

# The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

**From Pastor Lisa Schrott**



## In This Issue

- *Lessons and Carols*—pg. 2
- *Information about assistance*—pg. 2
- *Opportunities for Fellowship*—pg. 3
- *Mission Information*—pg. 4
- *Youth Calendar*—pg. 5
- *Weather Reminder*—pg. 6
- *Book Nook*—pg. 7

**Deadline for the January Grapevine is  
Monday, December 22th.**

### **Advent 2025: The Will to Dream**

As we approach this Advent and Christmas season, many of us are experiencing a range of emotions. We are anticipating the joy of the holiday – the decorating and the cooking, the rituals and the gift-giving, the time with family and friends. And yet there is much in our lives and world which bring pain and despair, anger and frustration. We are longing for a world where hope, peace, joy and love reign.

This Advent season we will be sharing material from *The Will to Dream* by Illustrated Ministry. We will be rooted in prophetic imagination—a theological framework powerfully explored by the late theologian and biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann—in the sacred practice to see beyond what is and move toward what could be.

The authors of the material share: “In this time of upheaval, we find trust is fragile, truth contested, and spaces between us feel harder to cross. Divisions stretch far and wide. The constant churn of political tension leaves many feeling anxious and uncertain. Community feels strained, and connection is harder to come by. Hearts are weary, and souls unsettled, and people of all perspectives are searching—not just for answers, but for understanding, healing, and hope. This ache is not weakness; it is a holy longing—a sacred desire for a world made whole. From this longing comes the *will to dream*—a persistent courage to imagine, resist, and rebuild a better world.” I invite you to join us in this holy longing as we seek a world made whole through the birth of the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Advent season there will be opportunities to dream for a world where Christ’s love reigns. Sunday worship will feature texts and messages focused on the candles we light: hope, peace, joy and love, accompanied by special music. I will facilitate a Bible study during the education hour on the book of Isaiah, from which many of our traditional Advent scriptures of longing originate. In addition, I hope you will join us for:

The soaring music and scripture of **An Evening of Lessons and Carols**, on Sunday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m. A free-will offering will be collected to support Advent House Ministries.

A **Longest Night Service** on Wednesday, December 17 at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel as we recognize the complicated emotions that accompany the holidays.

**All-ages Christmas Pageant** on Sunday, December 21 during worship, where everyone can channel their dreams to be a shepherd or an angel or wisemen

**Carols, Candlelight & Communion** a family Christmas Eve Service on December 24 at 5 pm. We will celebrate the birth of the Christ child with one service where all generations can share together the joy of the season.

## Happening in Life of the Church



**Sunday, December 14th, 2025**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Please join us either in person in the PCO Sanctuary or online on the PCO website (<https://okemospres.org>) or our YouTube channel. This year's program will feature the PCO Chancel and Handbell Choirs joined by a brass ensemble and singers from the MSU College of Music. The service will include readings, carol arrangements, and congregational singing in the format of the traditional King's College Lessons and Carols.

Come with family and friends to enjoy this beautiful tradition. The event is free and open to the public.

A free-will offering will be collected to benefit Advent House's service to the greater Lansing community. Advent House is a ministry which is dedicated to helping people out of poverty and homelessness and addressing the many different needs that surround them.

### **Stewardship & Giving Reminder**

Thank you to those who turned in their 2026 Pledge Card and Time and Talent sheets. If you have not had a chance yet, please drop them off on Sundays or during church office hours. We understand that situations may change throughout the year, and pledges can be updated as needed.

The Stewardship Packets that were mailed out contained your third quarter giving statements. If you have questions about them, contact Doug Paterson. The church office will be open on Tues, Dec. 30 and Wed., Dec. 31 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. to receive end of the year offerings.

### **Gas and Grocery Cards Available**

The generous hearts of this congregation, the Board of Deacons Pastor Discretionary Fund and the Mission Committee have made available funds for additional grocery and gas cards this season.

If you, or someone you know, is in need of some financial assistance this year, please contact, Pastor Lisa or the church office. All requests are confidential.

## **Isaiah & Advent Prophecy**

**Adult Ed Study November 30 - December 14, 2025**  
**during the Sunday Education hour**  
**Facilitated by Pastor Lisa**

ISAIAH DARED TO IMAGINE A WORLD REORDERED BY DIVINE WISDOM.



ISAIAH EMERGED NOT ONLY AS A PROPHET OF WARNING BUT AS A POET OF POSSIBILITY. HIS VISION OF PEACE CHALLENGES THE CYCLES OF EMPIRE, WAR, AND DESPAIR.

**TAKE WHAT DESTROYS AND  
REMAKE IT INTO TOOLS THAT NURTURE.**

Presbyterian Church of Okemos, 2258 Bennett Rd.  
[okemospres.org](http://okemospres.org)

## Christmas Day Dinner at PCO

Join your church family for dinner at **1:00 p.m.** on **Thursday, December 25.**



Ham will be provided. A sign-up sheet for those who would like to attend and what they plan to bring is on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall. Please sign up there or contact Siri Rainone via email at siri-rainone at gmail dot com (*standard email set-up*).

## Women's Dinner Out

On **Monday, December 1 at 5:30p.m.**, the group will meet at Buddies Pub and Grill in Okemos. Please RSVP with Jane Bo bay (*contact info in the directory*).

## Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our December Birthdays on **Sunday, December 21.** If you were born in December, please check the list posted on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall and add your name by Sunday, December 14, if it is not already there.

## Retirees in December

The Retirees meet in Fellowship Hall on the third Monday of each month at noon. Please join us **Monday, December 15** and feel free to bring a sack lunch to enjoy while we discuss our favorite holiday activities, music and stories.

## Caregiver Support Group

Those caring for a loved one are invited to attend our Zoom meeting, number 892-3955-1708. We will meet **Wednesday, December 17 at 5:00 p.m.** due to the Christmas holiday then resume our monthly meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month.

## Conversation and Contemplation

The C&C group meets on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. via zoom 905-709-104. Please join us as we study scriptures, meditate and learn about spiritual practices to bring us closer to God. These practices are led by group members, and we invite all to join us. We will meet on December 3, 10 and 17, then break until January 7.

## Adult Christian Education & Fellowship

**Password for Zoom meetings unless otherwise noted is 48864.** *Days and times subject to change. Please watch Friday e-Announcements for changes.*

### SUNDAYS

**Adult Education**— Weekly at 11:30 a.m. Watch e-Announcements and Bulletin for description and locations.

**Writing Life's Stories** – 1st Sundays, 2:00 p.m., Zoom 848 6124 7191— December meeting is **Sunday the 7th.**

**Birthday Cake Sunday**—3rd Sundays following worship unless otherwise noted. This month will be on **Sunday, December 21st.**

**Women's Connection**— On hiatus for Christmas. We expect to return in January

### MONDAYS

**Women's Dinner Out**— 1st Monday unless otherwise noted. This month will be on Monday, **December 1st.** See left column for details.

**Retirees** – Regularly scheduled on the 3rd Monday of the month at 12:00 noon in person at PCO. This month's meeting is **December 15th.**

### TUESDAYS

**Men's Group** – Weekly, 8:00 a.m. Zoom 813 7514 8286. **Hybrid** (In-person and on Zoom) this month is **Tuesday, December 2nd.**

**PCO Crafts Ministry**— Monthly, 1st Tuesdays, Fellowship Hall. Next meeting is **Tuesday, December 2nd.**

**Artists Circle**—Monthly, 1:00 p.m. on 2nd Tuesdays. Confirm with Eunice Creswell (*contact info in the directory*).

### WEDNESDAYS

**Conversation & Contemplation**—Weekly at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom 905-709-104 through December 17, then resuming on January 7th.

**Caregiver Support Group** - 4th Wednesdays unless otherwise noted. This month will be **December 17th. (early due to Christmas holiday)** at 5:00 p.m. on Zoom 892 3955 1708;

### THURSDAYS

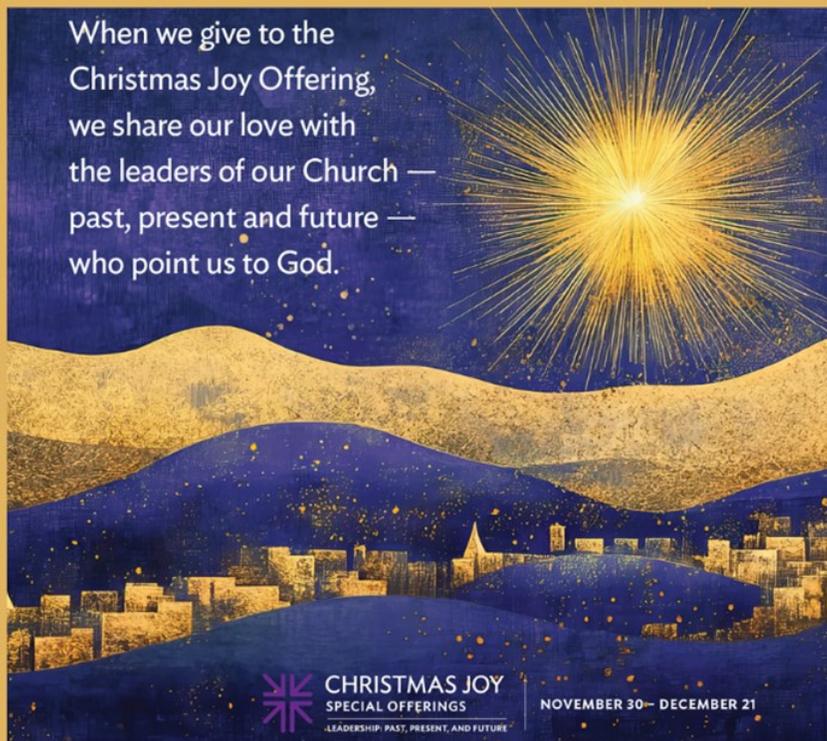
**Bible Study** – Weekly, 9:30 a.m. Zoom <https://msu.zoom.us/j/5147440526>; password: 48864



## Mission Opportunities & More

### We will collect the Christmas Joy Offering on Sunday, December 21, 2025

When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we share our love with the leaders of our Church — past, present and future — who point us to God.



This offering provides assistance to current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need, and develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.



### Giving Tree

to support  
refugee families

November 16 -  
December 7



*Take a tag from the tree. Purchase items listed. Place your unwrapped items with completed tag, under the tree in Fellowship Hall by Sunday, December 7.*

### Policy Report by Ellen Hoekstra

The Mission Committee had, of course, paid close attention to the federal shutdown on food assistance), given that last year our state's 1.4 million SNAP recipients received around \$3 billion in food assistance. Although the shutdown is over, its impact is not, with empty shelves in many pantries as SNAP recipients and federal employees dealt with the uncertainty of food for their families.

The federal shutdown also negatively affected childcare for low-income families, with 9 Head Start programs—mainly in northern Michigan—not receiving funding. One UP Head Start program had to close.

As reported previously, Michigan's K-12 students fall behind kids in other states in scores on reading exams, very likely linked to Michigan's absentee rate, one of the highest in the nation. One of four students misses 18 days of school a year. Absenteeism affects not only the pupils who are not in school but also their classmates because of the impact on teachers' lesson plans and the need to "catch up" those who have been absent. (Incidentally, school attendance is one of the metrics that Communities in Schools Michigan uses to measure student progress, with the other two being behavior and academics.)

Another challenge for schools is the underfunding of special education, resulting in Michigan having among the country's lowest graduation rates for students needing these services. A recent report recommends that Michigan increases special ed funding by 39%.

In addition to the increasing costs of health insurance, another current challenge in health care is access to medical care for transgender and nonbinary youth. Pressure from the federal government has resulted in two major hospital systems—University of Michigan and Corewell Health—dropping their services for these youth.

To end with somewhat positive news, \$131 million from the Opioid Healing and Recovery Account will increase access to support treatment and prevention services. This special funding, as you may recall, comes from a settlement out of litigation against certain pharmaceutical companies.

# PCO YOUTH CALENDAR

## DECEMBER 2025

### MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL COMBINED

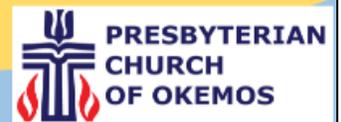
#### SUNDAYS:

**DECEMBER 7: ABRAMS PLANETARIUM: SEASON OF LIGHT (4PM)  
FOLLOWED BY DINNER (MEET AT CHURCH AT 3:20 PM)**

**DECEMBER 14: CHRISTMAS PAGEANT REHEARSAL & DINNER 5-7 PM  
LESSONS & CAROLS AT 7PM**

**DECEMBER 21: YOUTH GROUP CAROLING & CHRISTMAS PARTY  
POTLUCK & COFFEE MUG EXCHANGE**

**NO YOUTH GROUP ON DECEMBER 28 & JANUARY 4.  
ENJOY YOUR CHRISTMAS VACATION!**



### Looking for Designs

The PCO Green Team has various events wherein they participate as a group, and the team thought it would be fun to have matching T-shirts. The team is looking for artists with design ideas or anyone with ideas that would look good on the T-shirts to submit a design.

Possible ideas for designing could reflect the Green Team's goals in nature and caring for creation. Some areas of focus for the Green Team are solar energy, recycling, composting and native plants and flowers or maybe ideas around the prayer path.

Be creative and submit your design to the Green Team mailbox across from the office or see Jennifer Gordon or Dorinda VanKempen with questions.

**We would like the submissions by January 15, 2026 . All ideas are welcome!**



## Missions and Miscellaneous

### Food Bank / Food Pantry—What's the Difference?

The words “food bank” and “food pantry” are not synonymous. If we compare them to grocery stores, Michigan’s seven regional food banks are similar to wholesalers. They provide food to food pantries, which are similar to retail grocery stores. Food banks, because of their size and their roles, are able to provide substantially more food that food pantries could otherwise purchase for their hungry customers.

The food bank that serves our region is the Greater Lansing Food Bank (GLFB), and it serves food pantries in seven counties: Clare, Isabella, Gratiot, Clinton, Shiawassee, Eaton, and Ingham. Some of the state’s other food banks serve far larger geographic areas.

PCO’s Mission Committee usually focuses on three nearby pantries that are part of the GLFB: the Okemos Community Food Pantry, the Haslett Food Pantry, and the Food Pantry of First Presbyterian Church of Lansing. These are the pantries to which food from the shopping cart and food raised during our AGAPE celebration is delivered.

When PCO makes a financial contribution to the GLFB, we ask for it to be shared among these three GLFB pantries near where most PCO members live.



### Another Year, Another Successful ACM

The 2025 Alternative Christmas Market was a fun, successful event, thanks to all who helped and shopped! In just four hours we made more than \$8500.00 (\$1500 more than last year) in total sales for 15 charities, both local and international. Thank you everyone!

Our PCO Crafts Ministry sold \$890 in beautiful handmade items, with their proceeds going to The Greater Lansing Food bank. Thank you! Emily and Lizzy helped organize the youth table and to sell cookies and treats. Their \$534.25 was raised to support Advent House. Jill Tribell and Jean Cymbalski made and sold lovely cards for the Simbolei Academy as well as a few nativities ( a couple are left for purchase, see Jayne Z). Simbolei will be receiving a check for over \$800! Thank you all!

Thank you to Edward, Brian, Keith, Becky Gillespie and Jennifer Gordon for helping to set up Fellowship Hall for this event. Thank you to Sean, Brian, Jeff Conroy-Krutz-Kurtz, Christine and Roy Meland and Jane D for cleaning up after the event.

A special thank you to the planning committee! Thank you Pastor Lisa, Jill Tribell, Becky Gillespie, Barbara Scott and Emily and Lizzy for your help. Thank you to Anna for making flyers too! It is wonderful being a part of such a generous and caring church family. Thank you all who shopped and donated to the many great charities who joined us! God Bless!

*JayneZ*



### Inclement Weather Policy

A reminder as we head into winter:

If Okemos Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather, the PCO building will be closed as well. On a Sunday morning, we will notify through email and/or social media if worship will be online only.

## BOOK NOOK

*By Ron Dorr*

### For the Time Being

by Annie Dillard

"I am no scientist. I am a wanderer with a background in theology and a penchant for quirky facts." Annie Dillard wrote those words about Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, which won a Pulitzer Prize 50 years ago. They are also true of her book, For the Time Being, published in 1999. It continued the excellence, variety, originality, daring, and wonder of all her work.

The author's introductory note is unusual but enticing. "This is a nonfiction first-person narrative, but it is not intimate, and its narratives keep breaking. Its form is unusual, its scenes are remote, its focus wide, and its tone austere. Its pleasures are almost purely mental." The subjects are diverse, appearing and reappearing in each chapter.

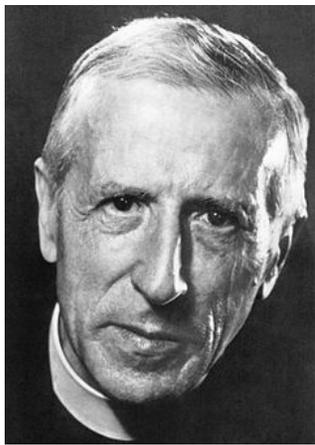
Each chapter contains ten subheadings: birth, sand, China, clouds, numbers, Israel, encounters, thinker, evil, and now. The French paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov, "dominate the thinking about an individual's place in the buried generations of humans, and in eternity." When I started the book, I did not think that Dillard could pull together such disparate subjects. I was wrong. There are three reasons why this approach works—and works so well.

Some of the parts are so engrossing and the facts so telling that they could exist on their own. The accounts of life in an obstetrical ward—the treatment of newborns almost like an assembly line—sit beside the haunting descriptions of birth defects such as bird-headed dwarfs. Seven thousand terra-cotta soldiers buried under planted fields near Xi'an, China, are exposed like swimmers when archeologists dig trenches in the fields. The torture of Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph by scraping away his skin and muscles to the bone is excruciating. The restrained love letters of Teilhard, a Jesuit priest, and Lucile Swan, an American sculptor, are poignant. One account of the creation of the world, in which the divine spark went awry, makes the origin of evil charming.

Some of the parts are interchangeable, and many of them fit integrally together. The biographical vignettes of Teilhard de Chardin fit under "China" (he discovered Peking man), "sand" (he worked in the Gobi Desert), "thinker" (when he did not have elements of the Eucharist, at sunrise he would "divinize the new day") and "evil" (life is to be "charged with the divine influence"). The vignettes of the Baal Shem Tov lead to hallowed ground in Bethlehem, strange encounters in Israel, and meditations about mortality and immortality. Even the photograph covering the front and back of the hard-cover book, Camels Crossing Dunes at Tsagan, Outer Mongolia, 1925, by J. B. Shackelford, pulls several themes wonderfully together.



**Author Annie  
Dillard**



**Pierre Teilhard  
de Chardin**

Most of the parts lead to larger questions. Annie Dillard's mind is curious, observant, and absorbent, enlightening, evocative, even exhilarating. But it is also probing and profound. This book will make you think. Several questions run through the book. Why are there birth defects? Does God cause natural calamities? "If God does not cause everything that happens, does God cause anything that happens?" Where does evil come from? Who are we as people? Why were we born? How does an individual matter in this immense world? What is our place in the scheme of things? How should human beings live? "Why is there something here, instead of nothing? And why are we aware of this question?"

These questions, plus the disparate parts and the threads interwoven together, point to a world that is complex, paradoxical, inviting, and incomplete. "Plunge into matter," Teilhard said, "plunge into God." According to Hasids, a person "who struggles long to pray and study Torah will be able to discover the sparks of divine light in all of creation, in each solitary bush and grain and woman and man. And when he cleaves strenuously to God for many years, he will be able to release the sparks, to unwrap and lift these particular shreds of holiness, and return them to God. This is the human task: to direct and channel the sparks' return. This task is 'tikun,' restoration."

For the time being, I will read more of Annie Dillard's and Teilhard de Chardin's books.

## Presbyterian Church of Okemos

2258 Bennett Road  
Okemos, MI 48864  
Phone: (517) 349-9536  
[www.okemospres.org](http://www.okemospres.org)

*The Grapevine* is a monthly newsletter of  
*The Presbyterian Church of Okemos*

**Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M.**

### Staff

REV. DR. LISA SCHROTT, PASTOR/HEAD OF STAFF

DR. MARLENE BREWBAKER, ORGANIST

SHELBY LAIRD, CHANCEL CHOIR DIRECTOR

IRENE SHUTT, HANDBELL CHOIR DIRECTOR

EDWARD ENNEN, SEXTON

ANNA THIEL, OFFICE MANAGER

JACOB MELAND, MEDIA SPECIALIST

Phone: 517-349-9536

<https://instagram.com/okemospres>

<https://www.facebook.com/OkemosPresbyterian/>

Website: <https://okemospres.org>

Email: [office@okemospres.org](mailto:office@okemospres.org)

