

## Remembrance, Thanksgiving, & Anticipation

Blowing leaves, chilly temperatures, and a bountiful feast at Thanksgiving are all hallmarks of November in Nebraska. For Christians, November is even more. In addition to giving thanks, it is a time of remembrance for those we have lost, and it is a time of anticipation as Advent begins. Please join in our November events, and find comfort and cheer in our church community.

**All Saints Day on Sunday, November 6.** At both worship services, we will remember those in the congregation who have passed away in the last year.

**Remembrance Service on Sunday, November 13 at 4:00 p.m.** This special service is for anyone who has endured a loss. You are invited to light a candle for someone you are missing, find comfort in prayer and music, and be surrounded by the love of your church family. A cookie, punch, and coffee reception will follow in Fellowship Hall, hosted by Cross Care Connections.

**Advent Workshop & Lunch on Sunday, November 20.** Our Senior High Youth Group will prepare and serve lunch after late worship. After lunch, attendees are invited to make a variety of Christmas crafts. Please sign up by **November 6**, so we can order adequate craft supplies.

**Hanging of the Greens on Saturday, November 26 & First Sunday of Advent on November 27.** We might still be stuffed from Thanksgiving dinner, but the new Christian year is beginning with Advent, a time of anticipation and preparation for the coming Christ child. Join us at 10 a.m. on Saturday to decorate the church (see details on page 6) and for worship on Sunday at 9:00 and 11:10 a.m.



Just one of the six crafts at the Advent Workshop.

**Children's Christmas Pageant & Advent Dinner is on Sunday, December 4.**

Our children are planning an outstanding program titled "Be More Than Counted." For children who want to participate in the pageant, we ask that parents sign them up by **November 1**, so we can plan costumes and parts.

After the program, stay for the Advent Dinner, a cherished tradition at Church of the Cross. It is a festive and meaningful way to start the Christmas season and includes a catered meal, lots of fun, and fellowship. Our theme this year is "The Star of Bethlehem." Bring a dessert to share (pre-cut bars, cupcakes, or cookies only — please no cakes or pies.). If your family would like to reserve a complete table of eight, please note that on your reservation. You must have 8 people to reserve a table. After dinner, we'll sing Christmas carols around the yule log with family and friends. There is no charge to attend this amazing event, but a free-will donation is always welcomed. Sign up online or at the Information Desk in the Narthex by **November 23**.

### In This Issue:

Messages from Our Pastors — Pages 2 & 3

Business Updates — Page 4

Christian Education News — Page 5

Music Notes — Page 6

Fellowship Events — Page 7

Our Church Family — Pages 8 & 9

Spirit of Mission — Pages 10-11

Agape for All — Pages 12 & 13

Deacons Update — Page 13



**Presbyterian  
Church of the Cross**  
1517 S. 114<sup>th</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 68144

**Phone:**  
(402)333-7466

**Fax:**  
(402)697-9084

**Email:**  
churchofthecross@pcoc.us

**Website:**  
churchofthecrossomaha.org

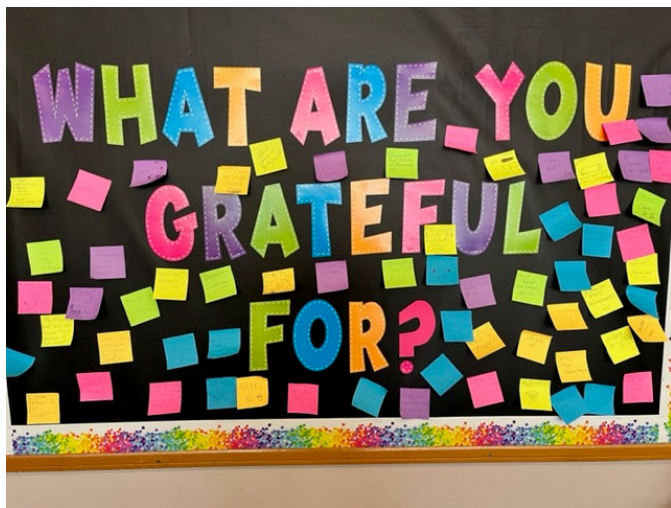


## Pardon Our Dust (Really!)

I had warned us awhile back that changes were in store for our East Lawn, and by now you can clearly see that I wasn't kidding. Our 13-month construction schedule is in full swing. Our lawn is gone (for now), new drainage from our south parking lot has been installed, a new south lot will soon be poured, and before long you will see improvements being done in Fellowship Hall and a new Welcome Center rising behind our Narthex. As TV character John 'Hannibal' Smith used to say, "I love it when a plan comes together," and I agree.

Fall is here, and this week, it feels like it. That means Thanksgiving is coming, and that means Advent and Christmas are already on the horizon.

Before we rush into Christmas, let's make sure and take time for a meaningful Thanksgiving. We talk about "getting ready for Christmas," but how will you also get ready for Thanksgiving? Besides planning the menu, how else will you prepare to have a thankful time? Here's a suggestion – the next time you're in Fellowship Hall, take a look at the bulletin board:



Our church members have added their sticky notes, expressing thanks in such ways as:

- For my great life
- The colors of fall
- The missions of our church
- School and friends
- The PCOC choir
- Good friends

- For food!!!!!!!
- For the Best Church Ever
- For Nickie and her delicious meals!
- I love church and love my family
- Ice cream, family, church, God, pumpkins
- I am grateful for backhoes!
- For family, friends, and cottage cheese

Feel free to come by and add your own sticky notes to the list!



Your pastor and friend,  
*Marshall Zieman*

## The Tuesday Bible Studies

Join us for one of our Tuesday gatherings in Room 15 – at 7:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. from September 13 – December 13

### "In the Beginning..."

Join us on Tuesdays this fall as we study the stories of Genesis 1-11. Both groups will look at the same passage each week. You know these stories - Creation, The Fall, Abel and Cain, Noah and the Flood, The Tower of Babel - we'll read them and discuss how these themes still apply to our lives today. Bring your own Bible.

- Men's Bible Study from 7:00-8:00 a.m. in Room 15 (Note this is a men's study only. If you are interested in a women's only Bible study, please refer to the information on page 7 about Presbyterian Women's Morning Circle.)
- Afternoon Bible Study from 1:00-2:00 p.m. in Room 15

New Members are welcome! Bring your own Bible and an inquisitive mind.

**No need to register – just drop in!**



## It's All About Sharing the Pie

“What kind of pie?” This is the first question I posed to the women on our recent women’s retreat. Cherry? Pecan? Chocolate? What is funny is that almost everyone had an answer, and it was non-negotiable. It was an identifying fact of what made a proper holiday meal. As we move into the holiday season, it is important for us to reflect on the traditions and experiences that we share with our families. Food is one of the highlights and many of us look forward to favorite dishes such as Uncle Steve’s sweet potatoes, Grandma Linda’s jello salad and of course, Aunt Ruth’s grasshopper pie. There are other traditions that bring us together as families during holidays such as attending a football game with hot chocolate and blankets, a trip to a favorite restaurant, or the annual visit to see the farm. My question is where is the church in your pattern of family gatherings?

Church gatherings, give us an opportunity to bond with our church family. Other than our connections with our immediate families, church is one of the few places where we build quality multi-generational relationships. Fostering relationships with our church family helps us see beyond our peer groups and encourages us to learn and understand how we are part of God’s family. Many of us take this for granted as we grew up with church at the center of our lives, but the busyness of today’s world can cause families to put church on the back burner. If church takes second place, families will fail to build these meaningful life-long relationships in the church. Instead of really getting to know one another as family, they merely see faces without names.

This upcoming holiday season is an opportunity for us to join, reconnect and celebrate together. We have so many intergenerational activities coming up that really provide us a chance to join together as family. In November, we have several special events. First, we have the Cross Care Connections Remembrance Service on November 13. This is for our church family to remember those we have lost. On November 20, we have the Advent workshop with lunch, and on November 26, the hanging of the greens. These are perfect ways to prepare us for the Christmas season. Finally, we can begin making reservations for the Advent Dinner and children’s program, the highlight of the year for our

church family. This year, plan on putting these events on your calendar. These can be the important rituals of your holiday season and will strengthen the fabric of our Church family.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at these church activities. We will make crafts together, worship together, celebrate our children together, and share a piece of pie together: Cherry, of course.



Grace and peace,

**Christine Dempsey**  
(402)333-7466 Ext. 4  
christine@pcoc.us



**Living on Hope: Terminal Illness,  
Chronic Pain, and Life in the Unknown**  
Led by Cross Care Connections  
Sundays, October 9 - December 11  
10:00-11:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

Living on Hope is a series of classes on living with terminal illness. The class is designed for those diagnosed with terminal disease, for survivors, for caregivers, and for all who seek understanding of the impact of terminal disease. The 10-week class will include a discussion of Deanna Thompson’s book, *Glimpsing Resurrection*, as well as a number of guest speakers who can help us navigate the world of disease as disciples of Christ. Register online by November 1 using the Adult Education form.

For more information about Cross Care Connections, contact Pastor Christine.





## A Moment for Stewardship

During October at worship, I am hopeful that everyone understands that Stewardship, at least in part, is that each of us have received gifts from God, and it is our choice as to how we share these gifts with the world. To truly understand Jeremiah 29:11 from previous lessons is that God also bestowed on each of us the gift of choice or reason or preference or selection or understanding. That is a unique gift. As humans, we are involved in the decision-making process each day.



"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

As Christians, we have heard that we are to share our time, talents, and treasures. The question becomes, just how is that done? It is a decision that each of us make.

Lately, I am intrigued with the mission work a group of our members have begun with Agape for All. It is understanding that we are all simply human. As humans, we are meant to be together. Together in a family. Together in a church. Together in a community. Together in a world.

There is a reason we do not take the time to listen to those who are suffering. To listen to the stories of the vulnerable is to become vulnerable. To hear stories of the helpless is to be reminded of our own human frailty. To listen openly to those in need is to feel responsible for their well-being.

The only way to keep ourselves protected, safe from empathizing with another person, is by refusing to hear their story. Otherwise, we may be

tempted to care, tempted to respond, tempted to change, tempted to remember: They are just like me.

As a parent there are times when my children have asked me to share a story from my childhood. I generally react with a joke of my adolescent perfection or that I was simply a boring kid. To share some childhood episode from my life is more than a transfer of information and ideas. To tell stories from my childhood is to relive those moments. To share a story from my childhood is to ask my children to relive it with me, and there are many moments from my childhood I may not want to relive.

Storytelling is the most intimate form of communication. It is a way of inviting the listener to enter into what we have known, what we have suffered, what we have overcome, what brings us joy.

That is this mission's focus. To listen, to learn, to experience another's story. It is vastly important that the conversation begin. It is my prayer that each of us are searching for new ways to serve God. That each of us are considering how we share our treasures and understand how very fortunate we are. Thank you for your support of our stewardship campaign, Envisioning our Future Together.



**Rock Sumner**  
Business Administrator  
(402)333-7466 Ext. 6  
rock@pcoc.us

---

**Finance Committee Moderator:**  
Sam Rennick

**Building and Grounds Committee Moderator:** John Stalnaker

---

## Advent Workshop & Lunch

The Advent Workshop and Lunch Fundraiser will be on Sunday, November 20 immediately following late church. This year we'll enjoy an Italian feast prepared by the Senior High Youth Group, followed by crafts facilitated by the Junior High Youth Group. We'll have fun making four children's crafts, one family craft, and one shut in craft. We want to make sure we have enough supplies for everyone, so please sign up online by November 6 to reserve your spot. There is no charge for lunch, but a free will donation will be collected. All proceeds go towards the Senior High Mission Trip.

## Evergreen Wreath Fundraiser

The smell of fresh cut evergreens...ahhh...makes you pine for cooler weather and the holidays, doesn't it? The Senior High Youth Group is selling fresh cut wreaths and centerpieces in the Narthex. Orders are already being taken and will end on November 6. Orders will be distributed at church on November 27. All proceeds go towards the Senior High Mission Trip.



## Bellevue Berry Farm Fun

The Junior High and Senior High Youth Groups had a frightfully fun time at the Bellevue Berry Farm on October 16. Going to the farm is a yearly tradition for the youth groups. Nothing beats sitting around the campfire, roasting hot dogs and marshmallows, getting startled on the haunted hayride, and just spending some quality time together enjoying each other's company.

## Thank You from Heather & Family ....

Thank you so much for your words of encouragement, cards, gifts, hugs, food, well wishes and prayers regarding my recent cancer diagnosis. We feel so blessed to have such a caring church family. This is going to be a long and challenging road, but I can feel your prayers lifting me up and that gives me comfort and strength. I will have 6 rounds of chemo, two down already, surgery in early 2023, followed by radiation. As some of you have noticed, I buzzed my head! I plan to wear many different wigs, hats, and head scarves in the very near future, so you might have to look closely to find me on Sunday mornings! We can play, "Where's Heather?"



**Heather Berry**  
**Director of Christian Education**  
 (402)333-7466 Ext. 2  
 heather@pcoc.us



## Hand-up for Housing Walkathon

Our JHF and SHF youth groups had a fun time at lunch at Don & Millie's before heading over to the Matthew 25 Hand-up for Housing Walkathon at First Presbyterian Church of Omaha. It was a bright and sunny day, perfect for getting outside and enjoying fall and for making a difference in our community!

**CE Committee Moderator:** Matt Kahler

**JHF Leaders:** Jeremy Cunningham, Julie Evers, Ashley Sherlock, and John Stalnaker

**SHF Leaders:** Dawn & Brad Gibson, Ethan Bennett, Susan Price



### An Afternoon of Classical Music for Cello and Piano

Vesper Concerts presents cellist Anita Graef and pianist Louise Chan in concert on Sunday afternoon, November 6, at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Described as “a world-class musician” who plays with “high energy and polish,” cellist Anita Graef has earned recognition as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral performer. Graef directs and performs with the Juliani Ensemble both nationally and internationally. She has performed on radio programs, including WQXR, NPR, and others. Notable appearances include Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall and features in Strings Magazine.

Louise Chan, a native of Ottawa, Canada, is a versatile and critically acclaimed pianist. Chan is a founding member of the Blue Violet Duo with violinist Kate Carter. She was the former principal pianist for the Madison Symphony Orchestra, and she continues to perform as an orchestral keyboardist with various ensembles in the Midwest.



### Save the Date for Our December Concert

Calmus is one of the world’s premiere a cappella vocal groups coming to us from Leipzig, Germany. Calmus will perform a concert of Advent and Christmas music in our beautifully decorated Sanctuary on Thursday evening, December 8, at 7:00 p.m. This will be a truly memorable evening.

### Help Us Hang the Greens

Advent will be here soon! The Worship and Music Committee invites you to help us prepare the building for the Advent season. We’ll meet on Saturday morning, November 26, beginning at 10:00 a.m. to assemble and decorate Christmas trees, hang wreaths and garlands, and enjoy holiday treats and music. This is a fun event for the entire family.



Please sign up online on the church website by November 23, so we know you’re coming.

### Christmas Poinsettia Orders

It’s time to place your poinsettia orders for the Christmas holiday season. Order forms are available in this issue of the *Cross Currents*, at the Information Center in the Narthex, and online on the church website. The cost is \$15.00 per plant. Payment must accompany the order.

**The deadline for ordering is November 15. No orders can be taken after the deadline.**



**Kristi Treu**  
Director of Music & Executive  
Director of Vesper Concerts  
(402)333-7466 Ext. 5  
kristi@pcoc.us

**Worship & Music Committee Moderator:**  
Jayne Frederickson





### Keep Moving on Mondays & Thursdays

Music & Movement meets at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. in the Great Room.

**Coordinator: Betty Baddley**

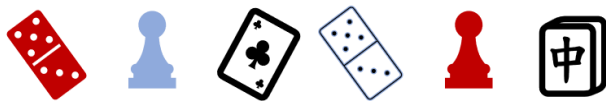
Tai Chi meets at 10 a.m. Masks are optional. Drop in if you'd like to attend a class. Contact Paula Allen with questions.

**Coordinator: Paula Allen**



### 49ers on Tuesday, November 1 at 11:30

"What can do the work of and in some cases replace buffalo, equipment, chemicals, and burning? GOATS!!!!" Our November speaker will be Matt Vermeersch, owner/operator of Goats on The Go Loess Hills. It is a part of his farming operation, and they are using goats around Iowa (and the world) to help defeat problem vegetation! Join us for lunch at 11:30 a.m. at WHEATFIELDS, 1224 South 103rd Street (One Pacific Place) in the Garden Room. Everyone is welcome, whether you are 49, younger, or older, come join us! We will order from a special menu. **Coordinators: Judy Sundberg & Mary Ott**



### Active Minds on Tuesdays

November will be a choice month for Active Minds: Canasta, one more variation of Pinochle, or Jumbo Sequence. We will meet in the Gathering Space in the lower level, 2-4 pm, on Tuesdays. Hope you can join us when your schedule allows. We can teach you to play any of these games **Coordinator: Earlene Uhrig**

### Friday Night Gourmets on November 11

Join us at the Pink Poodle in Crescent Iowa (633 Old Lincoln Hwy) for a 6:30 social hour and dinner at 7:00 p.m. Your hosts are Lloyd and Charlene Meyer and Mary Reid. Sign up at the Information Desk by November 6.



### Presbyterian Women on November 3

All church ladies are invited to join us on Thursday, November 3 at 9:00 a.m. in Room 15. Ardys Hansum will lead us in Lesson 3, Sabbath and Sunday. Questions? Contact Cindy Nisley.

### Book Group on Wednesday, November 16



Join the PCOC Book Group in Room 13 from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. We will be discussing *Abby Finds Her Calling* by Naomi King. All readers are welcome! **Coordinator: June Fettig**

### Especially for Young Adults . . .



### Cross Roads on November 6

Hey young adults (ages 20-40), we'll meet on Sunday, November 6, at the circle drive doors after late worship. We will get pizza, have a sermon talk-back, and enjoy fellowship. **Led by Pastor Christine.**



### College Bible Study Every Sunday

Every Sunday at 8 p.m. on Zoom. It's a great chance to bond, learn how to live a life of faith in a new environment, and keep connected with our church friends. Zoom link is in your weekly emails from church. **Led by Pastor Christine.**

**Did you find the group for you?** Not all our groups are meeting this month. Find the complete list of Fellowship Groups online at [churchofthecrossomaha.org/fellowship-find/](http://churchofthecrossomaha.org/fellowship-find/). If you have an idea for a new group, please submit your idea to our Congregational Life Committee for consideration.

**Congregational Life Committee Moderator:**  
Kristin Jacobi



- 1 Joshua Bumsted,  
Sandy Simpson
- 2 Charlie Darling,  
Greg Hanson
- 3 Carol Dworak, Jameson Huff, Chad Justice,  
Earlene Uhrig
- 4 Anna Flairty, Kris Halbersleben, Kim Petersen
- 5 Neal Hubbard
- 6 Kossi Eho, Barrett Polzin
- 7 Ruth Madison
- 8 Ruth Haycraft, Corey Prideaux, Pam Swenson
- 9 Carla Fritz , McKenzie Johnson
- 10 Jane Hawkins, Ethan Lindsey
- 11 Paula Allen, Bridgette Bunjer, Harper Ellis,  
Dorothy McIntyre, Karen Smith
- 12 Fred Henry, Margaret Knight, Ashley Sherlock,  
Rylee Spencer
- 13 Sandi Stuckey
- 14 Beth McGrath, Garrett Voss
- 15 Ayeson Tchona
- 16 Betty Mack, Trudy Meyer
- 17 Doug Buchanan, Rob Koch, Bob Mooney,  
Nancy Quine
- 18 Jean Cambridge, Linda Madison,  
Evan McFadden
- 19 Dan Innes, Kate Trapp
- 20 Colton Hansen Holdren, Angela Holdren
- 21 Sarah Grady, Tammy Wright
- 22 Mimi Bauer, Bob Hansen, Judy Thomas,  
Kay Tomek
- 23 Chet Thompson
- 24 Rod Adams, Penelope Thorson
- 25 Jane Bowers, Kim Kempf, Liam Kort
- 26 Libby Graves, Nickie Quartoroli
- 27 Pennie Cassling, Doug Wells
- 28 Sharon Jelinek, Carter Kahler, Janis Phelps,  
Mason Thorson
- 29 Ginny Redden, Bryant Schiessler,  
Brian Thorson
- 30 Jayne Frederickson



Harry (Harold W.) Payne October 11, 2022  
A memorial service was held on October 28.

Ron Sladek October 13, 2022  
A memorial service was held on October 17.

Bernice (Bernie) Smith October 14, 2022  
A memorial service was held on October 18.

In August 1961, Betty and Wally Mack moved their family from Madison, NJ to Omaha. They attended PCOC and knew it was the right fit. They joined the church that January and have been members ever since — 60 years! It will be 5 years since Dad passed just before Christmas, and we really want to make Mom's birthday special with the people that mean so much to her...her church family. On Sunday, November 13 between services, we will serve birthday cake in celebration our Mom, Betty Mack. What can be done as a surprise (I'll make sure she does not read the Bulletin or the *Cross Currents*) is to have a card shower for this very special lady who is turning 99 on November 16. You can drop off your card at church that day or mail it to Sue Meusey at 2643 S. 95th Circle Omaha NE 68124. Thank you for being a huge part of Mom's special week as she celebrates 99 years. She will treasure these cards as they can be read over and over again.

- Sue Meusey, Craig Mack & Dennis Mack



## Thank You!



Presbyterian Church of the Cross,  
Thank you for the well wishes, calls, cards, visits, and food during my recent surgery and recuperation. I am blessed to be a part of such a caring congregation. I am very appreciative of your concern and love.

Jeanne Smay

On behalf of the family, I would like to express our gratitude to the church staff and members for their tangible and intangible gifts of love and support.

Most sincerely, Faythe Harrison

---

**Reminder:** Call the church office when you or a family member is hospitalized. 402-333-7466

---





## Welcome New Members . . .

### Laura Linder

Laura has been attending a Presbyterian church in the central part of Omaha where she was residing, but she has moved out west and found Church of the Cross through our website. She was born in California, but she has lived in Omaha for fifteen years.



Her dad taught at Grace University. She is an Administrative Assistant at Frankel Zacharia, which is an accounting firm. Laura loves singing, theater, reading, and board games. She enjoys swing dancing with the Omaha Jitterbugs and supports local theater. Laura used to work at a daycare and loves working with kids, especially toddlers. Please welcome Laura to Church of the Cross.

### Kate Morris

You may recognize Kate, who has been singing with the Alleluia Singers, for over a year. We are so glad she decided to become a member of PCOC. She is a retired music teacher and taught with Jayne Frederickson. Kate is also acquainted with Joan Gayle



Chapin, Marilyn Corum, and Pam Otto through the New Neighbors Golf League at Eagle Run. At the spring start up golf brunch, she and Pam started talking about churches and choirs. When Kate learned about our traditional music program, she came to visit. Kate is married to John, and they have three grown children and grandkids. She was born in Orleans, NE and has lived in Omaha for thirty-eight years. Kate loves horses, golf, opera, and shooting, and she attends Omaha Symphony concerts. When you meet Kate, ask her about her golf game.

## New Member Class on November 27

Our next class will meet on Sunday, November 27 after late service in Room 15. A light lunch will be provided. If you are interested in joining the church, sign up online or call the church office.

**Membership Committee Moderator:** Pam Otto

## Find the Power of Prayer

Find prayer request cards in the pews. Just complete the card on Sunday and leave in the offering plate. Or, you can use our easy online form on the announcements page of the church website. Prayer requests are confidential and shared only with members of the prayer team.

### Prayer Team

Prayer Team Coordinators: Julie Buehler and Judy Arms



## *A Thanksgiving Prayer* God's Love Is Everlasting

O God, our Provider, you open your hand and lavish good gifts upon us. So we give you thanks. You create the beauty of the earth and stock it with abundance to sustain human life. You give us friends who share the journey of our lives; family who make us laugh with joy and dry our tears of sorrow; strangers who minister to our needs with generous kindness. You knit us into your larger family called church to encourage us in your Way. You have blessed us with the freedoms of a great nation. "Thank you" seems insufficient for all your blessings, yet we say it with all we are as an offering of gratitude for our many blessings that we name before you.

Though we may have seen our fortunes fall this year, we praise you for hiding our treasure in Jesus Christ our Lord, whom not even death can destroy. Though we miss those whose places sit empty at this year's table, we give you thanks for lending them to us for what time we had. For all your providence with the feast of life that you set before us, we give ourselves to you with all we are in thanks and praise. Amen.

Prayer provided by PCUSA



## Belarus, Ukraine, Russia Mission (BURM) Network Conference Report

Presbyterian Church of the Cross has a close relationship with a partner church in Russia. Over the past 15 years, members of PCOC have travelled to Russia 12 times and, a few times, their members have travelled to Omaha. These connections have been educational, inspiring, and rewarding for all, and they have resulted in many friendships and a commitment to maintain our partnership.

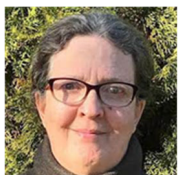


Since 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and now, due to the war in Ukraine, travel has not been possible, and communication is difficult. Our friends are fearful of outside communication with us, and we must be cautious about contacting them. Sometimes all we can do is be persistent in praying for them and their situation.

In October, a delegation of PCOC members attended the PC(USA) BURM Network Annual Conference, some in person and others via live streaming and Zoom. Here is a report of some of the things they learned:

What can be said about connecting with our partners in Russia, the Christians in Ukraine who are suffering from the war, the refugees in Belarus who are being used as pawns in a political game, the authoritarian regimes that are rising to political power in Europe and elsewhere, and the fact that we're fighting wars over access to fossil fuels that are also degrading our planet?

Lots can be said, and lots was said – we learned so much at the Belarus, Ukraine, Russia Mission (BURM) Network conference October 6-8. The conference was held in person in Green Bay, WI and virtually via livestream from the First Presbyterian Church in Green Bay. There was a LOT of great information. Here are some highlights.



Ellen Smith, our mission co-worker shared her recent newsletter telling us about how refugees in Belarus are at risk and details about her recent travels.

This photo (right) is of a Ukrainian refugee's former home.



The Presbyterian model for engagement has been "pairing" Russian and U.S. congregations. Since we cannot visit Russia now or in the near future, we will want to find other ways to engage. It is important to stay in contact with our Russian friends, but we have to be very generic in our communications – messages that we're thinking about them are wonderful but we can't ask questions that could raise their visibility. So, we need to hold them in prayer and make small talk when we communicate with them.



There are programs we can connect with in the region that are making a difference, though, and we can learn more about them and visit them! Ellen Smith, our mission co-worker, invited Marlene Wall, president of

LCC International University in Lithuania to tell us about their very diverse student body (800+ students from 56 countries!) and the ways they're teaching peace-making. All students at this liberal arts college have four semesters of theology. The students aren't all Christians, but they all learn about Christianity. LCC is an inclusive and diverse place. Their Study Abroad is a 6-week program open to students from anywhere.

The Rev. Marek Kucharski, Chancellor of the Evangelical School of Theology in Wroclaw, Poland, told us of some of the ways they are helping refugees and seminary students from Ukraine. They are very thoughtful, they listen, and they are working together with all other organizations, regardless of church affiliation, to help the refugees with food, clothing, language classes, jobs, counseling, and more. They have a long view and are building reserves for new needs as they develop.



Thinking about the reasons this war began and why it continues was a significant topic at the conference. We learned about the history of the region and how the borders have changed through the years.



We learned about the political climate and how a poor economy can lead to the election of Fascists. See the article from Luciano Kovacs, Presbyterian World Mission area coordinator and speaker at our conference. We learned about how destructive our dependence on fossil fuels is. We fight wars over oil and as we burn it, we contribute to climate change, which is affecting agriculture in Ukraine. And the oil purchased from Russia provides them with funds to fuel the war. All these problems seem insurmountable but discussing them and understanding them helps us move toward change.



We hope you will be able to engage in this part of the world, learn and grow with us, and be inspired by the Christian actions taking place there. Join the BURM Facebook page. It's a private group so you must ask to join, but Ellen Smith, our mission co-worker posts stories, articles, and information there continually. For example, she just posted an article on Energy Transformations for Ukraine to Become a New Green Power-house of Europe.

And for face-to-face conversations, please talk to Karen Morey, Marshall Zieman, Jean Waters, Rock Sumner, Sue Thomas, Mary Ann Pederson, Sandi Stuckey, or Clarence Waters – all of whom attended the conference in-person or virtually. Church of the Cross had the most attendees!

### Refugee Donation Drive Update

Desmond Tutu said, “We are to tell the world, there are no outsiders.” You have proven and lived out Tutu’s message by your generous donations and monetary gifts during our September kitchen donation drive for Lutheran Family Services (LFS). We collected over 500 items and also provided hygiene products totaling \$100.00 for much needed items requested by Lutheran Family Services. Our committee is prayerfully considering next steps in our continuing support for our new neighbors resettling in our community.



We thank you, and we are filled with gratitude for your generosity,  
- Refugee Assistance Committee



**Mission Committee Moderator:**  
Karen Morey

### Pantry Sunday Is November 20

Help stock the shelves at Heartland Hope Mission. Bring your items to church with you on Sunday, November 20, or drop them inside the Circle Drive doors anytime. Needed items are listed below.



<b>Food Items:</b>	<b>Hygiene Items:</b>
Cereal	Baby Diapers
Pasta	(most needed size 4-6)
Canned Soup	Baby Wipes
Canned Vegetables	Full-Size Shampoo
Canned Fruit	Full-Size Body Wash
Canned Meat	Toilet Paper
Mac & Cheese	Toothpaste
Peanut Butter	

**Siena Francis House  
Dinner Servers Needed  
Sunday, November 13  
4:15 to 6:15 p.m.**



PCOC has the dinner shift on the 2nd Sunday of every month. We need at least 6 volunteers. Please consider giving your time to this mission. Questions? Contact Sandi Stuckey

Scan our QR code to access the church online sign up page. We've made it easy to sign up to serve at Siena Francis House.







### Fall News from Agape for All

A group of 10 from PCOC enjoyed conversation, food, and the sleek new surroundings at Big Mama's Chicken and Best Burger, in North Omaha. The chicken and catfish were delicious! Sides of coleslaw, cabbage, greens, black eyed peas, beans and okra were equally tasty. The very best dish? Sweet potato pie! The Highlander property is a beautiful location with a wonderful view of North Omaha. Lunch was a wonderful way to support businesses in North Omaha. Several of us are looking forward to a return trip! Thank you, Mary Ott, for organizing this outing.



On October 7, nearly 100 community members and state and local officials attended an emotional unveiling ceremony outside the Douglas County Courthouse in Omaha to dedicate a historical marker memorializing George Smith, who was lynched by a white mob outside the courthouse in 1891. The new marker stands across from a second marker that acknowledges the lynching of Will Brown on the courthouse lawn in 1919. To confront our history of racial terror and its legacy is an essential step in the reconciliation process. Through song, poetry, and prayer, speakers emphasized the healing and hope that comes from sharing the truth about our history. Charlene Weyand, Kathy Moore, and Patty Ritchie attended.



The Women's Conference in North Omaha, held at Trinity Lutheran Church was a very enriching day. Women joined together for fellowship, food, and workshops centering on the Holy Spirit in our Lives. Breakout sessions offered a variety of spiritual paths, including a look at racism. The keynote speaker, Viv Ewing, related stories from her professional and personal faith journeys, and encouraged us to invite the Holy Spirit to "Give us the words to say", when faced with difficult people in difficult situations. The combined membership choir led us in beautiful praise music. Ann Pearson was our representative! What a beautiful blending of women from all ages, a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, denominations, and life experiences. Kindness and conviction defined the day! The Holy Spirit is love.

And finally, Kathy Moore and Patty Ritchie continue to be involved in a planning committee for Community Conversations on difficult topics. The most recent event, "Your Vote, Your Power," was held at UNO on Thursday, October 13 where about 20 people gathered to hear a panel presentation on ballot initiatives that 1) could potentially require photo ID each time a person votes and 2) that gradually increases the minimum wage over a 4-year period to \$15/hour.

Panel members included the League of Women Voters and the Douglas County Election Commissioner who provided valuable information on the efficacy of the election process and the tools available to become an informed voter. Additional speakers described the potential effects of these two proposals. We had a half dozen church members attend. A recording of this hour-long discussion can be found on the Agape for All page of our website at <https://churchofthecrossomaha.org/agape/>.



## Book Review

Submitted by Ann Pearson

“I was in prison and you visited me....” Matthew 25:36

On September 29 several of us from Agape for All had the distinct privilege of hearing an outstanding presentation by attorney and advocate for death row prisoners, Bryan Stevenson. Since the early days of his practice, Mr. Stevenson has operated the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. As it happens, we have two books in our Social Justice library related to Mr. Stevenson and his work. So this is a “two-fer” book report.

The first one is *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. This book is the story of Walter McMillian, a young black man who is sentenced to death for a murder he did not commit. It describes how, against all odds, Bryan Stevenson ultimately brings justice to this inmate. There are heart-wrenching stories of the total disregard for Mr. McMillian as a human being and a prisoner. Mr. Stevenson himself endures humiliating and infuriating episodes with prison personnel and fellow attorneys in order to bring out the real story of McMillian’s innocence. Nikola Kristof, of the New York Times says of Bryan Stevenson, “He may, indeed, be America’s Mandela.”

Closely related in subject is a book about Ian Manuel: *My Time Will Come; A Memoir of Crime, Punishment, Hope, and Redemption*. Unlike Walter McMillian, Ian Manuel is guilty of a crime he committed as a thirteen-year-old, yes, thirteen-year-old. He shoots a woman in the face and the woman survives, but he is sentenced to death for the crime. No consideration is given for his age or his mental health at the time. Somehow, he manages to survive horrendous and tumultuous experiences in prison with adults. Additionally powerful is the struggle between Ian and his victim to develop a meaningful relationship of some kind. Ian feels a painful sense of remorse, but the victim, for a number of reasons, wants to, but can’t, forgive him. As author Bryan Stevenson describes him, “Ian has held on to his magic” - breathtakingly beautiful poetry. Mr. Stevenson discovers Ian Manuel’s situation and begins to advocate for him. The rest is an achingly beautiful story of true redemption. The story is inspiring, and Mr. Manuel’s poetry is exquisite. A story of God in action.

“In as much as you did it for the least of these, you did it for me.....Matthew 25:37

Find the full list of available social justice books on our church website:

<https://churchofthecrossomaha.org/agape/#library>.



## DEACONS UPDATE

### Caring for Each Other

The Deacons are the organizing, caregiving body of our church. But there are many ways that everyone can have an opportunity to help each other. Many members who are NOT Deacons volunteer to provide meals, send cards, help with lunches, or visit the sick or homebound, etc. And the benefits to caring are many. Of course, the real reason we care for others is because Jesus taught us to do so. If you or your family need assistance, let us know how we can help. Or if you are ever asked to be a deacon, say, “YES!” It is a rewarding and vital ministry.

Here are some of the recent activities that the Deacons have coordinated or accomplished.

- Just completed a blood drive to help the physical needs of the community.
- Sent fall greetings and gift cards to young adults who are in training or college.

- Delivered flowers from worship services on occasion to recovering members.
- Sent cards to those celebrating birthdays or who are grieving.
- Provided funeral lunches.
- Took meals to recovering or grieving families.
- Delivered special prayer shawls made by gifted members.
- Prepared church Coffee Fellowship. Right: John Morey and Neal Hubbard hard at work in the kitchen.
- Kept in touch with neighborhood groupings.



**Deacons Moderator:**  
Pam Swenson



Presbyterian Church of the Cross  
1517 South 114th Street  
Omaha NE 68144-1799



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Omaha Ne  
Permit No. 833

**Next Cross Currents Deadline is:  
Third Friday of the month  
November 18, 2022**



**A Few Church Life Fall Highlights:** Left: PCOC Women's Retreat Oct. 7 & 8 at Calvin Crest  
Right: PCOC Choir Members who lent their talents to the Covenant Chorale Festival on Oct. 8



Cross Currents  
The *Cross Currents* is published monthly by the Presbyterian Church of the Cross, 1517 South 114th Street, Omaha NE 68144-1799

**Church Office:** For general church information/requests/inquiries, contact the church office. Email: [churchofthecross@pcoc.us](mailto:churchofthecross@pcoc.us) or phone: (402)333-7466

**Communications:** Gayle Kerr-McFadden [gayle@pcoc.us](mailto:gayle@pcoc.us) or (402)333-7466 ext. 7  
For Cross Currents and Bulletin announcements, church website updates, Zoom meeting invites, or other communications needs, please contact Gayle.