

## Celebrating New Belonging, People, & Experiences

Spring is a time of new life, and we rejoice as the world turns green around us and as we celebrate spiritual renewal with the arrival of Easter. We are blessed with many new beginnings and fresh opportunities at PCOC.

On April 16, we welcomed the 2023 Confirmation class into church membership. This group did a fantastic job leading us in worship at both services that day. You can get to know these young members by reading about them on pages 8-9. Pictured left to right with our pastors: Sierra Cunningham, Jessa Sherlock, Veronica Kerr, Garrett Voss, and Emmie Fuller.



The Confirmation class collected an offering all year and have raised over \$100 that they would like to use to help our soon-to-be-assigned refugee family. They are waiting to see if the family has children and if there are any specific needs that could benefit from their offering.

We also welcomed new adult members this spring. Read more about them on page 10 and say hello when you see them at church. If someone you know is looking for a church home, our next new member discussion will be after church on Sunday, June 11. Call the church office to sign up, or sign up online on the church website.

Spring can be a time for everyone to grow in how we live our faith. Whether it's education, music, mission, or fellowship, PCOC offers many opportunities to learn and serve. Read more about and sign up for these upcoming church events:

- Summer Youth Choir Festival — page 5
- Vacation Bible School — page 7
- Fellowship Opportunities — page 11
- Siena Francis House or Habitat for Humanity mission days — page 12
- Young Adult Mission Weekend — page 13

**Youth Sunday is May 7.** At both services, our youth will present a unique service that includes scripture, prayer, music, and faith talks from this year's seniors. To celebrate the class of 2023, the Deacons will host a brunch for our graduates and their families that day in Fellowship Hall.

## In This Issue:

Messages from Our  
Pastors — Pages 2 & 3

Business Updates —  
Page 4

Music Notes — Page 5

Christian Education News  
— Pages 6-7

Our Church Family —  
Pages 8-10

Fellowship Groups/Events  
— Page 11

Spirit of Mission —  
Page 12-16

Deacons Update —  
Page 17



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### The Best Church in the World

A minister friend of mine was once invited back to celebrate an anniversary at a former church he had served decades ago. He spent some time revisiting his former town and happened to go into a drug store in the old neighborhood. On a whim, he asked the high school girl working at the counter, “Have you ever heard of that church down the street? Is it any good?” The girl broke into a huge smile, slapped her hands down on the counter, and excitedly exclaimed, “That’s MY church, and it’s THE BEST CHURCH IN THE WORLD!”

In a nutshell, that’s my goal for every youth in our church, too. In fact, I’ve told them so. I want them to love our church and not be afraid to tell others about us. We all need to remember to invest in our youth, to help them build a great foundation for their faith that will last their whole life. It starts now.

It so happens that in both our Tuesday Bible Studies we are now studying 1 Corinthians. First Church, Corinth was filled with problems. I’m not sure if any of them thought they were the best church, ever. Each chapter brings another issue that the Apostle Paul addresses - sexual immorality, lawsuits between each other, marital issues, offering food to idols, how women should dress, abusing the Lord’s Supper – it’s a long and sordid list of how God’s people were behaving badly. They needed lots of course corrections.

So, first let me say, I’m glad we don’t have all these problems at Church of the Cross! No church is perfect, and although all problems aren’t necessarily bad, still I’m glad that we aren’t filled with drama and upheaval.

Second, if you were asked, “What’s the most famous chapter in 1 Corinthians?,” you’d know right away – it’s 1 Corinthians 13, the great chapter on love. It seems ironic to me that the greatest verses on love are found in the letter to the church who possibly showed it the least. Or maybe they needed it the most!

It’s possible that this chaotic, out-of-bounds church was even filled with extraordinary people. In the beginning of chapter 13, Paul makes reference to speaking in the tongues of angels, having prophetic powers, having faith to move mountains, even being extremely generous. But the kicker was that if you didn’t have love, nothing else really

mattered. And apparently, they didn’t, so Paul writes them a short but memorable chapter about faith, hope, and love.

I don’t know if there really is such a thing as a best church in the world, or even how to define one. But it’s sure what we want our youth to feel they are a part of – or what we want any of our members to feel – when they think about Church of the Cross.

I think about where our church is now, having come through a pandemic, having stepped up to the plate to fully fund a debt-free building project, having celebrated a moving Holy Week and powerful Good Friday service, and now looking forward to a great summer and exciting fall ahead, I am filled with faith, hope, and love for our future together.

May we spend our month of May together celebrating spring, our youth, our moms, all our graduates, and our God who so graciously guards us and shepherds us into his glorious kingdom.



**Pastor/Head of Staff**  
**Marshall Ziemann**  
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### The Tuesday Bible Studies

Join us on Tuesdays for one of our Bible Studies! We’re currently studying 1 Corinthians.

- 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 8 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!**

## “Act”

I am blessed to sit on many committees here at Church of the Cross, but one of the committees that I am particularly passionate about is membership. We kind of take membership for granted in the church. We see new members join, and we are aware of the yearly confirmation class, but most of us do not really focus on actively growing the church – it just seems to happen. But why? As I pondered the contemporary assumptions about membership during Confirmation Sunday, I was reminded of our study of membership in the ancient church during our late-night College Bible Study via Zoom.

This year in College Bible Study, we have been studying the Book of Acts. We were curious about this book that ties together the ministry of Jesus and the formation of the church. How did the early church gain members? This week, we read Acts 11:19-30 which tells us about the spread of the church from Jerusalem into Antioch and about Agabus’s prediction that famine would consume the Roman world. We learned that this is the first time those who follow Jesus are called Christians, and that this body of Christians in Antioch contains both Jews and Gentiles. These Christians, gathered from all walks of life, were those who truly had a new identity in Christ.

There is something beautiful about a new identity in Christ. It is one that drops the social and cultural barriers of belonging and instead includes all people. This may not seem like a big deal in the twenty-first century, especially in the West, where we at least recognize an equality of all peoples. This, however, is not true of the ancient world, where social status defined a person’s worth. When Jesus healed the servant of the centurion, he ignored rules of conduct between social groups. We know that Jesus broke these boundaries of status and gender all the time, but we really don’t see it in the fullness of the church until we reach Acts. Is this why the church grew?

I do think that tearing down the rigid social structure did attract people of the ancient world to the Christian faith, especially those who were disenfranchised. While the invitation that welcomed all people did draw individuals to the faith, I think the pull of Christianity went beyond welcome and extended into action. In his description of the Antioch church, Luke tells us that the church there

learned of the impending famine in Judea. The church responded by supporting the Judeans with food and supplies. It is faith in action! For the new Christians it was not only the realization that they were beloved children of God, but that they could serve others. The new Christians could claim their part within the Body of Christ.

I think this is why the ancient church grew, and I think it is why our church grows too. In terms of our membership, we can listen to Acts 11, as it encourages us to invite people to be with us, worship with us, and study with us, but we must continue to invite these same new friends to “reach out to others” in compassion and care. When we talk about Church of the Cross as being a special place, it is because we already do these things, but may we continue to be inspired to be people who act, living into our role as Christ’s disciples.



Grace and peace,

**Christine Dempsey**  
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### Footnotes:

1 — Acts 11:27.

2 — Acts 11:26.

3 — Note that the Roman Empire only executed non-citizens by crucifixion. Roman citizens were born into class identities that gave them specific privileges within a society. Plebians and Patricians did not have mutual associations. Non-citizens were yet another side group with limited rights.

4 — Matthew 8:5

## Care Cards

Find our new and improved yellow care cards in the pews. This is an easy and confidential way to submit prayer requests or ask for spiritual support from our pastors or the church’s Cross Care program.





### The View from My Office

#### KEEP OUR VISION FOCUSED

**Join Us Inside!**

**Focus on the GOOD  
and the Good will come into FOCUS.**

Church of the Cross is blessed to have many faithful and generous members and friends! Thank you to everyone who participated in our latest effort to raise the final pledges for our goal, \$5,589,000. Together, we have successfully completed our capital campaign.

This is an amazing feat considering we started raising funds as the worldwide pandemic began, as we could not gather to praise God at church, and worship began on an online venue.

Through this we persevered, as pledges and gifts continued in your generous manner. I look forward to opening our new front doors **TOGETHER** this fall for our dedication service.

#### WELCOME CENTER UPDATE

I hope you have noticed the expanded parking that is now available for use on the south and east sides of our facility. The connecting service road on the east side of our property between the north and south lots is available as well.

Take a drive around to see the new windows and doors that have been installed. The outside of our new expansion is looking great.

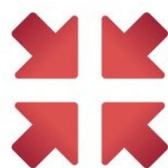
Next, you will be able to see the landscaping taking shape as sod is laid and new plantings begin to appear in the parking lot islands. Spring is such a great time of year to see new plants.

#### B&G BUSINESS AS USUAL



SPRING SPRUCE UP had a super turnout of members helping to prepare our landscaped areas for the summer growing months. Thank you for your help.

A new basketball hoop has been installed in the north parking lot. Our SHF and JHF groups are excited to have this new activity.



**REDUCE**



**REUSE**



**RECYCLE**

We are implementing a new program for our facility. You may notice that there are new recycling containers in Fellowship Hall and the kitchen. We are encouraging all members and guests to help us with this effort.

Most of us understand Omaha's recycling program that allows for paper, hard plastics, and aluminum cans. And just like at your home, we encourage you to empty your drink containers and clean plastics and cardboard as we recycle together.

Church of the Cross is making an effort to purchase more compostable products for our paper products in the kitchen, and we are using new clear trash bags.

Another way to help reduce waste is by using a permanent coffee cup, plate, and flatware. Washing these items each week will have the biggest effect on our efforts to reduce. Our Monday morning kitchen crews are lined up and ready to wash.



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

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**Finance Committee Moderator:** Mimi Bauer

**Building and Grounds Committee Moderator:**  
Casey Ballou

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## Spend “An Evening with Invoke” on Friday, May 5

Invoke is a string quartet with a contemporary twist. Described as “...not classical but not, not classical...beautiful, adventurous, American and immediately engaging” (David Srebnik, former SiriusXM Classical Producer), Invoke strives to successfully dodge even the most valiant attempts at genre classification. The multi-instrumental quartet encompasses traditions from across America, including bluegrass, Appalachian fiddle tunes, jazz, and minimalism. We hope you can join us as we wrap up the 34th season of Vesper Concerts on Friday, May 5, at 7:00 p.m.



## Be the First to Know

Vesper Concerts is putting the final touches on next season. Our email subscribers will be the first to know the details when we unveil the 2023/24 season. Would you like to be “in the know”? Be sure to sign up for our newsletter on the website at [www.vesperconcerts.org](http://www.vesperconcerts.org).

### Worship & Music Committee Needs Ushers

If you can serve in ministry as an usher, please sign up online for one of our open Sundays this spring! Questions? Ask Jayne Frederickson.



## Summer Means... More Singing!

If you are finishing grades 8-12 and love to sing, then you'll want to join us for the 8th Annual Summer Youth Choir Festival. This year's festival will take place June 19-25. For just \$45, you will experience a week of fun music and rehearsals, new friendships, and community outreach. Rehearsals are Monday through Thursday evenings from 6:00 – 8:30. Friday is a day off so we can rest up for our outreach tour across the Omaha metro all day on Saturday. We sing at the 10:00 worship service on June 25 to finish out the week.



Presbyterian Church of the Cross Presents...

8TH ANNUAL

## Youth Choir Festival

for singers who have finished grades 8-12

June 19-25  
Sign Up  
Online!



### Kristi Treu

Director of Music & Executive  
Director of Vesper Concerts  
(402)333-7466 Ext. 5  
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**Worship & Music Committee Moderator:**  
Jayne Frederickson





### Fun at the Easter Egg Hunt

Sunshine, a cool breeze, lots and lots of eggs, and the sound of children laughing. You can't get any better than that! Thank you to the youth and leaders that helped stuff and hide the eggs, facilitate crafts, and clean up after this event. You're "eggstra" awesome!



### Fish Banks

The children did a wonderful job filling up their Gracie Fish Banks in support of PCUSA's Special Offering, One Great Hour of Sharing. We collected a total of \$164.43! Way to go!



### Youth Sunday is May 7

We hope you join us on May 7 for Youth Sunday. This one-of-a-kind service is presented entirely by our youth, from scripture to liturgical readings to music to senior faith talks. Graduates and their families will enjoy a brunch provided by the Deacons that day between services.



### Celebrating Women's Baskets

Stop by the table in the corridor between the Narthex and Fellowship Hall to bid on your favorite basket, or two! All proceeds benefit the SHF Mission Trip. Bidding ends May 7. Winners will be announced after late service that day. Don't miss out!

### CE Volunteer Appreciation May 21

Many thanks to our Sunday School Teachers, Shepherds, Cornerstone Staff, Youth Advisors, Advent Workshop Leaders and Helpers, Christmas Pageant Directors, Confirmation Mentors, VBS Leaders and Helpers, Lenten Study Facilitators, and The Christian Education Committee. These folks have given their time, energy, and commitment to this area of ministry. They willingly come back, week after week, with the hope that they will make a difference in the lives of our children, youth, and adults. On behalf of the Christian Education Committee, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the work you are doing. Your efforts do matter, and you ARE making a difference! Please join us for a reception in your honor on May 21 at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.





### Vacation Bible School Tuesday – Thursday, June 13-15 9 a.m. - noon

In the depths of the colorful underground cave is the beating heart of the hero community. In the Hero Hotline Headquarters, everyone's gifts are valued, and every hero has a role to play in following Jesus, helping others, working together, listening to God, and showing grace.

Registration is open! Make sure your children don't miss out on the fun. Get them registered online today!



**Sign up online by June 1.**

### Garage Sale News

SHF will not be sponsoring a church garage sale this summer. We are going to take a year off! Please save your treasures for next year's sale.

### Important Dates to Remember

<b>May 7</b>	Youth Sunday/Senior Brunch
<b>May 21</b>	CE Recognition Sunday
<b>June 4</b>	JHF/SHF Mission Trip Parent Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
<b>June 13-15</b>	Vacation Bible School
<b>June 16-18</b>	JHF Mission Trip
<b>June 26-July 1</b>	SHF Mission Trip

### A Heartfelt Word of Thanks

I cannot express how grateful I am for our church family's support during my battle with cancer. I have received numerous cards, calls, texts, emails, and visits from my PCOC family since my diagnosis. And then there are the delicious meals that were lovingly prepared and delivered to me while I was recovering from surgeries. It was so nice not to have to worry about what I was going to make for dinner. Let me tell you, we have some amazing cooks at PCOC because every meal we received was outstanding. I don't know how I would get through this ordeal without such wonderful support from our church family, so thank you!!!

For those that are wondering, the biopsy from the mastectomy and lymph node dissection showed cancer no longer present. I'm glad chemo did its job! I am still receiving chemo treatments once a month until July and will start radiation in May, just as a precaution. I'm glad to be on the road to recovery. Thank you for all your prayers!



**Heather Berry**  
**Director of Christian Education**  
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heather@pcoc.us

**CE Committee Moderator:** Jeremy Cunningham

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

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





### Meet Our Confirmation Class

#### Sierra Cunningham

Sierra is the daughter of Jeremy and Sherri Cunningham. She attends Kiewit Middle School and will attend high school at Millard North High School. She reports that her favorite part of Confirmation Class was seeing how we all grow in our faith and the community in general. She has had fun, made lots of memories, and hates to see the class end. She reports that she has been able to find God even when it was hard and knows that God cares. In addition to Confirmation Class, Sierra participates in JHF and mission trips. From the mission trips, she learned that no matter how many questions and doubts she experienced, God was still there right beside her. In school, Sierra is in the show choir, recycling club, yearbook, and "Snack and Stitch" club. In high school, she wants to continue with show choir and dance. Her favorite subjects in school are math and science. Sierra's future plans include an interest in being a teacher or principal. Sierra enjoys working with kids. She works at Premier Gymnastics teaching recreational gymnastics. Photography, suspenseful movies and polished rocks are special interests of hers. Sierra is concerned about global warming and how it affects animals and people. Her mentor is Sue Thomas.



#### Jessa Sherlock

Jessa, the daughter of Ryan and Ashley Sherlock, attends Papillion Middle School and next year will be a student at Papillion LaVista South High School. At school, Jessa is a member of the National Junior Honor Society, Leo Club, Student Council, and in the past was on the track team. Her favorite subjects at school are science, Spanish and social studies. Additionally, she competes competitively in dance at Midwest Dance. As a confirmand, Jessa has learned what she believes as well as what she does not. Although Wednesdays are a long day with



Confirmation Class and dance, Jessa likes hanging out with the class. She attends Sunday School and Junior High Fellowship and plans to continue Sunday School classes and will join the Senior High Fellowship group. In the future, Jessa wants to become a biologist or perhaps work in the FBI. Regardless of career plans, she wants to travel and hopes to live on the beach. This sushi lover is interested in protecting the earth by having cars emit less emissions and use less fossil fuel. Jessa could be described as hardworking, motivated, caring, and loyal. Her mentor is Beth Maxwell.

#### Emmie Fuller

Emmie is very active in her school activities at Bennington South Middle School, where she participates in cross country, track, band, choir, yearbook, cross-stitch club, one act, music, and speech. And she finds time to be a volunteer at the Bennington library and the Heartland Hope Mission. She also participates in soccer and the Omaha Youth Philharmonic. Next fall she will attend Bennington High School. At PCOC, Emmie attends church, Sunday School, JHF, and acolytes. The Confirmation Class gave her more clarity because she feels like she understands Christ and the church more now. Although she did not like the Luke homework, she liked seeing her church friends every week. She plans to attend Senior High Fellowship next year. She will be a student at Bennington High School in the fall. One interesting skill that Emmie is fostering is learning to make her own oboe reeds. Emmie reports that her friends would describe her as fun, loving, kind, smart, sarcastic, and athletic. Her teachers would say she is a good student. Math is her favorite subject at school. Her mother is Valerie Fuller and her mentor is Ann Pearson.







### Garrett Voss

Garrett, the son of Chris and Staci Voss, is currently an eighth grade student at Beadle Middle School and next fall will attend Millard West High School. He enjoys science classes and plays the clarinet in band. E-Sports club, HULK club, and PE 2.0 club fill out his activity calendar. Additionally, Garrett participates in karate at Elite-Cheer and Karate. At PCOC we see Garrett acolyting, attending JHF, and in Sunday School classes. He will continue next year in SHF. In Confirmation Class, getting to know his fellow confirmands was the best part, and because he was the only boy with 4 girls, it was interesting. Garrett likes to help others, wishes the world was filled with happiness, and that poverty was eliminated. He likes to make people laugh and describes himself as kind and funny. Around two dozen surgeries, both major and minor with the first when he was only a few months old, have made him tougher. Confirmation Class has grown his faith, knowledge of the Bible, and God's relationship to us. He believes that God gives us free will with the wish that we will make the right decisions for the right reasons. Family is very important to Garrett. Casey Ballou is his church mentor.



### Veronica Kerr

Veronica, daughter of Dan and Laurie Kerr, is a busy and involved student at Gretna Middle School. She plays basketball, runs track and cross country, plays in the band and jazz band, and participates in One Act, and is on Student Council. She especially enjoys art, baking/cooking, and history classes. Next year she will attend Gretna High School. Hobbies include loving to run, bike-ride, and bake. Over the summer she participates in recreational softball. As a confirmand, Veronica liked meeting with her mentor, Gayle Kerr-McFadden, and seeing her church friends weekly. She also learned that to trust in God and that good things will come your way



when you wait and trust. Currently, she participates in Sunday School and JHF. Next year, she plans on being in SHF and helping out with Vacation Bible School. Veronica would be described as energetic, smart, and comical. Most people do not know that this girl with curly hair does not like her food to touch each other. Future plans are to become a psychiatrist, as she is a good listener and wants people to be happy. She also would like to see an end to homelessness; feeling it is unfair for some to be out in extreme cold and heat.

## Welcome to New Adult Members

### Irmgard Kramer

Irma was born in Achim, Germany and came to the United States with her family. She has lived in Omaha for 67 years. Irma came to Presbyterian Church of the Cross through a letter of transfer from St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Omaha. A friend who attends PCOC influenced her to come to our church, music programs, and the movement classes. Hobbies include knitting and other crafts, reading, and singing. She has been retired the past 20 years. Irma is widowed and her immediate family lives in different parts of the country; making the support from her church family extra special.



### Lucien Chu Kebek

Lucien was born and grew up in Cameroon, Africa and was a member of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. He has always been a Presbyterian, and it is his desire to be a member here in Omaha and has been led by the spirit. After having visited PCOC in January, Lucien experienced the fellowship and felt it was amazing. He appreciated that some church members made him feel very welcome. Lucien is a new resident of Omaha and lives here with his family. Lucien is learning to drive and is attending CNA classes.



(continued on page 10)



## New members (continued)

### Lucinda Heck Sloan:

Lucinda joined Presbyterian Church of the Cross by letter of transfer from First Presbyterian Church in Orlando, Florida. At that church she was involved as a teacher, in the choir, and in Bible Study. It is no surprise that she is interested in Music and Worship. Lucinda reports that she loves this church and already knows several members. She was born in Cleveland, Ohio. Hobbies include music, art, teaching and creative writing. Although now retired, Lucinda reports that professional singing and teaching were her occupations. She is the mother of Ashley Sherlock and the grandmother of Jessa and Ellie.



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

Heartfelt thanks to the PCOC family and staff for your cards, phone calls, and other expressions of sympathy following my husband Bob's death. At a time like this, we realize how much family and friends really mean to us.

- Eileen Wright



## In need of prayer?

Submit a prayer request online or use one of the Care Cards in the pews.. All requests are shared only with members of the prayer team.

### Prayer Team Coordinators:

Julie Buehler and Judy Arms

## PCOC . . . It's Where You Belong!

Do you know someone who is looking for a church home? Invite them to visit PCOC! Our next new

member discussion will be held on Sunday, June 11 after the worship service. The discussion will last about an hour, and a light lunch will be provided. Sign up online or call the church office.



- 5/1 Rob Bailey, Jerry Cornett, Jean Lynn
- 5/2 Liam Dempsey, Adrian Hinz,  
Marian Lewis, Lucah Sekle, Anne Wattles
- 5/3 Kevin Bunjer, Jimmy Downes,  
Doug Gollehon, Duncan Koch, Ben Miller,  
Mary Ann Pederson, Sherryl Shannon
- 5/4 Peyton Holubeck
- 5/5 Jerry Bland, Twink DeRoin, Chuck Frenk,  
Bud Miles, Joan Sacco-Grosskopf,  
Don Sievers
- 5/6 Laura Innes, Josh McFadden, Susan Price
- 5/8 Elizabeth Darling
- 5/9 Sandy Buda, Brinly Lehmann
- 5/10 Catherine Brady, Brooklynn Evers
- 5/10 Pat Hoisington
- 5/11 Ally Hopp, Morgan Koch, Bobbi Swedlund
- 5/12 Finn Mooney, Ethel Pauba
- 5/13 Betty Baddley, Mark Brady, Carl Greiner,  
Bill Steele
- 5/14 Kylie Berry, Kendall Kahler
- 5/15 Jillian Obregon, Michael Shannon
- 5/16 Irene Astleford, Jim Butler, Shawn Smith
- 5/18 Daniel Florent
- 5/19 Nancy Nicas, Carolyn Will
- 5/20 Genevieve Ebert
- 5/22 Ben Fritz, Jenny Koch, Gary Lynn
- 5/23 Phyllis Armstrong, Marlys Boyum,  
Peter Broderick
- 5/24 Daley Gibson
- 5/25 Owen Rock, Patti Sparks
- 5/25 Scotlyn Thorson
- 5/26 Maggie Ebert, Matt Kahler, Inga Wagner
- 5/27 Elaine Holdren
- 5/27 Camille Koch
- 5/30 Heather McIntyre-Haas, Don Thorson
- 5/31 Becca Whitlow

### Membership Committee Co-Moderators:

Amy Boesen & Brenda Graumann



### Active Minds in May

Active Minds Adult Fellowship will be playing the card game of pinochle and the group game of Apples to Apples. We will be happy to teach you to play these two games. Join us when your schedule allows. We meet on Tuesdays, 2-4 pm, in the lower level. Hope you can join the group for some joy and laughter!

**Coordinator: Earlene Uhrig**



### 49ers on May 2

Join us for a journey with Suzie Louis, Founder and Director of Conservation Fusion – from Lemurs to Dreamers, as she educates us with the conservation and education programs in rural Madagascar to empower local people and save endangered species in the wild. Lunch will be at 11:30 at Wheatfield's at One Pacific Place in the Garden Room, and we will order from a special menu. Sign up at the Information Desk in the Narthex.

**Coordinators: Judy Sundberg and Mary Ott**



### Presbyterian Women on May 4

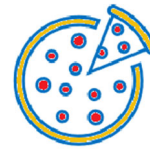
You're invited to Presbyterian Women's Circle at a special meeting time at 10:00 am in Room 15. We will have a salad luncheon after Sharon Walsh shares Lesson 9, Sabbath and Community. Bring a salad to share as this is our last meeting until September. Questions? Contact Cindy.

**Coordinator: Cindy Nisley**

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**Congregational Life Committee Co-Moderators:**  
Kathy Nickel & Stephanie Weaver —

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### Cross Roads for Young Adults May 7 After Late Worship

Young adults (ages 20-40) will meet after late worship on May 7 at the circle drive doors. We will get pizza, have a sermon talk-back, and enjoy fellowship. Find details about our YA mission trip on page 13.

**Coordinator: Pastor Christine**

### Friday Night Gourmets on May 12

Please join us at Tussey's (9229 Mormon Bridge Plaza, Omaha, NE 68152, 402-884-2288). Social hour begins at 6:30 with dinner at 7:00. We'll order from the menu and pay separately. Questions, contact the hosts: Stan & Charlene Weyand, and Don and Cindy Hiltgen.



### Book Group on Wednesday, May 17

PCOC Book Group will meet Wednesday, May 17 from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. to discuss *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles. All readers are welcome!

**Coordinator: June Fettig**



### Stay Active in Two Great Groups 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. Drop in if you'd like to attend a class.

**Coordinator: Paula Allen**





## From the Mission Mailbox

*Your mission dollars and volunteer hours at work!*



The Mission Committee would like to share with you some of the mail received from the organizations which are the grateful recipients of your generosity. For the last month we have received these thank you notes from the following mission partners:

- Omaha Public School's Walnut Hill Elementary School and the Integrated Learning Program at Saratoga sent their thanks for the appreciation lunches you provided for staff.
- The card sent by the PDA group from Austin College, Austin, Texas said, "You made us all feel so welcome, and we loved our time there in Nebraska."
- Project Harmony thanked you for your involvement with the "Pinwheels for Prevention" campaign, which brings awareness to the problem of child abuse and neglect.
- The Black Votes Matter Community Engagement group said they are "so grateful and appreciative for your love and giving spirit. You have given such a great sacrifice to help two youth to travel (this summer) on the Southern Civic tour."
- Heartland Hope Mission thanks you for your \$2,105 which will provide working poor families with a week's supply of groceries, clothing, and hygiene and household items.

KUDOS to you, PCOC!

## AllPlay Miracle Baseball League

**Submitted by Sandi Stuckey**

AllPlay Miracle League is a mission partner with PCOC. Each year the non-competitive league provides opportunities for over 450 children and youth with special needs to have fun playing baseball. Over 125 volunteers are needed each game day.

The spring season runs May 6-June 24. On each day there are many opportunities to volunteer. You may serve as a buddy, greet, serve concessions, announce the game, umpire, be a mascot, or even help set up and cleanup after the games. You can find a description of each position on the sign-up page. Each shift is 2 hours, and the time goes

swiftly as you experience the excitement of the players and joys of family and friends watching the players hit those base hits. Sometimes it's even a home run! I hope to see you there!

## OSS Gala

**Submitted by Keith Allen**

The Omaha Street School hosted their annual Gala and fundraiser on April 11 at the Scott Conference Center. Over 250 attended the event, including 20 members of PCOC, many of whom volunteer at OSS serving lunches, tutoring students, or serving on the board. The Gala event was hosted by the students and teachers and included readings by the students of their poetry and testimonials about the impact of their new vocational training program. The event raised over \$160,000 and was considered a great success.

## 2023 Habitat for Humanity Faith House Build Day

**Submitted by Rob Bailey**

If you are interested in helping with our Habitat for Humanity project this year, our build day will be on Saturday, June 3 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Anyone 16 or over can volunteer, and we have room for 10 on our PCOC crew. We will meet at the site at 8 a.m., and Rob Bailey will provide the address the week before the event to those signed up. Lunch and water will be provided. Work gloves, work boots, long sleeve shirt, and pants are suggested. Goggles and hardhat will be provided. Sign up online on the church website.

## Serve at Siena Francis House

Sign up to serve dinner at Siena Francis House on Sunday, May 14. from 4:15 to 6:15 p.m. Questions? Contact Keith Allen. Scan our QR code to sign up online via the church website.

**Want to sign up to volunteer for a PCOC mission partner?**

Scan our QR code to access the current volunteer opportunities on our online sign up page.





**Mission Committee Moderator:**  
Anne Wattles

## Preparing for Our Refugee Family Submitted by Paula Allen

In preparation for co-sponsoring a refugee family, Sue Kiel recommended I read the book *The Middle of Everywhere* by Mary Pipher. The author is a psychologist from Lincoln, Nebraska with much personal experience as a cultural broker and teacher for refugees resettling in our area. She shares her wealth of knowledge and insights into this process along with practical suggestions and fascinating true stories.

One of the things she writes in the chapter titled “Building a Village of Kindness” is her attempt to dispel some of the common myths about refugees. Here are a few:

**Myth #1:** Refugees are uneducated and uninformed.

**Truth:** Many were doctors, professors, engineers, and journalists in their native lands. Many are here because they were fighting for democracy in their countries and were persecuted as a result.

**Myth #2:** The U.S. takes in most of the world’s refugees.

**Truth:** We take less than 1% of the world’s refugees.

**Myth #3:** Refugees are taking American jobs.

**Truth:** Many are filling jobs that Americans won’t take, and they are helping businesses fill positions when workers are hard to find.

**Myth #4:** Refugees do not pay taxes.

**Truth:** Refugees do pay taxes, including property taxes. Despite this, they cannot vote or receive many government benefits.

**Myth #5:** Most refugees end up on welfare.

**Truth:** Most refugees are working within a month of their arrival, often doing jobs that are difficult, dirty, and dangerous.

**Myth # 6:** Anyone who wants to can come to the U.S.

**Truth:** The U.S. has strict rules and quotas on new refugee arrivals. Many have spent years in refugee camps in other parts of the world and have painstakingly completed paperwork, interviews, and physicals during the vetting process.

**Myth # 7:** Refugees should go back to where they came from.

**Truth:** Refugees are here because they ran out of choices. They have experienced some of the worst things people can do to one another, including torture, rape, witnessing the murder of family members, and more. They did not want to leave their homes, and they desperately miss their countries of origin.

This book contributed greatly to my preparation for being a cultural broker, mentor, and friend to the family we will welcome soon. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who would like to come along on this journey.

## Sign Up Now for YA Mission Trip!

Our young adult summer mission trip will be June 21-June 25 at Calvin Crest. Our mission work and other details are below. Sign up online!

### Wednesday, June 21

4:00-6:00 – Completely Kids  
6:30 – Sandwiches at the church

### Thursday, June 22

10:00 – Meet at Church of the Cross – fill water bottles/pack  
2:00 – Meet at Sienna Francis House to hand out water bottles and glasses  
5:00 – Camp Calvin crest – check into Cabins  
6:30 – Hobo Dinners  
9:00 – Ice Breakers, bonfire, Smores, Game

### Friday, June 23

8:00 – Breakfast at Camp Calvin Crest  
9:00 – Habitat for Humanity House in Fremont  
5:00 – Free time and GAGA ball  
6:00 – Dinner  
8:30 – Bible Study  
9:00 – T-shirt toys for Homeward Bound in the Heartland

### Saturday, June 24

8:00 – Breakfast in the Cabin – Pancakes  
9:00 – Set up Fireworks Stand for ROC Ministries in Ashland  
6:00-9:00 – Night on the town! Favorite food truck? Ice cream?  
10:00 – Boundary Breaking, Games

### Sunday, June 25

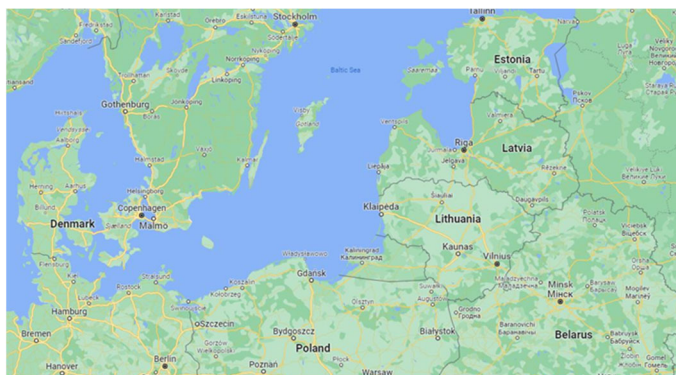
8:00 – Breakfast in the cabin  
10:00 – Worship at PCOC



## Report from Lithuania

Submitted by Jean Waters

What a fun and informative journey we had with Ellen Smith, our PCUSA mission co-worker, in traveling to the small country of Lithuania on March 5-15, 2023. Our primary goal was to learn about three different faith-based organizations who are making impressive efforts to address urgent needs in our world. Here's a bit about our encounters with these organizations and the impact they had on us, plus a little bonus material.



The Hope Center in Vilnius (the capital of Lithuania) is run by a Lithuanian woman named Larissa (shown in the picture to right at the head of the table). About 30 years ago, Larissa was moved to provide a hearty meal for a homeless woman she encountered in her hometown of Vilnius. The experience awoke in her a keen awareness of the needs in her own community to feed the hungry. As her heart was moved to do more, God provided. Many miracles occurred where people helped at just the right time to keep things going. This includes Christians from other European countries and from her own church in Vilnius. In 2022, her service to the city was recognized, and the city built a new build-



ing with about 30 rooms, space for a variety of services, and an industrial kitchen for her small organization to house and feed the homeless. Now she serves one hot meal to 200+ people per day.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred within days of the new building opening. It's currently serving the homeless and housing Ukrainian refugees, most of them women and children, until they are able to find housing and employment. Most refugees have found other housing but still need help feeding their families, so the center provides weekly food supplies to 350+ Ukrainians. The services are provided with care and love. It is a monumental task carried out by a few employees and volunteers. Currently, Larissa prays for her replacement and funds to hire more staff.



Eugeny Lovanov leads Ecoldea, an environmental organization in Belarus that must be chartered in Lithuania due to sanctions on Belarus. When traveling to meet us, he was delayed for two hours at the Belarus border, a regular occurrence. In recent years, Ecoldea has been internationally recognized for their innovative practices to effect environmental change, but as political tensions have increased in Belarus, they must focus on smaller ecological projects like working with church partners to install nesting boxes for endangered owls. These are installed high in the bell towers, similar to the picture on the right of Jon Boomgaarden in a Lithuanian bell tower. Eugeny and his organization are deeply committed

to being stewards of God's earth but live in a country where you can't raise issues that might be seen as criticism of the government. They are making a difference by providing ecological education, supporting organic farming, educating about waste and prevention of it, and engaging with other Christians to learn about and to love God's creation.







We visited LCC University in Klaipeda and were treated to a pizza lunch with three of their students. A young man from Ukraine, a young woman from Armenia, and a young woman from Kazakhstan talked enthusiastically about themselves and their experiences at LCC University. When asked about the challenges of sharing a dorm room with students from other cultures and sometimes from countries at war with each other, they explained that the programs and activities at the school paved the way for good relations, and their differences were “not really an issue.”

The students shared future plans to use their education and return to their country and make it a better place: one as a small business owner and mentor to help rebuild Ukraine, one as a diplomat for Armenia, and one as Minister of Education to reform the education system in Kazakhstan. We all agreed that listening to these young people gives us renewed hope for our future world!

LCC is a private university, supported largely by the Mennonites, with a 4-year liberal arts curriculum and a strong and intentional theme of peacebuilding and an international faculty. The 800-member student body is from 64 countries. In addition to extracurriculars like basketball, LCC offers a “study abroad” semester and short-term intensive courses focused on peacebuilding.

Sight-seeing included the Hill of Crosses, pictured to the right, apparently begun when someone erected a cross on this hill, and others added crosses to that place. It evolved into a place of deep meaning. People erect crosses or place small crosses or rosary beads on the existing ones in thankfulness for answered prayers or in memory of loved ones.

We visited the holocaust museum in Vilnius, too. Lithuania was under Nazi occupation during World

War II, and the Jewish people were confined to ghettos and sent to work camps. Their own countrymen were guarding and persecuting them. It is important to remember and talk about the past, so we can heal.



Church of the Cross members Karen Morey, Jean Waters, and Jon and Irene Boomgaarden are grateful for the opportunity to have made this trip along with retired PCUSA pastor Randy Argall and his wife, Ann, from Iowa City. We will continue to process what we learned and talk with others about what might come out of these encounters - to partner with, to support, and to learn at several levels: as our denomination, as our BURM Network, as our church community, and as individuals. Please visit with us about our experiences and join us in praying for the efforts of these individuals and their organizations.



### Agape News & Events

Submitted by Patty Ritchie & Mary Ott

Our luncheon at the Revive Center on March 26 was a total success with thirteen people attending. The Revive Center staff were very welcoming, and the food was delicious. Entrees included items such as meatloaf, catfish, baked or fried chicken, and smothered chicken. Sides included sweet potatoes, cabbage, mashed potatoes, green beans, corn, etc. Salads and desserts were included. Everyone in the group enjoyed the wonderful food and would like to go back to try some of the other entrees. The hosts were very gracious and accommodating and we were able to make some good contacts for the future.



The Revive Center at 2402 Lizzie Robinson Avenue, 24th and Lake, is open on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month from 12-3 p.m. I highly recommend it!

**Did you know?** Read this good news about restoration of a Presbyterian school in South Carolina that helped shape Black leaders in the PCUSA.

Goodwill Parochial School, founded more than 150 years ago in Sumter County, South Carolina, went on to turn out at least 32 PCUSA ministers. Currently, a board is fundraising to complete restoration of the school, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The school, founded in 1867 and constructed around 1890, was closed when combined with another school in the early 1960s and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. For decades, Goodwill Parochial School, with support from antecedents of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., educated thousands of African American children whose parents and grandparents had not long before been freed from enslavement.

“We have forgotten so much that the Black church has done over the years,” said the Rev. Dr. Johnnie Monroe, who chairs the board of directors of the

Goodwill Educational and Historical Society Inc. “The Presbyterian Church used to have elementary and junior high schools throughout the country, particularly in the South ... It was at the Goodwill School where we learned Black history, dignity, and self-respect.”

Read the full article by Mike Ferguson of the Presbyterian News Service at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/working-to-restore-a-presbyterian-school-in-south-carolina-that-helped-shape-black-leaders-in-the-pcusa/>

### “Trouble the Water “ Adult Education Class

Thank you to all the folks who have been learning about social justice issues and our Presbyterian denomination’s involvement. Individually and collectively, we can live in a more respectful and prosperous world.

### Agape Book Report

*The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocumb  
Submitted by Mary Ott

*The Violin Conspiracy* is a great read. It is definitely a page turner, fast moving, and a mystery. I would highly recommend this book.

The story begins with a young man, Ray McMillian, who is growing up in rural North Carolina. Ray dreams of becoming a professional violinist. He faces many obstacles along the way including being black, facing racism, and being poor. It doesn't help that most of his family including his mother are not supportive of Ray's dream. The one person in his family who supports him is his grandmother whom Ray loves dearly. Another support person is a college music professor who recognizes Ray's talent and potential.

Ray doesn't have the money for a violin that is suitable for a person of his talent. His life changes when his grandmother gives him an old fiddle. The fiddle is dear to his grandmother, and, was handed down from her grandfather who was a slave. At first the fiddle does not look like much, but, Ray discovers that it has a remarkable history. It is much more valuable than it first appears. I will not spoil the mystery by giving any further details.

The author, Brendan Slocumb, was raised in North Carolina. He has a degree in music education and has been a public and private music teacher for over twenty years.

## News from the PCOC Deacons

Submitted by Becky Ziemann

We've been glad to welcome the new class of deacons this spring:

- Holly Baddley
- Sue Barger
- Betsy Conway
- Toni Craig
- Andrew Ebert
- Carl Greiner
- Karen Smith
- Chris Voss

These new Deacons joined the previous classes in signing up for committees and opportunities to serve our congregation. Give them your thanks, and support them in prayer as they begin this new opportunity!

One of our third-year deacons, Bidong Tot, is encouraging church members to attend a special celebration of African culture, held at Westside High School, on May 13 beginning at 5:00 p.m. Find details online at [eventbrite.com/e/africa-djawa-africa-rejoicing-tickets-514869427317](https://eventbrite.com/e/africa-djawa-africa-rejoicing-tickets-514869427317)

Deacons care for our church community in a variety of ways. In the past month, they have been busy:

- Hosting funeral receptions
- Making and delivering food to recovering members
- Sharing Easter gifts with 50 less-mobile members
- Delivering flowers from our Sunday service as a reminder of our continued care
- Hosting the Sunday Coffee Fellowship
- Corresponding with members who are celebrating or grieving

We are grateful for ALL the caring members of this church, whether you're serving officially or not. Together we make this congregation the very special group it is!

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### Deacons Moderator:

Neal Hubbard

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## PCOC Summer Schedule Begins on May 28

### Pentecost is Sunday, May 28

Wear red to church that day!

Our summer schedule begins:

- Single Worship Service at 10 a.m.
- No Sunday School until after Labor Day

### Memorial Day Holiday

The church office will be closed on Monday, May 29 in observance of Memorial Day.

### Save the Date for Summer Social Events

- Pancake Man on Sunday, June 4
- All-church Potluck on Sunday, July 30



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



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**Next Cross Currents Deadline is:  
Third Friday of the month  
May 19, 2022**

#### Cross Currents

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

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**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.

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