

The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

From Pastor Lisa Schrott



The Journey to the Cross and to the Empty Tomb.

Throughout the month of March, as we continue our Lenten journey, we will be fed by scriptures that remind us of the power of community – the power of coming to the table as a body of believers. Jesus invited the meek and lowly, the rich and powerful, the well-connected and the outcast to dine together. As we share these stories in our Lenten Supper and Small Groups on Thursday nights, in our Sunday services, and in prayer stations during the Sunday education hour, we gain a deeper appreciation of the disciples gathering at the table for the Last Supper; the friends and family gathered at the foot of the cross at Jesus' crucifixion and the women who find the tomb empty on Easter morning. We come as part of a community.

I invite you to join us on this journey to the cross and to the empty tomb, which will include elements that draw us together. We will hear special music from the Chancel choir and the Handbell Choir and we will hear a Youth String Quartet. We will ordain and/or install a new class of Elders and Deacons on March 10. We will share our gifts as we collect for hunger, disaster, and development needs in the One Great Hour of Sharing on March 24.

Holy Week

Palm Sunday, March 24. Worship at 10:00 a.m. We will celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and begin the transition to the passion story.

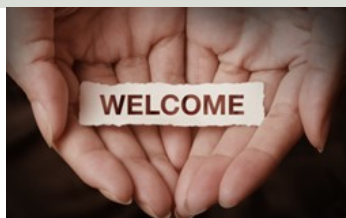
Maundy Thursday, March 28. Worship at 7:00 p.m. We gather around the Table to be fed by the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

Good Friday, March 29. Worship at Faith Lutheran Church 7:00 p.m. We will journey to the cross with our siblings in Christ from Okemos Community Church and Faith Lutheran.

Easter Sunday, March 31. Celebrate the empty tomb with special music from a brass quintet and the Hallelujah Chorus. The service will be followed by an Easter brunch sponsored by Parish Life.

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Do You Have a Heart for Welcome?

We are seeking some friendly faces to join a team who will welcome visitors and new members to our faith community and help get them connected into our life at PCO. If you have a gift for hospitality and connection and would like to join this team, please reach out to Bill Given at givenc@msu.edu or Jill Schaberg at mas7185@aol.com (standard email set-up) .

Journey to 2030: Survey and Next Steps

What a response! We received 94 completed surveys. Thank you all for your participation in this part of our visioning process. The Journey to 2030 team will be working with a consultant, the Rev. Sarah Moore-Nokes, over the next two months to translate the data into goals and identity statements. How does PCO see itself in 2030? The Journey to 2030 visioning document will be rolled out to the congregation at a special town hall, following the worship service on April 28.

An important component of the visioning process is to help guide the Session and our leadership groups in planning future programming. For example, the Journey to 2030 team will share relevant data with the Personnel Committee as they develop a position description for the Associate Pastor position. The Nominating Committee will begin work later this spring, calling an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee. The APNC will use the results of the Journey to 2030 visioning process to help complete the Ministry Discernment Profile, the document the PC(USA) uses to match call seekers to churches.

Please keep the Journey to 2030 team in your prayers as we discern who God is calling PCO to be in our next chapter (Emily Conroy-Krutz and Jeff Arbour, co-chairs; Catherine Holdway, Doug Paterson, Matt Pearson, and Pastor Lisa).

Save These Dates!

****See Pastor Lisa's article on Page 1 for a list of services taking place during Holy Week March 24—31****

Saturday, March 2

Poor People's Campaign at the State Capital

Carpool from PCO at 9:30 a.m.

Contact Kent Workman or see the Community Bulletin Board on church website for more details.

Sunday, March 3

Souper Sunday and Bowl Auction

Following Worship

PCO Youth will be serving homemade soup.

A silent auction for hand decorated bowls continues until noon.

All proceeds from lunch donations and auction bids go to the Greater Lansing Food Bank.

(For more information about how we can help feed our neighbors, see page 8.)

Thursdays, March 7, 14 and 21

Lenten Supper and Small Group Discussions continue

5:00 p.m.

All are welcome to attend any or all sessions.

Sunday, March 10

Parish Life Out on the Town Bowling

2:00—4:00 p.m.

(See page 6 for details)

Wednesday, March 13

2024 Advocacy Day for Mental Health in Michigan

Contact Pastor Lisa or see the Community Bulletin Board on the church website for more details.

Friday, April 5

Final day to RSVP for 60th Anniversary Dinner

To facilitate planning for this special event, please respect this RSVP deadline.

(See page 5 for details)

Security at PCO



A screen in the church office allows those working in the office to see who may be coming down the hall or entering the church from outside.

The Administration Committee is implementing security measures at the church. After participating in an online training webinar by the Michigan State Police on “Security for Places of Worship”, we chose to purchase a camera system. John Juarez is coordinating this project.

- We are beginning to install cameras at all church entrances. These cameras will allow us to see who enters and leaves the building at all hours. Many members have keys, and doors are sometimes left unlocked, thus the need for increased security.
- Anna, our Office Administrator, will have a screen in the office showing anyone entering the building. This is very important as she is often alone in the building.

This camera system is extremely important when the building is not being used. We need to know who enters and leaves, whether people leave the doors unlocked, and if those entering are individuals we know.

As of now, we have installed one active camera at the office entrance door and plan to install more at all entrances plus at the solar panel.

This process was endorsed by the Michigan State Police as a means to improve security.

If you have questions, please let either John Juarez or me know.

Dave Rumminger

Administration Committee Chair

More Ways to Recycle at PCO

The Green Team is pleased to announce the opportunity for church members to recycle household batteries at the church. This includes battery types such as AA, AAA, C, D, 9v, lithium/rechargeable, hearing aid batteries (please return in an enclosed container such as a pill bottle), coin batteries used in electronics (such as keyless entry devices, watches, and cameras), and any other small battery such as a Duracell Ultra 3v or Energizer A23.

Batteries contain heavy metals such as lead, zinc, cadmium and lithium which are considered hazardous to the environment if not properly disposed of. That’s why it’s more important than ever to recycle household batteries.

There are many good reasons to recycle household batteries including: (1) Conserving natural resources (2) Reducing waste sent to landfill (3) Preventing pollution (4) Producing new products.



The bin for recycling batteries is identified specifically for batteries and is in Fellowship Hall adjacent to the pill bottle drop-off container.

Daylight Savings Time Begins—Spring Ahead on Sunday, March 10!

March New Member Class

If you are interested in 'officially' joining PCO, please contact Pastor Lisa.

Women's Dinner Out

Our next Women's Dinner Out is scheduled for **Monday, March 4 at 5:30 p.m.** at Acapulco Mexican Grill, 300 N. Clippert St, #17 in Lansing (in the Frandor Shopping Center). If you will be attending, please notify Candy Boldrey by Sunday, March 3. Her email address is *cbold67 at gmail dot com* (standard email setup) and phone number is (859) 421-0014.

Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our March Birthdays on **Sunday, March 17**. 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, March 10, if it is not already on the list.

March Women's Connection

We will meet **Sunday, March 24** at 12:30 p.m. in Room 108. Please plan now to join us for a time of fellowship, lunch, and a presentation on life and faith. All women are welcome and encouraged to invite friends. Questions: Shirley Rumminger 655-4123 or *srumming at yahoo dot com* (standard email set-up).

Conversation and Contemplation

C&C meets every Wednesday from 10:00-11:30 a.m. on Zoom # 905-709-104. Password is 48864. We have just begun a study of Barbara Brown Taylor's book *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, so it's not too late to join.

We alternate weeks with the book study and contemplating scripture based on the Lectionary using the practice of Lectio Devina. All aspects of our Conversation and Contemplation are facilitated by group members, including weekly prayer and meditation.

Caregiver Support Group

The Caregiver Support group will meet on **Wednesday, March 27 at 5:00pm** on Zoom #517-329-2320 password hello. Join us for discussion on topics related to caring for a loved one.

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 — 1st Sundays, **2:00 p.m.**, Zoom 848 6124 7191— **next meeting is March 3.**

Birthday Cake Sunday—3rd Sundays following worship unless otherwise noted. This month will be on **March 17th.**

Women's Connection— 4th Sundays at **12:30 p.m.** in Room 108. This month will be on **March 24th.**

MONDAYS

Women's Dinner Out— **Monday, March 4** at Acapulco Mexican Grill, 300 N. Clippert st #17 in Frandor Shopping Center.

Retirees — monthly meetings on Mondays at 12:00 noon on Zoom 711 799 804. Next meeting is **March 18th.** Watch weekly announcements for more info.

TUESDAYS

Men's Group — Weekly, 8:00 a.m. Zoom 813 7514 8286. **Hybrid (In-person and on Zoom)** this month is scheduled for **Tuesday, March 5th.**

PCO Crafts Ministry— 1st Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room. This month will be on Tuesday, **March 5th.**

WEDNESDAYS

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

Caregiver Support Group - 4th Wednesdays, **March 27th.** 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 April Grapevine is Friday, March 22nd



Celebrate with Us!

*Presbyterian Church of Okemos
60th Diamond Jubilee
Anniversary*

*Catered Dinner & Program
Saturday, May 4 at 5:00 p.m.
\$12 per person*

*RSVP by April 5 for Dinner at
okemospres.org/anniversary*

*Seating will be assigned
Note any seating preference with RSVP*

*Worship Service
Sunday, May 5 at 10:00 a.m*

*All events at the church
2258 Bennett Rd, Okemos MI*

What's Happening with Youth Group

March 2: Senior High Poor People's Campaign March followed by soup making 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Middle School soup making 1:30-3:30 p.m.

March 3: Souper Sunday and Bowl Auction after worship. *No Youth Group.*

March 10: Bowling with Parish Life (see pg. 6) Youth Council, 5:00 p.m.

March 17: Middle School Youth Group, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

March 24: Palm Sunday, no Youth Group

March 31: Easter, no Youth Group

April Youth group meetings will begin planning for Youth Sunday on May 19.

Youth Council

Under the umbrella of the CECY Committee, a Youth Council has been formed. Its purpose is to guide the youth program, engage and encourage youth in leadership skills, give them ownership of the program, and to provide a sustainable base for youth ministry through engagement of the congregation. In addition to walking alongside and encouraging youth, the adults will be reading *Sustainable Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries.

The youth council is: Lucas Meland (Junior), Mad-die Pearson (Freshman), Claire Mayhew (6th grade), Barbara Fretwell-Cooke (Deacon), Roy Meland (parent), Brett Cone (congregation member), and Rebecca Mattern (Interim Director of Faith Formation). Please keep us in prayer as we begin our work together!

*Members of the
PCO Mission Com-
mittee served a meal
at Advent House on
Saturday, February 17.*

*Advent House is
located at 743 Martin
Luther King Jr. Blvd. in
Lansing and shares a
building with North
Westminster Presby-
terian Church.*

*Advent House as-
sists people with food,
housing assistance,
day shelter and other
needs.*



Parish Life at PCO

Bowl those winter blues away!
Fun for all ages!
Join your Church Family
for an afternoon of bowling!

When: Sunday, March 10, 2024
2:00 to 4:00 PM

Where: Pins & Pints
(formerly City Limits)
2120 E. Saginaw Highway

How much: \$12.75 per bowler – includes 2
hours of bowling & shoes

RSVP: Please sign up on the kiosk,
online sign up on the church
website or contact Deb Major at
the email or phone number in
the directory preferably by
March 8th.



*Last year's bowling was so much fun we've
decided to do it again!*

Looking Ahead: Dinner in My Home: April 21, 2024 5:00 p.m.

This popular event (formerly known as Dinner for 8) is back! If you are unfamiliar with it, PCO members and friends gather in small groups to share a meal in someone's home. The host provides the main dish and the guests provide the sides. This event is for **anyone**: singles, couples, or families.

Do you have food allergies or restrictions? Let us accommodate them!

Need a ride or have other physical limitations? Let us know and we can help you!

Want your dinner to be intergenerational? Let us know!

Bottom line: if you like to eat and share conversation and friendship, signup! You can do that 2 ways: 1) find the form on the Fellowship Hall Kiosk, fill it out and drop it in the envelope (also on the Kiosk) or 2) signup on line at the PCO website.

Questions? Call or text Jerri (517-331-0250). There is much organizing to this event so the sooner you signup, the easier you make Jerri's life but the absolute deadline for signing up is Sunday April 7th. You should receive a phone call or email by April 14 with your home assignment.

Thank you so much for your prayers during my mom's recent health challenges. I'm happy to report she has exceeded all of her doctor's expectations as she is home now and resting comfortably. Prayers are so powerful. I praise God for all of you and give thanks.

Barb Geske

Thank you to everyone who donated new pajamas to the Judson Love Clothing Center for needy boys and girls in Lansing. 33 pairs of cozy pajamas were collected and delivered on February 2. Their Director, Deborah was very glad to receive them and they will be ready for the February 10 shopping day at the center.

Thank you for your generosity!
Jayne Zuhlke

Church family,

Thank you so much for the prayers, cards, and calls during my recent shoulder surgery and recuperation. Knowing I was held in prayer allowed me to let go and let God, opening space for physical and spiritual healing. I appreciate you and thank God for you all!

Peace,

Laurin Gierman

Dear members,

Thank you so much for all the coats and jackets for Cristo Rey Community Center. With the bitter cold this year they came at the right time. We have so many people who are financially insecure and homeless and the numbers are only increasing. You are definitely following the path of Christ's teaching.

Blessings.

Maureen Zalba

(Jayne Zuhlke extends her thanks as well)



PCO Library News

March 2024 is a busy month for the PCO Library. Early in the month, you will find a collection of books chosen especially for the season of Lent on the library table. There's still plenty of time to take a book with you on your Lenten journey.

Later in the month, the focus will shift to books by and about women. The new titles among our featured books will include:

- * *God Is a Black Woman* by Christena Cleveland
- * *Someone Other Than a Mother: Flipping the Scripts on a Woman's Purpose and Making Meaning beyond Motherhood* by Erin S. Lane
- * *Women and the Gender of God* by Amy Peeler
- * *Finding Phoebe: What New Testament Women Were Really Like* by Susan E. Hulen
- * *We Will Be Free: The Life and Faith of Sojourner Truth* by Nancy Koester
- * *Blessed Are the Women: Naming and Reclaiming Women's Stories from the Gospels* by Claire McKeever-Burgett
- * Another new addition to the library:
- * *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home* by Traci Smith

"Add family faith moments to your daily routine with little or no prep, and share meaningful experiences with your children! Traci Smith, a pastor and mother of three, offers ways to discover and develop new spiritual practices as a family, whether you're a new seeker or a lifelong follower. *Faithful Families* is brimming with easy, do-it-yourself ideas for transforming your family's everyday moments into sacred moments!" (from the publisher)

This book is already on the shelf, among the other new books.

Borrowing a book is easier than ever. Please make an entry in the new Check-Out Binder, keep the book for up to two months, and return the book to the basket on the bottom shelf. We will return the book to the shelves and update the binder.

Do you have books to donate to the PCO library? We have a shelf for that, too! As you enter the library, look to the shelves on your left. You will find a sign answering your questions about donations, and a shelf where you may leave them.

Thank you for using the PCO Library!

Kathi Cook

PCO Food Cart



As you enter Fellowship Hall, you see a freshly painted food cart that MSU students retrieved years ago from the Red Cedar River. Donated non-perishables, personal need items and pet food placed in this cart are regularly delivered to food pantries in **Okemos** (Community Church), **Haslett** (Community Church), and **Lansing** (First Presbyterian Church). These pantries also receive goods from the Greater Lansing Food Bank (GLFB), other churches, and local grocery stores. In 2023 the City of Lansing provided \$5,000 of fresh vegetables, eggs, and bread to the First Presbyterian pantry.

Food Stamp reductions, inflation, and an increase in the number of people served have led to significant challenges at food pantries. In 2023, First Presbyterian served an average of 298 households a month, up from an average 215 households from 2022. Okemos Community Church's numbers also rose from an average of 539 families to 660 families.

The three food pantries to which PCO contributes are run by 30 to 60 weekly volunteers, who purchase, schedule, transport food, stock goods, distribute, and plan. During the pandemic, the GLFB began supplying the pantries with food selections at no charge. This program was discontinued in August 2023 when federal Covid relief funds ran out, and the local pantries are now billed a cost share for most items and delivery.

Due to the increases in people served and cuts in supplies, local pantries must rely more than ever on area churches. So, the next time you shop, please remember Matthew 25:40: "Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine you did for me" and pick up some Cheerios, peanut butter, tuna, diapers and wipes, toothpaste, dog food etc., to help us fill PCO's food cart to the brim. If you prefer, you can place a check into our cart written to PCO or one of the food pantries listed above.

Public Policy Report— Ellen Hoekstra

The Governor has issued her executive budget recommendations for an \$80.7 billion budget, which next goes to the legislature for their modifications and approval before the next fiscal year in the fall.

Highlights include:

- \$10 Million into the Disaster and Emergency Contingency Fund to support response and recovery activities;
- \$159 million to expand free pre-K to 4-year-old children;
- \$127 million to expand support for children's special education services;
- \$125 million to increase funding by 5% for academically at-risk students, English language learners, career/technical education students, and students in rural districts;
- \$500,000 to continue the \$108 million federal summer food program to provide children nutritious food when school is not in session;
- \$1.4 billion to build or rehabilitate nearly 10,000 homes, to help make housing more affordable; and
- A new tax credit of up to \$5000 for expenses such as transportation, nursing, and respite services for families to care for elderly parents or children with long-term care needs.

In other news:

The decision in Jennifer Crumbley's trial highlights the safe storage law, which went into effect on February 13, along with other firearm safety legislation.

Michigan will spend \$19 million to clean up the contamination left by GM's former Fisher Body plant in Lansing, a necessary step prior to the property's sale.

State Superintendent Michael Rice is advocating for state registration of home-schooled children. He states that some home-schooled children appear to be receiving little or no education. Advocates have highlighted the AG's charges against four Clinton County adoptive parents, charged with homeschooling as a guise for child abuse. Opponents express concern that registration would lead to more state regulation. Some opponents opine that the Superintendent wants to see more children return to public schools, given the pandemic increase in homeschooling (from 5.3% to 11.3%).

The opioid settlement with pharmaceutical companies aims to provide funding to counties and municipalities over an 18-year period for substance abuse services. In our region, Ingham County will receive \$14,334,537; East Lansing, \$1,156,300; Lansing, \$3,638,658; and Meridian Township, \$245,134.

The eight year Flint water crisis suit now appears to be finally settled, with the addition of \$25 million in funds now totaling \$655 million.

BOOK NOOK

By Ron Davr

The Gospel According to Mark

Mark is “the most important book in the world,” William Barclay argues, because it is the earliest of all the gospels and therefore the first life of Jesus that has come down to us. . . . Mark is the nearest approach we will ever possess in an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus.” It was written about 70 A. D., using what the writer remembered of Peter’s preaching material. On four occasions, for instance, Jesus speaks in Aramaic, recreating what Peter heard (5:41, 7:34, 14:36, 15:34).

Mark is the briefest and most dramatic gospel. Like a child eager to tell a story, the narrator rushes on, propels the story, does not linger. He remembers vivid details: Jesus sleeping on a pillow, Jesus taking children in his arms, Jesus’s loneliness even amid the disciples, the crowd of 5,000 sitting in groups of 50 and 100. In Mark, Jesus’s humanity is realistic and poignant. He felt hungry and tired, looked at the rich man with love, mingled anger with grief, and said, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” But the narrator is also impressed by the divinity and impact of Jesus. “The large crowd listened to him with delight.”

Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 10 are my favorites. They are powerful. Mark 1:1 sounds the themes of the entire book—the good news “about Jesus Christ, the son of God.” The first chapter gives us one surprise after another just when we think we are comfortable with the story. In the New English version of Mark 1:41, to the leper begging to be cleansed, “in warm indignation” Jesus stretches out his hand and cleanses him. Mark 2:1-13 give us the trinity of tasks in Jesus’s ministry: preaching, teaching, and healing. The story of the paralytic healed is not only compelling but poetic. In Spanish, Mark 2:5 reads, “Hijo, tus pecados te son perdonados” (“Son, your sins are forgiven”).

A preacher’s dream for sermons, Mark 5 is a stirring chapter of deliverance—for a man named Legion, the woman hemorrhaging, and the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus, presumed dead. How often teaching and healing go together in this book. Mark 10, too, is powerful, beginning with the prohibition against divorce, including the story of the rich young man, foreshadowing the cost and suffering of a God-filled life, and ending with the restoring of Bartimaeus’s sight. “What do you want me to do for you?” “Master, let me receive my sight.” “Your faith has made you well.”

Two emotions stand out: amazement and fear. Mark begins with the former and ends with the latter.

In the first chapter, people “were amazed at his teaching” with such authority and driving out an evil spirit. Jesus’s healing left people praising God and saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” In his hometown, people were “amazed” at his teaching and performing miracles. When Nazarenes took offense, however, Jesus “was amazed at their lack of faith.”

More than a dozen texts refer to wonder and amazement. Fear, however, also breaks in. Sometimes the two emotions accompany each other. The disciples were “terrified” when Jesus appeared like a ghost, walking on the water to their boat. “Don’t be afraid,” he said, calming the wind and leaving them “completely astonished.” On their way up to Jerusalem, Jesus led the way, “the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid.” In the temple in Jerusalem, authorities “feared” Jesus “because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.”

The disciples were “afraid to ask” Jesus to explain his prophecy about being killed and then being raised from the dead. Authorities too were afraid, whether they were priests, teachers, or elders, or whether they wanted to arrest Jesus and couldn’t. Most revealing, the early manuscripts of the Gospel According to Mark end with the eighth verse of chapter 16: “Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.”

The instances of being amazed number 16. The instances of fear number 17. Such is Mark’s fearsome wonder.



A painting of Saint Mark by Italian painter Andrea Mantegna, painted around 1448.

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