



A Season of Gratitude for Our Community of Faith

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Campaign for Our Life Together in 2024

The Presbyterian Church of Okemos



Greetings, grace, and peace!

"The Church exists to invite everyone to join the lifelong journey of faith that is life in Jesus Christ."

This journey for the Presbyterian Church began 60 years ago, offering hope and light to the members and community both near and far, as in our mission statement, *"Service to a world that needs God."*

We appreciate new opportunities going forward. PCO is not resting; we are looking at stretching our efforts through a new look at Strategic Visions.

In this booklet you will see highlights of our church's extension of God's love and grace through service within the local community and worldwide community. We have much to be grateful for here at PCO! We celebrate these accomplishments, and we give thanks to all whose time, energy, and talents keep us focused on God's vision and mission. As well as describing opportunities to serve, the following pages include opportunities for spiritual growth, through biblical study, social gatherings, and other fellowship events.

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. Your financial support means more now than ever to keep this flexibility, creativity, and faithfulness alive and thriving in the year to come. Gifts of your time and talents improve the lives of those around us. We hope you will keep the enclosed estimate of giving card and time & talent card nearby and when you see them, ask God for help in discerning what gifts you can offer for the coming year.

Dedication Sunday is November 12 this year. On that day, we will gather in our pledges, bless them, and pray for direction in their use.

In faith,

PCO Stewardship Committee; Jeff Arbour, Bill Given, Doug Paterson, Jane Paterson, Gary VanKempen, Frank Webster, Patty Wilson, and Pastor Lisa Schrott

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 Gratitude each Sunday.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

We are GRATEFUL that worship has continued to thrive in 2023 under the direction of Pastor and Head of Staff Lisa Schrott. Many traditions continued including our beloved Lessons and Carols service, now over a decade old, and the annual Jazz Sunday which this year expanded into a Jazz Weekend with the talents of the Dave Bennett Quartet. The Agape Meal was once again enjoyed with food and fellowship during the worship service. Other special Sunday services included Epiphany Sunday with Star Words, Creation Care Sunday led by the Green Team, Youth Sunday and World Communion Sunday.



The Chancel Choir at the Agape Meal

Generation to Generation, Lent: Stories That Shape Our Faith, Refugee Awareness Month: Welcoming Our New Neighbors, Summer Series: Belonging & Building Community, and a Fall Series: Our Mission at PCO. Each of these series shaped our faith through new messages focused on a common theme.

Complementing and weaving throughout our worship life is always the many talented musicians who call our church home. We enjoy the blessings of a dedicated organist, chancel choir director, and bell choir director. Several church members, and our scholarship students, work many hours to lend their voices or skills to our services. We also enjoy the budding talents of our youth as they perform instrumental pieces during the year. We are GRATEFUL for the varied musical gifts they all bring to our worship life.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

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 special committee will help assess what direction and changes we may want consider both big and small and we look forward to the energy and ideas that Rebecca Mattern will bring to worship.

Of course, we were blessed to have Pastor Rebekah Anderson as Associate Pastor join us for most of 2023 and focus on our children and youth. In worship, Rebekah introduced us to Las Posadas and led families on a special Christmas journey. Rebekah bonded with our children through many children's sermons and introduced our kids to the Children's Worship Experience, a special time and place for worship tailored specifically to where our kids are in their worship life.

Throughout 2023, our pastors led us through several sermon series, including Advent 2022: From



Youth Musicians

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 take action in the name of God 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.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

The mission committee is GRATEFUL for all the support this congregation shows that reflects our commitment to serve others. During 2023 this congregation served the community by assisting with:

Housing and Food Insecurity

- Organized a trip to Cass Community Social Services in Detroit to assist in painting and organizing their warehouse.
- Supported PCO activities including the CROP walk, Thanksgiving baskets, and the Alternative Christmas market, among other activities.
- Maintained our relationship with local churches to provide clothing and food to those in need in our community.
- Supported local shelters: Loaves and Fishes and Advent House.
- Collected non-perishable food in our PCO shopping cart that was delivered to 3 food pantries at Haslett Community, Okemos Community and First Presbyterian (Lansing) churches in support of the Greater Lansing Food Bank.
- Served meals at Advent House and increased our commitment to 8 days, thanks to strong congregational support!



Serving in Kenya

Education and Global Outreach

- Sponsored a mission trip to Simbolei Academy in Kenya to deepen relationships and provide various support activities for their students.
- Continued our support internationally for the Simbolei Academy in Kenya, Haiti Nursing Foundation, and the Medical Benevolence Foundation (MBF).
- Maintained our liaison and financial support for Communities in Schools – Michigan (CISM).
- Continued support for Edgewood Village and its scholar program for youth at Edgewood.
- Provided updates on local and state policy issues published monthly in the Grapevine.

Refugee Support

- Continued our support for refugees in our community through Saint Vincent Catholic Charities (STVCC).
- Continued to provide leadership, teachers, and financial support for Global Institute of Lansing (GIL) and their mission to educate adult refugees and immigrants in our area.



Crop Walkers

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

In 2024 the mission committee is committed to:

- Identify local and Mission projects that will engage both youth and adults in hands-on mission activities.
- Continue our efforts supporting refugees and new immigrants in the greater Lansing area.
- Partnering with organizations that tutor and support students of all ages in a variety of settings.
- Continuing to spread the joy of Thanksgiving and Christmas to families in our community.
- Continuing our support internationally for MBF, Haiti Nursing Foundation, Simbolei Women's Academy (Kenya), and Friends of Moldova (Ukrainian Refugees).
- Continuing our support and involvement in local efforts like Ukirk, AFAR, Mikey 23 Foundation, Community in Schools (CIS), CROP Walk, Advent House, Edgewood Village, Global Institute of Lansing (GIL), Lansing Food Bank, among others.
- Reviewing our list of agencies to assess current needs and the church's ability to make a difference.

Children and Youth Christian Education

The Christian Education for Children and Youth committee provides the opportunity for children and youth to further their faith formation through Bible study, reflection on the role of faith in their lives, the development of Christian social and interpersonal relationships, and showing care for all people. Activities include Sunday School for pre-school through high school, nurturing of youth groups, and offering opportunities to participate in mission projects.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

The Christian Education – Children and Youth committee is GRATEFUL to all who participate in providing education and opportunities for our children and youth to grow in their faith and spiritual life.

Weekly Sunday School and youth group activities were a regular part of the program for children and youth. Along with other activities, some of the special events last fall included children and youth participation in the Crop Walk, the all congregation rock painting event, providing a coffee and cookie shop during the Alternate Christmas Market, and participation in a new Christmas Eve worship focused on the journey to Bethlehem.

Mid-winter, the youth participated in two youth retreats with First Presbyterian, Holt, one for middle schoolers and one for high schoolers. Also during the winter, we offered a Children's Worship Experience for children three to seven years old provided during the second half of the weekly Sunday morning worship service.

In the spring, the youth again led the Youth Sunday Worship Service including readings, a small drama, offering a children's sermon, music, and the worship service sermon.

A major mission activity for the high school youth was the summer mission trip to Chicago. Youth worked with a program providing food for the homeless and needy, engaged in some small facility and grounds projects, and participated in worship services. Youth subsequently did a presentation on their mission trip during the adult Sunday School hour.



Preparing to serve in the Windy City

Of course, there were also some traditional fun activities for youth including visiting a corn maze, snow tubing, cookouts, and many game nights. Periodically, youth were joined in activities with youth from other churches. Youth also engaged in outreach by inviting friends to participate in youth group activities.

With Pastor Rebekah Anderson leaving in August, the youth group activities were continued into fall under the rotating leadership of the youth's parents.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

With Rebecca Mattern serving as Interim Director of Faith Formation, we look forward to a rewarding year for our children and youth. 2024 plans include both middle school and high school youth participation in national conferences, educational and development opportunities for child and youth volunteers, offering a confirmation class in conjunction with Eastminster Presbyterian Church, refreshing the children's library including removal of outdated material, procuring new books, and moving the location of the children's library to a more conspicuous and central location.



Painting Rocks was an intergenerational activity as part of education hour

Adult Christian Education

The Adult Education Committee seeks to enhance the faith of members through information relating to Scripture and society and our roles at PCO to increase our knowledge on how to respond to issues in church and community.

The committee is GRATEFUL for all who participate in the various offerings and opportunities for study and contemplation.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

Sunday morning Adult Ed featured reports on the trip to Simbolei Academy in Kenya and the youth mission trip to Chicago; advanced care planning for aging and death; discussions on apology and reparation to the black community; a Green Team presentation on Earth Care; refugee presentations by Melissa Borja and Stephanie Nawyn; the journey Inward on vulnerability, shame, empathy, and leadership, and occasional sermon talk backs by Pastors Lisa & Rebekah.

Bible studies: These included *Beyond Suffering* for Lent; Book of Revelation in July and August; and throughout the year, Thursday Morning Bible Studies on Genesis and Luke.

Our Firearm Safety Task Force conducted a congregational survey and contributed articles to the Grapevine and regular updates on proposed bills and policies at state and federal levels were shared.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

Two proposed major topics for Sunday mornings are science and faith, and Old Testament prophetic messages. We plan to include sermon talk-backs, and updates on Mission projects. Advent and Lenten studies will focus on the birth and passion of Christ in innovative ways. The Thursday morning Bible Study will complete the Gospel of Luke and continue to study the Book of Acts on Zoom. The Firearm Safety Task Force survey results suggested some topics that would lend themselves to advocacy, such as restricting the purchase of assault weapons; support of the Safer Neighborhoods Gun Buyback Act of 2023, and intentionally work toward removing assault weapons from our homes and our communities. We also plan to have occasional excursions outside the church building.

Parish Life

The Parish Life Committee provides opportunities for church members and guests to get to know each other better, both during the time of fellowship after church and at other events and activities throughout the year.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

The committee is GRATEFUL for all who take the time to participate in the opportunities we offer and to all who help plan and conduct the various activities we organize.

The Parish Life Committee continued to provide opportunities for our congregation to come together by offering coffee, snacks, and monthly birthday cake during the fellowship hour after church. As winter settles in, we hosted a Chili Cookoff and Game Night and a dinner on Christmas Day. We came together for a pancake breakfast as the days began to get longer, followed by bowling in March.

This past year, we initiated a time of fellowship and food after the Easter Sunday service. We supported the University Presbyterian group, UKIRK, by hosting a Trivia Night. With the arrival of summer, our Out on the Town series offered a women's football game, a stunning Carillon Bell concert and tour of Beaumont Tower, a Lansing Lugnuts baseball game on Faith and Family Night, and participation in Meridian Township's first Pride Festival. We organized Food for Rally Day and the September Presbytery meeting was held at our church.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

The goal of all of the Parish Life activities is to serve more faithfully through fellowship with and caring for one another. This will continue in 2024 with both traditional activities mentioned above and with NEW opportunities. Stay tuned!!



Out on the Town activities included bowling at City Limits in East Lansing

Small Group Ministries

PCO has several small group ministries that bring members together in various ways. The Women's Connection, Men's Group, and the Retirees Group create opportunities to gather together. The Women's Connection highlights members' faith journeys, while the Men's Group highlights faith, experiential, and contemporary issues. The Retirees' Group focuses on personal changes and spiritual development as we grow older. The Contemplation Class brings members together with spiritual practices of prayer, silence, and shared conversations.

The Crafts Ministry (formerly the Prayer Shawl Ministry), the Artist Circle, and the Writing Life Stories Group bring members together by offering creative activities for the church and community. The Crafts Ministry makes prayer shawls to give spiritual support to members and friends as well as 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, and stories as well as engaging discussion about what has been read.

The Parents' Group creates time for those with children to know each other better. The Caregivers' Group provides support, advice, and comfort to those taking care of others with special needs.

The Small Group ministries will continue meeting outside the Sunday services, making possible engaging conversations and endeavors that increase the understanding of and help to those around us.

Small groups are organized by Parish Life. For more information, contact the church office.



Members of the Crafts Ministry display items to be donated to those in need.



Small groups of differing ages and interests gather at the church building, online and out in the community throughout the year.



The monthly Women's Dinner Out gives PCO women a chance to connect with one another and to try new restaurants in the greater Lansing area.

Communication and Engagement

We are Grateful to the Communications and Engagement committee that continues to:

- improve communication and connection among our members, church groups and standing committees
- encourage active engagement of the congregation in the life of our church
- extend the love of Christ to the community through our offer of Welcome

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

In March, we rolled 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. You can create an account here: <https://members.instantchurchdirectory.com>

Through the Summer, we worked with the pastors to produce a Weekly Devotional Series *Continuing the Conversation*; the series is available as a Playlist on our PCO YouTube channel.

In August, we made a financial contribution to the Meridian Pride Festival to demonstrate our support for the LGBTQ+ community.

We worked with Pastor Lisa to roll out a simplified outreach process for both new Visitors to the building as well as Members who have not visited recently.

This Fall, we have been busy with visible signs of our church pride! We produced two banners to literally extend “Welcome” at the entrances to our property. More recently, we rolled out the 2023 PCO-branded T-shirts and we’re excited to see our members showing their church pride at events at church and in the wider community.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

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:

- Hire a Technology Coordinator to supplement the work of our amazing team of Livestream volunteers
- Grow our presence at community events, such as festivals and homecomings, with signage, banners and other materials
- Encourage and facilitate greater service opportunities and involvement for members, establishing an annual *Volunteer Service Fair*



PCO is present at community events.

Administration and Property

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.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

The Administration Committee has been involved in the following projects during 2023:

- Replacement of the basement furnace
- Replacement of the church water heaters
- Updating of the landscape around the church
- Review and updating the church's insurance policy
- Coordinatiing the annual clean-up day with the 20+ church people
- Coordinating CPR training and updating the Emergency Preparedness Policies
- Reviewing the church's building security plan
- Completing the annual Audit of our financial books

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

The Administration Committee continues to provide oversight of the finances and property of the church. We will be presenting and budget to the Session for approval to support our work together in 2024.

As our building ages, we continue to plan and ensure that all areas of our church are safe and well managed, and continue to handle financial responsibilities, including both on-going expenses and preparing for long-term expenditures.



Hard at work on Clean-up Day

Green Team

It is through the Green Team that we share our GRATITUDE for the gift of creation and all creations of God which have been shared with us, for people who care for this gift today and for those who will be stewards well into the future. 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 2023

- Achieved re-certification as an Earth Care Congregation
- 100 panel solar installation went live in March, 2023
- Received a legislative tribute plaque for our solar project signed by Governor Whitmer, Lt. Governor Gilchrist, Rep Julie Brixie and Senator Sam Singh
- Awarded a \$2,000 Meridian Township grant to hire a landscape architect to develop a holistic strategy around native plants
- Grew the native plant project at the entrance to the parking lot
- Formally joined Michigan Interfaith Power & Light (IPL)
- As a member of the local IPL-Capital Area Chapter PCO helped fund a solar home project in Lansing in conjunction with the Ingham County Land Bank
- Participated in "Growing Solar" forum at Laingsburg First Congregational Church
- Purchased several environmentally responsible commodity products (coffee, paper products) for church use
- Participated in a national solar tour program sponsored by the American Solar Energy Society and promoted by Interfaith Power & Light



PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

- Achieve re-certification as an Earth Care Congregation
- Continue to be an advocate for solar energy projects
- Initiate holistic landscaping strategy based on input from the landscape architect report funded primarily by a Meridian Township grant
- Continue to enhance the native plant project at the parking lot entrance
- Renew our membership with Michigan Interfaith Power & Light and continue active participation with the local Capital Area Chapter
- Grow recycling and composting activity at the church
- Expand where possible the purchase of environmentally friendly commodity products



Personnel

The Personnel committee has oversight responsibility for our staff and works with them to assure that the church has the staffing and staff structure needed to accomplish our ministry and mission. Duties include coordinating personnel policies and practices, recommending salary packages and wages, conducting annual reviews of staff performance, setting goals for the coming year and maintaining confidential personnel records.

The Personnel committee is GRATEFUL for the cooperative and professional staff that currently serve our congregation throughout the year and the energy and creativity they bring to their jobs. WE ARE VERY BLESSED!!!

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023



**Pastor Lisa
Schrott**

The Personnel committee worked alongside Pastors Lisa Schrott and Rebekah Anderson to solidify their goals for 2023 and provide support for them and their ministry. The committee carried out the annual evaluations and made recommendations for upcoming goals and compensation.

We were pleased to host Rebekah's ordination in October 2022. We celebrated the gifts she shared with PCO, especially developing deep relationships with the youth, as we bid farewell to her in August as she accepted a new position in Children and Youth Ministry in the Chicago-area. After much work, an Interim Director of Faith Formation, Rebecca Mattern, was hired to help shepherd the congregation while strategic visioning takes place. We are grateful for the vision and skills she brings to this position.

In our music program, we celebrated the graduation of our chancel choir director, Dr. Colleen Chester, as she received her Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance at MSU. Following graduation, Colleen accepted an academic position in Minnesota. The committee worked diligently to recruit and hire Westin Sorrel as the new Choir Director. Westin comes to us from Denver, Colorado and is working toward a Master's Degree at MSU.

The Personnel Committee wants to offer a special thank you to PCO staff Edward Ennen, Anna Thiel, and Marlene Brewbaker. During yet another season of transition, Edward, Anna, and Marlene have shouldered some extra responsibility, and done so with excellence and grace. We want to acknowledge their significant ministry to the church and express our gratitude.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

The Personnel committee will reevaluate the Position Descriptions for all employees considering the findings of the 2023 employee evaluations and 2024 visioning process. Also, the committee is committed to finding a new audio/visual technician to help with weekly worship and the church's online presence. We are also working to update the Employee Manual.



Rebecca Mattern



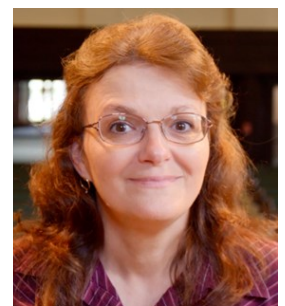
Westin Sorrel



Marlene Brewbaker



Edward Ennen



Anna Thiel

Stewardship

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 with other members of the congregation in the life and mission of the church.

HIGHLIGHTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

The Stewardship committee is GRATEFull for those who were, are, and will be the stewards by supporting the ministry and mission of our church.

Last fall's stewardship campaign highlighting *"Together for Joy"* resulted in our members successfully providing financial support of the church's operations during this church year. Our "volunteer coordinator" is using 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.

PLANS/VISION FOR 2024

This fall's stewardship campaign entitled *"Gratitude for the Past, Present, and Future"* will focus on highlighting how, as a Christian Community, we have learned from those who came before us to minister both in the congregation and in the communities beyond our church. We strive to continue these opportunities through the present and going forward. We focus on how giving financial support and sharing our time and talents fulfills our call from God's to serve others.



PCO hosting the Presbytery of Lake Michigan in September.

PCO Mission Statement

As members of The Presbyterian Church of Okemos,
We believe that in life, in death, and life beyond death,
We belong to God.

The Church exists to invite everyone to join the
lifelong journey of faith that is life in Jesus Christ.

Through worship that glorifies God,
Study that seeks to understand God,
Service to a world that needs God,

We desire to build a network of caring relationships
Between families, friends, and strangers

By offering welcome, healing, justice and peace to all in the name
of Jesus Christ.

