundays at **12:30 p.m.** in Room 108. This month will be on **February 25th.** (more info on pg. 3)

### MONDAYS

**Women's Dinner Out**— **Monday, February 5** at Ozzie's Kabob Restaurant, 3536 Meridian Crossing in Okemos.

**Retirees** — **4th Monday** in February at 12:00 noon on Zoom 711 799 804. Next meeting is **February 26th.**

### TUESDAYS

**Men's Group** — Weekly, 8:00 a.m. Zoom 813 7514 8286. **Hybrid** (*In-person and on Zoom*) this month is tentatively scheduled for **Tuesday, February 6th.**

**PCO Crafts Ministry**— **1st Tuesday** at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room. This month will be on Tuesday, February 6th.

### WEDNESDAYS

**Conversation & Contemplation**—Weekly, 10:00 a.m. Zoom 905-709-104

**Caregiver Support Group** - **4th Wednesdays**, February 28th. 5:00 p.m. on Zoom 517 329 2320; password is **hello**

### THURSDAYS

**Bible Study** — Weekly, 9:30 a.m. Zoom <https://msu.zoom.us/j/5147440526>

**Deadline for the March Grapevine is Wednesday, February 21st.**

## Being Thirsty for Justice, Life, Kindness & Joy

The title above was the theme for the **Association of Partners in Christian Education's (APCE) Annual Event, held January 24—27, 2024** and attended online by PCO's Interim Director of Faith Formation Rebecca Mattern and by Catherine Holdway and Barbara Fretwell-Cooke, members of PCO's committee for Christian Education for Children and Youth. The event focused on effective ways the Church can meet people's spiritual needs in today's secular world.

The Godly Play Foundation (<https://www.GodlyPlayFoundation.org>) reported that their surveys showed faith leaders were anxious about lack of family participation in church, and a belief that families were not interested. Parents and guardians felt longing for spirituality for their children and themselves, but reported feeling alone even when they belonged to a church and. They also felt they didn't know how to talk to their children about God, but were suspicious of religious education. Both faith leaders and parents and guardians shared feelings for stress and burnout, but remain interested in the spiritual lives of their children.

Suggestions for the above concerns from the conference included:

- Celebrate any time a child shows up at church
- Plan all activities and programs for short-term participation
- Have a whiteboard for youth to write down extra-curricular activities so staff and church members can attend to "become a familiar face."
- Let teachers know it is ok not to know the answer to a child's question.
- Have family retreats
- Make worship accessible to children and adults
- Let children and youth become more involved-in decision making
- Think of family as the focus of ministry, and the church as a companion to the family.

The event offered resources both online and in book form for families and educators. If you are interested, contact the church office.

The big message from this event was to foster relationships in order to promote trust, which leads to a good learning environment, and to believe and trust in God as we wait to let the Holy Spirit guide us as we seek effective ways for our church to meet people's spiritual needs in today's secular world.

**Barbara Fretwell-Cooke**

## What is Mission? Youth searching for Justice

The title above was one of the sessions offered at the APCE Annual Event and offered a look at the historical positive and negative connotations connected to Christian mission.

Online discussions covered white saviorism of the past (the assumption that Caucasians know better than locals how to solve problems). Consensus in the discussion group was that current Christian mission involves partnering, coming alongside others in need, to work with them. Mission is not trying to convert but to show God's love through Social Justice. Justice is what love looks like in public, part of public policy. Charity is giving a loaf of bread. Social justice is finding out why people don't have bread. What systems prevent people from living their lives with all their needs covered. Good exercises and ideas to work with youth to explore these ideas and consider value of youth mission trips.

**Catherine Holdway**

## Horizons Bible Study Workshop: The Bible and Environmental workshop

This workshop covered a new Presbyterian Women's study entitled *Let Justice Roll Down* which is coming out in March of 2024. We were given a preview of what it entails.

"We are called to care for neighbors and God's creation with all our hearts, with particular care for society's least powerful members who are disproportionately impacted by unjust systems." - With this emphasis, the study looks at environmental justice, as well as land, food and water justice. Air quality justice, climate change, economic climate justice and intergenerational justice are all covered. The final chapter is called "Sustaining Creation's Health for All."

This looks like a very relevant and well produced program for youth as well as adults in the church.

**Catherine Holdway**



## Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our February Birthdays on **Sunday, February 18**. If you or your child celebrate your birthday in February, please check the Birthday List on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall and add your name by Sunday, February 11, if it is not already on the list.

## Mental Health in Michigan

Did you know that 1 in 5 adults in Michigan experience mental illness each year? It's time to take action and advocate for better mental health care access! Join United Methodists in Michigan in making a difference for those in need. Let's work together to improve access to care and support for all.

The **2024 Advocacy Day** at the Michigan State Capitol will be held on **Wednesday, March 13**. Last year, 350 people from across Michigan spent the day advocating with their state legislators, and this year, we hope to grow that participation. Our focus in 2024 is assuring that all persons have access to affordable mental health care and to reduce the stigma of mental health that impacts every family in Michigan.

### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

- Register now and get all communications related to this event.
- Watch the **February 15** Lunch and Learn on Mental Health Advocacy at **12:15 PM EST/11:15 PM CST**.
- Attend the first online training on **Tuesday, February 20 at 7:00 PM EST**. 'A Roadmap' with Tori Booker, Advocacy and Outreach Manager for Immigration Law and Justice Michigan.
- Attend the second online training on **Monday, February 26 at 7:00 PM EST**. 'Insights' with State Representative Julie Rogers, Chair of House Health Policy Committee; and State Representative Felicia Brabec.
- Attend Advocacy Day on **March 13 at 9:00 AM EST** in Lansing.



## Public Policy Report— Ellen Hoekstra

Given that the House is not planning to be in session until after the April special elections for its two vacated seats and that the General Election takes place this fall, this year's session is likely to be brief. The Mission Committee was alerted to the Governor's State of the State address to the House and Senate on January 24. Her proposed budget message will follow some weeks later. The executive budget is not delivered by the Governor but by a team headed by the directors of the offices most relevant to the budget. As part of the presentation, the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies and Treasury will present their views on expected state revenues for 2024. At this point, state revenues are expected to show a surplus this year and next, although not to the extent when states were receiving federal pandemic funds.

### In other news:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recognized January as Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) month, given that disparities contribute to persistent and preventable health inequities and unfairly disadvantage some individuals.
- MDHHS has announced that nearly a million residents have renewed Medicaid or Healthy Michigan coverage. Michigan received a federal waiver permitting automatic eligibility for people receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) benefits. The federal government has also released other changes to increase flexibility for beneficiaries receiving life-saving treatments, including chemotherapy, radiation, immunotherapy infusions, or dialysis.
- An organization called Citizens for Local Choice is preparing a ballot petition asking voters to repeal a new state law permitting the state to override local opposition to large wind and solar projects. Although their goal is to put the measure on the November ballot, that would require collecting 356,958 valid signatures by May 29.
- Regarding firearm safety, the legislature will likely take up legislation regulating ghost guns and addressing the ability to 3D print a firearm at home. Legislators may also consider a bill to ensure that guns in buyback programs are completely destroyed.
- A Detroit health agency has launched emergency mobile van units to assist people with mental health or substance abuse crises. This project is designed to prevent long waits for people in crisis in emergency rooms, where providers must triage saving lives of patients with strokes, heart attacks, or gun shot wounds over those with disorders not immediately life threatening.
- 2024 is the first of the four years when the state will begin to phase in the repeal of income tax on retirement income, such as pensions and withdrawals from 401k and IRA accounts. Expansion of Michigan's Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) for lower income workers is also being phased in. Historical note: PCO's beloved John Duley once testified in support of the EITC, citing scripture, before a Michigan State Senate committee.

## BOOK NOOK

*By Ron Dorr*

### KING: A LIFE

by Jonathan Eig

In hallowing Martin Luther King, Jr., Jonathan Eig writes, “we have hollowed him.” In “canonizing King, we’ve defanged him.” We have forgotten how courageous, complicated, divided, and divisive he was.

So Eig, a journalist and biographer, gives us the teenager King who twice jumped out of his second-story house in deep grief, the graduate student who plagiarized in his Ph. D. dissertation, and the husband who cheated on his wife. In Montgomery in 1955, the 26-year-old minister wanted to compromise at the start of the bus boycott. He hated to confront others. He was not a good administrator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He spent 90 per cent of his time away from home giving speeches and raising funds. His efforts at Albany, Georgia, in 1961-1962 and in Chicago in 1966 largely failed. Overnight, he dropped from being the fourth most admired man in the world to disappearing from the list. Former supporters criticized and turned away from King after his antiwar speech at Riverside Church in New York in 1967.

His strengths, however, greatly outweighed his limits. First of all, King “announced at an early age that God had called him to act. He lived his life accordingly. And he was willing to die” living out that calling. According to James Lawson, King’s call from God was central—“the deep-down-inside awareness that connects your life up with the life force of the universe, the God who created the heavens and the earth. . . . That’s something that profoundly alters [your] way of thinking and behavior.” Whether it was his “vision in the kitchen” (“Preach the Gospel, stand up for the truth, stand up for righteousness”), four hours after midnight spent listening to gang leaders in Chicago, his moments of despair when his wife revived him, or the night he gave his last speech, God was King’s sovereign.

Second, he had a masterful way with words. To familiar speeches Eig adds less well-known ones such as the Prayer Pilgrimage speech at the Lincoln Memorial in May, 1957 (“Give . . . us . . . the . . . ballot”). He adds analysis to narrative, for example, featuring two listeners, one Black and one Caucasian, reacting to King at Washington in 1963. King’s first speech to bus boycotters had to be “bold enough to encourage the people to suffer for their freedom, moderate enough to keep their fervor under control, and optimistic enough to make everyone believe they could succeed.” And Eig offers a fascinating theory how “King employed many of the same skills of the finest professional singers.” King used parallelism like that in the Biblical psalms.

Third, King inspired thousands and thousands of people. That inspiration came in various ways: one-to-one encounters, seeing and hearing him on television, answering his calls to join demonstrations, say, in Selma in 1965. Some trusted advisers pushed him further than he first wanted to go. King grew closer to critics like Malcolm X. The most important supporters were Rev. Ralph Abernathy, who accompanied King to jail, and Coretta King, who stood in for King, spreading the word for equality, justice, and nonviolence. Coretta’s support of her husband and own goal of a singing career were a delicate balancing act. Diane Nash and Dorothy Cotton were other women who showed that the civil rights movement involved lots of women, young and old.

Finally, King was a genuine radical, probing the roots, or foundations of racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. To those who sought more moderate means and lesser ends, King was an extremist. To those who wanted to retain the status quo, extending the right to vote to Black people, encouraging school children to march, and disobeying unjust laws were thinking outside the box. To President Johnson and most other Americans, criticizing the war in Vietnam was no longer redistributing wealth and power but interfering in foreign affairs. To Eig, King’s thinking “beyond race, class, and nation meant giving unconditional love to all mankind.” It was “what God calls on us to do.” It was a bigger and more challenging dream than the one articulated at Detroit and Washington in 1963. Such a “reconstruction of the entire society, a revolution of values,” however, ultimately cost King his life.



*Author Jonathan Eig*

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