



A Season to Appreciate our Time Together for Joy

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Campaign for our life Together for Joy 2023

The Presbyterian Church of Okemos



"Sing to God a new song, for God has done marvelous things.
Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy."

+ Psalm 98

Greetings, grace, and peace!

Who in the world would ever have guessed we'd have a season like the one we've just been through? Through this challenging season, the Presbyterian Church of Okemos has weathered major staff transitions and pandemic protocols with creativity, energy, imagination and love.

In the following pages, you will see reports from various church committees sharing highlights from the past year – highlights that speak to ways in which we embrace God's love and grace and extend it within our congregation, within the community and throughout the world. We have much to be grateful for here at PCO! We celebrate these accomplishments, and we give thanks for all whose time, energy, and talents kept us focused on God's vision and mission. This congregation embodies the call to love God and to love our neighbors, and does so *Together for Joy*.

We are called to be a people of joy. We are called to embrace abundance. We are called to dream. With the addition of Rev. Rebekah Anderson as our Associate Pastor, we are well placed to live into the next chapter of our communal life at PCO: 1) to increase the nurture and care of our children, youth and families, 2) to reach out into the community and invite others to be part of the PCO family, 3) to engage each member in ministry, using the gifts God has uniquely blessed us with, 4) to feed the hungry, visit the infirmed, and care for the refugee, 5) to support the education and well-being of children in our community and around the world, 6) to care for our Earth and be good stewards of creation, 7) to build and rebuild connections that have frayed, and 8) to cultivate and foster community – to be *Together for Joy*

Your financial support means more now than ever to keep this flexibility, creativity, and faithfulness alive and thriving in the year to come. We are asking every household in the congregation to prayerfully consider supporting the PCO community with your financial gifts and gifts of time and talent. Dedication Sunday is November 13 this year. On that day, we will seek to meet the challenges before us by gathering up our pledges and blessing them. On Sunday November 20, we celebrate and give thanks by sharing in an Agape Meal during the worship service.

We hope you will take the enclosed pledge card and place it somewhere prominent in your home. Whenever you see it, ask God to help you discern your pledge for the coming year. For all that we've already accomplished together during this challenging season, for all that we will accomplish together in the future, thank God and thank you.

In faith,

Pastor Lisa Schrott and Doug Paterson, Chair of the Stewardship Committee

Worship and Music

The Worship & Music Committee works with staff and our congregation to plan and organize worship services on Sundays and other important days in the church calendar. The committee coordinates communion, greeters, ushers, and flowers for services and is responsible for the overall worship experience. In addition the committee has oversight of our music programs including our chancel, bell, and youth choirs. It is through this committee's efforts that our congregation joins *Together for Joy* each Sunday.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022



Jazz Sunday

We've celebrated a full year with our new Pastor and Head of Staff Lisa Schrott. Even more recently, we were blessed to welcome Associate Pastor Rebekah Anderson. We are excited with Pastor Lisa's oversight and new ideas. We can't wait for the changes and blessings as Pastor Rebekah rebuilds our youth and children's programs. Along with the new, we celebrated the continuation of our many traditions, including Lessons and Carols (our 10th!) and Jazz Sunday (more than 10). And, wait for it, Agape is coming back! Very recently, we celebrated with some of our youth through a special Cuba Sunday service and shared in their amazing trip to a fascinating country. Finally, our chancel and handbell choirs are back in full swing and the congregation graciously supported the purchase of a fifth octave of bells.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

We plan to continue the many ongoing worship and music activities. We are continuing to discuss changes to better welcome and support families with children during worship service. A specific event we are working on is considering a reimagined family Christmas Eve service.



Communion

Mission

The Mission committee provides opportunities for church members to increase our awareness of our responsibilities to our fellow human beings, to advocate for our Christian ethics, and to take action in God's name who has blessed us with His calling to feed the hungry, heal the sick, clothe the naked, promote justice, and bring Christ's love to all people. The Mission committee brings us *Together for Joy* in the many Mission projects funded by and participated in by PCO members.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

The Mission committee organized many events and activities throughout the community, both locally and globally, helping those in need and educating the congregation and community on local and international situations.

PCO continued to provide support in the Lansing area to Communities in Schools – Michigan, which supports the students in local schools, to the Global Institute of Lansing, which provides education to refugees, and to Edgewood Village, starting a Senior Christmas program. PCO joined with neighbor churches, Judson Baptist, Okemos Community, and Holt Community to provide food and clothing for many in our community. PCO members continued to provide monthly meals to Loaves and Fishes and to serve various meals at Advent House.

The committee provided help to our newest neighbors, joining with St Vincent Catholic Charities to aid with funds and supplies to Afghan refugees.

Internationally PCO continued its support to the Simbolei Academy in Kenya, to the Haiti Nursing Foundation, Medical Benevolence Foundation, and to the Mercy & Hope Charity in Sierra Leone.

The committee organized PCO participation in the CROP walk and the mission trip to Detroit for CASS. The PCO youth along with Youth from Holt Presbyterian Church, went to Cuba on a mission trip in June.



Crop Walk



Ready to Shop for the Giving Tree

The committee continues providing Thanksgiving baskets, and Christmas gifts through the PCO Angel Tree and hosting our Alternative Christmas market.

The Mission committee advocated for PCO to our congressional representatives supporting the bi-partisan Afghan Adjustment Act. The committee keeps the congregation informed of local and state policy issues through a monthly update in the Grapevine. The committee also hosts church events to inform the congregation and community of issues, this year sponsoring an information lunch and session on the Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

The Mission committee plans to continue providing support to those in need, both locally and globally. The committee will continue to provide educational opportunities for the congregation as well. The Mission committee is organizing a June 2023 Mission trip for both youth and adults to Simbolei Academy in Kenya. The committee will continue to pursue opportunities that will engage both youth and adults in hands-on mission activities.



Mission Group to Cass Community Services

Children and Youth Christian Education

The purpose of the Christian education for children and youth committee is to nurture the development of a life of faith through the study of the Bible, the discussion of the meaning of faith in the current world, the development of social and interpersonal lives based upon Christian beliefs, and the caring of all people throughout the world. Our Children and Youth join *Together for Joy* through Sunday School and participation in Youth groups, and participate in mission projects throughout the year. Our children have always been a priority for PCO, with mission participation being an important part of the youth program.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

In 2022, we saw the gradual re-emergence of our programs for children and youth from the Covid caused shutdown. Sunday School was provided for children and youth from pre-K through high school by a dedicated group of Sunday School teachers. We were particularly pleased by the continued active participation of high school youth in the Sunday School program. In the fall of 2022, Sunday School classes were realigned by combining a couple of age groups in order to enhance the size of some of the Sunday School classes. In May, high school youth participated in leading a Youth Sunday Worship Service which included all parts of the service.

Youth Group activities continued throughout the spring and early summer including such activities as snow tubing, neighborhood trash cleanup, a soupless “Souper Bowl Sunday” (fund raiser for food banks), and game nights. With the arrival of Pastor Rebekah, we started two youth groups, Middle School and High School, that began meeting weekly. Activities included a swimming pool night, a movie night, and game nights.



Youth Mission Team to Cuba

Perhaps the most exciting youth activity in 2022 was a youth mission trip to Cuba in June. Four of PCO's youth joined with Holt Presbyterian Church youth to provide a Bible School program for Cuban youth and to assist with some community repair activities. This fall, the youth who participated in the mission trip led a Sunday worship service with a Cuban theme and conducted a Q and A session during the education hour.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

During the upcoming year, the Christian Education for Children and Youth Committee will be developing new strategies for providing Christian Education for younger children, focusing on the small number of children who have been participating in our traditional Sunday School. We will be developing a more multi-generational approach. We also want to continue to develop the opportunities for children and youth to participate in mission activities and projects. In particular, we hope to provide at least one major mission trip and a number of shorter mission related activities.



Youth Sunday

Adult Christian Education

The Adult Christian Education committee enhances the faith of our members through study and contemplation of the scriptures and discussion as to how we can be servants to one another and those in need in our community and the world. It is through these various classes and groups that we join *Together for Joy* in learning and developing a deeper understanding of what it means to be Christian.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

Following a congregational Adult Education Retreat it was determined that adult education should focus on four theme areas consistent with our PCO mission: 1) how to care for self and community; 2) how we can apply the Bible to our lives; 3) how to further develop our faith formation and continued growth in Christ; and 4) how we can become better equipped for action in the world. Each theme consisted of three consecutive Sundays with scriptural background, a speaker or panel, and development of a PCO response.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

Adult Education will continue to follow our four theme areas by considering topics that help us care for self and community, applying the Bible to our lives; growing our faith formation in Christ; and equip us for action in the world. The events will continue and expand these themes while coordinating with mission and youth.



Caring for Community

Parish Life

The Parish Life committee brings people *Together for Joy* by providing opportunities for church members to get to know each other better, both during the time of fellowship after the church service and at other events and activities.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

As Covid numbers diminished, the committee returned to providing opportunities for our congregation to come *Together for Joy* by providing coffee, snacks, and monthly birthday cake after church. We delighted in being able to talk to friends over food once again. Pastor Lisa introduced us to King Cake on Jazz Sunday. Lemonade on the Lawn welcomed Pastor Rebekah after her candidate sermon. Summer activities included going to a women's football game, an outdoor production at MSU's Summer Circle theater, a concert at the Lake Lansing Band Shell, and a Lansing Lugnuts baseball game. There were receptions after Pastor Lisa's Installation and Pastor Rebekah's Ordination and Installation services.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

In 2023, we hope to expand the ways in which we can meet in fellowship. We would like for church members to know what other members live close to them. We hope to revive favorite activities like the Chili Cookoff and to introduce new ideas, always mindful of health protocols that should be observed. We will welcome many of the church's small groups under our umbrella so that together we can better serve God in our community.



Lansing Lugnuts Game Out on the Town Summer Fellowship Initiative

Small Group Ministries

PCO has several small group ministries that bring members *Together for Joy* in various ways. The Women's Connection, Men's Group, and Retirees Group create opportunities to gather *Together for Joy*. The Women's Connection highlights members' faith journeys, while the Men's group highlights faith and experiential issues. The Retirees Group focuses on personal changes and spiritual development as we grow older. The Contemplation Class brings members *Together for Joy* with spiritual practices of prayer, silence, and shared conversations. The Crafts Ministry (formerly the Prayer Shawl Ministry), the Artist Circle, and the Writing Group bring members *Together for Joy*, by creating for the church and community. The Crafts Ministry makes prayer shawls to share spiritual support to members and friends, and will begin making hats, mittens, scarves, and other items that are needed in the community. The Artist Circle explores faith through creating liturgical art for the sanctuary. The Writing Group shares writings of poems, letters, stories, etc.



Intergenerational Art Project

The Small Group Ministries hope to continue meeting outside the Sunday services, allowing engaging conversations and endeavors that increase the understanding of and help to those around us.

Communication and Engagement

We are grateful to the Communications and Engagement committee that keeps improving communication among our church groups, standing committees, and members and encourages active engagement of the congregation in the life of our church.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

This past year, the Communication and Engagement committee maintained a focus on connecting with our members, while simultaneously taking on outreach projects with an external focus. In March, we sent about 700 postcards to new and recent arrivals in the 48864 zip code. The postcards extended a message of Welcome and publicized our Holy Week and Easter Schedule. In August, we rolled out an updated website with a refreshed look and feel. This allows us to better promote major activities of the church (with an Events calendar), and make it easier for members to volunteer (with a new Serve page). We also added an Instagram account in 2022 - please follow us there: www.instagram.com/okemospres

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

In the coming year, the committee will continue to build the church's online presence and to extend the reach of our message and work. We are planning to roll out an online church directory so that members can more easily connect with each other as well as keep their own information up-to-date. As we continue to meet through a mixture of in-person and remote participants, we are also looking at ways to simplify and improve the technology in use, as well as adding permanent screens to improve how we share information in the Fellowship Hall.

Endowment Fund and Memorial Fund

The Endowment and Memorial Funds committee has oversight and manages our church's endowment funds and memorial funds. The Endowment Fund was created in 2010 as a means of generating investment income to fund needs beyond those funded within the church's operating budget. The Endowment Committee bylaws divide investment income between increasing the principal and funding grants. This year the committee was charged by session with the additional responsibility of oversight and management of the Memorial Fund.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

The Endowment and Memorial funds committee was pleased in 2022 to provide funding for the following uses: Music and Worship for decoration, Resurfacing the parking lot, including improving safety, PCO Green Team, Christian Ed for the youth mission trip to Cuba, Pastor Installation expenses, and the Pastor Portrait Gallery.

The committee spent significant time this year updating the bylaws, policies and procedures for management and operation of the Memorial Fund which were approved by Session this Summer. The committee also reviewed and updated the Endowment Fund by-laws which were approved by Session and will be brought to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting.



Resurfacing the Parking Lot

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

The vision for 2023 is to continue to address, in a timely manner, the needs of our church and the community that we serve. We hope to have some information sessions for the congregation on the purpose of an endowment, on building donor relationships, and on understanding the impact our endowment and memorial funds have on our congregation and community. This might include a Legacy Sunday and some guests from the Presbytery.

Administration and Property

It is only with responsible management of the church, that we can work *Together for Joy* on a continuous basis.

The Administration committee is responsible for the following.

- Oversight of all financial, legal and insurance matters of the church.

- Oversight of maintenance and use of the building and grounds.

- Maintaining policies and procedures for the church facilities and activities.

- Oversight of the Green Team



Solar panels in the church yard along Okemos Road

The Administration committee develops and monitors the annual budget, and has oversight responsibility for legal issues, insurance, and building and grounds. In addition, this committee supports acquisition of technology needed by the church to continue its services as we move beyond the pandemic. All of this enables the congregation to accomplish the ministry of the church *Together for Joy!*

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

The committee arranged building and grounds repairs and cleanup, including resurfacing the parking lot, upgrading sanctuary lighting, and continued maintenance of the facilities. The committee reviewed and disseminated emergency policies and procedures to the congregation. The committee continues to handle financial responsibilities, including both ongoing expenses and preparing for long term expenditures .

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

The vision for 2023 is to continue the financial and facilities responsibilities of the committee, with upcoming evaluation of the building HVAC and installation and start-up of the new solar panels.

Green Team

It is through the Green Team that we are *Together for Joy* in our commitment to stewardship of the earth and all creations of God. This stewardship extends to the church's facilities, our homes, and our communities. Our stewardship begins by informing our own behaviors and sharing ideas and knowledge to preserve our earth and its climate.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

PCO made commitments to protect our earth and creation. In 2022 PCO carried out these commitments and is now a certified Earth Care Congregation. The church installed solar panels that will be ready for use in 2023; initiated a native plant project, collaborating with the MSU seeded plant plot project; increased recycling through a church composting program; and changed environmentally responsible commodities, ie. coffee and paper products, to protect our earth. The team worked to increase awareness of environmental issues and participated in activities with Michigan Interfaith Power and Light Area Chapter.



Preparing the ground



Planting the plants

PLANS/VISIONS FOR 2023

The Green Team plans to build on the work of 2022. The team will work to recertify PCO as an Earth Care Congregation. The team will finalize the installation and start-up of the solar panels, expand the native plant project, increase further the recycling and composting at the church, and continue to purchase environmentally friendly commodities. The team will continue to inform the congregation of what actions PCO and the Green Team are taking. The team will continue to provide environmental information to the congregation and the community, and will continue to participate with and share information with the Michigan Interfaith Power and Light Area Chapter.

Personnel

The Personnel committee works *Together for Joy* to manage our staff and works with our staff to ensure that the church has the staffing structure it needs to accomplish our ministry. The Personnel committee meets monthly to perform the following tasks when necessary: Coordinates personnel policies and practices for paid staff; Recommends salary packages and wages to the Administration Committee at budget time; Establishes and annually reviews Position Descriptions for each paid position; Meets face to face for an annual review with all paid staff to review work performance for the year and to establish goals for the coming year and maintains confidential records for each employee.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022



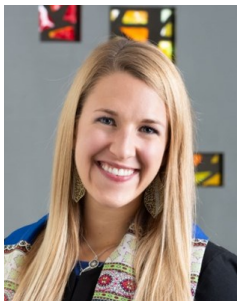
**Pastor Lisa
Schrott**

The Personnel committee worked alongside Pastor Lisa Schrott, who provided the committee with her goals for 2022. The Associate Pastor Nominating Committee began its search for a new associate pastor, resulting in Rebekah Anderson being called to serve, and she accepting the terms of call offered to her by the Personnel committee.

Committee members updated the Position Descriptions for all employed staff, established a new form for non-clergy annual evaluations, and updated security practices for personnel records. All employees completed the 2022 documents for W-4, I-9 and an Employee Acknowledgement confirming that the Employee Handbook had been reviewed. The committee carried out the annual evaluations and made recommendations for upcoming compensation.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

The Personnel committee will reevaluate the Position Descriptions for all employees considering the findings of the 2022 employee evaluations. The committee will consider establishing staff appreciation events during the coming year.



**Pastor Rebekah
Anderson**



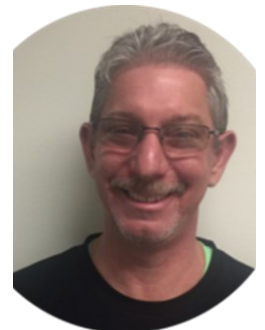
Marlene Brewbaker



Colleen Chester



Anna Thiel



Edward Ennen

Nominating Committee

Each year, the Nominating committee identifies church members for Deacons, Elders, Endowment and Memorial Funds trustees, and in times of transitions recommends Pastor Nominating committees for congregational approval. In all cases the church members nominated for positions are approved by vote at congregational meetings. It is through these nominations that the Deacons, Elders, Trustees, and committee members can effectively work *Together for Joy* in carrying out the mission of the church.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

We have continued to work on selecting candidates who have not previously served as church officers. Also, we have improved the gender balance of elders and deacons to more accurately represent the congregation, and we have worked towards including more younger members in these roles. The committee successfully accelerated its work to meet an annual meeting deadline that was three months sooner than it was in 2021.

PLANS/ VISION FOR 2023

The committee plans to continue its role of identifying church members who can best represent and serve the church in the various leadership roles.



The congregation prays for the newest Deacons and Elders

Stewardship

The Stewardship committee is grateful for all the church members who work *Together for Joy* to support our ministry and mission of the church. The Stewardship committee is responsible for assuring there is both financial and volunteer support to accomplish the goals of the church. The committee conducts a stewardship campaign each fall asking for a pledge of *both* time and money to our efforts. This brochure is one effort by the committee to inform you of the work of the church, but also to inform you of many opportunities for you to participate *Together for Joy* with other members of the congregation in the life and mission of the church.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2022

Last fall's stewardship campaign highlighting "gratitude" resulted in our members successfully providing financial support of the church's operations during this church year. In addition, a "volunteer coordinator" agreed to use the time and talent pledges from last year's campaign to identify people who can fill the various needs for volunteers to fulfill various roles required to support our congregation's ministry. Finally, Pastor Lisa attended a conference on Stewardship in September to help guide our work this coming year.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2023

This fall's stewardship campaign entitled "Together for Joy" will focus on highlighting how, as a Christian Community, we minister to both our congregation and many outside our congregation accomplishing much more together than we could ever do as individuals. We will also focus on how giving money and time fulfills our call to discipleship and serving as instruments of God's call to serve others. We challenge each member and friend of our church to prayerfully consider how they can play an active role in the work we do *Together for Joy*.