

The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

From Pastor Lisa Schrott

Grounded in Hope

I recently read an article by writer Nate Barksdale titled *A Glass at Least Half Full. Can Optimism Be Rational?* Barksdale shares insights about the various types of optimism people embrace, including what he refers to as *resourced optimism* or optimism grounded in belief. This type of optimist has valuable external reasons to think they might have better odds than others, and thus it is a rational optimism. As followers of the Triune God who creates, redeems, and sustains, we are a people who practice *resourced hope*, hope that is grounded in scripture that tells us that the best indication of God's presence with us is to look back at God's presence throughout history. I believe this is a rational hope, especially in times when our future is unknown.

We are entering a season in our church, in our country, and our world with many unknowns. As a congregation we are beginning the process of reviewing applicants for the Associate Pastor position. We are in the midst of our *Impact of Hope* stewardship campaign, asking you to prayerfully consider increasing your pledge as the church seeks to live out the *Journey to 2030* vision. This vision calls us to be a welcoming, inclusive, vibrant congregation that provides relevant intergenerational programming and seeks to expand and deepen partnerships in the community. We enter into this season with the backdrop of a contentious election, knowing that the Presidential election may not be decided on November 5, and that there may be anxious and difficult days ahead. We do this as forces try to emphasize our differences and promote divisiveness, rather than embrace our common humanity. We do this within an environment of escalating violence in the Middle East. And we live in this season as people **grounded in hope**.

During the month of November, it is my prayer that you will avail yourselves of opportunities in the church and community that promote hope, peace, and gratitude. You can learn more throughout the Grapevine about the Interfaith Gathering of Hope and Peace on Monday, November 4, the night prior to the election. On Sunday November 10, our worship will be a service of scripture and song focused on hope. That afternoon there will be two opportunities to learn from our history so we might embrace a brighter future with respect to racial reconciliation. On Sunday, November 24 we will lift our hearts in gratitude as we share in the Agape Meal.

Cont. on pg. 2



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***Deadline for the
December Grapevine
is Friday, November 22nd***

Cont. from pg. 1

We are a people **grounded in hope**. This is more than a rational hope. This is our call as followers of Jesus Christ, who taught us that the death does not have the last word and there is joy in the empty tomb. As theologian Shirley Guthrie shares: Scripture offers us not one but several hopes for the future. There is the hope of freedom after slavery. There is the hope of homecoming after exile. There is the hope of reconciliation after estrangement. There is the hope of community being formed from strangers. There is the hope of the outcast being welcomed to the table. There is the hope of new life after death. Let us always live as a people **grounded in hope**, rather than fear and anxiety, especially in seasons of unknowns.

Pastor Lisa

Called to Discernment

It seems hard to believe it has been 13 months since I came to PCO and we have been in a time of discernment together. The congregation has been discerning your vision as well as hopes for an Associate Pastor. I have been discerning the kind of ministry God is calling me to serve. As our discernment converges and the APNC begins its search, I want you to know that my time here has been invaluable and that I am not going to apply for the Associate Pastor position. I have learned in the past year that God is not calling me to Christian Education or Youth Ministry.

There are two things that guide my reflection and prayer. The first is an ordination vow that Elders, Deacons, and Ministers of Word and Sacrament take: Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love? I find that while I may have the intelligence and love for these ministries and value them greatly, I lack the energy and imagination required for their thriving, and mine. To continue in such a posture not only will not serve the church or me, it will not truly serve God.

The second is the definition of vocation by Presbyterian Minister and author Frederick Buechner: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." I have realized in this year that I miss the gladness I found in meeting the deep hunger for God and meaning outside of the church, particularly in the hospital. I do find deep gladness, energy, intelligence, imagination, and love in crafting worship and in prayer. I am led to wonder if God is calling me to bi-vocational ministry as pastor and hospital chaplain. I am now meeting with a Spiritual Director for guidance as I discern.

Finally, an article about vocation as identity rather than work has given me much to ponder. I recommend it for you, too, in working years and retirement, employed or not: drchanequa.rethinking-vocation.

I give thanks to God for this congregation, for you who have welcomed and encouraged me, taught me and pushed me. It continues to be a gift and a joy to serve alongside you and as I work and pray for what is next for me, I work and pray for what is next for you, too.

In the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

Rebecca Mattern



Update from APNC

Good news from the APNC! After several months of discernment and prayerful editing, the PCO Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) has been accepted by Session and Presbytery's Commission on Ministry. It has been uploaded to the Church Leadership Connection (CLC), the database to connect churches with pastors seeking calls. We will be posting the Associate Pastor position information and our church's MDP on our church website early this month. We encourage you to share this site in your circles so those interested may apply through the CLC. We will only be accepting applications through the CLC.

As we quickly approach Advent we understand and appreciate that pastors everywhere will be rightfully focused on serving their communities, so we do not anticipate beginning the interview process in earnest until potentially after the new year. Please trust that the APNC will be diligently reviewing applications, reading blogs, and viewing sermons, though you will not hear back from us until we are ready to move to the next step, which will be a candidate visit. This may take several to many months, so please continue to pray for the APNC and those seeking a call.

We appreciate your support and prayer.

APNC (Candy Boldrey, Brett Cone, Laurin Gierman, Jerri Gillett, Zach Krawczyk, and Zach Nawyn-Hellinga, Pastor Lisa)

Happening in November

Interfaith Gathering of Hope Prayers for Peace for the 2024 Election

**SPONSORED BY THE INTERFAITH CLERGY
ASSOCIATION OF GREATER LANSING**



NOVEMBER 4, 2024 AT 7 P.M.

**THE PEOPLES CHURCH
200 W GRAND RIVER AVE,
EAST LANSING, MI 48823**

**I Thessalonians
5:16-18**

*Rejoice always,
pray without ceas-
ing, give thanks in
all circumstances,
for this is the will
of God in Christ
Jesus for you.*

WORSHIP WITH AGAPE MEAL

*Worship around tables in the sanctuary
as we share a simple meal together.*

10.00 AM
Until 11:30 AM

NOV 24

Worship and
Fellowship Together

Happening in November

Impact of Hope



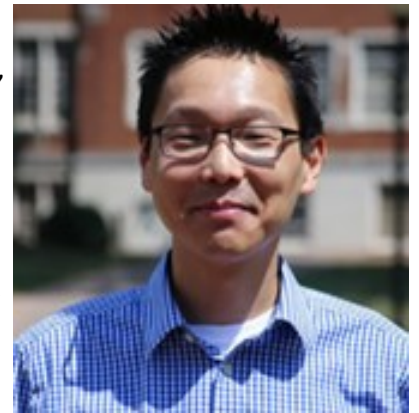
Commitment Sunday, November 3, 2024

If you have not received your 3rd quarter giving statement and/or a stewardship packet, please let the church office know. We ask that you prayerfully consider how you might support the ministries of the Presbyterian Church of Okemos in 2025.

If you have already committed your time, talent and treasure for the coming year, Thank You!

Welcome Rev. Dr. William Yoo

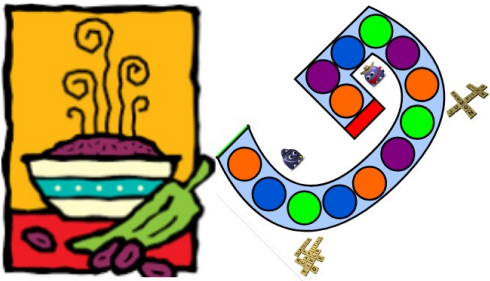
Dr. Yoo is an Associate Professor of American religious and cultural history at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. His recent book, *What Kind of Christianity: A History of Slavery and Anti-Black Racism in the Presbyterian Church*, was the focus of a study hosted by the Presbytery of Lake Michigan earlier this fall. He will be in the Okemos area on **Sunday, November 10** and there will be two opportunities to hear him speak.



- **PCO Out on the Town Event** : Dr. Yoo will be speaking at the annual Henry & Annabel Larzelere Memorial Lecture at **1:00 p.m.** The Peoples Church, 200 West Grand River.
- **PCO will host A Conversation with the Rev. Dr. William Yoo** at **4:00 p.m.** in Fellowship Hall.

Dr. Yoo's research involves examining the histories of racial injustice, settler colonialism and slavery in the United States.

CHILI COOK-OFF & GAME NIGHT



Sunday, November 3, 2024
5:00-7:30 PM

Church building is closed Thursday, Nov. 28 & Friday, Nov. 29 for Thanksgiving holiday. .

Alternative Christmas Market Reminder

Mark the date! Don't miss this traditional event - earlier this year - **Saturday, November 16, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**, in Fellowship Hall - a wonderful time to shop for that unusual gift for that special person. Choose from a variety of fair trade, handmade items that support people around the world and also locally. Peruse the unique gifts available from these international vendors:

Hmong Crafts

Better Way Designs

Solar Circle

Peruvian Slippers

Cass Community Services

Mayan Women

Hope against Trafficking

Sak Saum Bags and Clothing

Viva Fair Trade

Simbolei Academy Nativities

Esperanza en Accione Crafts (cookbooks)

Red Bird Ministries

In addition, the PCO Artist Circle will sell crafts with proceeds to EVE (End Violent Encounters), The PCO Knitters Circle will be selling items with sales supporting GIL (Global Institute of Lansing) and Edgewood Village Artisans will have crafts.

There will be food too!! Bread Bites is coming again, the youth group will have treats to sell and the Noosh Food Truck will be selling Afghan food.

Education & Fellowship Opportunities

YOUTH CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- Fri 1 UKirk Trivia Night
- 3 Stewardship Sunday
4pm: Youth Council
5pm: Chili Cook-off and game night in Youth Group
- 10 4pm William Yoo: Racism in the Presbyterian Church
5:30-7:30pm YOUTH GROUP: Cookie Baking
- Sat 16 Alternative Christmas Market - Youth Cookie Sale
Sign up for shifts: 9:30-Noon; Noon-2:30pm
- 17 NO YG
- 24 Agape Service
Youth Group: Middle School 5:00-6:30pm
High School 5:30-7:00pm

THIRD THURSDAYS

YOUTH PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

NOVEMBER 21

7 PM

JOE'S ON JOLLY

Sunday Education Hours in November

The **Intergenerational Bible Study** from *Colaborate* will be looking at Psalms and the Prophets on Sunday mornings. This study for Senior High students and adults helps participants answer the question "So what?" as they explore the history of the Bible. It will also look at the mystery and complexity of scripture and encourage digging deeper into scripture and faith through individual and group learning. Rather than an in-depth study on a particular book, this study looks at a broader picture of the texts.

Pastor Lisa's Digging Deeper into Hebrews Bible Study continues through November 17. PCO's current worship series *Grounded in Hope* uses texts from the Letter to the Hebrews. Hebrews expresses a yearning for a world that is better than this world. This yearning is grounded in hope because of the word made flesh in Christ. Join Pastor Lisa as we explore how Hebrews has spoken through the ages to nurture generations of the faithful, and how this book has also been misinterpreted and misused throughout history. There are two opportunities to participate (same content in both) in this Bible study: In person on Sunday mornings during the Education Hour and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom

Confirmation Class November 10

11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

CHANGING THE WORLD
CONFIRMATION FOR THE MISSIONAL CHURCH



Women's Dinner Out in November

Our next Women's Dinner Out is scheduled for **Monday, November 4**, at 5:30 p.m. at Lucky's Steakhouse in Okemos.

If you will be attending, please notify Barb Hoevel by Sunday, November 3. Her email address is *Barbhoevel68 at gmail dot com* (standard email set-up) and phone number is (517) 927-6311.

Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our October Birthdays on **Sunday, November 17**. If you celebrate your birthday in November, please check the November Birthday List posted on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall and add your name by Sunday, November 10 if it is not there.

Retirees in November

The Retiree Group is open to all who are retired, are semi-retired, or who wish to retire. Bring a sack lunch or a snack and join us the third Monday of the month.

We will meet on **Monday, November 18 at noon** in PCO's Fellowship Hall. We ask group participants to contemplate their hopes and fears for the future and share them in a supportive group of Christian friends.

Caregiver Support Group

We will meet on **Wednesday, November 20** from 5:00- 6:00 p.m., on Zoom, meeting number 517-329-2320; password is hello. Group members share their experiences and discussions offer support and resources.

Conversation & Contemplation

The C&C group meets every Wednesday from 10:00-11:30 a.m. on Zoom 905-709-104 password 48864. The group opens in meditation and prayer, reads scripture from the week's lectionary using Lectio Divina questions, discusses spiritual readings and has a time for members to share about their lives.

The current book of study is *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* by Marjorie J Thompson.

November Gratitude Calendars

Paper calendars will be available after worship on November 3. Calendars will also be available on the PCO website. The calendars include simple questions to share in the car, around the table, at bedtime, for children and adults. These are great for families.

Adult Christian Education & Fellowship Opportunities

SUNDAYS

Writing Life's Stories—Monthly, 1st Sundays, 2:00 p.m. Zoom # 848 6124 7191. Next meeting is **Sunday, November 3**.

Education Hour—Weekly, 11:30 a.m. in person only. Zoom option is suspended until January.

Birthday Cake Sunday—Monthly, 3rd Sundays, following worship. **November 17**

Women's Connection, Monthly, 4th Sundays, 12:30 p.m. in Room 108. Next meeting is **Sunday, November 24**.

MONDAYS

Women's Dinner Out, Monthly, 1st Mondays. 5:30 p.m. **Monday, November 4**. See info on left.

Retirees Group Monthly, 3rd Mondays 12 noon. Next meeting is **Monday, November 18**. See more info on left.

TUESDAYS

Men's Group on Zoom at 8:00 a.m. every week on **Tuesday**. Zoom #813 7514 8286. Hybrid meeting is **1st Tuesday, November 5**.

Crafts Ministry, Monthly, 1st Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall, Next meeting is **Tuesday, November 5**

Artists Circle, Monthly 2nd Tuesdays, 1:00—3:00 p.m. at PCO. Next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 12**.

WEDNESDAYS

Conversation & Contemplation, Weekly, 10:00 a.m. on Zoom #905 709 104 See more info on left

Caregiver Support Group-Monthly, early this month due to holiday, at 5:00 p.m. on Zoom. **Wednesday, November 20**. Zoom # 517-329-2320; **Passcode hello** See more info on left.

THURSDAYS

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

Youth Parents Night Out, Monthly, 3rd Thursdays, 8:00 p.m. at Joe's on Jolly Next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, November 21**.

Read more about Education and Fellowship opportunities in the left column



Visitation Ministry

Is one of your gifts the gift of being able to visit people to share a word of comfort, a prayer, and a Bible passage? Would you like to share your gift by listening to the stories and concerns of people who request a visit from a church member? If so, consider signing up to be a visitation volunteer.

You do not have to be a current deacon to do this. Volunteers would usually make visits in pairs. The visits might be in a hospital, a rehabilitation center, or at the home of the person requesting a visit. Please tell Pastor Lisa if you are interested. She will make a document identifying volunteers who will then be contacted by Barbara Fretwell-Cooke (one of the deacons) when people request a visit.

Advent is coming!

Our Theme this year is "From the Manger." Here's a sneak peak at what's coming early December:

December 1 Education Hour: Intergenerational Advent Workshop. The Artist's Circle is putting together several projects for creating our own nativities. Bible study for this event will look at the scripture passages associated with each part of the nativity.

December 8 Education Hour: PCO members' Nativity scene display! You are invited to bring your nativity scenes (also known as a creche) and a brief description including your name. We will set them up around the church and have a nativity scavenger hunt. Discover depictions of Jesus' birth in many shapes and sizes and from around the world! We will also share stories of Christmas traditions from around the world.

Both events are for all ages.

New at the Library in November

What's new for November in the PCO Library? New books, of course! We hope some of these short descriptions inspire you to stop by the library and look further into the pages (all quotes are taken from the book covers):

The Road to Wisdom: On Truth, Science, Faith, and Trust by Francis S. Collins

"From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Language of God* and former director of the National Institutes of Health, a deeply thoughtful guidebook to get us beyond societal divisions and back to the sources of wisdom."

Circle of Hope: A Reckoning with Love, Power, and Justice in an American Church by Eliza Griswold

"Americans have been leaving their churches. Some drift away. Some stay home. And some have been searching for – and finding – more authentic ways to find and follow Jesus. A soaring, searing examination of what it means for us to love, to grow, and to disagree."

Disarming Leviathan: Loving Your Christian Nationalist Neighbor by Caleb Campbell

"Campbell equips Christians to minister to their Christian nationalist neighbors with the love and freedom of Jesus Christ."

A Journey Called Hope: Today's Immigrant Stories and the American Dream by Rick Rouse

"Despite the hateful, xenophobic political rhetoric surrounding immigration, the United States is still a nation of refuge, hospitality, promise – and hope."

Who's Afraid of Gender? By Judith Butler

"An essential intervention into one of the most fraught issues of our moment. A bold call to refuse the alliance with authoritarian movements and to make a broad coalition with all those who fight against injustice."

Looking Up: A Birder's Guide to Hope through Grief by Courtney Ellis

"A meditation on birding as a practice of hope. Ellis invites us to open our eyes to the goodness of God both in the natural world and in our own lives."

When Kids Ask Hard Questions: Faith-Filled Responses for Tough Topics, Volumes 1&2

"The range and complexity of issues kids grapple with today can be overwhelming. From a diverse group of young parents, pastors, and experts, learn how to craft faithful conversations and tackle the tough topics with the kids in your care."

The ABCs of Diversity: Helping Kids (and Ourselves!) Embrace Our Differences by Carolyn B. Helsel & Y. Joy Harris-Smith

"This practical resource includes activities to build compassion and empathy among differing religions, classes, races, genders, abilities, political affiliations, sexual orientations, nationalities, and more."

The November display will also feature five new books for our middle-school and teen readers, including two new graphic novels. Please stop by the round table in the PCO Library and sign out one of these books, or one of the many other books on the shelves. Happy reading! - **Kathi Cook**

Missions & More

Blanket Collection

Wow! Thank you so much! We collected over 100 blankets, throws, comforters for refugees. As the temps drop these will be very welcoming to those new people coming to this community and cooler climate.

The exact number of blankets collected is not known...too many to count! **Michigan Hope Refugee** at Faith Lutheran Church took five new blankets and a comforter. **St. Vincent's Refugee Services** mentioned they were critically low on blankets so they came and picked up about 60. The remainder of the blankets were delivered to **The Refugee Development Center** on S. Pennsylvania and three members of the PCO Mission Committee had a wonderful tour of the school and facilities there.

We highly recommend you seeing all that is being done to help others, inspiring! At the RDC these blankets will be added to the welcome baskets as refugees arrive. It will be like a big, warm hug from our PCO members. Thank you!

Thanks once again, for your support of this wonderful mission.

**Jayne, Becky and Kent
And the Mission Committee**



Giving Tree
*to support refugee families
through St. Vincent's
Catholic Charities*
November 24 - December 8



Take an ornament from the tree
Purchase the items
Complete the back of the tag



**Place your unwrapped gifts,
along with the ornament, under
the tree in Fellowship Hall by
Monday, December 9**

A Message from Pastor Peggy Casteel-Huston

Dear Pastor Lisa and members of PCO –

I am so grateful to all of you and I thank you.

When it came time for the presbytery to acknowledge my retirement I was not looking forward to it. The thought of asking someone to stand before the presbytery and say nice things about me and then having to do the same. ...it is just not me. I have never cared for falderal.

What meant the world to me was Pastor Lisa, Kent and Ewen from PCO ... and my husband rising to stand with me before the presbytery, holding my hand and laying hands on me in prayer.

What came as a surprise was a gift bag full of cards, two beautiful prayer shawls, and chocolates – FABIANO chocolate!! As I opened every card I felt so blessed and appreciated. I thought of each one of you and I gave God thanks. I will always treasure my time at PCO and the kinship we have with one another.

Thank you for being you and for making my retirement truly special.

With deep gratitude,

The Honorably Retired Peggy Casteel-Huston

BOOK NOOK

By Ron Dorr

How to Know a Person

by David Brooks

If I were immediately to re-read columnist David Brooks' most recent book, How to Know a Person, I would start with the last chapter, "Wisdom." There Brooks features four people who exemplify The Art of Seeing Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen, the subtitle of his book. The first one is Tracy Kidder, who comes to know the fears, vulnerabilities, and resilience of Deogratius, a refugee from Burundi. Deo has survived the horrific murder of Tutsis by Hutus, slept homeless in Central Park in New York City, graduated from Columbia University, and returned to his homeland to form a new health center.

The next two wise people are therapists who prompt extreme narcissists to recognize their defects and begin to change. "In this room, I'm going to see you, and you'll try to hide," Lori Gottlieb says, "but I'll still see you, and it's going to be okay when I do."

In the fourth example, Kathryn Schulz deeply recognizes Isaac Schulz, her Jewish "refugee father . . . brilliant, funny, adoring," and Margo Schulz, Isaac's "rock, his comfort, his right hand and heaven knows his left, his fashion consultant, his ethics committee." His daughter and wife tell Isaac, dying at 74, "what they didn't want left unsaid . . . what he had given them and how honorably he had lived his life . . . the source and subject of [the family's] abiding love." With "just and loving attention," all four exemplars bore witness to what others had been through.

Next, I would re-read chapter 8, "The Epidemic of Blindness." According to Brooks, "We're living in the middle of some sort of vast emotional, relational, and spiritual crisis." We "have lost the ability to see and understand one another, thus producing a culture that can be brutalizing and isolating." Some statistics are stark and startling: increasing suicides, sadness, isolation, hopelessness, and lack of close friends. "In one survey, 54 per cent of Americans reported that no one knows them well." The presence of growing loneliness and meanness is a failure "to teach moral and social skills" and to treat other human beings with genuine attention, respect, love, kindness, intimacy, and empathy.

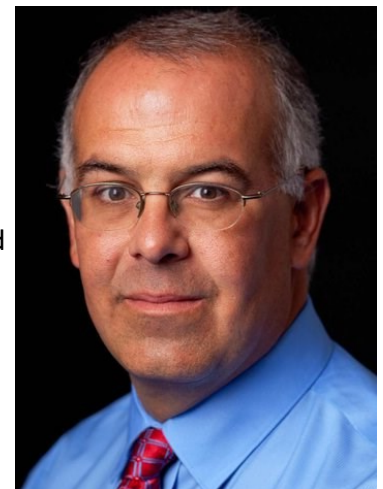
This moral crisis has led David Brooks to research and write this book. His purpose, he writes in chapter 1, "is to help us become more skilled in the art of seeing others and making them feel seen, heard, and understood." He hopes the book will create deeper ways of being present and deeper conversations with others. Every human being, he assumes, is like no other human being in some ways, like some other humans in certain ways, and like all other human beings in common ways.

Part 1, "I See You," focuses on everyone's uniqueness. Brooks contrasts being seen with not being seen, examines stages of seeing more deeply, offers unusual definitions of a person, and ends with "Good Talks" and "The Right Questions." Among other qualities, "a person is a point of view" and "a mass of antithesis." As a teacher, I found his remarks about good conversations helpful and commonsensical. He is right in recommending various kinds of questions—practical, humble, honest, historical, self-revealing, and big questions.

Part 2, "I See You in Your Struggles," recognizes the difficulty in asking "Hard Questions" in a time of blindness, cynicism, hyper-partisanship, and moral relativism. Chapter 10, "How Do You Serve a Friend Who is in Despair" may be the most poignant part of the book: there Brooks narrates the growing depression of his oldest friend, who eventually committed suicide. What Brooks learned was hard-earned, nightmarish, disorienting, and limited.

In Part 3, "I See You in Your Strengths," Brooks counters with more positive advice and examples. Theories and academic studies abound in chapters on "Life Tasks" and "Life Stories." Zora Neale Hurston's life shows how personal traits, consciousness, upbringing, and ancestral history are transmitted from one generation to another. New insights on "Wisdom" complete the book.

"The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deeper people," Richard Foster wrote in Celebration of Discipline in 1978. David Brooks would agree.



Author David Brooks

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