

All You Really Need for Christmas . . .

Holly, jolly, jingle, mingle, hustle, bustle, bake, shop, wrap, STOP! Be sure to find the peace and promise of the Advent season beneath the lights, tinsel, and bows. At Church of the Cross, we offer a full lineup of Advent activities, ranging from fun and festive to quiet and contemplative. Please join us and make your Advent season more meaningful.

Hanging of the Greens

Help us decorate the church on Saturday, December 2. Find details on page 3.

Lighting of the Advent Candles

We are looking for families to light the Advent candles and read the call to worship on Sundays during December. If your family is interested, please sign up for a service at the Information Desk in the Welcome Center.

Children's Christmas Pageant & Advent Dinner on December 3

On Sunday, December 3 at 5:00 p.m., our children are planning another amazing Christmas pageant. Join the sheep, angels, wisemen, Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus in our Sanctuary for a special Christmas message with music provided by the children. For those who sign up, the Advent Dinner will follow in Fellowship Hall. Find the dinner details on page 9.

Quiet Christmas on December 10

Starting at 4:00 p.m., this late afternoon service is a perfect way to pause the hectic pace of the season and recenter. Advent is a time to watch, wait, and prepare for the coming of the Messiah. The service will feature scripture and softer seasonal music to create a time for God to find us this season.

Advent Alleluias & Coffee Fellowship on December 17

Alleluia and Chamber Singers and Resound Ensemble will be joined by a professional chamber orchestra and guest soloists on Sunday morning, December 17 at both worship services at 9:00 a.m. and 11:10 a.m. Find details on page 3. The Congregational Life Committee invites you to bring treats to share at Coffee Fellowship that day. Please have items already cut and ready to serve. Thank You!



Christmas Eve — Sunday, December 24

Regular worship service at 11:10 a.m.

Christmas Eve — candlelight services at 5:00 & 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Joy Offering

In December, we participate in the PCUSA Christmas Joy offering. The funds from this offering are divided to support our pastor retirement fund and three of our local charities. Use the special envelopes in the pews or write "Christmas Joy" on a blue envelope.

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Not Yet Ready for Christmas

I confess that as I sit down to write this December *Cross Currents* article, I haven't yet had a chance to think much about Christmas. And then it hits me – this is exactly why we have Advent. I'm not in the Christmas Spirit yet, but through celebrating Advent, I trust that I will be. I haven't thought much about shopping for presents, but through celebrating Advent, shopping will be on my mind in due course. And what about all those other things? Christmas music? Christmas parties? Christmas goodies? The tree, the lights, the decorations? Plenty of time for all of that in Advent.

Advent is the reason we don't have to worry about missing Christmas. In the four weeks of Advent, we will have all the time we need to get ready. We will have all the time we need to let what's really important sink in.

We need to hear the carols. We need to see Christmas lights going up, house by house. We need to see more Advent candles being lit, Sunday by Sunday. We need to look forward to special worship services – either Quiet Christmas or Big Music Sunday or Christmas Eve. We need to have them on our calendars and anticipate being there in our Sanctuary.

We also need to think about why this Advent could be different than others. Maybe our children or grandchildren will be old enough to enjoy it more. Maybe we have more to be thankful for, and we realize it. Maybe we'll have family in or travel to visit someone else. Or maybe someone won't be

here this year, and their absence will cause an obvious void. Or perhaps our mobility (or lack thereof) will cause us to slow down our pace and limit our activities. No two Advents are exactly alike.

In the church calendar, Advent (not New Year's Day) begins a new year. That's right, we start the year with four weeks of anticipation, while hope, peace, joy, and love bring us again to the manger and the new-born king. Thus, we aren't ending the year on a high note, we're beginning a new year this way.

May Advent this year usher in a new season of contemplation, contentment, and anticipation into your life. Embrace Advent, embrace the waiting. Look for God to walk with you as we count down the days together. Ask God to open your mind this year to all that Christmas really means. This is why we have Advent.



Pastor/Head of Staff
Marshall Ziemann
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marshall@pcoc.us

Tuesday Bible Studies

Join Pastor Marshall as our study of the book of Exodus continues through December 12. 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)



In Other Church News . . .

Associate Pastor Search

Members of the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) have met weekly to finalize the church's resume. The resume is used to tell prospective applicants what PCOC is looking for in its next Associate Pastor. Once finalized, the resume will move through the review process before posting to the Church Leadership Connection website where we hope to attract the attention of our next Associate Pastor.

- Emily Murray, Clerk of the APNC

Session Sets Course for Fellowship Hall Renovation

In November, the Session voted to move forward with more plans for improving Fellowship Hall. In addition to the work already done (new HVAC unit on the roof, new East windows, new clerestory windows near the roof, new sound system) more upgrades are in the works, including a new ceiling, new lighting, and new flat-screen monitors.

Stay tuned for details in January as we continue to upgrade our existing facilities.



Hanging of the Greens

All are invited to help us decorate the Sanctuary at the Hanging of the Greens on December 2. Our Sanctuary is such a beautiful place during the Advent and Christmas season. It takes many hands to make it that way, and we hope you can help us! We'll hang evergreen garlands and bows and decorate trees on the morning of December 2 at 10:00 a.m. Festive music for the season and sweet treats will make for a fun morning. All ages are welcome! Please sign up online so we know how many people to expect.

A Service of
Christmas Lessons & Carols
 Monday, December 4, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
 Presbyterian Church of the Cross
 1517 S 114th Street, Omaha, NE 68144
 OMAHA
 American Guild of Organists
 CHAPTER
 All are welcome! No admission charge
Hark,
 the Herald Angels Sing
 Sing your favorite
 Christmas Carols
 led by Omaha's finest organists

Lessons & Carols Organ Concert

The Omaha Chapter of the American Guild of Organists Invites you to a service of Lessons and Carols on December 4 at 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. This is a free concert and open to the public. Join area organists for an evening of singing traditional carols and hearing scripture lessons. PCOC organist Mark Kanitz is one of the featured organists for the evening. It will be a great way to begin your Christmas season.

Usher Needed! The Worship & Music Committee needs volunteers to usher on Sundays. You can join a monthly usher team or sign up for individual Sundays. Go to the online signup form to see available openings. Thank you!



Advent Alleluias
 Sunday, December 17, 2023
 9:00 and 11:10 a.m.
 Alleluia and Chamber Singers and Resound Vocal Ensemble
 and Professional Chamber Orchestra
 With Jesse Wohlman, bass and Olivia Hacker, soprano
 Present "Fantasia on Christmas Carols" by Ralph Vaughan Williams
 And "O Magnum Mysterium" by Omaha composer David L. Gardner
 And Christmas hymns for Congregation, Choir, Orchestra and Organ

Advent Alleluias

Join us for this year's "Advent Alleluias" with Choir, Soloists, and Orchestra on Sunday, December 17. Alleluia and Chamber Singers and Resound Ensemble will be joined by a professional chamber orchestra and guest soloists at both worship services at 9:00 a.m. and 11:10 a.m. The choir will present choral works for Advent and Christmas and invite the congregation to join along on beloved hymns and carols.

This is the perfect opportunity for you to invite a friend, family member, or coworker to join you at Church of the Cross. These services are an Advent tradition in the life of our church and the surrounding community.



Kristi Treu

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

Worship & Music Committee Moderator:

Jayne Frederickson



Stewardship Update

In a recent sermon, Marshall spoke of the bridesmaids and those who prepared and those who did not. An important lesson for us as Christians is to prepare by planning and participating in Stewardship. Thank you to each member who has taken the time to complete and return a pledge for 2024.

Each morning I remind myself that I should be a blessing to others, and each evening I remind myself of the many blessings in my life. Many members who I interact with each week are on that list.

The Finance Committee, the Personnel Committee, and the Session are all working together to prepare a balanced budget for 2024, and our future looks financially fit. THANK YOU!

Wrapping Up the Capital Campaign

Certainly, a highlight for 2023 is the completion of the Welcome Center and the other infrastructure improvements to our facility and grounds.

I hope you are comfortable and feel like you belong at Church of the Cross when you enter our new front doors. As winter approaches, it will be wonderful to have the fireplace burning on Sunday morning.

The new room signage on the windows has been carried down the hall. Rooms 13, 14 & 15 are now marked visibly and include new works of art on the walls.

As a reminder, we will be closing out all final payments. Please make every effort to complete your Capital Campaign commitment. Church of the Cross has been fortunate to have not borrowed funds yet for this project. Monthly commitments will continue during 2024 and 2025 to help members cash flow their commitment.

This has been an amazing venture, and we are blessed to be able to use our facility as we plan for future generations.

Per Capita Stated for 2024

Per Capita has been set at \$40.20 per member for 2024. For young families, please remember that membership includes only those confirmed and not younger children. Per Capita goes to offset the administrative costs for our Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. As a connectional church, we need to maintain effective channels for communication and coordination so that our ministry as Presbyterians works well.



Rock Sumner
Business Administrator
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rock@pcoc.us

Finance Committee Moderator:
Mimi Bauer

Building and Grounds Committee
Moderator: Casey Ballou



Cross Care
connections

Cross Care Connections provides a personally tailored relationship with a fellow church member to walk with you at life's most challenging times. These trained compassionate individuals can provide confidential support to help you navigate major life events.

- During an illness or following a medical diagnosis
- Following the loss of a loved one or another traumatic event

- After a job loss
- When you are feeling alone and chatting with someone would brighten your day
- Following a major life change like a new baby or an empty nest
- When you are the sole caregiver for an aging or ill loved one
- After a miscarriage
- When you are trying to be strong for someone else
- If you are struggling with the failure of a marriage or relationship

Contact Marshall or Rock in the church office for more information about this program or to request a Cross Care provider.

Children's Christmas Pageant December 3 at 5:00 p.m.

All are invited to attend the Children's Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 3 at 5:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Children of all ages will be participating in the pageant. The Advent Dinner will follow. RSVP for the dinner is required, but all are welcome at the pageant. We hope to see you there!

College & Young Adult Christmas Party December 22

The College and Young Adult Christmas Party will be hosted at the home of Chris and Staci Voss on Friday, December 22 at 5:30 p.m. Parents, look for an invitation in your mailboxes and encourage your college-age kids to attend. Please spread the word and don't forget to RSVP to Staci Voss. We hope to see you there!

Adult Education

Bach's St. Matthew Passion Led by Cindy Sloan

Sundays, January 7 – February 11 at 10:00 a.m.

About this class from Cindy: Bach considered his St. Matthew Passion his "Great" Passion, his greatest work. To many musicians and music scholars, it is his greatest work. It contains music of unequalled beauty and skill, profound theological insights, and truths about God and humanity. Peter Kalkavage states that Bach "was reaching out to all his fellow human beings, believers and nonbelievers alike, and impressing upon them what was for him the potent truth of the Christian faith." To many, listening to it is not only a journey into the suffering, the passion, of Christ but also to understand the great love that God has for us and to contemplate individually and corporately what this love from the cross means.

We will listen to and study five sections of the Passion focusing on the compositional process, the theological issues presented through the music, and discuss what we all hear and feel in the music. Bach was trying to move and convince us of the importance of the crucifixion by journeying with him through the musical setting of the words of Matthew, arias that reflect on the action of the story, choruses that are part of the people witnessing the events, and chorales that we all sing together providing for us the truth of each section.

Important Dates to Remember

December 2	Pageant Rehearsal, 2 p.m.
December 3	Pageant Rehearsal, 10 a.m.
December 3	Christmas Pageant, 5 p.m.
December 10	Children and Youth Sunday School Ends
December 22	College/Young Adult Christmas Party, 5:30 p.m.
January 7	Children and Youth Sunday School begins
	Bach's St. Matthew Passion Class begins
January 10	Cornerstone begins

I have studied this work for many years and each time brought me to tears and figuratively brought to my knees by its power. I hope you will join and share with me this journey.

Register online by December 25.

Cornerstone Resumes January 10

Looking for something to do on Wednesday nights? Want to grow closer to God and build community with people at church? Then, join us at Cornerstone! Gathering mid-week to study, sing, and sup with your church family is just what you need. Look for more details soon, and register online by January 1.

Save the Date – SHF Garage Sale

Several have asked if we will be having a garage sale this year. I am happy to report that it is happening on July 27, 2024. You may start saving your treasures now, but we don't have room to store them, so keep them with you until we start collecting them in July.



Heather Berry
Director of Christian Education
(402)333-7466 Ext. 2
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



Tables for Eight Winter Session

The registration deadline for the Winter Session (January, February, March, April) of Tables for Eight is December 10. New participants (couples or singles) are always welcome to join this fellowship opportunity. You can choose to be a “regular” or a “substitute.” Details are on the Tables for Eight on the registration form. Sign up online or find the form at the Information Desk in the Welcome Center online. For the upcoming Winter Session, current “regular” members are automatically assigned to a new group and “substitutes” will remain on the list unless you notify Pam Otto. If you dropped out last session and want to return as a regular or substitute, please contact Pam Otto by phone, text, or email.

Active Minds

Active Minds fellowship will be playing mah-jongg for December until we break for the Christmas holidays. Want to learn or just curious? Please join us starting December 5. 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.

GALS Cookie Exchange on December 2

Let's have some fun and fellowship trading our homemade Christmas cookies and candies on Saturday, December 2 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Welcome Center. Sign up online! Questions? Contact Staci Voss.

49ers on December 5

Our speaker will be Erick Ewing, Executive Director, Great Plains Black History Museum. 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.



Keep Moving in December

Music and Movement exercise classes meet at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. every Monday and Thursday. Their holiday break starts Dec. 18 through Jan. 1. 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. No class on Dec. 25 or Jan. 1. Questions? Contact Paula Allen.

Presbyterian Women on December 7

Presbyterian Women will continue *Sacred Encounters* on December 7 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 15. In lesson 4, Cindy Nisley is taking a new look at the Mary and Martha encounter with Jesus.

Our Gifting Gals Project with Heartland Hope Mission in December is collecting Scarves & Gloves. We have a bin inside the circle drive, should you wish to help us. Thank you to all who have helped us the last couple months. Our future collecting will be: Jan. Socks; Feb. Panties; Mar. Bras; April Sunscreen & Sunglasses. We appreciate any items you can donate as do the lady clients at Heartland Hope Mission. Questions? Contact Cindy Nisley.

Friday Night Gourmets December 8

The Friday Night Gourmets will meet on Friday, December 8 at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Tim and Kris Goodman (address available in church directory). Please sign up at the Information Desk in the Welcome Center for what you would like to bring to this hearty hors d'oeuvre evening. This is a BYOB event, but the hosts will serve a signature cocktail. For questions call Kris at Goodman or AJ and Judy Sundberg. It's sure to be a festive evening!!

Book Group on December 20

PCOC Book Group will meet Wednesday, December 20 from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. to review *Women Who Built Omaha* by Eileen Wirth. All readers are welcome! Questions? Contact Charlotte Hubbard.

Fellowship Club Christmas Party on December 17

After a several year hiatus, the Fellowship Club is back! Join us for a Christmas Party and gift exchange on Sunday, December 17 at 5:00 p.m. in the Welcome Center. Couples and singles are welcome to attend. Each person attending is asked to bring a gift not to exceed \$25. White elephant gifts are welcome. Each couple or single is asked to bring an appetizer or dessert. Non-alcoholic seasonal beverages will be provided.

Presbyterian Men on December 16

Presbyterian Men will ring bells for the Salvation Army's Christmas campaign on Saturday, December 16 at Hy-Vee on 132nd and Dodge. Each volunteer rings during a 1-hour shift from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We will have two ringers at each door (east and west) per shift. This is an easy, enjoyable opportunity to assist the Salvation Army's efforts in helping those in need during the Christmas season. Please sign up at the Information Desk by Sunday, December 10. Thanks to Jim Chapin for coordinating this activity.



Shrimp Bowl Thank You

What a fantastic event, a record 112 people attended the Presbyterian Men's Shrimp Boil on Sunday, November 12. Many thanks for attending as the proceeds were donated to Heartland Hope Mission



(HHM) for baby formula! Tablecloths were red and white gingham check with sea shells, and decorations were hung around Fellowship Hall. Everyone loved the delicious menu that chef, Jim Miller, and his crew created, and thanks for his amazing organizational skills. Everyone enjoyed jumbo shrimp (a few had chicken cordon bleu), red potatoes, almond-laced beans, coleslaw, an Italian roll, and several desserts.

Thank you to these awesome guys for organizing, buying food, setting up, decorating, promoting sign-ups, collecting money, cooking, serving and cleaning up: Jim Miller, Chuck Baddley, Ken Nisley, Gary Fitch, Dan Scanlan, Tim Graumann, Scott Stalnaker, Lloyd Meyer, Roger Utman, Gary Lippstreu, Doug Wells, Darold Bauer, Neal Hubbard, Tim Goodman, Jim Chapin, Frank McMullen, Loren Penkava, Bruce Cramer, Tim Jerry, Brad Burch, Carl Greiner, AJ Sundberg, and Jon Boomgaarden. It takes a village – what a great team!

We were very blessed that two centenarians attended: Betty Mack & Bill Reisser are pictured right.

Dave Webber, former WOWT Sports Director, played guitar, sang folk songs & was accompanied by Bill Ritchie on bass that involved many audience sing-a-longs. The night's festivities are pictured below.



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



Breast Cancer Support Group

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



- 12/1 Joan Boomgaarden, Char Fehr, John Fettig,
John Morey, Kathy Thornton
- 12/2 William Smith
- 12/3 Piper Smith
- 12/4 Jenny Bruce, Izzy Piotrowski
- 12/5 Dee Coffey, John Hall
- 12/7 Nathalie Hart, Helen McNiven,
Kevin O'Neill Jr., Libby Whitlow
- 12/8 Addison Hansen Holdren, Ken Kluck,
Jan Steffa, Joe Trapp
- 12/9 Sam Arnold, Beth Morris,
Jeffrey Swenson, Webb Versaw
- 12/10 Dennis Boesen, Ryan Davelaar,
Kathy Moore, George Rath
- 12/11 Sydney Goodwin, Nadine Jenkins,
Robin Kussman
- 12/13 Angela Ayika, Holly Baddley,
Maudie Brantz, Paula Hazelrigg
- 12/14 Cindy Garner, Marinell Neuhaus
- 12/15 Shirley Emig
- 12/16 Adam Buda, Aaron Fettig, Matthew Reid
- 12/17 Lee Harlan, Janet Wallace,
Charlene Weyand
- 12/18 Barbara Thompson
- 12/19 Jim Conway, Douglas Corum,
Charlene Meyer
- 12/21 Irene Boomgaarden, Katie Gerot
- 12/22 Kristin Johnson, Karleen Nelson
- 12/23 Jacob Bumsted, Carole Sieck,
Tom Stalnaker
- 12/24 Ken Burson, Kim Spencer
- 12/25 Toni Craig, Sawyer Dittman, Paul Price
- 12/26 Howard Anderson, Julie Driftmier,
Tammy Holdren, Gary Lippstreu
- 12/27 Brian Weyant
- 12/28 Ardys Hansum, Brooklyn Miller,
David Tchona, Clarence Waters,
Jackie Youngstrom
- 12/29 Charlotte Avivor, Louis Knight,
Ginger Petersen-Britt, Tori Wright
- 12/30 T. J. Davey, Mark Mathia, Paul Nickel Jr.,
Chris Rath, Marla Vanneman, Staci Voss
- 12/31 Bob Allen, Amavi Amela, Avis Polacek,
Mary Reid, Chelsea Spielman

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

Prayer Requests

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



Invite a friend to church during Advent!



Next New Member Discussion January 14, 2024

Do you know someone who is looking for a church home? Invite them to visit this month — Advent at Church of the Cross is a wonderful time of year to show off what our church has to offer!

Our next New Member Discussion will be on Sunday, January 14, 2024 after the worship service. The discussion will last about an hour, and a light lunch will be provided.

Scan our QR code to sign up online or call the church office to register!



Membership Committee Co-Moderators:
Amy Boesen & Brenda Graumann

Deacons 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*

Deacons Doings in December

By the time you receive this *Cross Currents*, you might be baking your favorite dessert to take to the annual **Advent Dinner on Sunday, December 3**. Jerry Cornett and our own Deacon committee will be preparing the wonderful brisket dinner that we will enjoy that night. In addition to Jerry, the committee deserves a round of applause for their work and planning. They are Piper Smith, Bidong Tot, Karen Saunders, Carolyn Will, Danny Whitlow, Karen Smith, and Andrew Ebert. And of course, it takes many hands to make light work of this amazing event, so thanks to all of the Deacons who will help with set up the day before, serve the night of, and clean up following the event.

Those same Deacons will also be helping to ensure that all of our members feel connected to our congregation in one way or another. Greetings will be sent from our neighborhood care person, and holiday baskets will be delivered to those members who are often unable to attend church. Pictured below, deacon Neal Hubbard shows off the nativity craft that our members made at the Advent Workshop for the baskets. About 50 holiday baskets are filled and ready for delivery.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas Season and look forward to seeing what the New Year holds for Presbyterian Church of the Cross.

Merry Christmas and Thank you,
Kathy Moore, Deacon



Deacons Moderator:
Neal Hubbard

Annual Advent Dinner Sunday, December 3 6:00 p.m.

(begins after the Children's
Christmas Pageant)

Menu

Beef brisket*
Roasted potatoes
Vegetable
Salad
*or vegetarian entrée



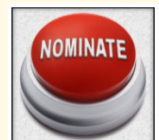
Please bring a dessert to share that will serve approximately eight people.

The festivities continue after dinner with Christmas carols outside around the Yule Log.

**Sign up online or at the Information Desk
in the Welcome Center
by Sunday, November 26.**

Nominate an Officer Today!

In the Presbyterian Church, we have the privilege and responsibility of nominating and electing our own congregational leaders. Now is the time to nominate a new class of Elders and Deacons. Your input is both appreciated and necessary! Forms are available online, in the Church Office, and at the Information Desk. The deadline is December 17. Questions? Contact a member of the church nominating committee: John Bennett, John Fettig, Susan Geschwender, Pam Swenson, Mimi Bauer, and Lowell Wilhite.





BURM — Energy, Enthusiasm, & Room for Expansion

Submitted by Jean Waters

The annual conference of the Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia Mission (BURM) Network was held at Presbyterian Church of the Cross on November 2-4. We had many of our members in attendance plus many from other churches who have relationships with Russian churches through our mission co-worker, Ellen Smith.



Our conference included an informative presentation about Eastern Europe, the diversity of the people, their religion, their history, and the shifting borders of the countries there. Energy came especially from 16 students who attended all or part of the conference. We learned about peacebuilding in Europe through LCC International University and the peacemaking initiatives and resources of PCUSA. It is fair to say that people left with renewed energy and enthusiasm to travel in Eastern Europe, to visit and listen to our existing and new partners there, to hone our skills, and to help make connections.

Dr. Nicolae Roddy, Professor in the Theology Department at Creighton University and a native of Romania, provided background on the history and people in Eastern Europe. He reminded us that the span from east to west of the region shown is



SPIRIT OF MISSION

Mission Committee Moderator:
Anne Wattles

about half the distance across the U.S. (1300 miles). The north to south distance is 1100 miles. The religious diversity includes countries that are primarily Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or mixed with Orthodox or Catholic, Protestants, and unaffiliated. He explained some major sociocultural considerations that exist on a continuum.

Westerners are more on the left side, Eastern Europeans are more on the right side but it's mixed.

Individual ----- Communal orientation
Guilt (moral) ----- Shame (social) in self-perceived attitudes and expectations
Personal responsibility ----- Sense of insignificance (especially post-communism)

We all have a lot to learn - we hope you'll join us on the journey!

The Rev. Carl Horton, coordinator of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program came to this conference. The peacemaking program has many resources of interest to groups at PCOC. Also, his office is planning a travel study to Lithuania Oct 14-24 with Ellen Smith. Members of PCOC may be interested to join in this opportunity!

Ellen Smith, our mission co-worker, updated us on her travels and the people she met in Lithuania,

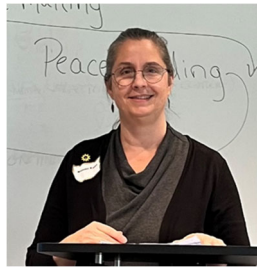


Moldova, and Romania. PCOC continues to be blessed with the relationship with Ellen. We can travel with her and benefit from the connection with Christians across the world. We can learn from them as well as give to them.

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Namoi Enns, the Director of the Peace Center for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation at LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, shared the difficulty that some of the LCC students have with each other because their countries are at war with each other. She taught us how she helps the students come together and understand their emotions and find ways to move forward. We participated in an exercise to improve communications and help us see points that allow change towards reconciliation and resolution. LCC University offers innovative opportunities for American students to take a “gap” year and study at LCC. We think this is a unique and exciting opportunity for our youth at PCOC.



We closed out the conference with a world café workshop led by PCOC elder, Karen Morey. The idea mural (created by PCOC elder and artist, Patty Ritchie, pictured at top of next column) included ideas and themes generated from the workshop dis-



cussions: "we are called to love," "we are a connectional denomination," "we can learn from each other," "the need is greater than ever," "we have skills we can build upon and share," and many more.

There was a lot of energy, even at the end of the conference. People are renewed and ready to do more. We hope you will join us now and in the future!!! Save the date: next year's conference will be held October 24-26, 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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:

- 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." We give \$1,820 monthly to this PCUSA office.
- Heartland Hope Mission thanks you for the contribution of \$9,500 that will help provide poor working families with grocery and hygiene items. The donations also provide access to clothing, household items, a Client Service Specialist who provides navigational assistance, SNAP (food stamp) application assistance, and connects them to the HHM Job Paths program.
- Voices for Children thanks you for your \$7,050 Partner Sponsorship for the 2023 "Fall So Hard" for Voices for Children Gala September 22, 2023. Your contribution helped net more than \$74,000 toward Voices for Children's annual fundraising goal to make their advocacy work on behalf of Nebraska's children and families possible.



Zoo Mission Project Submitted by Sandi Stuckey

Thank you to all the families that attended the Family Mission Outreach at the Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium Saturday on November 11. The group crafted 6 very large paper-mache balloons that will enhance our large animals Christmas and 17 smaller ones.



It was a fun morning. After the Enrichment Center project, the families were able to spend time exploring the zoo. We will have more family outreach projects in the future.

Serve at Siena Francis House

Sign up to serve dinner at Siena Francis House on Sunday, December 10, from 4:15 to 6:15 p.m. Questions? Contact Keith Allen. Sign up online via the church website.



Thanksgiving for Completely Kids Submitted by Gayle Kerr-McFadden

PCOC provided 90 Thanksgiving bags to families in need through our mission partner Completely Kids. This year's confirmation class and their parents (pictured above) assembled the bags at PCOC, and Completely Kids distributed them at their site on November 22.

Each bag included canned corn, turkey gravy, stuffing, rolls, mashed potatoes, a 4 lb. bag of sugar for baking, and a \$20 gift card to Hy-Vee for use towards meat or other grocery items for a Thanksgiving meal. Thank you for your generosity in supporting the special Thanksgiving offering each year that makes this mission effort possible.



OPS Winter Clothing Project Submitted by Rob Bailey

The 2023 OPS Coats, Clothing and Shoes Mission Event benefitting Walnut Hill, King, Dodge, Bancroft and Sherman elementary schools has wrapped up. Following the collection of needs from the school administrators in late October, Kristin Johnson used our inflation-adjusted budget of \$6200 to purchase the following items: 127 winter coats; 250 hand-knit scarves, 88 pairs of sweatpants, 45 sets of shoes, 30 sets of winter gloves, 15 packs of socks, 65 long and short sleeve shirts, 21 packs of underwear, and 60 assorted other garments. Deliveries were completed on November 10 and 14 by Julie Buehler and Rob Bailey. Thank you PCOC!

Christmas Donation Trees

Our JHF group decorated the Angel Tree in the Narthex. Please take an angel, buy a gift for a child in need, and return it to the church. Instructions and due dates are printed on each angel. The gifts will be delivered to Heartland Hope Mission where families in need can choose presents for their children in December.

You'll find our wooden mission giving tree in the Lobby outside the Church Office. Use the donation envelopes to give to one of the PCOC missions listed on the tree.

Agape Book Report Submitted by Lucinda Sloan

In this era where competing ideologies and narratives spar over how our history should be taught, *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History* by Ned Blackhawk does not rewrite our narrative, but enhances and completes it. He writes that if we have come to understand how slavery relates to "the making of America," why have America's "original caretakers" remained almost nonexistent in our narrative? Native American scholars maintain that American Indians were and are central to every century of U.S. historical development.

The book covers five centuries and includes all the European nations who attempted to colonize America. The word colonize is accurate because what Europe attempted was the harvesting of America's wealth: its land, minerals, gold, food, animal products, wood, and water. In doing so, everything the Native Americans considered sacred was taken, leaving nothing in its place but waste and destruction. Europeans resorted to violence in order to get this wealth. The Indians were eliminated through genocide, forced to leave their homes and land with deportation, and lied to regularly through broken treaties.

As the controlling government, the Europeans tried to assimilate the Native Americans by forcibly removing their children from their homes and families and placing them in boarding schools where they would be "educated." The children were forced to speak only English and wear only European clothing. They were denied any practice of their religion, culture, or arts. The goal was to "remove the Indian from them." Five centuries later this process of assimilation has remained a

failure. They continue to insist on the right to earn a living as they see fit, to live on their sacred lands, to continue to practice their religion, keep their children, and have their own governmental agencies. They desire to be free from racial discrimination.

Native Americans fought for America as soldiers in both World Wars, without the benefits of citizenship. After the Civil War they were not included in the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. They argued that they should have dual citizenship. The words of Senator Orville Platte (Senator from Connecticut from 1879-1905) speak volumes: "The Redman has no right which the white man is bound to respect andno treaty or contract made with him is binding."

As a child I wondered why Ohio had so many Indian names. The name Ohio is from the Indian word "ohi-yo" which means "beautiful river." There are 14 counties, lakes, and cities that have Indian names. I never learned this. I also never learned where the Indians went after the English defeated the French and took control of the Great Lakes area. I did learn that the Indians fought with both the French and the English in their wars. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Every page of the book contains facts about America that I never knew. There is never a tone of accusation or condemnation. It is a straight-forward retelling of American history taking into account the narrative of the Native Americans who were the original caretakers of this land. The author does get to tell the story of his people so that we realize how incomplete our American history is without them. I recommend every teacher read this book. It is beautifully written and includes the numerous, essential, and unknown contributions made to America by Native Americans. As a nation, we are incomplete if we do not know the history of the Original Americans.



Holiday Church Services & Closings

Sunday, December 24 — regular worship at 11:10 a.m. only; Christmas eve services at 5 & 7:00 p.m.

Monday, December 25 — Closed

Tuesday, December 26 — Closed

Sunday, December 31 — single worship service at 11:10 a.m.

Monday, January 1 — Closed

Presbyterian Church of the Cross
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**Next Cross Currents Deadline is:
Third Friday of the month
December 15, 2023**



Advent Workshop. Everyone had a blast at the Advent Workshop and Lunch! The SHF youth were excited to serve 100 of us a delicious pasta lunch. A special thanks goes out to Renee and Jerry Cornett for their guidance, patience, and oversight in preparing the meal with the high schoolers. After lunch, everyone enjoyed making crafts, with parents, JHF leaders, and JHF youth guiding them step by step. You should thank Gayle Hoybook and Carla Fritz for selecting, purchasing, and prepping the crafts – weren't they great?! In the end, SHF collected \$278 in donations that will be used to help fund their mission trip to Minnesota in June. Thank you as always for your support!

Cross Currents

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