

The Grapevine

A monthly newsletter of
The Presbyterian Church of Okemos

November 2018; Volume 18, Issue 11

Some Thoughts on Faith

I don't remember making a conscious decision to look for words concerning God's grace, but perhaps my eyes and ears are tuned differently these days. I have been collecting words about grace for a few months now, and November seems the right moment to share them with the congregation.

I've read a lot of Marilyn Robinson these days. She is a self-avowed Calvinist, Presbyterian, University of Iowa professor and Pulitzer-Prize winning author. She reminds me that, "if the Lord is more gracious than any of us can imagine, then we should feel more secure, more happy and more pleasantly surprised than we do. If there is no Lord, then things are just the way they look to us, which seems harder to accept actually than the presence of the Lord. Just because some people accuse us of wishful thinking doesn't mean it isn't true."

Then there is Anne Lamott, an author who once called herself an unconventional evangelical Presbyterian. When she was 32 years old, Lamott woke up too many mornings asking herself why she couldn't stop after six or seven drinks. "Why" was not a useful question. She realized she was successful and loved. She described herself as "penniless and bulimic, but adorable and cherished." And she realized her soul was rotting from the inside out.

So she called for help. She went to her first AA meeting and found, "there were all these other women who had what I had, who'd thought what I'd thought, who'd done what I'd done, who had betrayed their families and deepest values, who sat with me that day, and said 'Guess what? Me, too! I have that too. Let me get you a glass of water.' Those are the words of salvation: Guess what? Me, too."

Anne Lamott learned from experience that God always finds a way even when there appears to be no way. Grace is like water wings on a toddler that keeps her afloat. It is like spiritual WD-40; there is almost nothing Grace cannot fix. It may seem like the 9th inning and your back is against the wall, "but Grace always gets the last at bat."

And then there is Karl Barth. I once had a teacher who told us— aspiring preachers all of us—that Karl

Barth wrote all the important stuff in his footnotes, not in the body of his *Church Dogmatics*. Sure enough, in the footnotes, you can find these words on grace and gratitude:

"God's grace always demands us to answer with gratitude. Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder follows lightning.... the two belong together, so that only gratitude can correspond to grace, and this correspondence cannot fail. Its failure, ingratitude, is sin. Radically and basically all sin is simply ingratitude—man's refusal of the one necessary thing which is required of him with whom God has graciously entered into covenant. As far we are concerned there can be no question of anything but gratitude; gratitude is the task which we must fulfill."

Our gratitude follows God's grace like thunder follows lightning. It is a striking image. God's grace struck Paul like a blinding light. It hit Martin Luther out of the blue. In 1934, a Baptist preacher named Michael King was so struck by God's grace that he returned home to Atlanta and changed his name and his five year-old son's name to Martin Luther King. The senior King was always struck by how God spoke to him while he was in Berlin as the Nazi regime threatened the peace of the entire world.

Harvard professor, Michael Ignatieff, calls gratitude one of the "ordinary virtues that make it possible for us to behave decently toward each other." By the grace of God and our desire to show our gratitude to God and one another, it is possible for us to belong to one another as fathers and mothers, son and daughters, brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends.

Every time we gather together in church, we are invited to recognize that by the grace of God, we have been given brothers, sisters, friends and neighbors that we would not have known without Jesus Christ who has brought us together—who has shown us welcome, healing, justice, and peace—and who is determined to bring all things together, even us.

See you in church,



JOYS & CONCERNS

Giving thanks for:

The **wedding** of Kate Grady and Colin Hudson on October 13 in Traverse City. Parents include Shawn and Terri Grady.
The **birth** of Graham Sully Cooke, born October 4 to John and Jennifer Hopkins Cooke; grandparents include Peter and Barbara Fretwell Cooke.

Thank You!

Rick and I want to thank the congregation for all of the prayers, notes, prayer shawl, and well-wishes for Esther, during her recent cancer treatment. There is a certain helplessness that envelopes a parent, as we watch our child travel this path. Knowing we were all in your prayers shone a bright light on that darkness, pulling us through each and every day. Esther has stabilized and is back to work, and will be monitored over the next year, before additional treatment is considered. We so appreciate our church family, and thank God for each and every one of you.

Laurin & Rick Gierman

Food Donations and Drivers Needed for our Thanksgiving Baskets Project

Food donation sign-up sheets for this year's Thanksgiving Baskets project will be available in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, October 28, November 4 and November 11. Please consider getting involved in this worthwhile project which provides Thanksgiving meals for 12 Meridian Township families. Food items are collected through 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, November 18, when they will be prepared for delivery following church service. In addition to food donations, **volunteers are needed to deliver the baskets**. Thanks for your help with this project! If you have any questions, please contact Becky Gillespie at 332-5657.

The College Singers of Kalamazoo College will be performing a free concert in the PCO sanctuary on Friday evening, November 9 at 8:00 P.M.. The Concert is titled, "I Feel the Earth Move," and features global music, folk, pop, and spirituals. Our own Jonathan Townley is a member of the College Singers.



Lessons & Carols 2018

The annual Lessons and Carols will be presented Saturday evening, December 1st at 7:00 P.M. This year's program will feature the Chancel and Handbell Choirs accompanied by brass and percussion from MSU. Celebrate the beginning of Advent with family and friends by attending this beautiful service.

Please hold in prayer:

- Walter Albrecht
- Jaunita Bachmann
- Ardith DaFoe
- Bill and Sis Fritze
- John Geske
- Lyleen Haller
- David Hoekstra
- Joey Hubbard
- Wally MacLean
- Harriet McDaniel
- Doug Paterson
- Mary & Phil Prygoski
- Dick Stuart
- Jean Weinert

Caring for God's Creation

Recycling continues to go well at church! Please though remember all recycling, including Styrofoam, must be clean (free from food particles.) Also NO napkins or paper plates can be recycled.



Artificial Christmas trees needed

The Advent decorating crew would like to use branches from artificial Christmas trees to create some of the decor this year. If you no longer need your tree please let Jennifer Gordon know at gordonjms@gmail.com or 517-349-6880.

Financial Update:

As of September 30, the church's general fund budget was running a deficit of \$10,914. This is a significant improvement over the \$30,000+ deficit we had over the summer. Thank you for your continued support of the mission and ministry of this congregation..

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

ADULT ED, SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 11:30 A.M.

Bible Study with Rev. Carlson: "Jesus Then and Now," we will be studying chapters 6 and 7 of Mark the first two Sundays of November. On November 18, we will begin looking at the Gospel of Luke and the birth narrative of John and Jesus. Meeting in Room 108.

Faithful Practices: How Do We Stay Centered in Anxious Times? in the Chapel

November 4: Processing Trauma, with Kent Workman

November 11: Contemplative Prayer, with Alice Townley

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION & FELLOWSHIP

Writing Life Stories group will meet on Sunday, November 4, at 12:30 A.M. in Room 108.

Women's Supper Out

Join us for supper out on Monday, November 19 at 5:30 P.M. Each month we choose a different restaurant to meet at and enjoy an evening together. This month we will be eating at Sultan's; located in: Hannah Plaza, 4790 Hagadorn Road, East Lansing. Those planning to attend, please let Barbara Dorr know so she can make arrangements.

Book Discussion Group meets Sunday, November 18, 12:30 P.M. in Room 108. We will discuss Yeon-mi Park's, *IN ORDER TO LIVE: A NORTH KOREAN GIRL'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM*

Retirees Group addresses topics of interest for those who have recently retired, retired a while ago, are partially retired or hope to retire soon. It is an informal group discussion of topics decided on by those in attendance. Feel free to come once or each month. On Monday, November 26, we'll discuss change and how we deal with change. We meet at noon so please feel free to bring a sack lunch and join us. Beverages are provided. Please contact Tom Bobay at tombobay@hotmail.com or Jane Bobay at 571-505-0211 if you have questions. This will be our last meeting until January.

Women's Connection will meet next on Sunday, *January 27, 2019*. In the meantime, PCO women are encouraged to participate in the coming holiday worship and mission events, particularly the Thanksgiving baskets project in November and the Giving Tree project in December. Holiday blessings to all!

MID-WEEK STUDY GROUPS AND CLASSES

Men's Group meets Tuesday mornings at 6:45 A.M. in Fellowship Hall.

Artists' Circle meets Tuesdays, 1:00 P.M., in Room 108. Come join our delightful group as we explore the ideas and concepts of Art and Christianity. We look forward to having you join us!

Conversation & Contemplation, with Rev. Alice Townley Wednesdays, at 10:00 A.M. in Room 108.

Bible Study: Thursdays, 9:30 A.M. in Room 108; with Ewen & Zora Todd

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES CALENDAR

November:

- 3 **Saturday** Youth Group serving Advent House. Please meet at Advent House, 743 MLK Blvd, Lansing; located in the basement of North Westminster Presbyterian Church at 2:30. We will finish by 4:30 P.M.
* Daylight Saving Ends, set your clocks back one hour
- 4 No Youth Group
- 11 Youth Group will be making hats for charity.
- 18 Youth Group is having the Amazing Race, please contact Tanya Stokes or Christine Meland if you want to help and to RSVP
- 25 Thanksgiving weekend, no CE or Youth Group

December

- 2 Normal church school and youth group
- 3 **Monday** CE Staff meeting 5:45-6:45 P.M. in the Upper Elementary Room
- 9 Normal church school and youth group
- 16 Pageant Preparation for all children and youth with speaking parts during church school hour.
- 23 Christmas Pageant dress rehearsal during church school hour (it may run a little long)
- 24 Christmas Eve Family Service with Pageant, 6:00 P.M.
Candlelight and Communion service, 8:00 P.M.

January

- 6 Bowl glazing for Souper Bowl of Caring after Church School hour for upper elementary children and youth.

MISSION COMMITTEE —ORGANIZATIONS WE SUPPORT:

- Global Institute of Lansing (GIL).** Support by donations and by PCO member volunteer teachers.
- Meridian Township Families in need.** Yearly Thanksgiving donation of a Thanksgiving meal to local families.
- Alternative Christmas Market.** Organize a yearly bazaar of Michigan organizations who are active in mission activities. Purchases of Christmas gifts from these organizations helps them raise money. Donations are also encouraged.
- St. Vincent Catholic Charities Refugee Services.** Donations for support of refugees living in the Lansing Metro area.
- Advent House.** Donations and provision of volunteer services.
- All Faith Alliance for Refugees (AFAR).** PCO establishing relationships with other faiths to support the refugee community.
- Cass Social Services.** Volunteer work performed to help improve the living conditions of people in the Cass Community in Detroit.
- Christmas gifts (Giving Tree).** Organizing the donation of Christmas presents to local families.
- CROP Walk:** Volunteers and donations support this annual hunger walk,, sponsored by Church World Services.
- Food Bank.** Donations from One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday are directed to 3 local food pantries.
- Edgewood Village Scholars** program. Donations from the mission fund to support the education of children living in the Edgewood community.
- Michigan Communities in Schools.** Donations to support students who may lack the essentials needed to succeed in school.
- Ludwig family:** Financial and prayer support for their mission work for the PCUSA in Niger.
- Shared Mission Fund of the Presbyterian Church (USA),** such as campus ministries, new church development, outreach in vulnerable Michigan communities.
- Habitat for Humanity: Finances** from the mission budget to supported the PCO Youth project in the U.P. of Michigan in the summer of 2018.
- PeaceQuest 2018** gave us the opportunity to co-sponsor two documentary movies with financial support from PCO donations.
- Simbolei.** A secondary school for girls is being built in a rural part of Kenya by a member of our congregation. PCO donations are helping.
- Loaves and Fishes.** PCO members support this local family shelter through donations and by providing a meal once a month.

Alternative Christmas Gift Fair

Members and friends will once again be able to purchase gifts and make donations in honor of friends and family at the Presbyterian Church of Okemos Alternative Christmas Gift Fair on December 2 from 11:15 until 1:00 P.M. in Fellowship Hall. Organizations will include Haitian Artisans For Peace, Cass Social Services, Advent House, Global Institute of Lansing, Solar Circle, Simbolei Academy and others. Gifts will include handmade soaps, greeting cards, nativity sets, jewelry and other gift ideas.

Please join us on December 2 to prepare for the holidays in the spirit of loving generosity.

Serving at Advent House

The Northern Lights LINK group, with help from friends, served Advent House dinner on October 18. Many hands helped make chili and cookies. We want to thank Great Harvest Bread of Okemos for donating bread to share. If you visit the Great Harvest be sure to thank them for feeding the homeless. We were glad we could serve others at Advent House and hope PCO members will consider participating in the meals when asked in the future.

Our PCO Youth Group will also be serving at Advent House on November 3.

Please bring your travel and hotel toiletries for the Advent House shelter. We will get them to Advent House so they can be distributed. Please cut out coupons and buy toiletries during your shopping trips for great savings and an even greater demonstration of our caring for others in our community

Mission Committee Public Policy Report, October 2018

By Ellen Hoekstra

In the aftermath of the rancorous national debate over the US Supreme Court, it is worth noting that Michigan's seven-member Supreme Court has made the majority of its decisions (33 of 65) unanimously during its 2017-2018 session. Michigan has the interesting practice of nominating candidates for the highest state court by political party but then having them run for office without listing which party nominated them. However, for those who already sit on the court, the ballot will put "Justice" in front of their names—worth all the lawn signs in the state!

One federal decision—tariffs on agricultural products-- will have a trickle down impact on states' food banks. (And right here, remember that the three entities where our PCO grocery cart donations go are food pantries—essentially the "retail" entities that service different parts of the geographic area served by the Greater Lansing Food Bank, the wholesaler to food pantries.) To mollify farmers and prevent crops from going to waste, the administration has been purchasing more food that is sent to food banks across the country. An immediate reaction to this might be—oh, the Greater Lansing Food Bank will need less financial support. However, it has actually increased food banks' need for cash, including for storage but particularly for shipping. In the public policy world, this is called an "unintended consequence," a result not intended by the initial policy decision.

CROP Walk report:

Sunday, October 14 turned out better than predicted. The temperature reached 60 degrees, the sun shone brightly, and the new course was only five kilometers, not ten. The people at Grace United Methodist Church prepared and handled things well. Before the walk, our church received two plaques: one for the most walkers in 2017 and the other for the most money in contributions in 2017. Appropriately, around 40 people from our church took part in the CROP Walk. This was the 40th year that PCO has participated.

Thanks to all the walkers, contributors, and others who supported the walk. . Members of the Mission Committee in particular, led by Becky Gillespie, deserve special thanks for preparing and delivering a special lunch.

Please turn in donation envelopes and donor sheets by Sunday, November 4 to Ron Dorr.

Other items of interest:

Shortly before the Mission Committee meeting, WDIV-TV's "Flashpoint" has featured a debate between Congressman Mike Bishop and his Democratic opponent, Elissa Slotkin. Members may also have watched the debate between Gretchen Whitmer and her Republican opponent, Attorney General Bill Schuette.

Michigan's House Oversight Committee has held a hearing on the very negative audit of the Chic Protective Services that was mentioned in last month's [Grapevine](#).

The Michigan House overwhelmingly passed a package of bills re-defining "good moral character" and how it can be used for occupational licensing. The goal is to reduce the impact on employment opportunities for individuals who've been incarcerated, once they return to their communities.

The House Law and Justice Committee is reviewing legislation to require that individuals who have been convicted of two domestic violence misdemeanors be prohibited from owning a gun for three years.

Agape Feast in Worship Sunday, November 18

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, it is the tradition of this congregation to mark the holiday with an Agape Feast. *Agape* is the Greek word for "love" especially used to refer to Christ's love toward his disciples. This is the self-giving love that Jesus commanded his followers to practice: "Love one another as I have loved you."

On the 18th, you are invited to bring food to share--bread, grains, fruit, cheese, finger-foods--and deliver them to the kitchen prior to the worship service on Sunday morning. During the last 15 minutes of our worship, we will leave the sanctuary and go into Fellowship Hall to share food and conversation, and give thanks to God for God's love, bounty, and blessings.



When I used to talk to prospective students, their parents, and their teachers on our College's Visit Day, I mentioned 18-year-old students' writing strengths and weaknesses as I have come to know them. Most entering first-year students at James Madison College were better speakers than they were writers, especially when they could add creative role-playing in the second semester of our writing and speaking course. In writing, they were at their best in first-person descriptive narratives. They were fair to middling in character sketches, analyses, and argumentative essays. They were weakest in writing summaries, especially understanding and elaborating theses of complex essays.

At the same time, we college professors expect them to master the craft of analysis. According to Nancy Huddleston Packer and John Timpane, "developing analytical skills is a—perhaps the—major purpose of a college education." "To reason well, to recognize when reason and evidence are not enough, to discover the legitimacy of intuition, to subject inert data to the probing analysis of the mind—these are the primary experiences required of the undergraduate course of study," adds Frederick Rudolph. Yet two caveats apply here. Good analysis often includes descriptive sense-images, suspenseful narratives, authentic voice, opposition, warm human details, clear exposition, and forceful persuasive points. Analysis, in fact, is limited. "The heart has its reasons that reason does not know," Pascal once wrote.

In teaching the art of skillful analysis, I try to nail things down and yet open things up. Analysis comes from the Greek word, "analyein," meaning to break up, to loosen. The first step, then, is to separate "a whole into its component parts," to distinguish one component from the other parts, and to contrast the parts. The second step is to bring the parts back together, to connect them and synthesize. It may involve comparing, classifying, or showing cause and effect. Then interpretation follows—drawing inferences from the careful observations and coming to conclusions or hypotheses. Such interpretation draws upon one's background, experience, and opinions, common (historical) knowledge, use of a dictionary, reliance on other outside sources, and openness to new insight and interpretation. Finally, a good thesis proposes, disposes of what opposes, imposes analytic order on what juxtaposes, for evidence noses for roses, and, as it closes, the essay composes. Every class session, whatever the topic, is an invitation to do disciplined analysis.

To open things up, I include other elements of analysis: defining terms, identifying elements, enumerating, illustrating, evaluating, persuading, and even imagining new elements. I encourage students to read and examine self-reflection, summaries, newspaper reports and analyses, essays based on oral interviews, explications of texts, op-eds, and other essays.

Students respond in sundry ways, choosing their own subjects.

In a residential college at M. S. U. focusing on a liberal arts education in public affairs, some students take assigned readings such as "Federalist No. 10" from The Federalist Papers in their social science course. Like Lincoln's First and Second Inaugural Addresses, such work

is probably too sophisticated for most first-year students to analyze well. More effective essays have come from more recent speeches: Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech of January 6, 1941, John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, Michelle Obama's impassioned speeches in the campaign of 2016. Steve Jobs' commencement speech at Stanford University in June of 2005 provided three lessons he learned from his life, and Pope Francis's speech before the United States Congress on September 15, 2015, gave listeners his four model Americans—Abraham Lincoln, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Analysis of poetry has included essays on secular and religious works. The most popular poem chosen by Madison students, "Annabel Lee," was written by Edgar Allan Poe, the favorite American poet of my first students at the women's college, Colegio Mayor de Cundinamarca, in Bogota, Colombia, in 1962. Robert Frost, "Mending Wall," "The Road Not Taken," and "Out, Out—" as well as Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise" and "Caged Bird," have been popular works to dissect. The most successful analyses, however, have often been complicated poems that students felt challenged to understand more carefully and to illuminate what they learned: G. K. Chesterton, "The Earth's Shame," about God, Judas, and Christian love; Richard Eberhart, "The Groundhog," about emotional and intellectual aspects of death; and careful study of a novel that includes poetry and poetic prose, B. Z.'s award-winning essay, "White Lamb and White Whale: Religious Ambiguities in Moby-Dick."

In art, analyses of photographs and paintings have predominated. They have ranged from older works such as studies of Farm Security Administration pictures, filled with dual and conflicting purposes, taken during the Great Depression, to Ramon Espinosa's haunting photograph of the struggle for daily bread after devastating storms in Haiti in 2008: "four faces, three hands, two pieces of bread, and one focus: self-preservation." They have included B. Q.'s sound analysis of Winslow Homer's 20 oil paintings depicting the ordinary, realistic, and unheroic dimensions of soldiers' lives during the Civil War and F. T.'s original comparison of Diego Velazquez's "Portrait of Pope Innocent X" in 1650 with Francis Bacon's modernist take on the same person in 1953—the "contest between modernity and tradition."

In music, students have greatly increased my knowledge—the essential purpose of analysis—and provided great delight in their interpretations of classical works. Analyses of "Veni Sancte Spiritus" (1900) by Leos Janacek and "The Four Seasons" (1725) by Antonio Vivaldi have stood out. Other students have made their own interpretations more personal. In its lyrics, meanings, emotions, and metaphors, Bob Seger's song, "In your time," spoke to one Madison student in the way that it was composed for Seger's son. In "A Civil War Story," the Linden Eagle Marching Band skillfully conveyed the tensions between "Nation versus State, Patriotism versus Family" through five familiar songs, drill, costumes, flags, and other props.

In May of 2017, I wrote about first-person singular writing in my course. Here I have focused on memorable analytic writing. Research writing and public speaking remain as future columns to compose.





THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS
2258 BENNETT RD
OKEMOS, MI 48864-3233



Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Monday, November 19, 2018

7:00 P.M.

Imam Sohail Chaudhry, preaching

Combined choir practice begins at

6:00 P.M.

University United Methodist Church

1120 South Harrison Road, East Lansing

Coffee and Fellowship following the service

The Grapevine is a monthly newsletter of

The Presbyterian Church of Okemos

Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
 <p style="text-align: center;">Events & Activities of The Presbyterian Church of Okemos</p>				1 9:30am Bible Study 5:30pm outside group 7:30pm Chancel Choir	2 1 pm Prayer Shawl group	3 2:30pm Youth trip to Advent House Daylight Savings Time Ends 
				4 All Saints observed 10am Worship & Communion 11:30am CE Hour 12:30pm Writing Life Stories No Youth Group	5 6pm Jubellees rehearsal 6:45pm Monday Mallets rehearsal	6 6:45am Men's Group 1pm Artists' Circle 5:30pm outside group 5:45pm Worship & Music Committee 7pm outside group
11 10am Worship 11:30am CE hour 12:30pm Youth Group	12 6pm Jubellees rehearsal 6:45pm Monday Mallets rehearsal	13 6:45am Men's Group 1pm Artists' Circle 5:30pm outside group 6:30pm Admin Committee 7pm outside group 7pm Deacons' meeting	14 10am Conversation & Contemplation 6:30pm Mission Committee 7pm Communication & Engagement Committee meeting	15 9:30am Bible Study 5:30pm outside group 7:30pm Chancel Choir	16 1 pm Prayer Shawl group	17 6pm Orchid Society
18 10am Worship/ Agape feast Stewardship Dedication 11am Birthday cake Thanksgiving Baskets 11:30am CE Hour 12:30pm Youth Amazing Race	19 5:30pm Women's Supper Out 6pm Jubellees rehearsal 6:45pm Monday Mallets rehearsal 7pm Interfaith Thanksgiving Service at University Methodist	20 6:45am Men's Group 1pm Artists' Circle 5:30pm outside group 6:30pm outside group 7pm outside group	21 <i>Grapevine Deadline</i>	22 <i>Thanksgiving Day</i> 	23 Church Office is closed	24
25 Christ the King 10am Worship Alternative Christmas market No CE	26 12noon Retirees lunch 6pm Jubellees rehearsal 6:45pm Monday Mallets rehearsal	27 6:45am Men's Group 1pm Artists' Circle 5:30pm outside group 6pm Adult Ed Committee 7pm outside group	28 10am Conversation & Contemplation 7:30pm Session	29 9:30am Bible Study 5:30pm outside group 7:30pm Chancel Choir	30	December 1 7:00pm Lessons & Carols 🎵