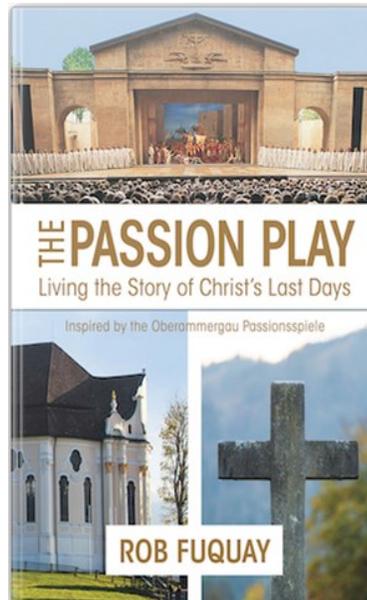




2025 LENTEN STUDY

One of our most meaningful churchwide activities is starting soon – The Lenten Study! Small groups will begin a 6-week study on March 9 and end on Palm Sunday, April 13. Rob Fuquay’s book, *The Passion Play, Living the Story of Christ’s Last Days*, has been chosen as this year’s study. The Lenten Study is a great opportunity to get to know others in our church family while preparing for Easter. We hope you will join us! Find more information on the Lenten Study on Page 5 with the Christian Education News.



Classes will be offered the following days and times:

- Sundays at 10 a.m.
- Sundays at 5 p.m.
- Mondays at 1:30 p.m.
- Thursdays at 7 p.m. on Zoom

ASH WEDNESDAY — MARCH 5

You’re invited to a meaningful service with the imposition of ashes. The service will begin in the Sanctuary at 6:45 p.m. following Cornerstone dinner. The service will be livestreamed also.



SUPER THANKFUL FOR 10 YEARS OF MINISTRY!

Becky and I want to thank everyone for celebrating my Ten-Year Anniversary with a fun Tailgate Party! Thank you for the lunch, all the kind words, so many cards, and the generous donations. The years have truly flown by! It is a joy to be your pastor. Daily I am reminded of your good work in the gospel in so many ways. Let’s keep it up!



In This Issue:

Message from Our Pastor — Page 2

A Note from Our Associate Pastor — Page 3

Business Updates — Page 4

Christian Education News — Page 5

Deacons Update — Page 6

Music Notes — Page 6

Our Church Family — Pages 7, 8 & 9

Fellowship Groups/Events — Page 9

Updates on the Church — Page 10

Spirit of Mission — Pages 11, 12, & 13



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

Phone:
(402)333-7466

Fax:
(402)697-9084

Email:
churchofthecross@pcoc.us

Website:
churchofthecrossomaha.org



“Draw Near to God”

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. This year, Ash Wednesday occurs on March 5. As usual, we will have a service in the sanctuary at 6:45pm to begin our journey to Easter with the imposition of ashes on our foreheads in the sign of the cross. Forty days later (not counting the six Sundays along the way), Easter will be here.

Lent is one of the oldest observances in the Christian calendar. Like all Christian holy days and holidays, it has changed over the years, but its purpose has always been the same: self-examination and penitence, demonstrated by self-denial, in preparation for Easter. We need the season of Lent to get us fully ready to celebrate on Easter!

Some folks traditionally have observed the practice of denying themselves “by giving up something” for Lent. I suppose by giving up something – “sacrificing something” - this would perhaps remind you to think of the sacrifice that Christ made for us. If this works for you, then I’m glad. We all need to be more penitent and reflective, especially during Lent. I confess, though, that this generally never works for me like it’s supposed to. Whenever I’ve tried to give something up for Lent (soda pop, candy, snacks, sleeping in, etc.) I often just end up being grumpy or resentful or just giving in, which makes for a very long Lent.

Others try to focus on giving up something negative (like procrastinating, swearing, complaining, worrying, etc.) by doing something positive in its place. Some take on a new activity, such as volunteering. Some add an exercise routine where they can devote part of it to prayer. Many will join a Lenten Study group at church, reading a book together and meeting regularly to discuss it.

I think a main theme of Lent is found in this famous verse, James 4:8 – “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” Remember that God desires, even more than we do, that we draw near to him. Whenever you’re tempted to think that God is far away, take these words to heart.

From now through mid-April we will prepare to approach the cross and the empty tomb. So, I invite you, in the ancient words,

“to observe a Holy Lent,
by self-examination and penitence,
by prayer and fasting,
by works of love, and by reading
and meditating on the Word of God.”

Instead of just waking up tomorrow and realizing that Easter is here again, we first observe a season of Lent, to prepare us anew to fully celebrate together the Greatest Story Ever Told. We are setting out on another great journey together.

Let’s all try to draw even nearer to God and to others between now and Easter on April 20.

Your pastor and friend,



**Pastor/Head of Staff
Marshall Ziemán**
(402)333-7466 Ext. 1
marshall@pcoc.us

Marshall Ziemán

Tuesday Bible Studies

The Tuesday Bible Studies will conclude our study of Romans on March 4. Beginning March 11, we’ll begin a new study focusing on another book of the Bible. Newcomers are always welcome; just bring your favorite Bible and join us in the classroom in the Welcome Center at either 7:00 (men) or 1:00 (everyone).

Choose a Sunday to Help!

If you are looking for a way to serve the church, please consider filling one of our open usher spots. You can now sign up online for individual Sundays.



Ushers Needed

Questions? Contact
Mary Lynn Bennett



An Irish Blessing

Many Presbyterians know that our theological roots can be found in the writings and preachings of John Calvin, who lived and ministered to his congregation in 16th century Geneva, Switzerland. Some Presbyterians know that our denominational roots can be traced back to the Church of Scotland; particularly, in the evangelism and works of John Knox, who presided over the pulpit at St. Giles Cathedral in 16th century Edinburgh. But few Presbyterians realize how important the role of the Irish monks were in terms of faith formation in Western European Christianity. To understand that role, one must step back in time... quite a bit.

A thousand years before the Reformation, in the 6th century, the early European Church was embroiled in constant controversy and plagued by corruption. At that point in time, Church offices came with a lot of power and territory and were thus an intelligible “occupational” pursuit for the European aristocracy in their various principalities and kingdoms. This reality did little to promote and spread the “good news” in an accessible and authentic way.

Enter the Irish monks.

Finding their context far from the courts and practices of Christian-political powerhouses like Rome, the Frankish Kingdom, and the Byzantine Empire, the Irish version of Christianity was marked more by ascetic commitment and impoverished piety than hierarchical ambition. Counterculturally, the monks who defined Irish faith were known for their self-denial, not greed, for their heightened spiritual focus, not self-centeredness. In a time when the institutional church of Europe was increasingly being driven by human pursuits, when everyday people felt further and further distanced from their local representatives of Christianity, the Irish monks singlehandedly brought our faith back to the Cross by their mission work across their continent.

As we go forth into the month of March and St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, let us meditate on the 6th century Irish roots of our faith. Namely, how do we answer the question, are we choosing to live out and follow the gospel in ways that are accessible and authentic? I’m not saying we should all become monks and join an abbey, or take vows of poverty and ship off to the far-flung corners of the world. Surely God has different plans for us and our de-

nomination. But what does our version of that kind of faith look like in motion? Can our example of faith shape the future?

Fun facts: it was actually the Irish monk Columba who first brought the Christian faith to Scotland in the 6th century when he helped to create a monastery on the island of Iona; another Irish monk, Ursicinus, founded a mission in Switzerland in the 6th century. This means both geographical cradles of our Presbyterian faith were influenced by Irish monks.



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.

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



Associate Pastor
Joshua Garry
(402)333-7466 Ext. 2
josh@pcoc.us

Deacon Moderator
Patti Sparks

Membership :Co-Moderators
Brenda Graumann and Earlene Uhrig



The View from My Office

MARCH IS FOR QUICK READING JOIN US FOR THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

The Old Testament reading for March are from Numbers and Deuteronomy. Much of the material here is similar to what we have been reading in the second half of Exodus and Leviticus.

Again, try not to get bogged down in the details. I attempt to read quickly and then pause to look more closely at relations and laws that seem curious or noteworthy. It is hard for me to understand all the sacrifices that are constantly made by everyone. Or how the priest had time to meet with so many people for decision making let alone the time it would have taken to sacrifice the animals properly.

In Numbers, which covers the time they are in the wilderness. I imagine this as a time of wandering, or rather in God’s time not our time. Notice how many times they complain, commit mutiny, and break commandments God has so recently given them. What we will find in the end is that mercy triumphs over judgement. God remains faithful to the covenant with his people.

The second half of the month we will be reading from Deuteronomy, the name of this book simply means “second Law.” Many feel that it is a summary of the regulations God has given Isreal. It is in a way, a constitution for the nation in the Promised Land. This book is also very important to the New Testament and is quoted often.

And speaking of the New Testament, during March we will complete the book of Acts and read much of Romans. Acts centers on Paul and his missionary activities. This is a very exciting portion to read and ponder about. A Gentile doesn’t need to be Jewish first? One only needs faith in Christ alone. Everyone has an equal footing. For Jewish listeners, Paul’s message is provocative.

Romans is Paul’s most important letter, not only because of its well-rounded explanation of the gospel, but because of the influence it has had on so many great leaders of the church throughout history. It will be fun since Marshall’s Bible studies

on Tuesdays will be finishing up their discussion on Romans in February. Plenty to chew on as you consider where your spiritual life is today.

MARCH	Scripture Reading
1	Numbers 6, 7 / Psalms 26, 27
2	Numbers 8, 9 / Acts 16
3	Numbers 10, 11 / Acts 17
4	Numbers 12, 13, 14 / Psalms 28, 29
5	Numbers 15, 16 / Acts 18
6	Numbers 17, 18, 19 / Acts 19
7	Numbers 20, 21 / Acts 20
8	Numbers 22, 23 / Psalm 30
9	Numbers 24, 25 / Acts 21
10	Numbers 26, 27 / Acts 22
11	Numbers 28, 29 / Psalm 31
12	Numbers 30, 31 / Acts 23
13	Numbers 32, 33 / Acts 24
14	Numbers 34, 35 / Acts 25
15	Numbers 36 / Deuteronomy 1 / Psalm 32
16	Deuteronomy 2, 3 / Acts 26
17	Deuteronomy 4, 5 / Acts 27
18	Deuteronomy 6, 7 / Psalm 33
19	Deuteronomy 8, 9 / Acts 28
20	Deuteronomy 10, 11 / Romans 1
21	Deuteronomy 12, 13, 14 / Romans 2
22	Deuteronomy 15, 16 / Psalm 34
23	Deuteronomy 17, 18 / Romans 3
24	Deuteronomy 19, 20 / Romans 4
25	Deuteronomy 21, 22 / Psalm 35
26	Deuteronomy 23, 24 / Romans 5
27	Deuteronomy 25, 26 / Romans 6
28	Deuteronomy 27, 28 / Romans 7
29	Deuteronomy 29, 30 / Psalm 36
30	Deuteronomy 31, 32 / Romans 8
31	Deuteronomy 33, 34 / Romans 9



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

Finance Committee Moderator:
Jeff Friesen

Building and Grounds Committee Moderator:
Josh Murray



Save the Date!

**Road Trip – On the Go with God
Vacation Bible School**
Tuesday – Thursday, July 15 – 17
9 a.m. to Noon
4 yrs – 5th Grade (completed)



Join us in a fun-filled adventure on the open road, taking all the kids (Travelers) on thrilling journeys to exciting destinations. Led by the Navigator and an adventurous pup Scout, kids will learn that God is always with them. Through engaging stories from the Navigators' Guide (the Bible), Travelers will delve into timeless tales of faith from the Old and New Testaments. Get ready for twists, turns, and excitement as they face new challenges and find strength in God's presence on this unforgettable trip!

Register online by May 1.

Adults and teens, we need YOU! We are forming our leadership team now. Contact Heather to serve our children.

The Calvin Crest Experience

Most of you are familiar with the little gem we call Calvin Crest just down the road in Fremont. Calvin Crest offers opportunities for fun, community, adventure, and growth during the summer through their summer camp experience. Calvin Crest is purposely low-tech, which means that they focus on building relationships without the big toys and high adventure that other camps offer. Campers spend their days in Bible Study, games, activities, and recreation that builds each other up and makes those meaningful connections between campers and staff.

Summer camp registration is now open, so go online and sign up now: www.calvincrest.org

If finances are preventing your child from attending, PCOC offers scholarships to Calvin Crest, and Calvin Crest has a fund to offer need-based financial aid as well. Contact Heather for more information.

Camp Scholarships

Our Scholarships are available for children and youth that attend Camp Calvin Crest. To be considered for a scholarship, please fill out the form located on our church website before paying for camp. Also let Calvin Crest know that you have applied for a camp scholarship. Calvin Crest will contact Heather to verify the scholarship amount. The CE Committee determines the amount and frequency of scholarships per camper.

Important Dates to Remember

March 9	Lenten Study Begins
April 19	Easter Egg Hunt, 10 a.m.
April 27	Confirmation Sunday
May 4	Youth Sunday
July 15 – 17	Vacation Bible School
August 5 - 8	Art Camp

Heather will notify parents of the amount of the awarded scholarship. PCOC will send payment directly to Calvin Crest. The scholarship amount will be deducted from the total cost of the camp. Parents are responsible for paying the remaining balance.

Children's Worship Kits

Parents, be sure to pick up worship kits for your children on the way into worship on Sunday mornings. The kits are located on a cart in the Narthex. There are two types of kits: one for ages 3 – 6 and one for ages 7+. These kits contain paper, crayons, pencils, and children's bulletins that help children follow along during the service. After worship, return the bags to the cart so they can be restocked and ready for next Sunday.



Association of Partners in Christian Education

At the end of January, I had the pleasure of attending another APCE Annual Event, this time in Memphis, Tennessee. This was the 8th APCE I've attended, seven times in person and one online. Every year I return home refreshed and renewed. Spending four days learning, worshipping, and fellowshiping with others in my field is invaluable, and I appreciate the opportunity to do so. Next year's event is in Pittsburgh, and I'm already looking forward to it!



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

CE Committee Moderator: Kathryn Vint —

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

SHF Leaders: Dawn & Brad Gibson, Ethan Bennett, Susan Price, Piper Smith, and Jonathan Fritz



Deacons March Update

Submitted by Larry Frederickson and Anna Flairty

The Board of Deacons is starting the year with plenty of activity. On Saturday, February 15, we held a retreat to welcome nine new deacons and organize our committees for the year. The agenda included:

- What is a Deacon?
- Purpose – Duties – General Information
- Deacon and Elder Lists
- Board of Deacons Annual Report

Further discussion included descriptions of the various committees, events, and ministries, Coffee Fellowship assignments, and other Deacon duties. We also welcomed the new Deacons:

Russ Beernick	Cherri Carpenter
Anna Flairty	Ann Pearson
Corey Prideaux	Sandy Simpson

Tina Morgan	Barbara Thompson
Kristine Gasko (1 yr.)	Barbara Haar-Rightmyer

Our Valentine Outreach committee sent gift cards to PCOC young adults who recently graduated high school, reminding them that their church family continues to pray for their success and well-being.

On March 2nd, we are hosting a Red Cross Blood Drive from 8 AM to 2 PM. Thank you to everyone who has signed up. Your donation can make a life-saving difference!

This Easter, our Deacons will deliver baskets to older church members, especially those who are homebound or in care facilities, sharing joy and gifts during the holiday.

Finally, we are deeply grateful for your generous support of the Deacon Fund, which allows us to continue serving our church and community. Thank you for your service to the church!



MUSIC NOTES

Ryan & Ryan Will Provide an Entertaining April Vesper Concert

Join us on Thursday, April 3, at 7:00 p.m. for Ryan & Ryan on duo pianos. Ryan & Ryan is a dynamic father-son piano duo that draws upon classic and contemporary music to create enthralling concert experiences. From Rachmaninoff to Gershwin to Billy Joel,



Donald and Barron Ryan combine their talents to create a dazzling blend of old and new schools.

A native of Trinidad and Tobago, Donald came to the United States to study music, earning degrees from Oral Roberts University and the University of Tulsa. He is well known as a master of diverse styles—evidenced by a diploma from the 9th International Chopin Competition as well as his induction into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame. Donald has also earned the distinction of being among the most accomplished pianists in the world as a Steinway Artist.

Given his father’s profession, Barron’s choice of playing the piano is no surprise, and he has been no stranger to the stage since the age of four. He distinguished himself in piano studies at the University of Oklahoma and has been a featured soloist across the United States and internationally. Barron is also an experienced composer, and in 2021,

was named one of “Ten Innovators To Watch” by Smithsonian Magazine.

As a performing team, Donald and Barron amaze audiences with their skill, expressiveness, and love of making music. Their experience in classical, jazz, ragtime, and funk allows them to create exciting new music and give fresh interpretations of old. Audiences everywhere have been thrilled by their renditions of selections from Grusin’s *The Firm* soundtrack and Rachmaninoff’s *Second Suite for Two Pianos*. Their performance of George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* has always earned a standing ovation.

As you may recall, Barron Ryan graced our stage two years ago in 2023 (“Classic Meets Cool”). Ryan & Ryan will present a program titled “Kickin’ the Clouds Away,” where you will delight in a mix of classical crossover, jazz, ragtime, gospel, and blues.

As always, this Vesper Concert is free for all to attend. Please visit vesperconcerts.org for more information, and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

[@pcoc.us](https://www.instagram.com/pcoc.us).



Kristi Treu
Director of Music & Executive
Director of Vesper Concerts
(402)333-7466 Ext. 5

Worship & Music Committee Moderator:
Don Metzger



- 3/1 Walter Karges
- 3/2 Chase Spencer
- 3/3 Mary Cramer, Anna Paul
- 3/4 Adam Goodwin, Drew Ritchie
- 3/5 Stan Garner, Mike Howland
- 3/6 Chase Jenkins, Sandy Johnson, Dick Miller
- 3/7 Len Juarez, Wendy Anderson
- 3/8 Robbie Baddley, Charlotte Hubbard, Marsha Smith, Barb Woods
- 3/9 Elizabeth Swedlund
- 3/10 Lloyd Meyer, Kathy Nickel, Anna Sumner
- 3/11 Euloge Sekle
- 3/12 John Goodwin, Doug Patten, Diane Wetuski
- 3/13 Mitch Pirnie, Anna Whaley, Pam Lindsey
- 3/14 Brad Burch, Bob Thomas, Dan Scanlan
- 3/15 Paul Cornett, Melissa Marvin, Mary Ott, Henry Spann
- 3/17 Mary Kate Broderick, Mary Haddock
- 3/18 Valerie Fuller, Betty Goodwin, Karin Hjerpstedt, Bob Swartzbaugh
- 3/19 Peg Conley, Kathryn Harrison, Stan Hille
- 3/20 Dave Berry, Xander Huff
- 3/21 Lena Florent, Carol Hale, David Moore
- 3/22 John Dyer, Brooks Luth
- 3/23 Jessica Downes, Nancy Long, Adam Lundgren, Parker Spann
- 3/24 Judy Book, Brock Bougger, Bob Foehlinger
- 3/25 Gerry Reid
- 3/26 Darold Bauer
- 3/27 Lucas Bumsted, Karen Butler, John Conley, Paul Kratz, Gladys Kuster, Adeline Lorentzen, Lissa Treu, Amelia Hamill
- 3/28 Dave Arnold, Molly Florent, Scott Morris, Jill Rath
- 3/29 John Swenson, Nathen Holdren
- 3/30 Jeremy Cunningham
- 3/31 Elise Arnold, Dylan Spencer

In need of prayer?

Submit a prayer request online. All requests are shared only with members of the prayer team.

Prayer Team Coordinators:

Julie Buehler prayerteam@pcoc.us or and Judy Arms

Project Harmony Mission Update

At their January lock in, SHF made 5 tie blankets (3 child size and 2 teen/full size) to give to Project Harmony. Project Harmony is one our mission partners, and this project shows yet again that all ages play a part in supporting PCOC’s mission efforts.



PCOC Library Spotlight



In 2025 so far, we have added 18 additional books to the library. We would like to highlight a few of these and invite you to stop by the library and “check them out”.

STRANGER IN THE LIFEBOAT by Mitch Albom “In Mitch Albom’s profound new novel of hope and faith, a group of shipwrecked passengers pull a strange man from the sea. He claims to be “the Lord.” And he says he can only save them if they all believe in him.” - Amazon 75% five-star rating

THE OMAHA STREET SCHOOL by John R. Parsons Why would a successful, young Denver lawyer move to Omaha and create a school for at-risk teens? The story behind the birth of Omaha Street School, one of PCOC’s mission partners.

OUR HIDDEN CONVERSATIONS by Michele Norris “In just six words, describe your feelings about racism.” A journalist collected thousands of heart-felt responses and turned them into this eye-opening book. Examples: “You’re pretty for a Black Girl” or “Grandma feared Blacks. Grandson IS Black.” or “Pay no attention to my packaging.” - 83% Amazon five-star rating

ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME by Pope Francis God trusts us to care for the wonderful world he has created....and our fellow inhabitants.

BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME by Ta-Nehisi Coates “The author’s attempt to answer hard questions about race in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of experiences.” - 76% Amazon five-star rating.

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



Welcome our New Members!

Laura Duncan

Laura Duncan recently moved to Omaha because she accepted the position as Vice President of Outpatient Services at Children’s Nebraska. After she got settled in her apartment, she wanted to find a traditional PC (U.S.A.) worship service, and we are so glad she chose Church of the Cross. She is joining via Letter of Transfer from Knox Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. At Knox, she served as an Elder and has served on their Finance, Mission and Worship/Music Committees. Laura also served as a Bible and topical study teacher at her church. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, church history, traveling, gardening; and to note, she is a Master Gardener. She loves dogs and cats, and soon her four cats will be coming to Omaha from Kentucky. Once Laura’s Mom sells her house in Kentucky, she will be moving to Omaha and live with Laura. Laura plans on purchasing a house and then plans to adopt two greyhounds to add to her household. Please welcome Laura to Church of the Cross as well as Omaha.



RaeLynne “Rae” Hale

After looking at our website and visiting other churches, RaeLynne “Rae” decided Church of the Cross is where she wanted to worship, and she is joining by Letter of Transfer from Presbyterian Church of the Master, Omaha. Rae grew up on a farm near Manning, IA. and graduated from Parsons College. She taught elementary, preschool, and HeadStart for eighteen years, sold real estate; and for the last seventeen years prior to retirement, she worked at the Gallup Organization. She lived in Maine before her divorce, but then decided to move to Omaha to be close to her son and his family and has been here for fifteen years. Rae enjoys knitting and has been knitting baby blankets for the Linus Project. She also belongs to a P.E.O. chapter. Please welcome Rae to our church family.



Jordan Garry

We are so happy to officially welcome Jordan as a member of Church of the Cross. Just an added note, Josh cannot be a member of our church since he is a pastor; so, he is a member of the Presbytery. Jordan joined via a Letter of Transfer from First Presbyterian Church in Dutch Neck, New Jersey. At her previous church, she served as an Elder and was on the Worship and Music Committee. She also taught the “Bibles and Bagels” class for middle school kids. Jordan was born in Watertown, New York, and is a Nurse Practitioner. Besides getting settled in Omaha, being Mom to Dmitri, Nikolai, and Nadia, and getting involved at PCOC; in her spare time, she enjoys reading, playing games and watching/playing sports. When you see Jordan, please reintroduce yourself as she’s still learning all of our names.



Judy Recer

When you see Ginger Petersen-Britt and Ardys Hansum, thank them for introducing Judy to Church of the Cross. The ladies at the reception desk at Ovations told Judy that Ginger goes to Church of the Cross every Sunday at 10AM, and why don’t you go with her, and she did. Thank You Ovations! Judy is joining via Letter of Transfer from the First Methodist Church in Mountain Home, Arkansas. Judy was born in Minnesota. She moved here within the past two months since her daughter and her family live in Omaha. Judy is a retired teacher and also taught Sunday School for thirty-five years. She is an artist and also enjoys history, concerts, book clubs, and Bible studies. Please welcome Judy to PCOC.



Membership Committee Co-Moderators:

Brenda Graumann and Earlene Uhrig

Congregational Life Committee Moderator:

Linda Miller and Sue Meusey



Neil and Elissa Hamill

When you see Chris and Staci Voss, Matt and Christina Kahler, Dave and Heather Berry, Ben and Amy Miller, and Hayley Allen-Mendick, please thank them for encouraging Neil and Elissa to visit Church of the Cross. The Hamills were looking for a change of churches after Covid and wanted a youth group for their daughter, Amelia. They will be joining by Letter of Transfer from Dundee Presbyterian Church, Omaha. Neil served as an Elder at Dundee. Neil is a maternal fetal medicine physician at UNMC. He was born in Kansas City, KS. He volunteers



for ABIDE, is a governing member of the Omaha Symphony and volunteers for his kids' activities. In his spare time, he is "Band Dad", enjoys yard work, food and wine, travel and is a classical music enthusiast. Elissa was born in Lincoln, NE and used to work in software project management/integration consulting, but now is a stay-at-home Mom. At Dundee, Elissa was a Sunday School and VBS teacher. She also participated in a women's Bible Study. She volunteers for ABIDE, serves OSS lunches, and has been a "Band Mom". Elissa enjoys reading, traveling, cooking, baking and classical music. They also have two older children, Owen who is graduating from college this year; and Miles, who is a freshman at Drake University. Please welcome the Hamill family to our church!



FELLOWSHIP GROUPS/EVENTS

Active Minds in March

Active Minds will be playing Pinochle for all of March. We can teach you to play any time that you can join us. Every Tuesday, 1:30-4:00pm, in the lower level Great Room. Drop-ins are always welcome, or stop after Tuesday afternoon Bible Study. Questions? Contact Earlene Uhrig



Presbyterian Women March 6

Join the Presbyterian Women's Circle on Thursday, March 6 at 9:30 am in the Courtyard Room. Carol Sorensen will continue our Bible study from Growing Older & Wiser by Dale & Sandy Larsen. This month's topic "They Don't Always Listen" from 1 Kings 12: 1-20. All church women are invited to join us. Please contact Cindy Nisley with any questions.



PCOC Book Group on March 19

PCOC Book Group will meet March 19 in The Courtyard Room from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. to review *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. All readers are welcome! Questions? Contact Charlotte Hubbard.



49ERS on Tuesday, March 4

Our program for Tuesday, March 4, 2025 is Joy Battling of Scatter Joy Acres. Joy Bartling is a native of Nebraska and has 4 children and 7



grandchildren. She was raised on a dairy farm in Herman, Nebraska. In 2006 Scatter Joy Acres (SJA) was founded by Joy to provide a new home, new life, and new meaning by rescuing abused or neglected animals. In 2022 the ranch was relocated to 15 acres inside the city limits of Omaha. The lunch location is Wheatfields, One Pacific Place, at 11:30 a.m. Every one is welcome, whether or not you are 49, younger or older, come join us! We will order from a special menu. For reservations or questions, please contact Mary Ott or Judy Sundberg. We also have a sign-up sheet at the Information Center and you can find out more about Joy on the sign up sheet as well.

Friday Night Gourmets on March 14

Our next Friday Night Gourmet Dinner will be held on March 14 at Cascio's. Drinks will begin at 6:30 with dinner to follow at 7:00. All are welcome to join us for an early St. Patrick's celebration. Please sign up at the Information desk. We will order off the menu with separate checks provided. Co-hosts are Irene and Bob Astleford, Jr.



Stay Active 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. for gentle stretching and movement! Drop in if you'd like to attend a class.

Coordinator: Paula Allen



Communications Task Force... ASSEMBLE(D)!

Once upon a time, and even 20-25 years ago, the first impression a church made upon someone seeking to join one... was the moment they walked through the door.

Yes, there used to be advertisement and information sections for purchase in the yellow pages. Yes, there are still television and newspaper advertisement sections available for purchase. And, yes, many churches have historically utilized these mediums with differing degrees of success...

But, when you think about it, those efforts were primarily informational, not experiential. The point of them was to get you in the door. Once you were in the door, then you could make an impression, then you could show someone how great it is to be "here."

The reality is things have changed. Now more than ever, most first impressions begin online.

So, the question is... how do we make a first impression... online... how do we communicate through that medium who Presbyterian Church of the Cross is?

Well, the first step is by assembling the excellent people already involved in such activity (Communications Staff Christian Fritz and Social Media Staff Mark Kanitz), combining them with a known marketing wunderkind (Annika Shaw from Vespers) and a ragamuffin associate pastor, and then having them strategize about how they can further the mission of the church by reaching the people who would belong here... but aren't yet!

We're just getting the ball rolling, so there is not too much to update the church on other than the fact that we have intentionally formed as a group and are working together (though you should check PCOC website and watch the video we recently put there to get an idea of the direction we're headed). But in due time that will change! Stay tuned for more updates!

Pew Supplies Replenished

Ever wonder how those pew pencils stay sharpened, blue envelopes appear week after week, or are the Hymnals all facing the correct direction? That happens each week due to Doug Larson's continued attention to detail and his commitment to helping our Worship and Music Committee be ready each week for the worship service.



Volunteers are key to our church's success. Doug is not the only person over the years who has helped fill this role for our church. Many volunteers have stepped forward and offered their time and like Doug, I hope they offered their time with joy in their hearts much like Doug does today.

Pew Crew Makes Repairs

The B&G Committee seems to never run out of items that need attention inside or outside our facility. Recently, Jerry Cornett noticed a pew support that had been compromised. A few weeks later, someone car-

ried a support into Rock's office and reported finding it under another pew.

That being said, our crew has been working for the past month! Led by Jerry, Mike Howland, Gary Maron, Anna Sumner, and Roger Utman, they have been pulling and marking support locations each week in varying pew areas. Jerry then takes the support to his shop for any glue or repair needed. Later in the week, they all gather again to attach the supports in the correct locations to keep us all sitting comfortably.

This has been a huge undertaking, and we want to extend our gratitude for this group's many hours and their abilities to complete this repair.





AGAPE For All Spring Speaker Series

It is hard to believe Spring is just around the corner. We are planning two more speakers this spring to continue expanding our knowledge of the various corners of our Omaha Community. Immigration and refugee resettlement is front page news most days. Our church hosted a Syrian family over a year and a half ago and some of our members remain in contact with that family. But only some of us were involved with that family and many of us still don't fully understand how immigration and refugee resettlement work in our country. We will have one speaker from a formal resettlement agency and another from a smaller, more volunteer-driven organization that serves asylum seekers. We believe it will be another rich opportunity for us all, so bring your questions and imaginations and plan to open your hearts and minds with the rest of us.



Embracing Community Connections

Sunday mornings, in the Welcome Center
April 27th and May 4th, 10:10 -11:00AM.
In the Courtyard Classroom
Please arrive before 10:10

April 27 – Connecting with Omaha Welcomes the Stranger (OWS)

Tom & Margaret Hoarty, founders

Omaha Welcomes the Stranger, formed in 2022, strives to serve migrants fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries by providing safety, hospitality, hope and assistance with establishing new lives in the United States.

Increasing numbers of families have been arriving in Omaha who have no friends or relatives in the U.S. OWS provides shelter, food, and healthcare, and facilitates referrals to legal assistance for these asylum seekers. Because these families have no sponsors in other cities, OWS assists with resettling them in permanent housing in Omaha, and supports them mone-

tarily while they await work permits. They initially house them in a shelter that is located on the same campus as the Omaha Street School. They are currently supporting 21 families, 12 in the shelter and 9 in rental housing, totaling 78 people.

OWS collaborates with local churches and service providers, as well as many volunteers, in order to fulfill its mission of providing compassionate care to immigrants. Tom and Margaret Hoarty started this organization after volunteering in El Paso, Texas at Annunciation House for a couple of years. This compelled them to begin filling a need in our community and create this new nonprofit organization. We have much to learn from them and may find new opportunities for service.

May 4 - Connecting with the Center for Immigrant and Refugee Advancement (CIRA), formerly known as the Immigrant Legal Center

Erik Omar, Executive Director of CIRA

CIRA's history is embedded in the 1997 founding of the Southern Sudan Community Association, which became the Refugee Empowerment Center, and the 1999 establishment of Justice for Our Neighbors, which was later renamed the Immigrant Legal Center. A 2022 merger between the two organizations created a powerful force for empowering immigrants and refugees in our community. As the newly named CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ADVANCEMENT (CIRA) they now provide legal, resettlement and social services in a growing number of locations spanning from Council Bluffs to Scottsbluff.

CIRA now has close to 100 employees in ten locations. Many or most of those employees were refugees themselves, easing the language and cultural challenges faced by new arriving families. They are just completing renovation on their building space at 42nd and Center and will have all Omaha employees under one roof. The building itself, which is wrapped in a beautiful, diverse mural, throws out a brilliant welcome mat before the newcomers even walk in the front door.

Erik Omar is an attorney who has served the refugee community for the last ten years, first as a volunteer and ultimately as the leader who took the agencies through this important merger in 2022. He has important information to share with us about the changes underway in our country and within their agency.

Deacons Moderator:
Patti Sparks



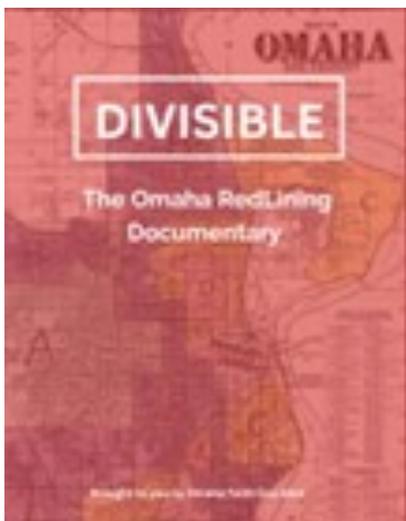
DIVISIBLE: The Omaha Redlining Documentary

Date: Tues, April 8, 2025

Time: 6:30 – 8:30 pm.

**Where: Omaha Conservatory of Music
7023 Cass St, Omaha, NE 68132**

We have another Agape for All opportunity coming up. Church of the Cross and our Presbytery (PMRV) are co-sponsoring a free screening of this important documentary film, along with some other faiths across Omaha. “Divisible” is a documentary made in Omaha, about Omaha, that explains the history, mechanics, and lasting ramifications of redlining in our city. Redlining is a process that began in the last century to segregate neighborhoods by



race. It was outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, but the practice did not end at that time. In addition to defining where people could live, it also allowed discriminatory lending for home-buying and neighborhood business development. The result is disparity in generational wealth,

education, health care, and access to good nutrition in different sectors of our city.

Following the showing of the film we will have a short 30 minute panel discussion with: Dr. Nikitah Imani, Professor, UNO Black Studies Program
Mike Hornacek, President and CEO, Together
Teresa Hunter, Executive Director/CEO, Family Housing Advisory Services

If you’d like to learn more about this award-winning film, please click on the following link.
<https://divisibledoc.com/divisible-documentary>

This is a regular meeting night for the PCOC Mission Committee so most of us plan to attend this event in place of our meeting. We hope you will be able to join us for the screening and panel presentation followed by refreshments and some rich conversation.

Register for FREE tickets at
<https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/12284890061/false#/invitation>

Or scan the QR Code here:



Agape Book Review

Submitted by Ann Pearson

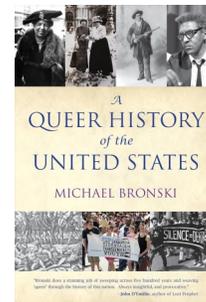
A Queer History of the United States,
by Michael Bronski

The author is Michael Bronski, a Harvard professor who has studied, taught and written about the LGBTQ+ community for 50 years. He has also taught and been actively involved in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality programs at the University.

He begins by pointing out that the LGBTQ+ community has had a long and fascinating history throughout the world and in numerous societies. In some societies they were regarded as having special magical or spiritual powers and qualities. In European history, he

notes a number of leaders and well known figures who were known or thought to be gay. In the 1550’s, it was Plato and Plutarch. In the 1840’s, it was Karl Ulrichs and John Addington Symonds. In the last couple of centuries, Emily Dickinson and J. Edgar Hoover were thought to be gay.

There have been numerous studies from a variety of viewpoints, metaphysical, medical, and scientific. In the introduction and epilogue, Professor Bronski also makes sure to point out the changes that have occurred in the ten years since the book was originally published.



As always, we have so much to learn!



The Mission Committee 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:

- Midlands Community Foundation gratefully thanks you for your generous gift of \$4,150 to the Sarpy County CASA Fund.
- The Calvin Crest Board thanks you for your end of the 2024 year financial gift. Your gift is critical to ensure that they can continue their mission to provide a place where God's love abounds.
- The staff and students of Sherman Elementary said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you...for your generosity, kindness and willingness to share with us funds to help our students, families and community." Your gift provided the school with food, clothing, school supplies and other essentials for their students.
- "Thank you for supporting Voices for Children in Nebraska last year! Your generosity helps further our mission to advocate for equitable opportunities for kids in our state. Through your support in 2024, we produced and shared over 1,100 copies of the 31st annual Kids Count in Nebraska date report, supported young people into policy action through our new Youth Advisory Council, summer advocacy cohort, and multiple policy fellowship. Offerings throughout the state, and stood up for kids and families. In our state, winning policy victories at the Legislature and through the Paid Sick Leave for Nebraskans ballot initiative," wrote Juliet Summers, Executive Director for Voices for Children in Nebraska.
- ILP sent a thank you card signed by the staff thanking you for your generous gift for their students.
- Habitat for Humanity thanks you for your gift of \$5,000 that provided more than 1,000 families with affordable homeownership opportunities and home improvement projects, as well as helping Habitat for Humanity of Omaha advocate for affordable housing in the community.
- Siena Francis House thanks you for your 2024 contribution of \$14,575 and your January gift of \$106.42 which helped to serve 3,150 neighbors



Mission Committee Moderator:
Keith Allen

facing homelessness and helped meet the growing demand for their services that provided shelter, meals, treatment and other necessities to people working toward permanent, safe housing and a better future.

- Rapid Response is deeply grateful for your support. Guided by our mission to "Bring hope in the midst of crisis, to those in need after a disaster," your generosity has made a profound difference.

- "Thank you for your recent gift of \$885 through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. Your generosity is changing lives in the name of Jesus Christ.

Siena Francis House Servers Needed

**Sunday, March 9
4:15 to 6:15 p.m.**

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



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

Heartland Hope Mission Saturday March 1

Consider volunteering on the first Saturday of each month to work at the HHM West pantry at 15555 Industrial Road from 9:30am - 12:30pm. Several members of our church will be there with you and it is a great way to meet the staff, other volunteers and help local clients for a short period of time on one Saturday each month. Please contact John Bennett if interested in volunteering. Thank you for continuing to support Heartland Hope Mission.

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
 March 21, 2025**

2025 Goal for Youth Giving

Two sets of 2 Rabbits and a Hutch - \$200
 Rabbits reproduce at a very high rate and can be a consistent source of nutrition for a family in need. Consider giving a family everything they need to house and raise a family of rabbits.

Fishing Kit - \$150
 Small-scale fishers rely on their catch for income and food. Help families fight famine and extreme hunger with a fishing kit that includes a fishing net, fishing line, and fish-finding radars.

Egg a Day Pledge - \$300
 Keep hunger at bay with the “Egg a Day” Pledge. Pledge to give a family of Chickens every month for a year! Make a difference in the lives of those who don’t have easy access to a health and nourishing

diet. Eggs can be a valuable source of income, providing money to purchase other food for the table.

Beekeeping - \$240
 Bees help crops - and income - grow. In parts of the world where harvesting a seasonal crop might not provide enough money to live on all year, beekeeping can help farmers supplement their earnings. In Guatemala, for example, farmers earn 23% more each month by selling honey. Provide positive change for a village by contributing to the installation and management of beehives.

2025	
Goal for Youth Giving	
Two Sets of 2 Rabbits & a Hutch	\$200.00
Two Fishing Kits	\$150.00
One Egg a Day Pledge	\$300.00
One Beekeeping Opportunity	\$240.00
	\$890.00

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

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

Communications: Christian Fritz communications@pcoc.us
 For *Cross Currents* and Bulletin announcements, church website updates, Zoom meeting invites, or other communications needs, please contact Christian.