PRESBYTERIAN
Church of the Cross

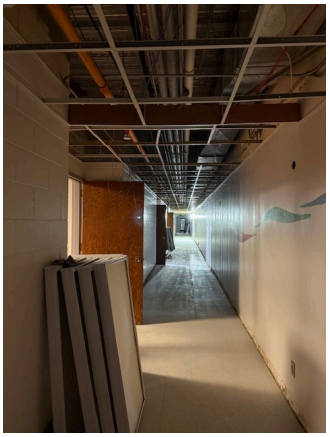
Cross Currents

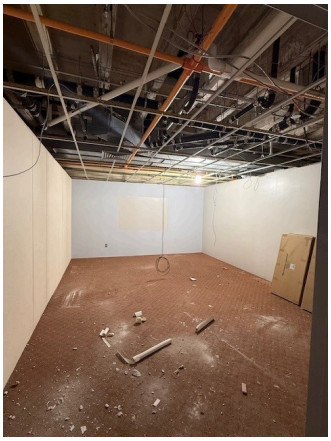
Newsletter for Septmber 2026

Downstairs Renovation Update

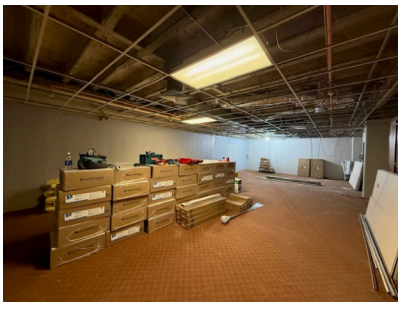
If you've ever walked the long hallway by Rooms 8 – 12 with the lights off, you know exactly why the youth call it the creepy hallway. It's been decades since that space was updated, and it's finally getting the refresh it deserves. Demolition kicked off on Monday right after the garage sale, and things are moving fast. The old fluorescent lights and ceiling tiles were the first to go. After that, the temporary wall between Rooms 8 and 9 was replaced with a permanent one. You might remember how Room 8 used to feel huge while Room 9 felt tiny – now they're being rebuilt to be similar in size, so the space works better for everyone. Drywall has replaced the old cinderblock walls, and the next steps include installing brighter, more modern lighting, adding new ceiling tiles, painting the entire area, and finishing with fresh carpet. It's already starting to feel "less creepy" and more "welcoming space."

This project is happening because of our generous donors – THANK YOU for helping us bring this area into the 21st century. Stay tuned for more updates and pictures as the transformation continues.









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Spirit of Mission - Pages 12 & 13

Presbyterian Church of the Cross

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Back to School "Daze"

If you're on Facebook, you can't help but notice all the first-day-of-school photos that so many parents are posting. For those of us parents who are past those fun-filled days, it brings back memories of our own kids' first-day jitters and nervous anticipation. How did you handle your kids' first days of school? Did you exude pride and confidence in them, hoping your own fears and emotions didn't show through? What were you like on that first long day back at school, wondering how things were going, counting down the minutes and hours until the first day was over and they came back home to tell you all about it?

As parents, we mark the milestones, and hope and pray that our kids will grow up into the godly adults we want them to be. It seems like it takes forever for kids to grow up, but then once your child goes off to college it seems like it was only yesterday when you bit your lip as they walked into kindergarten on their own. Raising children is a great, emotional privilege, with many highs and lows along the way.

With school starting back up, our church's Christian education program is gearing up for another strong year. Summer has been a fun change of pace, but now we get ourselves back in gear for a year of learning together and spiritual growth. As parents and grandparents, take advantage of all that PCOC offers for our children and youth. And for yourself, don't miss out on the Christian education that is offered for you.

Sunday School and Cornerstone begin the week after Labor Day. Let's commit ourselves to another school year of growing in the Lord. See you in church. See you in Sunday School. See you on Wednesday nights!

Your pastor and friend,

Marshall Zieman



Pastor/Head of Staff
Marshall Zieman
(402)333-7466 x 1
marshall@pcoc.us

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.

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 no sign up online for individual Sundays.

Questions? Contact Mary Ott or Mary Lynn Bennett



Tuesday Bible Studies

The Tuesday Bible studies will resume on September 15! You can find more information on Page 6.

Some September Meditations on the Words of Jaroslav Pelikan

Lately I've been thinking of seminary and some of my experiences there. One of the great gifts of seminary is that you get to engage in a variety of academic disciplines… at a voracious pace… all the while navigating such things at the guidance of world-class scholars. You encounter courses that cover history, theology, pastoral care, biblical exegesis, and many others. On top of that, if you're Presbyterian, you are required to take Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek (with options of taking other ancient languages that are offered few other places in the world such as Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Coptic). I don't miss the papers and the deadlines. I don't miss the exams. I don't miss the pressure of wondering where God would lead us to, where our family would end up living after the program was done. But I do miss all of the learning. I do miss the breadth of wells from which I drew such knowledge. So, from time to time, I try and order some books that help me to keep learning about our incredible faith across a myriad of different disciplines.

This time around, one of the texts I chose was Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Christian Tradition, Part One, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600).* For those of you who don't know, Jaroslav Pelikan was the Sterling Professor of History at Yale University, and *The Christian Tradition*, is a five-part modern masterpiece of Christian History. I had never encountered his work before, so I thought… why not? I love history, let's give it a shot. So I did. And I was wildly surprised with how it began. Instead of some contextualizing historical preface section there was a "Some Definitions" section that preceded the main work and it included the following: "What the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the Word of God: this is Christian doctrine. Doctrine is not the only, not even the primary, activity of the church. The church worships God and serves mankind, it works for the transformation of this world and awaits the consummation of the next. "Faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" – love, and not faith, and certainly not doctrine."

Now. There is a universe in that excerpt above and there could be so many things to unpack and meditate on; the least of which not being how fascinating it is that Pelikan refers to Christine Doctrine with the above definition only to say it is not the primary activity of the church. But the thing that really got me, was Pelikan's inclusion of Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians, specifically its 13th chapter. We all know its words from weddings: if I have everything but I do not have love, I have nothing; love is patient, love is kind; when I was a child, I thought like a child. Many of us know the words from this chapter, the last of which includes the final words that Pelikan uses above (faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love). For some reason, perhaps it not being spoken at wedding, Pelikan's use of them struck me differently. Weddings are of course a day of love, and in many cases, in the modern sense, weddings get carried away with *romantic* love (understandable). But that isn't the kind of love that Paul was talking about. And neither was Pelikan. Both Paul and Pelikan were speaking of *God's* love and they were speaking about it theologically. I was struck by the idea that God's love, and our sharing it, is more important than our faith. Hope, sure – I can easily see, no matter how much I love hope and understand how precious it is, that hope would take a backseat to God's love. But faith? This is wild. It almost seems counterintuitive. *How could love be more important than faith?* And yet I think perhaps it is because all of these things are relational, that we would understand love's emergence before the other things (we may not understand faith or hope… even when we have it… but we do understand what love is… even if we can't describe it). There remains a tremendous amount more here to unpack…

At any rate, none of the above is what I expected out of a history book. And I share this with you because my hope is that this next month God love surprises you with something similar or new this September… and that it leads to your faith continuing to grow.



Associate Pastor
Josh Garry
(402)333-7466 x 2
josh@pcoc.us

The Senior Highs Cleaned Up

We should've known better than to worry - even with the heavy morning showers. The sky cleared just in time for the start of the car wash, and as always, our church family showed up in full force to support our youth! Thanks to your generosity, the Sr Highs raised a little over $1100 to help fund next year's mission trip to South Dakota. Thank you for your support!

Second Grade Bible Presentation

Students in the second grade will receive their very own Bibles during late church on October 11. Everyone is invited to help us celebrate this happy milestone.

Garage Sale Recap



16 days, 63 volunteers, 754 hours worked, $5400.85 profit = Success!



Cornerstone

If you haven't participated in Cornerstone lately, you're going to want to come back. We are very excited to announce that Jerry Cornett will be cooking dinner for us! Come for a delicious dinner and stay for Bible study. There's something for everyone! Register online or at the Information Desk in the Welcome Center by September 1. Registering early helps us plan for dinner and class supplies. If you have any questions, please let Heather know.

Important Dates to Remember

September 2	Confirmation Mentor Training, 6:30 p.m.
September 9	Confirmation Parent Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
September 13	Sunday School Begins, 10 a.m.
September 16	Cornerstone Begins



New Classes

Get Ready to Sign up for Fall Education Classes

We have many classes available to explore this season! You can find more information on each class on Pages 5 & 6

The Christian Imagination and Literature
Falling Upward
The Anxious Generation
Acts of the Apostles
First Things First
Advent in Plain Sight
Tuesday Bible Study
Behold the Beauty of the Lord



Heather Berry
Director of Christian Education
(402)333-7466 x 4
heather@pcoc.us

CE Committee Moderator: Laurie Kerr

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

SHF Leaders: Ethan Bennett, Jonathan Fritz, Lisa Luke, & Piper Smith

The Christian Imagination and Literature
Led by Michael Paulus and Lucinda Sloan
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
September 13 – October 18

The twentieth century, although often thought of as a secular period, has had great works of literature written that at their core address theological issues. T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land", Charles Williams' "The Three Temptations", Flannery O'Conner's "Revelation" and "Good Country People" and Fyodor Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor" will be examined. All the stories and the poems are available free as pdfs. Questions to guide your reading will be supplied. We aim for lively discussion and reflection on important questions for which we still seek answers.

Falling Upward
Led by Keith Allen
Sundays at 10:00 a.m.
September 27 – December 27

In ***Falling Upward***, Richard Rohr (A Franciscan priest and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation) takes us on a journey to give us an understanding of how the "Falling" in life – the heartbreaks, disappointments, and first loves - are actually stepping-stones to the "Upwards" in life – the spiritual growth that the second half of our life has in store for us. With rare insight, Rohr calls for us to recognize the promise of this journey and to follow it into the wider dimensions of our spiritual authenticity. Fortunately, this "second half of life" need not wait till our middle years. It emerges whenever we are ready and able to expand beyond the familiarity and safety of our current path.
Join us this September for a 13-week study of **Falling Upward** with Richard Rohr as our guide. Led by Keith Allen, the class will follow Rohr's book, chapter by chapter, and will also incorporate reflections, questions and experiential exercises that have been pulled from Rohr's companion journal that accompanies the book.
Suggested Book Donation $15.

The Anxious Generation
Led by Quinn McGuire
Sundays at 4:45 p.m.
September 13 – October 25

Together we will explore Jonathan Haidt's research on the rise of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among children and adolescents while discussing how Christian families can intentionally cultivate resilient, connected, faith-filled children in a digital world.
This study is designed to encourage conversation—not debate—and to leave each session with practical ideas families can begin using immediately. Register Online.
Suggested Book Donation $15.

Acts of the Apostles
Led by Kirk Ryckman
Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.
September 16 – November 18

This fall the after dinner adult ed class will be looking at the ***Acts of the Apostles***. We will be using this study for both Fall and Winter. The author of the student's guides, Carol Miller, is a gifted and insightful writer and teacher. This is the second book of our Bible written by Luke. This is the best history of how those eleven remaining disciples took the Good News Jesus taught and the wonder of the Resurrection and took it to the world. This is the story of how Paul, the author of 1/3 of our New Testament, went from persecuting the early church to being a major factor in its growth and success in the Roman world. Fun times. Lots of discussion. All questions are welcomed. Join us!
Suggested Book Donation $30.

First Things First
Led by Josh Garry
Wednesdays during Cornerstone at 6:30 p.m.
September 16 – November 18
Genesis 12-50: The Old Testament Magic Continues

Last spring during our Cornerstone Class we read through Genesis 1-11, a collection of scripture known as the Primeval Narratives – the very foundation of the entire Bible. Now we continue our quest into Genesis 12-50, a collection of scripture known as the Patriarchal Narratives – the texts which provide us with the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Few words have shaped the history of the entire world such as these stories. The Patriarchal Narratives serve not only as the theological and historical structure for our own faith but also that of Judaism and Islam. No need to have taken the previous course or attend classes in succession, just a desire to read and sift through the Bible together.

Advent in Plain Sight
Led by Ardys Hansum and Carol Sorensen
Sundays at 10 a.m.
Tuesdays at 7 p.m. on Zoom
November 22 – December 13

In this daily devotional for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, Jill Duffield draws readers' attention to ten ordinary objects that appear in the biblical narratives of messianic prophesy and incarnation – objects we encounter in our own lives. Readers will find new meaning in the biblical account of Jesus' coming. By connecting everyday objects with biblical texts, readers see the near kingdom of heaven on earth and ponder what that divine proximity enables and asks them to do and be. Each daily devotional features Scripture reading, prayer, and reflection, reminding Christians that God still dwells among us, even in the most ordinary places. Register Online.
Suggested Book Donation $12.

Tuesday Bible Study led by Pastor Marshall
Led by Dr. Marshall Zieman
Tuesdays at 7 a.m. for Men
1:00 p.m. for Everyone
Class begins September 15

How brave a person are you? Do you consider yourself a brave person? If you faced a hardship, how well would you cope? Do you think you would rise to the challenge? What resources would you draw upon? Could you be brave enough to get through it? How would you get through it?
Our word "comfort" comes from the Latin word *fortis*, which means brave – it's like when you are comforted, you are fortified. Receiving comfort, or comforting someone else, involves being strengthened. You become brave as you are strengthened.
Through specific events occurring in the Early Church in Corinth, Greece, the Apostle Paul wrote letters to guide, encourage, and challenge them to remain faithful in following Christ. They were a congregation in troubled times, and Paul was a man who knew trouble. He stressed these things:

- God comforts us in the midst of affliction.
- God strengthens us in the midst of weakness.
- The key to suffering lies in endurance.
- As God comforts us, we gain the power to comfort others.

These are some of the themes we'll be addressing this fall in the Tuesday Bible Studies as we read through 2 Corinthians together each week. Feel free to join in, either at 7:00 a.m. (men) or at 1:00 p.m. (everyone). Just bring your favorite Bible and come to the Welcome Center, beginning on September 15.

Choir Season Begins!

Alleluia Singers began their season with an all-day workshop on August 22 with Dr. John Petzet from UNK, then sang for the August 23 worship service. Rehearsals began on August 26, and we look forward to a new season ahead of us. It isn't too late to join! We always welcome new singers. Contact Kristi if you'd like to be part of the music ministry.



Worship & Music Committee Moderator:
Charlotte Hubbard - Worship&Music@pcoc.us

New Children's Choir Director

After months of searching, we are excited to announce our new children's choir director! Samyak Pandit is a music teacher from right here in Omaha. He is a recent graduate from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in K-12 Music Education with an emphasis in choral and vocal music.

Please help us welcome Samyak to the music ministry team!





Kristi Treu

Director of Music & Executive Director of Vesper Concerts

(402)333-7466 x 4

kristi@pcoc.us

Deacon Updates

Submitted by Kristin Johnson
Do you or someone you know need a physical reminder of God's love, comfort, and peace? Our Prayer Shawl ministry hand-crafts beautiful shawls, knitting and praying over every stich. These shawls are freely available to anyone facing an illness, grief, a major life transition, or simply in need of encouragement. The prayer shawls are located in either the upper or lower cupboard in Room 15. You will also find a white three-ring binder kept in the lower cupboard. Please sign the sheet in the notebook leaving a record of the date, your name, and the name of the recipient. The recipient can be anyone; a member or non-member of PCOC, a loved one, friend or neighbor. Additionally, you do not need to be a Deacon to be a member of the Prayer Shawl ministry. If you are interested, yarn and instructions are available in a bin in the narthex or the information desk. If you have any questions, you may reach out to Paula Allen at 402-980-1385.

PCOC Book Group on September 16

PCOC Book Group will meet September 16 in The Courtyard Room from 5:15 to 6:30 p.m. to review *Isola* by Allegra Goodman. All readers are welcome! Questions? Contact Charlotte Hubbard.

Active Minds in September

Active Minds will be a choice of games for 2 or 4 players. Backgammon (easy to learn), Cribbage (love math), or Mancala (game of strategy). Come enjoy the fellowship and learn something new this month. If you have any of these 3 games at home, please bring your's to share in September! Contact: Earlene Uhrig

Friday Night Gourmet on September 11

Friday Night Gourmets will kick off its 2027 Dining Out season at Farmer Brown's Steakhouse (2620 River Road Drive, Waterloo, 402-779-2353). Our menu will consist of steak, prime rib, fried chicken, and salmon. Additional information is available with the signup sheet at the Information Desk. Please sign up by Sunday, September 6th. Hosts are Alta Empkey (402-679-5182} and Launie Lambert (402-676-3709). Please join us for an enjoyable evening, great food, and lively conversation.

GO SOLO for September

The Go SOLO fellowship group is for anyone wanting to know more people at PCOC. Some want to explore Omaha and prefer company when they do! Some want to sit and visit. Feel free to join our email lists if you live alone, have a partner, or just want to meet other like-minded folks.September's first Friday coffee is on September 4 at 9:30am in the Hearth room of the Welcome Center. Join us!

49ERS on September 1

Our program for Tuesday, September 1, 2026, will be Becky Korinek, Director of Business Development, Outreach Patient Advocates, which helps clients navigate the health care and insurance world. The organization gives clients gives piece of mind as they get the best medical outcome. 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, 402-201-4103, or Judy Sundberg, 402-333-6981. We also have a sign-up sheet at the Information Center.

Presbyterian Women on September 3

We will soon be gathering on September 3 at 9:30 am in the Courtyard classroom. We are excited to return to the Presbyterian Women's Horizon Bible Study. This year's topic "United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other" is based on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians and to be lead by Carol Sorensen. We'll be welcoming a couple new members this Fall as we look for more congregation women to join us...all are welcome! If you need a $20 lesson book, contact Carol Sorensen 402-321-6109. For other questions, call Cindy Nisley 402-850-0889.

Membership Committee Co-Moderators: Trudy Meyer & Earlene Uhrig - Membership@pcoc.us

Congegational Life Committee Co-Moderators: Pam Swenson & Sue Meusey - CongregationalLife@pcoc.us



9/1 Alyson Grady
9/2 Penny Dehner, Spencer Friesen, Kyndall Goodwin, Noah Luke, Hudson Schiessler
9/3 Tim Graumann
9/4 Avery Boesen, Oliver Boesen, Carol Bolton, Sean Johnson
9/5 Sue Freyer, Donna Turner, Jordan Garry, Weslyn Frahm, Cheryl Hildenbrandt
9/6 Russ Beernink, Marshall Zieman, Collins Luth
9/7 Jeanette Garner, Gayle Kerr-McFadden, Nellie McDaniel
9/8 Sophia Miller, Arnie Nelson
9/9 Brody Collins-Durant
9/10 Cecelia Ballou
9/11 Gary Fitch, Larry Frederickson, Tom Kort, Joshua Paul
9/12 Kim Crum
9/13 Jean Waters
9/14 Ryan Koch, Barbara McNeal, John Sparks, Jeremiah Frahm
9/15 Madelyn Grady, Charles Madison, Rick Sessions, Mike McGillick, Katherine Innes
9/16 Judy Nelson, Kirk Ryckman, Cara Schiessler,Veronica Kerr, Gene Depue, Alicia Jones
9/17 Chad Bumsted
9/19 Abby Sekle
9/20 Shanna Mathia, Sara Pickens
9/21 Molly McGuire, Sue Thomas, Ava Davey
9/22 Brayden Downes, Olivia Downes, Lauren Harrison, Leah Whaley
9/23 Andy Husman, Abigail Clerk
9/24 Pam Otto, Cory Flint
9/25 Jerry Klein, Roger Pauba, Emily Sumner
9/26 Mary Carlson, Sierra Cunningham, Skip Decker, Dick Hart, Martha Henry
9/27 Alena Bennett, David Goodwin, Gary Petersen, Dave Fritz
9/30 Chuck Baddley, Carol Futhey, Marjorie Huff

Thank you from our Members!

26 surgeries, but only 2 that came with a delayed allergic reaction tagging along 11 days after surgery. It was a pancake size hive head to toe July filled with lots of Prednisone that sure made for a challenging Summer and one I hope to never repeat.

Looking at things from a 180 degree polar opposite perspective, I was truly overwhelmed with all the kind, compassionate and caring cards, notes and prayers that our incredible loving congregation sent my way. Our members certainly must be paying attention to Marshall and Josh's sermons each week responded in kind by acting in such a positive and nurturing way towards those like myself when trouble befalls us. I can never repay your kindness but I do want you all to know that I am so grateful to belong to such a loving family that is Presbyterian Church of the Cross. Thank you all for your caring, your inspiration, your words of compassion and most of all, your prayers as I really believe that is what pulled me through this time and I am eternally grateful. God bless you all.

Doug Larson

In need of a Prayer?

Submit a prayer request via email. All requests are shared only with members of the Prayer Team.

Prayer Team Coordinators: Julie Buehler & Judy Arms - prayerteam@pcoc.us

Reminder: Please contact the church office when you or a family member is hospitalized at churchofthecross@pcoc.us or at 402-333-7466.

Meet our New Members

Cheryl Hildenbrandt

Cheryl has been attending a Methodist church, but wanted to look at other Methodist churches that had a traditional service and a strong music ministry; however, nothing appealed to her. She started looking at Presbyterian churches on line, viewed our services, and felt our church met her criteria. By becoming a member of PCOC and belonging to a faith community, she hopes to grow in faith and make new friends. Cheryl was born in York, NE. and grew up in Gresham, NE. She is a retired registered nurse and worked, the bulk of her career, in the field of psychiatry/ mental health. In her spare time, she loves to crochet, do counted cross stitch and enjoys working jigsaw puzzles on the computer. Twenty-two years ago, Cheryl, her son and daughter-in-law built a house together, and they still live there today. However, in 6-9 months, her son and daughter-in-law will be relocating to western Nebraska, and Cheryl and her little chihuahua will remain in Omaha. Cheryl also has three adult grandsons who live in Omaha. We're glad Cheryl chose our church, and please welcome her to Presbyterian Church of the Cross



Kim Erickson

Kim has been attending First Methodist Church in Omaha, but felt she wanted to reaffirm her faith and began looking at other churches. Thanks to her parents, Arnie and Karleen Nelson (long time members of PCOC), she's been attending with them and felt PCOC is the church for her. She is joining individually since her husband and children are members of the Catholic faith. Kim feels belonging to a church means being welcomed, supported, and encouraged to grow in faith. She was born in Omaha and owns both Plato's Closet stores, which are secondhand resale stores for teens and young adults. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling. Through her stores, she supports Nebraska Humane Society and works with OPS to help fill their closets for students who are in need of clothing and shoes. Please welcome Kim and thank Arnie and Karleen for encouraging her to consider becoming a member of PCOC.



Evans Otoo

You may recognize Evans sitting in the chancel with the Alleluia Singers or Resound, but now you can officially welcome him to our church family. Evans learned about PCOC through our Website, and his love of singing brought him to our church. Evans is joining by Reaffirmation of Faith. He was born in Ghana. Evans works at Cargill as a food scientist and has been in Omaha for a month. In his spare time, he enjoys cooking. Please greet Evans when you see him and thank him for sharing his musical talent with us.



John and Judy Nelson

John has been attending First Presbyterian Church Omaha, and Judy has been attending West Hills Church, but they were looking for a church they both would enjoy and could attend together. Because of our more formal worship service, inspirational preaching, uplifting music, and welcoming people, they chose PCOC. In their previous churches, they have served as Elders, Deacons, and also served on various church committees. On the "New Membership Form", they listed many PCOC church members they knew, and that helped them decide on joining our church. John was born in Geneva, NE and grew up on a farm. John is a retired attorney, a former NE State Senator and was also appointed Lt. Governor in 2014 to complete the term of an incumbent who resigned. John is also a retired Commander in the USNR. He enjoys reading (history and biographies), music, exercise, finance and agriculture. He belongs to Kiwanis Club of Omaha, Inc. Judy was born in St. Louis, and grew up in Sioux City, Kansas City and Omaha. She is a "PK" (pastor's kid) and you may have known her Dad, Pastor Harvey Throop, since he was called to serve First Presbyterian Church Omaha in 1963. She is a retired high school and middle school English teacher. In her spare time, she enjoys casual gardening, reading, archiving family history, and Bible Study Fellowship. John and Judy have 3 married adult children (2 sons and a daughter) and 9 grandchildren. Two families live in Minnesota and one lives in Omaha. Please welcome John and Judy to our church family!



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:

-Rev. Mary Beene, PCUSA Office of Stewardship & Funds Development Stewardship Officer, thanks you for your $2,060 June 2026 gift that supports Shared Mission and which purchased a piglet, a rainwater catchment system, an improved cookstove and a refugee food basket from the Presbyterian Giving Catalog.

-Pastor Chelsea Salifou, CEO of Heartland Hope Mission thanks you for your contribution of $745 that provides working poor families with a week's supply of groceries, which includes fresh produce, meat, milk and hygiene items. Your gift also allows families in need to have access to clothing, household items, and an opportunity to meet with a Client Service Specialist to receive navigational services, SNAP (food stamp) application assistance and connects them to Heartland Hope's Job Paths program.

Siena Francis House Servers Needed

Sunday, September 13
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.

SIENA FRANCIS HOUSE
Serving Hope to the Homeless

Mission Committee Moderator:
Beth Maxwell - Mission@pcoc.us

AGAPE Book Review

The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux
Recorded and Edited by Joseph Epes Brown

While our country was celebrating its 250th birthday with parades and fireworks, my thoughts turned to our Native American citizens. I wondered how they felt about this season and whether or how they celebrated. It's important to note that in the 1880's there was a Code of Offenses that forbade them to practice any kind of tribal ceremonial activity. Although there was some celebration done in secret, it was strictly forbidden. Fortunately, these restrictions were lifted in the 1930's and Native Americans were once again permitted these sacred practices.

When Joseph Brown approached Black Elk for information about some these practices, he feared that Black Elk, who was no longer speaking to people, would not share with him. Fortunately for Mr. Brown (and all of us) Black Elk was willing to talk about these ceremonies.

As it is, on July 4th many Native Americans celebrate and honor their own people who served and sacrificed as soldiers in any of America's foreign wars.

Also, July 4th is celebrated as the hottest month of the year with their own Sundance. This is also done in honor of those who serve or have served in the military.

And some celebrate it as a way of reuniting with family and tribal roots.

These are the seven rites of the Oglala Sioux:

1. The Sacred Pipe
2. The Keeping of the Souls
3.The Rite of Purification
4 Crying for a Vision
5. The Sundance
6. The Making of Relatives
7. Preparing a Girl for Womanhood.

The rites themselves were quite complex and included singing, dancing, complex rituals and building tipis. Sometimes they took several days. The primary recipient of all prayers, songs, and dances was their Sacred being who they called Wakan. Mr. Brown also points out certain practices that are very similar to Christian and Muslim traditions. We are grateful to Black Elk and to Joseph Brown for gathering these very precious and sacred ceremonial practices.

We have so much to learn,
Ann Pearson.



AGAPE for ALL Updates

By the time you are reading this, our Agape group will be visiting two North Omaha locations. On the afternoon of Saturday, August 29th, we will visit the new Ernie Chambers Legacy Library located in the Saratoga Multicultural Center along with the community program, "Together We Achieve Miracles". We will also stop by the Malcolm X Foundation for an update on their new development plans. If this comes out early, and you haven't signed up, please do so online or call Kathy Moore at 402-880-3844.

Watch next month's Cross Currents for photos of this event. I have some travel in September and October and am very active in the electoral process, so we may wait until November for our next learning tour. I have always considered voting to be a right we have all been given. Unfortunately, I'm finding that many people – both in some North Omaha canvassing I've been doing and among my own friends – many people are becoming disheartened with the electoral process and feel that their vote doesn't really count, so why bother.

I had a grandmother who was an active suffragette so have long believed voting is a powerful tool and a right to be exercised faithfully. I was recently reading about a Civil Rights Pioneer, Diane Nash, who coined the phrase, "Agapic Energy". With agape meaning "love for humankind", she felt the phrase "agapic energy" encapsulated the driving force behind the nonviolent civil rights movement that she helped lead in the 1960's. She wanted a term that encompassed more than "the absence of violence". She stated that nonviolence is a negative term, and what she was talking about was a very positive and comprehensive phenomenon. She emphasized several powerful positions. The following is from a speech she gave in 2017:

- Freedom is not something you get and then you've got it. Freedom is a constant, never-ending struggle.
- People are never your enemy. Unjust political and economic systems are the enemies. If you recognize that people are not the enemy, you can love and respect the person at the same time you attack the attitude or action of that person.
- "Agapic energy" remains applicable to today's issues and Americans need to put it into action if they want to see change. Voting is important, but it is not enough. Can you imagine if we had waited for elected officials to desegregate lunch counters and buses, and get the right to vote for blacks in the South? We probably would still be waiting.

So, as we wait for our next learning opportunity as a group, I would encourage all of us to vote, but to also use our "agapic energy" to help make the electoral process fair, equitable and meaningful for all. Work on a campaign, help register people to vote, talk to your friends and neighbors about a candidate you support. That is Agape for All!

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Next Cross Currents Deadline is:
Third Friday of the month
September 18, 2026

Heartland Hope Mission
September 4

Heartland Hope Mission's West Omaha pantry schedule to distribute grocery hygiene items to the clients they serve on Fridays from 12:30 - 3 pm. If you would like to volunteer to stock the pantry on Saturday morning at the West O location, you may volunteer at 9:30 - 11:30 am. All volunteer opportunities at HHM are for both the South and West Omaha locations. Please contact John Bennett if you are interested in volunteering or have any questions at (402) 618-6991 or mljbennett85@gmail.com. Thank you for generously supporting Heartland Hope Mission.

Heartland Hope
MISSION

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