

Thankful for Our Church Community

As the days get shorter and the colder temperatures creep in, remember the warmth waiting for you at Church of the Cross each week. We are thankful to have an active, loving, and giving church community. In November, we hope you will join in one of the many events we have planned.

Remembering Those We've Lost on Sunday, November 5

For **All Saints Day** during worship on Sunday morning, we will remember members of the congregation who have passed away in the last year. Later that day, our Cross Care Connections team will host a **Remembrance Service 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 the Welcome Center.

Special Visitors for Coffee Fellowship on Sunday, November 5

Join us in welcoming our Syrian refugee family on Sunday, November 5 at the 10:00 a.m. coffee hour. Along with our regular donut holes and cookies, we will have fruit and assorted pastries. Since arriving in Omaha earlier this summer, the family has been getting settled with the help of the refugee assistance coordinators, who will be on hand to introduce the family that day. Please stop by to say "hello" and welcome the family to Omaha.

Giving Thanks & Giving to Others This Month

God's goodness is abundant, and we have several mission activities planned this month for you to help others.

Throughout the month, we'll collect a **Thanksgiving Offering**. These funds provide Thanksgiving baskets for families in need through our mission partner Completely Kids. Please use the special giving envelope for this donation, or write Thanksgiving Donation on the memo line of your check.

On November 5, you'll learn more about the mission efforts in Eastern Europe from our mission partner Ellen Smith. You also can hear about Karen Morey and Annie Wattle's trip to the region between services on November 19. Your whole family can participate in a mission project at the zoo on November 11. Or, maybe you'd like to help serve dinner on November 12 at Siena Francis House. Find details about these mission activities and more on pages 10-12.

Advent Workshop & Lunch on Sunday, November 19

After late worship, attendees are invited to make a variety of Christmas crafts. Our Senior High Youth Group will prepare and serve lunch before the crafting begins. Find details on page 5, and sign up online!

Children's Christmas Pageant & Advent Dinner Is Coming!!!

Save the date — Sunday, December 3. Find the details on page 9.



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Godsends

I suppose that harvest time has always been seen as a natural time for a farmer to be thankful. You've worked hard to bring in the crops. You're relieved that you actually have a harvest, and you'll either sell it or save it to get you through the coming winter. You've seen all your hard work pay off.

Your harvest never was a certainty – when you did all your spring planting, you had to hope that the combination of seeds, soil, sun, rain, and temperature would all somehow magically work together. You may have worried all summer that the critters or hailstorms might wipe you out. A lot of your success may have ultimately come down to good timing, to things you couldn't control. So I can see how farming was always meant to be a faith-filled endeavor.

But what about us non-farmers? Our biggest worries in the fall might have to do with our team becoming bowl-eligible, or who we'll spend our Thanksgiving meal with, or what to get everybody for Christmas. Do we have a sense of stopping once

again to count our blessings, to reflect on what we treasure most, to acknowledge that God is overseeing our lives, and that all the benefits we enjoy don't just come from our own capable hands?

Is the noun 'godsend' a regular part of your vocabulary? Maybe it should be. Happy Thanksgiving!



**Pastor/Head of Staff
Marshall Ziemman**

(402)333-7466 Ext. 1
marshall@pcoc.us

Tuesday Bible Studies

Join Pastor Marshall as our study of the book of Exodus continues. Both groups meet in the Courtyard Room in the new Welcome Center.

- Men's only at 7 a.m.
- Everyone at 1 p.m. (in person & on Zoom)



BUSINESS UPDATES

The VIEW FROM MY OFFICE

Fall Clean-Up November 4, 9 a.m. to Noon

B&G looks forward to your help with this fall's clean-up day. Volunteers will be preparing our landscaped areas for the winter season. If you've recently stood in our new Welcome Center and gazed out over the lawn, you realize just how much there is to care for. All ages and families are welcome to help. Bring your rake, trimmers, work gloves, and smiles! We will have donuts and beverages to share. Hoping to see new volunteers this fall!

Cross Care Connections

The number of people dealing with troubles and challenges in life continues to grow, but you don't have to struggle alone. Church of the Cross has a team of trained volunteers to support and walk beside you through your Christian journey. This program is



designed for those who . . . are homebound and chatting would brighten their day. . . have a baby and are feeling overwhelmed. . . have lost a job and want to discuss the future with an outside person. . . just came home from the hospital and need some encouragement. . . are dealing with the loss of a loved one and want to share the feelings of loss. . . are facing physical limitations. . . simply need to talk with someone. Contact Marshall or Rock in the church office to begin your journey with Cross Care.



**Rock Sumner
Business Administrator**

(402)333-7466 Ext. 6
rock@pcoc.us

Finance Committee Moderator:

Mimi Bauer

Building and Grounds Committee Moderator:

Casey Ballou

Vesper Concert on November 17

Brian Jeffers, together with collaborative pianist Stacie Haneline, will present a solo recital on Friday evening November 17 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Brian Jeffers is a NYC-based vocalist and actor praised for his flexible and heroic tenor (Opera News). His 2022/2023 season engagements include his mainstage role debut as Beadle Bamford in *Sweeney Todd* as well as Lillas Pastia in *La Tragedie de Carmen* with Chautauqua Opera, and his symphony debut with the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra.



Born in Sioux City, Iowa, and a native of Omaha, he is thrilled to make his debut as a recitalist here in his hometown. Brian earned his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from UNL's Glenn Korff School of Music and doubled down with a minor in Musical Theatre. He studied with Dr. Jamie Reimer (voice), Dr. Bill Shomos (opera), Alisa Belflower (Musical Theatre), and Stan Brown (Acting). He then earned his MM in Music Theatre-Opera Per-

formance from Arizona State University's Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts where he studied voice with acclaimed baritone Gordon Hawkins and opera with conductor Brian DeMaris.

Active in choral and popular repertoire, he is a member of the New York Philharmonic Chorus, the tenor of the chamber ensemble at the Church of Our Saviour, Park Avenue, and has performed the solos in Mozart's *Requiem*, *To Be Certain of a Dawn* (Paulus), *King David* (Honegger), *The Creation* (Haydn) at ASU Gammage, *Vesperae solennes de confessore* (Mozart) and *Messiah* (Handel). As a chorister he has performed Britten's *War Requiem*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Bach's *B Minor Mass*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Poulenc's *Gloria*, and Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. He has performed as a backing vocalist for Kristin Chenoweth with the Phoenix Symphony, and in early 2023, appeared with the *Gloria* choir and Sharon Stone on Saturday Night Live with musical guest Sam Smith.

We hope you can join us for Brian's hometown recital debut.



Kristi Treu

Director of Music & Executive
Director of Vesper Concerts
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kristi@pcoc.us

Worship & Music Committee Moderator:
Jayne Frederickson

Save the Date for the Annual Hanging of the Greens on Saturday, December 2.

More details about decorating the church for Advent to come later this month!

If you'd like to purchase poinsettias for the Sanctuary this Advent, be sure to submit your orders by the deadline!



Find the order form inside this issue!

**Forms and payment are due in the church office by
Wednesday, November 8.
No exceptions!**

You can also order poinsettias online via the church website. Scan our QR code to go to online signup page of website and locate the online form.





PMRV Youth Outing to Skinny Bones Pumpkin Patch

Do you know that the youth in our presbytery have been getting together for fun and fellowship several times per year? Ever since Triennium was cancelled in 2022, our presbytery has been intentionally gathering our 6th – 12th graders together to build community and strengthen relationships among the youth. The first gathering was at Camp Calvin Crest in August of 2022. Since then, they have scheduled several other opportunities for youth in the presbytery to gather together. The most recent event was an outing to Skinny Bones Pumpkin Patch. The event was a smashing success, with approximately 100 youth and adults attending, 34 of which were from PCOC alone. Everyone had fun visiting the attractions and chowing down on hot dogs and s'mores that were cooked over the campfire.



There are two more events planned for next year: Serve and Glow on January 14, and a retreat at Calvin Crest on March 1-2, 2024. Put these events on your calendars now!

Important Dates to Remember

November 4	JHF serves at Heartland Hope Mission, 9:30 a.m.
November 17	SHF Advent Workshop set up and food prep, 6 p.m.
November 19	Advent Workshop and Lunch, noon
November 29	Children's Pageant Rehearsal, 6 p.m.
December 2	Children's Pageant Rehearsal, 2 p.m.
December 3	Children's Pageant Rehearsal, 10 a.m.
December 3	Children's Christmas Pageant, 5 p.m.
December 22	College/Young Adult Christmas Party

Preschoolers – We want YOU!

The Preschool Sunday School Class for three-, four-, and five-year-olds that haven't attended Kindergarten, meets in Room 7 on Sundays, at 10:00 a.m. Anna Flairty loves teaching this age group and invites your children and grandchildren to join her. The PCUSA curriculum, *Growing in Grace and Gratitude*, is so much fun and the perfect introduction to learning about God's love. No need to register ahead of time, just drop in. If you have any questions, please let Heather know.



Children's Christmas Pageant

The Children's Christmas Pageant will be on Sunday, December 3 at 5:00 p.m. All children (preschool – 5th grade) will be wearing costumes and singing! We would love to include youth, too! Please sign up online or let Heather know you'd like to participate.

There are mandatory rehearsals:

- Wednesday, November 29 from 6 – 7 p.m.
- Saturday, December 2 from 2 – 4 p.m.
- Sunday, December 3 from 10 – 11 a.m.

Advent Workshop

The Advent Workshop and Lunch Fundraiser will be on Sunday, November 19, 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 three 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 to reserve your spot. There is no charge for lunch, but a freewill donation will be collected. All proceeds go towards the SHF mission trip next June to Deerwood, Minnesota.

(Family craft: right)



(Kid's crafts above and left)



(Shut in craft right)



Note: SHF will be meeting on Friday, November 17 at 6 p.m. to set up and prep lunch. On Sunday, November 19, youth helpers need to arrive at 10 a.m. and need to stay to clean up and reset Fellowship Hall. Parents plan to pick up your youth at 3 p.m.

Use the QR Code below to register for any CE event:



College Kids and Young Adults - Save the Date!

The College and Young Adult Christmas Party will be hosted by Chris and Staci Voss, at their home, the evening of Friday, December 22. Please spread the word to your college age family and friends. Look for an invite in the mail soon!



Heather Berry
Director of Christian Education
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 heather@pcoc.us

CE Committee Moderator: Jeremy Cunningham

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

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



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

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

Membership Committee Co-Moderators:
Amy Boesen & Brenda Graumann —

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



Breast Cancer Support Group

For anyone currently diagnosed with Breast Cancer. Contact Karen Morey or Heather Berry for more information.

Thank You Notes

We would like to have the church and congregation (especially those who wrote me messages of support) know that I have successfully finished my two and a half year journey of overcoming stage 4, metastatic melanoma. Thank you all for your prayers and support.

- Bruce and Mary Cramer

I want to thank all for their kind well wishes and Marshall's recent visit while I was in the hospital. It's people like this, blessed in Jesus Christ, that make life wonderful. I appreciate it. Bless you all.

- Don Miller

100th Birthday for Betty Mack

We think she can. We think she can...make it to 100 years old. Betty Mack was so surprised with a 99th celebration at church between services last year that we want to do this again but not as a surprise. Our church family is the family she knows and remembers since 1961. On Sunday, November 12 between services in Fellowship Hall, we can celebrate Betty becoming a centenarian. This fellowship time will begin the week of celebrating Mom. Her birthday is November 16, and our out-of-town family begin arriving the 15 through Thanksgiving. So stop by for cake. If you would like to bring a card, I know she would appreciate your love and friendship. We never imagined anyone in our family reaching 100. She's like a "Senior" Energizer Bunny. Thank You!

- Sue Meusey and family

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

Prayer Team Coordinators:
Julie Buehler and Judy Arms



Active Minds in November

Active Minds fellowship will be playing mah-jongg for all of November and December, until we break for the Christmas Holidays. Want to learn or just curious? Please join us starting November 7. We play from 1:00-4:00 p.m. in the lower level Great Room. A table or two will also be starting after Bible Study, playing from 2-4 p.m. Please let Earlene Uhrig know if you plan to join us, so we have adequate game sets and cards. We will also have Sequence and Dominoes available for these weeks. Hope you can join us! Questions? Contact Earlene Uhrig.

Presbyterian Women on November 2

Hope you can join us as we continue studying *Sacred Encounters*. Presbyterian Women will meet November 2 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 15. Jacque Kluck will present Lesson 3 on the woman who reaches out to touch Jesus' cloak and is immediately healed.

Our "Gifting Gals Project" to benefit Heartland Hope Mission's lady clients is collecting bath and hygiene items in November (soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, etc.). We have a bin next to HHM's blue bin for food inside the circle drive entrance, should you wish to help us. Thank you to all who helped in October with the period items. For those that like to plan ahead, our future items are December Scarves and Gloves; January Socks; February Panties; March Bras; and April Sunscreen & Sunglasses. Our Gifting Gals Project is fun for us, and we hope all church members will join in donating. Questions? Contact Cindy Nisley.

Also, starting at 11:30 on November 2, the group will sew Christmas stockings for one of our mission partners. All women are invited. If you don't sew, come anyway - everyone will have a job. We will order lunch to be delivered to the church. Please contact Diane Kratz if you plan to attend.

49ers on November 7

Our speakers will be Tim and Lisa Trudell, authors of *Lost Treasures of Omaha*. Remember cruising Dodge Street? How about a family dinner at Mr. C's? Did you know Fred Astaire got his start here in Omaha? Omaha has a lot of history and trivia to offer. Join authors Tim and Lisa as they take us down a nostalgic look at our city's history. We meet for lunch at 11:30 a.m. at WHEATFIELDS, 1224

South 103rd Street (One Pacific Place). We order from a special menu provided for our group. Everyone is welcome - whether you are 49, younger, or older - come join us! For reservations and/or questions, please contact Mary Ott or Judy Sundberg. Or, sign up in the white binder at the Information Desk.

Presbyterian Men on November 12

Presbyterian Men are once again hosting an old-fashioned shrimp boil on Sunday, November 12 in Fellowship Hall at 5:30 p.m. Dave Webber, former WOWT Sports Director, will sing and entertain. Come and enjoy scrumptious 'JUMBO' fresh shrimp (or chicken cordon bleu) served with all the fixings! The cost is only \$17 per person. ALL proceeds will go to purchase baby formula for Heartland Hope Mission (HHM). Sign up and pay in advance (make checks to Presbyterian Men) at the Information Desk by Sunday, November 5. Contact Jim Miller or Frank McMullen with questions.

Friday Night Gourmets November 10

Let your inner Zorba bring you to the Friday Night Gourmets at the Greek Islands Restaurant, 3821 Center, on Friday, November 10. Our menu includes a variety of six delicious Greek inspired specialties. View the menu and sign up at the Information Desk. Socializing will start at 5:30 p.m. and we'll order dinner at 6:00. Hosts are Kathy & Paul Nickel and Cindy & Ken Nisley. Opa!!

Book Group on November 15

PCOC Book Group will meet Wednesday, November 18 from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. to review *The Last Bookshop in London* by Madeline Martin. All readers are welcome! Questions? Contact June Fettig.

Stay Active in November

Music and Movement exercise classes meet at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. every Monday and Thursday. Questions? Contact Betty Baddley.

Tai Chi meets at 10 a.m. on Mondays and Thursdays. Drop in anytime if you'd like to attend a class. Questions? Contact Paula Allen
(No classes on Thanksgiving day, of course!)



Lance and Betsy deStwolinski

When you see Larry and Judy Keating, please thank them for introducing the deStwolinskis to Church of the Cross. Lance was born in Richland, WA and grew up mostly in Southern California and Roswell, New Mexico.

He retired from Kiewit as a Vice President and Underground District Manager. In his free time, he enjoys golf, photography, family history,

model trains, and travel. Betsy was born and raised in Chandler, Arizona. She loves to play bridge, loves to read, plays golf (and in her words “she plays golf badly”). She has previously volunteered at Methodist Hospital, but later volunteered with two Hospice organizations. They returned to Omaha recently after living in Sioux City for several years to be near their daughter, son-in-law, and grandkids. Their permanent residence is Las Vegas, Nevada. They also have a son that lives in Mercer Island, WA. Please welcome Lance and Betsy to our church family.



Mike Hall

Please welcome Mike to Church of the Cross. We’d also like to thank Bob Reisser and Ann Pearson for inviting Mike and his wife Linda to visit Church of the Cross. After fifty years working for the Topeka Capital-Journal newspaper, Mike retired.

He was a reporter first and then worked as an editorial page editor and columnist. Mike enjoys reading and is a quotation collector. Mike and Linda moved to Omaha five months ago to be near their son, Dr. Benjamin Hall, and his family. First Presbyterian Church in Topeka was their home church where Mike served as an Elder, served as Clerk of Session, taught an Adult Sunday School Class, and served on the Christian Education Committee. Welcome, Mike!



Carol Gasko

Being a fairly new resident to Omaha, Carol was looking for a church. We are so glad she found Church of the Cross. She was born in Newark, New Jersey and moved to Omaha ten months ago to be close to family and enjoy cooler weather. Carol was a member of St. Luke United Methodist Church in Columbus, Georgia. She is a retired teacher and also did group sales for a Branson, Missouri Hotel. Carol enjoys gardening and bridge. Please welcome Carol to our church family!



Gena Marks

Gena chose to become a member of Church of the Cross because of the music, Bible study, and the friendliness of the congregation. Gena was born in Madison, WI, has lived in Omaha for 50 years, and previously attended Rejoice Lutheran Church in Omaha. She is a former elementary teacher and enjoys needlepoint, mah-jongg, duplicate bridge, and reading. She has been involved in many non-profit organizations. Please welcome Gena to Church of the Cross.



Our next New Member Discussion will be on Sunday, January 14, 2024.



Taking Care of Our Congregation

Holiday Baskets, Cards & Candy, Advent Dinner, Coffee Fellowship, Home Meals, Funeral Luncheons, Senior Recognition Brunch, Prayer Shawls, Peacemaker Newborn Quilts, Neighborhood Connections and Care

The Deacons at Church of the Cross have been hard at work throughout the fall season. Did you know they send Halloween greetings to our college students? We always hear such positive things about the holiday boxes our students receive, and it is just one of the many ways our congregation stays connected to our members who can't worship regularly with us. Our college students find another box of goodies in their mailbox on Valentine's Day, and our senior citizen members get an Easter Basket. Someone who is recovering from an illness or grieving the loss of a loved one may find that a home meal or two is offered from the Deacons.

For those who are regularly in church with us, there are numerous other events that the Deacons host, ranging from Coffee Fellowship every Sunday to funeral lunches when needed. The biggest event of the year is our annual Advent Dinner, which is right around the corner on Sunday, December 3.

It is no small task to organize that amazing evening and this year we are fortunate to have eight Deacons serving on the committee. We owe gratitude and a round of applause this year to committee: Piper Smith, Bidong Tot, Jerry Cornett, Karen Saunders, Carolyn Will, Danny Whitlow, Karen Smith, and Andrew Ebert. Sign up online for the Advent Dinner. We are looking forward to seeing you there!

Pictured below: Last year's Advent Dinner



Annual Christmas Pageant & Advent Dinner

**Sunday, December 3 at 6:00 p.m.
Save the Date**

Please join us for a wonderful Advent Dinner on Sunday, December 3 at 6 p.m. (immediately following the Children's Christmas Pageant). This year we are honoring our past; in addition to serving the meal, the Deacons are also cooking! The planned menu is beef brisket, roasted potatoes, vegetable, and salad (a Vegetarian entrée will also be offered). And of course, we'll have all the great desserts brought by the Congregation. Please bring your favorite dessert to share that will serve approximately eight people.

The Advent Dinner is a festive and meaningful way to start the Christmas season that includes fun, fellowship, and singing around the Yule log. Sign-up sheets will be posted in the Welcome Center and online starting in November.

Thank you,
Kathy Moore, Deacon

Deacons Moderator:
Neal Hubbard





Mission Exploration in Moldova and Romania, Part 2: Is This Romania or Transylvania?

Submitted by Karen Morey

In last month's *Cross Currents*, I described the experiences Anne Wattles and I enjoyed on the first half of our trip to Moldova and Romania with Ellen Smith and a small group of other Presbyterians. We were exploring possible mission opportunities in the countries of Eastern Europe, on behalf of our own churches as well as the Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia Mission Network (BURM).

After 7 full days in Moldova with wonderful people doing impressive work for the poor, the elderly, and Ukrainian refugees, our heads were swimming with the things we had learned. But we pressed on, traveling to Cluj-Napoca, a city in northwest Romania, where we were met by Tibor, an official in the Central District of the Reform Church of Transylvania. Tibor is Director of International Relations and Mission Coordination for the district and he was our excellent host for four jam-packed days. With his leadership, we visited many of the activities of the denomination, while also learning about the history and culture of Transylvania.

We learned that Transylvania is a geographic region in northern Romania that has been part of several different countries over the centuries. Prior to World War II, it was part of Hungary, but the region was ceded to Romania just as many other borders in Europe were changed in the post-war treaties. The people of Transylvania now continue to proudly celebrate their own culture and still speak Hungarian, though they are governed by Romania.

With the help of several young adults who are part of the Diaconal ministries, we visited the HomeCare Center, which provides senior citizen housing, palliative care, and healthcare services. Since the war in Ukraine began, the denomination has provided food and cash to 10,000+ refugees. Their current need is to provide more housing and transportation for refugees, and to expand their services to the elderly; they wish to become known throughout Romania as a source of aid for those in need.

We visited the young directors of YMCA of Transylvania (YMCA-FIKE), housed in one of the Reform Church's buildings, who shared their



SPIRIT OF MISSION

Mission Committee Moderator:
Anne Wattles

impressive programs that target the young people of Transylvania. They were especially active during the Covid pandemic, providing online encouragement, interaction, blogging, and even an online festival. The "Change Direction! Festival" originated in 2002 and is held every other year, drawing 1,000 or more participants between the ages of 14 and 25. They encouraged us to consider sending a delegation of American young people to participate in the 2024 festival, August 4-8!

Also in Cluj-Napoca, we visited the Protestant Theological Institute (90% of Romanians are Orthodox; less than 4% are Protestant, mostly Reform, Unitarian, and Lutheran) where we heard from a dean of the school, and the Unitarian House, where the director shared the history of the Unitarian Church in Romania.

On Sunday, we participated in four different church services (!), each in a small village with congregations ranging from 7 to 22 in attendance. The churches are four of the seven churches under the care of one pastor, Karoly Gaspar, an impressive preacher with a passion for service to these small congregations. Two of our group are pastors, and they took turns delivering a sermon in each service, while the pastor translated. Of course, each service ended with the congregation serving us coffee and pastries! After the last service, as the sun set in the hills, we rode back to Pastor Karoly's house, where he and his wife served a delicious dinner while we enjoyed lively conversation with them – in English.

After a morning of final meetings the next day, we began our two-day journey back to Budapest to fly home. We were too overwhelmed to process all we had seen and learned in our two weeks in these two fascinating and beautiful countries. We will continue this processing by sharing pictures of our journey with you on November 19 between services in the Welcome Center. We hope you will join us!

From the Mission Mailbox

The Mission Committee would like to share with you some of the mail we receive every month from the organizations which are the grateful recipients of your generosity. Below are the latest thank you notes we have received:



- Saving Grace Perishable Food Rescue, Inc. thanked you for the 45 pounds of food you provided them.
- Rene Myers, Ministry Engagement Advisor for the Office of Ministry Engagement and Support of the PCUSA thanks you for the \$1,820 the Shared Mission Support for the Presbyterian Mission Agency received in August. Ms. Myers said, "Thank you once again for your support, dedication, and partnership in furthering God's mission around the world. You are a valued partner in mission."
- Principal Stephanie Black expressed her gratitude for your generous support of King Elementary School. Your donation of gift cards and small gifts will be presented to the teachers during a special luncheon where teachers can relax, socialize, and enjoy some well-deserved recognition for their work.
- The 5th Annual Family Fun Day at Calvin Crest on August 19 raised over \$6,000 dollars which will support the ministry of the conference and retreat center. Craig Huffman, Executive Director wrote to thank you for your contribution to this day.
- Lutheran Family Services thanks you for your donations of furniture, household items, and gift cards which allows LFS to provide safety, hope and well-being for all people.
- Heartland Hope Mission thanks you for your contribution of \$741 that will help provide poor working families with groceries and hygiene items. Your donations also allow families in need to have access to clothing, household items and to meet with a Client Service Specialist to receive navigational services, SNAP (food stamp) application assistance, and connects them to our Job Paths program.
- Habitat for Humanity of Omaha thanks you for your gift of \$4,300 in August. Your donation is an investment that will build stronger neighborhoods and brighter futures.
- Church of the Cross is the meeting site for several PEO chapters in the Omaha area. You received a thank you note from PEO Chapter FD for a

presentation PCOC member Jean Waters gave about Church of the Cross's partnership with Grace Baptist Church of Gnozdoza in Smolensk, Russia. The group donated \$25 in support of your efforts to provide support to our partners in Russia and for our work with neighboring countries.

Refugee Update

It has been a year since our Refugee Committee declared our commitment to co-sponsor a refugee family in Omaha, and the Committee is pleased and excited to report that the Muhammad Ali family is doing very well in our joint efforts to get settled in new surroundings. What an amazing adventure we have shared, and it has delivered very rewarding results. Ali, the head of his family of eight, had stated his goal was to seek a safe place for the family where his children could receive a good education and he could find employment to support them. There have been hurdles along the way, and that was expected. Our dedicated committee, with strong leadership and generous congregational support, has made dreams a reality. The family is settled in a three-bedroom apartment, and the children are all enrolled in Omaha Public Schools. The family has work permits and banking accounts, and they are established with dentists and physicians (even one who was fluent in Arabic!). They are learning the English language well and have connected with other refugees who are able to help them get acclimated to their new environment. Our committee is moving on getting driver's permits and licenses for those who are eligible. Lutheran Family Services has closed this case but is still involved with helping Ali find employment. Health and Human Services is also ready to help in any ways that they are able. Our Congregational Life Committee is planning a reception for the family on Sunday, November 5—find the details on the front page of this issue. It will be a wonderful opportunity for the family and our church members to connect with each other and share the joy that we all feel in the work we have accomplished.

Serve at Siena Francis House

Sign up to serve dinner at Siena Francis House on Sunday, November 12, from 4:15 to 6:15 p.m. Questions? Contact Keith Allen. Join our last minute volunteer list, too! Scan our QR code to sign up online via the church website.





Family Mission Project on November 11

The Mission committee has arranged a family gathering at the Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium on Saturday, November 11 at 10 a.m. There is no cost to attend, and we will gather in the Enrichment Room to make items for the Animal Care Staff to give to various animals. After completing these projects, families are free to enjoy the rest of the zoo. This event is limited to 20 people, ages 8 and older. This will be a fun way to meet other church families, assist the zoo, and have fun exploring the #1 zoo in the nation. Sign up online. Questions? Contact Sandi Stuckey.

Agape for All - **Where All Are Welcome to Learn and Listen** Submitted by Patty Ritchie

In a 1966 speech in South Africa in opposition to apartheid, Robert F. Kennedy said, "There is a Chinese curse which says, 'May he live in interesting times.' Like it or not, we live in interesting times. They are times of danger and uncertainty; but they are also the most creative of any time in the history of mankind." We all may feel the same way today.

So here is some positive news - some "sunshine" to put in your pocket, as we continue to live and breathe and have our being in this complex world.

PCOC has so many worthwhile mission projects, and we often team up with agencies all over Omaha and beyond. As Pastor Marshall mentioned recently, we can find joy in being a part of something bigger than ourselves. A recent event gave testament to the goodwill of several people and agencies and to the ongoing efforts of healing and strengthening our community through supporting families.

A roundtable discussion entitled "Family Wholeness" took place on October 26 at Mount Moriah Baptist Church in North Omaha. An invigorating discussion and essential networking addressed four components of family wholeness: physical; emotional; mental; and spiritual. This initial panel discussion sets the stage for an Information Fair in April. Stay tuned come April.

Panelists:

- Juliet Summers / Josh Shirk - Voices for Children
- Teresa Hunter - Family Housing Advisory Services
- James Hunter - You Turn
- Doris Lassiter - Healthy Families
- Doris Moore - Center for Holistic Development
- Jimmy King – Heart Ministries
- Kevin Bagley Dir / Carissa Schweitzer Masek - Medicaid for Nebraska
- Eric Ejeike - North Omaha Area Health
- Jimmy King – Heart Ministries
- Yvonne Martinez – Centris FCU

East / West Courageous Conversations planning committees include:

- The League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha
- Mount Moriah Baptist Church
- St. Luke United Methodist Church
- Mount Calvary Community Church
- National Council of Negro Women
- 4Urban
- Civic Nebraska
- Two Presbyterian Church of the Cross members (Patty Ritchie and Kathy Moore)

You may know some of the panelists and members of the East/West Courageous Conversations Committee. This committee meets regularly to craft meaningful dialogue opportunities on topics of import to our neighbors in North Omaha.

So much good can grow from working together with agape love.

Great Opportunity!

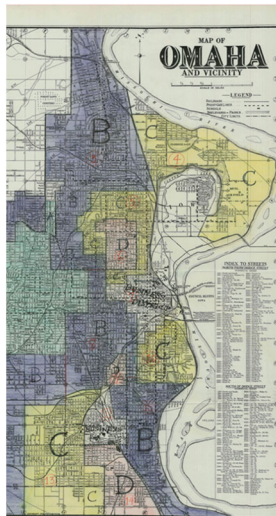
Saint Luke United Methodist Church members visited the Undesign the Redline at UNO with Agape for All. They are now hosting a workshop on Redlining at St. Luke. This workshop will have a panel of three experts and residents from Omaha that have been directly impacted by Redlining.

Redlining in Omaha: Past or Present?
 When you hear the term 'redlining' you probably think it was a discriminatory practice from the 1930s that prevented some people, mostly people of color, from buying homes. That would be a correct, but incomplete understanding of 'Redlining.'

(continues on next page)

The impact of ‘Redlining’ continues today in areas of health, food security, transportation, education, income and wealth, and more.

On Sunday, November 12 from 2-5 p.m., St Luke UMC will be hosting a Redlining Workshop to explore the lasting impact of ‘Redlining.’ Come listen to community experts and Omaha residents discuss how ‘Redlining’ continues to shape housing segregation and concentrated disadvantage in our community. A late lunch will be served, so please bring your appetite for a delicious meal along with your desire to learn more.



"Listen to community experts and Omaha residents discuss how Redlining continues to shape housing segregation and concentrated disadvantage in our city today!"

Food will be served so please come hungry!

Date: Sunday, Nov. 12, 2023

Time: 2-5 pm

Where: St. Luke UMC

11810 Burke St.

Omaha, NE 68154

This workshop is open to ALL, so please feel free to share this information with others you might know that would be interested in attending.

Please register in advance for this opportunity at <https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/2919072660120/false#/invitation>

Agape Book Report

House of Purple Cedar by Tim Tingle Submitted by Patty Ritchie

To read this book is to grapple with the very essence of forgiveness. True, this novel is a touching tale of love, family, compassion, and forgiveness. But that description only scratches the surface of a poignantly simple telling of episodes that sear through any veil of complacency towards racism. With a gentle but clear and compelling voice, and plenty of colorful characters, Tim Tingle describes a community of Choctaw people

and “whites” in Oklahoma in 1896. As readers, we are left to feel the enormous potential in each of us to love or hate ourselves and each other. We can yet again open our minds to the uniqueness of each person, place, time, and culture.

The Choctaw residents in this story are strong Christians who also embrace meaningful rituals and

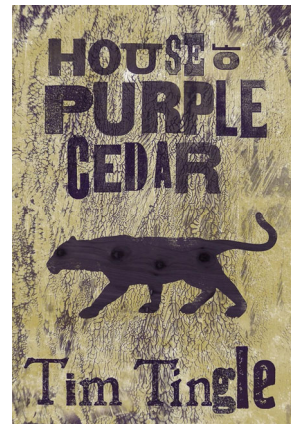
spiritual truths from their Native American ancestor culture. The wisdom of forgiveness helps us heal but is it really possible to “Let God judge?” Here is the last line of the book.

“Forgiveness slays the serpent. It withers in the Light.” I highly recommend this book for your agape journey.

A brief synopsis taken from online Kirkus Review:

“At Skullyville settlement, New Hope Academy for Girls has been destroyed by fire. Twenty Choctaw girls die. Tingle’s story spans the months following the fire as experienced by Rose Goode, a student. Rose goes home to her parents and to beloved Pokoni and Amafo, her grandparents. Shortly thereafter, Amafo visits Spiro, a town nearby, with Rose and her little brother. There, he’s viciously assaulted by town marshal Robert Hardwicke, who’s in a drunken rage. That night, Choctaw people gather, both fearing attack and planning revenge. But then, stoic, dignified Amafo says, “I will do this, speak friendly words to him and tip my hat to him, till one day he will turn away from me and they will see who is afraid.”

In quiet, often poetic language drawn from nature’s images and from Choctaw ethos, Tingle sketches Amafo, a marvelous character both wise and loving. Tingle writes of cultures clashing, certainly, but hatred from nahullos (whites) like Hardwicke is counterbalanced by the goodwill of others like John Burleson, railroad stationmaster, and one-legged store clerk Maggie Johnston. Despite assimilating elements of white culture, including Christianity, Tingle’s Choctaws maintain mystical connections to the land and its creatures. The tale is ripe with symbolism and peopled by riveting characters.”



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Next Cross Currents Deadline is:
Third Friday of the month
November 17, 2023



Daylight Savings Time ends at
2 a.m. on November 5, 2023.
Be sure to set your clocks back
one hour before going to bed on
Saturday night, so you're on time
for your church events on Sunday
morning.

Cross Currents

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For general questions about the church, contact the Church Office:
Email: churchofthecross@pcoc.us or phone: (402)333-7466

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