

The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

From Pastor Lisa Schrott

When God began to create the heavens and the earth— the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters— God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness.

Genesis 1: 1-4 (CEB)

Every new year invites reflection and hope. We turn calendars, set resolutions, and imagine what might be possible. As the church steps into a new year, the imagery of Genesis 1 offers us a powerful starting point—not with our plans, but with God's presence and purpose. Before there was light, land, water, order or life, God was already there. This reminds us that the new year does not begin with our effort, our goals, or our uncertainty—it begins with God. Whatever lies ahead, God is already present in it.

Genesis 1 describes a world that begins without shape or form, covered in darkness (something we in Michigan know way too much about this time of the year!). Many people enter a new year feeling something similar—uncertain, weary, or unsure of direction. Yet Scripture tells us that *God's winds (God's breath) swept over the waters.* Even in chaos, God's Spirit is active. Darkness is not the end of the story; it is the setting for God's creative work. As we enter this new year, the church is reminded that God still speaks. In the Sundays following Epiphany until the beginning of Lent, we will explore how the imagery of light and water speak across the pages of scripture into our lives today.

Genesis 1 also reveals that God brings order, setting boundaries and rhythms—day and night, seasons and purpose. The new year is an opportunity to realign our lives with God's design: healthy rhythms of rest and work, service and play, active worship and quiet reflection. At the climax of creation, God forms humanity in God's own image and calls it *"very good."* Our value is not measured by productivity, success, or failure, but by the fact that we are created and loved by God. As the church, we are called to live out that image—reflecting God's love, justice, creativity, and compassion in the world.

At the end of the creation story, God looks at all that has been made and rests. The new year is not only about doing more, but about trusting God more. Rest is an act of faith, declaring that God is sovereign and God's work is sufficient. As we step into this new year, Genesis 1 invites us to begin where Scripture begins—with God. As you read through this issue of the Grapevine, I invite you to seek ways to embrace God through worship, study, service and fellowship. Whatever this year holds, may we move forward with confidence, knowing that the God of beginnings is still creating, renewing, and calling us to a life of witness and love.

Pastor Lisa



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**Deadline for the February Grapevine is
Thursday, January 22th.**

New Ministry Structure Coming to PCO

Last fall the PCO Session approved a ministry structure that better aligns with our current church needs and our Journey to 2030 vision, in which we are a:

A welcoming congregation where meaningful connections are made.

A congregation that is intergenerationally inclusive.

A congregation actively building partnerships

This new structure was shared with the congregation at a Town Hall education event in October. The feedback included enthusiasm for this model increasing the opportunities for the development of new leaders in the church, and reducing (and hopefully preventing) burnout among established leaders.

The new structure includes four ministries, each with committees and teams carrying out the work of the church.

Support (includes Administration, Personnel, and Stewardship)

Faith Formation (includes Worship and Music, Intergenerational Ministry, Study, and Special Events)

Community Engagement (includes Mission, a new Social Justice team, Communications and Evangelism)

Congregational Engagement (includes Parish Life, Small Groups, Welcome Team, New Members)

The Board of Deacons will continue the work of compassion, service and witness interacting with these ministries. One of the biggest changes with this model is the role Elders will play. Three elders will serve on each ministry and will coordinate joint planning across the committees and teams, encouraging collaboration and engagement with the Journey to 2030 Vision. The Deacons will also be responsible for submitting reports to Session and bring any motions from Committees.

Our new Session year begins in March, so you will begin seeing some of this new structure in the coming months. The change will not be instantaneous and will likely take a year or so before fully realized. And we know that there will be some tinkering along the way!

New Social Justice Team. As part of the new ministry structure, we will be forming a new Social Justice Team. This team will be addressing how we as a church engage in better addressing the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, racial reconciliation, as well as advocacy for issues the Gospel calls us to speak to. This team will work closely with the Mission Committee as part of the Community Engagement Ministry. If you have a desire to be part of this new team, please contact Pastor Lisa. Please note that indicating your interest does not commit you to a monthly committee meeting. The team will meet periodically as events and programs arise and conduct some of its work electronically.

Annual Stated Congregational Meeting

Sunday, January 25 following worship

The Session of PCO has called for the Stated Annual Meeting of the Congregation and the meeting of the PCO Corporation to be held on Sunday, January 25 following the 10:00 a.m. worship service. The purposes of the meeting are to hear:

- a report from the nominating committee and to elect the at-large members of the nominating committee for 2025,
- the clerk's statistical report,
- the treasurer's report, including a statement of income and expenditures as compared to the preceding year's budget, and a statement of the endowments, trusts, memorial and other special funds, and a presentation of the current year's budget,
- to approve the terms of call for Pastor Lisa.
- The Annual Report will be available electronically. It will be distributed prior to the meeting via email and placed on the church website.

Please note that if you wish to receive a hard copy of the annual report, you must request one from the church office.

Church Facility Hours & Office Hours for Pastor Lisa

Remember that the PCO facility hours are **9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Tuesday through Friday. If you need access to the church at times beyond that, please call ahead to secure entry.

NEW in 2026.

Pastor Lisa will have designated office hours with availability for drop-in visits on Tuesdays from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. – Noon. She is available other times via appointment. Please contact her by email or phone to arrange.

Happening This January

Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our January Birthdays on **Sunday, January 18**. If you were born in January, please check the list posted on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall and add your name by Sunday, January 11 if it is not already there.

Caregiver Support Group

Please join the group on Zoom #892-3955-1708 the fourth Wednesday of the month from 5:00-6:00 p.m. This month's meeting is **Wednesday, January 28th**. An open discussion, offering encouragement and support, is the format each month

Winter Weather Reminder

If Okemos Public Schools are closed due to weather, the PCO building will be closed also.

On Sundays, we will notify through email and/or social media if worship will be online only.

2026

Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

PCO will be hosting two tables for the MLK Jr. Commission of Mid-Michigan Annual Luncheon January 19, 2026 at the Lansing Center at 11 a.m.

The price per ticket is \$60.

If you would like to be a part of the PCO group, please sign-up on the FH kiosk or let Kent Workman know.

PCO YOUTH CALENDAR

JANUARY 2026

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL COMBINED

SUNDAYS:

JANUARY 11: BOWL GLAZING FOR SUPER BOWL OF CARING (LEAVE FROM WORSHIP, RETURN 1 PM)

JANUARY 11: ALL CHURCH CHILI COOK-OFF & GAME NIGHT 5 – 7:30 PM

JANUARY 18: SLEDDING AT BURCHFIELD PARK (AFTERNOON)

JANUARY 25: MOVIE & DINNER “1946: THE MISTRANSlation THAT SHIFTED A CULTURE” AT UNIV. LUTHERAN 4 – 7:30 PM

SPECIAL EVENT ON JANUARY 19: MID-MICHIGAN MLK LUNCHEON AT THE LANSING CENTER 11 AM TO 3 PM.

Special Training

Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Policy

Boundaries Training

Saturday, January 24 from 10:00—11:30 a.m.

In November, the PCO Session approved an updated policy for the protection of our most vulnerable members. We invite all to attend a gathering where Pastor Lisa will share the latest changes, as well as cover appropriate boundaries for work with these special populations. Light snacks will be served .

Chili Cook-off and Game Night

Sunday, January 11 from 5:00—7:30 p.m.

Join your church family for a delicious and fun evening! We will enjoy a variety of chili and side dishes and desserts from about 5:00—5:45 p.m. then play games to pass the winter evening.

Sign up to bring a dish on the church website's Events calendar, or on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall. Feel free to bring a friend and a favorite game to play!

This event is for all ages so come enjoy food, fellowship and fun with your church family!

Conversation and Contemplation

On **Wednesday, January 7** at 10:00 a.m., the C&C group will meet in the PCO Fellowship Hall for an Epiphany Party. Please bring a brunch item to share with others and your favorite Christmas Card.

All are welcome to join us, whether you are a regular attendee or not.

On January 14, the group will continue meeting on Zoom #905-709-104 from 10-11:30 a.m. for Lectio Divina and discussion of the book *Sacred Balance*.

Women's Connection

Women's Connection will meet **Sunday, January 25 at 12:30 p.m.** Following time of fellowship, devotion, and lunch, we will hear a church member speak on her life and faith journey. All women are welcome, and encouraged to invite friends.

Questions: Shirley Rumminger

Retirees in January

The Retirees will meet at PCO on **Monday, January 26** at noon. (*Change of date because of the MLK luncheon at the Lansing Center.*) You are welcome to enjoy your lunch during the discussion. What are your hopes and dreams for 2026? How will you embrace the new year? Please join us, unless Okemos schools are closed.

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— January meeting was **Sunday the 4th**.

Birthday Cake Sunday—3rd Sundays following worship unless otherwise noted. This month will be on **Sunday, January 18th**.

Women's Connection— 4th Sundays at 12:30 p.m. This month will be on **Sunday, January 25th**.

MONDAYS

Women's Dinner Out— 1st Monday unless otherwise noted. This month's dinner was January 5.

Retirees — Regularly scheduled on the 3rd Monday of the month at 12:00 noon in person at PCO. This month's meeting is **January 26 due to the Martin Luther King Jr. lunch**.

TUESDAYS

Men's Group — Weekly, 8:00 a.m. Zoom 813 7514 8286. **Hybrid** (In-person and on Zoom) this month was **Tuesday, January 6**.

PCO Crafts Ministry— Monthly, 1st Tuesdays, Fellowship Hall. Next meeting is **Tuesday, January 6**.

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 Resumes on January 7th. See left column for details.

Caregiver Support Group - 4th Wednesdays unless otherwise noted. This month will be **January 28**. 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

Advent House Meals Update

The Mission Committee is very grateful for PCO members' support of meals at Advent House. Volunteer groups and individuals have purchased food, prepared tasty meals, and served dinner for up to 80 people in our community. To help us continue this service but make it easier for staff and members, **we have decided to make some changes for 2026:**

- Provide reimbursement for up to \$200 per meal (additional by request) by submitting receipts to Mission Committee chair, Kent Workman.
- Volunteer for 6 dinners next year rather than 7, skipping the month of November, so we are providing meals every other month starting in January.
- Let volunteer leaders know that if they have concerns or need assistance, such as finding additional volunteers or having a Mission Committee member participate in their meal, they should contact me (or if I'm not available, Kent). This will streamline the process and avoid needing our pastor or other staff to forward requests.

You'll be happy to hear that Advent House staff have told me "Your group always goes above and beyond the expectations" when we provide a meal.

Ellen Hoekstra



**ADVENT
HOUSE
MINISTRIES**

Policy Report by Ellen Hoekstra

Recently, Pastor Schrott preached on the theme of hope. If we feel discouraged about the state of the nation or the world, let us recall the exhortation from the December 7 Prayer of Confession, "Make us a holy and risk-taking people." Also, David Muldrow Beasley--former director of the UN World Food Program--has noted that 200 years ago, around 80% of the world's people lived in extreme poverty, while today that number is below 10%. Of course, 10% is still 800 million impoverished people, leaving much more to do.

At the state level:

- The legislature passed its final days for 2025, with its elusive goal being creating a business incentive deal that can pass both chambers and be signed into law.
- With almost no opportunity for public input, the House Appropriations Committee approved the cancellation of \$645 million in previously approved state funding for a number of programs. Cuts included \$18.5 million for low income pregnant women and their babies; \$56,600 for wigs for people receiving cancer treatment, and \$1.3 million in funding for the Office of Global Michigan (OGM), which provides funding for new Americans already in Michigan. OGM's programming is already obligated through contracts. If this process or these cuts alarm you, it would be timely to contact your state representative to express your views.
- The Michigan Gun Violence Prevention Task Force report has recommended: requiring waiting periods for all fire-arm purchases; increasing the age of firearm purchase to 21; closing the concealed pistol license loophole; banning ghost guns; strengthening school safety laws; standardizing training for school resource officers; strengthening red flag laws and personal protection orders; prohibiting possession of large capacity magazines and assault weapons; and banning automatic conversation devices (Glock switches). While no action is expected in the few days of this session, the list creates a comprehensive blueprint for action.
- More than \$8 million was awarded statewide to expand residential lead hazard programs.
- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services plans to invest \$37.5 million in opioid settlement funds (from pharmaceutical companies) to expand recovery housing. Recent studies have found that over 7500 discharges from publicly funded Substance Use Disorder treatment resulted in people leaving treatment without stable housing, a barrier to employment and continued recovery. The goal is to increase new recovery housing beds by 40% by 2028—3467 beds.

In the last three years PCO has participated in the **Advocacy Days** sponsored by the United Methodist Church at the State Capitol. This year's event will be held on **March 18, 2026**. According to one of the organizers, the Rev. Alice Townley, the goal for this event, which is open to members of the wider faith community, is to address issues of food insecurity. She and I (Ellen) will be meeting with the lobbyist for the Food Bank Council of Michigan to inform ourselves about their policy goals. I hope PCO members can join us at the March 18 event.

PCO Library News For Such a Time as This

This is the title of one of our new library books for January 2026, and it captures what the new books have in common. These are all books that address and help us through troubled times. We hope that these new books offer knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment, and hope to those who are seeking. (All quotations are from the publishers).

The Tears in Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage by Richard Rohr “Drawing on a century of biblical scholarship and written in the warm, pastoral voice that has endeared Rohr to millions, *The Tears in Things* breathes new life into ancient wisdom. It paves a path of enlightenment for anyone seeking a compassionate way of living in a hurting world.”

Trans Biblical: New Approaches to Interpretation & Embodiment in Scripture by various contributors “Provides some of the most exciting new scholarly work in trans biblical interpretation to help us better understand our Bibles, our bodies, and one another in a fraught and fractious world.”

Separation of Church and Hate: A Sane Person’s Guide to Taking Back the Bible from Fundamentalists, Fascists, and Flock-Fleecing Frauds by John Fugelsang “Fugelsang’s message is about more than just taking down hypocrites. It’s about fighting for the love, mercy, and service that are supposed to make up the heart of Christianity. Told with a blend of radical honesty, comedy, and deep political and religious knowledge.”

For Such a Time as This: An Emergency Devotional by Hanna Reichel “A guide for ordinary Christians seeking to live faithfully in extraordinary times. Drawing upon both scholarship and pastoral wisdom, Reichel offers a timely resource for believers seeking spiritual grounding amid societal upheaval.”

Please stop by the library and take a look at these new titles for a new year.

Kathi Cook

The PCO Green Team is still accepting design ideas for Green Team tee shirts.

Submit your ideas to Dorinda VanKempen or Jennifer Gordon before January 15!

Design ideas can be placed in the Green Team mailbox in the hallway near the church offices.

All ideas are welcome!

Earth Care @ PCO Saving the Planet & Saving Money!



In the almost 3 years of solar panels, we have saved over 212,000 lb of CO2 (equivalent to planting 1600+ trees). In 2025, we saved \$6700 in utility costs!

In addition to recycling paper, cardboard and styrofoam and composting food scraps



Recycled 1980 pill bottles for re-use around the world



Safely recycled over 210 pounds of batteries

BOOK NOOK

By Ron Darr

De-accumulate.

Study produces joy.

To worship is to change.

Make the ministry of hospitality a priority.

We are called into a perpetual Jubilee of the Spirit.

The Discipline of confession brings an end to pretense.

The lust for affluence in contemporary society is psychotic.

Christian meditation . . . is the most practical of all the Disciplines.

We can descend with the mind and the heart most easily through the imagination.

The majority of Christians have never seriously wrestled with the problem of simplicity.

The desperate need today is not for . . . intelligent or gifted people, but for deeper people.

We must seek out the recreating stillness of solitude if we want to be with others meaningfully.

We must seek the fellowship and accountability of others if we want to be alone safely.

More than 40 years ago, I read and reviewed Richard Foster's masterful book, Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. Then I wrote, "This is an excellent book, deserving a second and third and fourth reading." It is still the most helpful book on spirituality that I have ever read. For the January issue of The Grapevine, I will focus on the content. For February, I will evaluate the book and its continuing relevance.

Foster believes that "superficiality is the curse of our age" and that classical disciplines can take us beyond such "surface slush." Indeed, the purpose of the disciplines is to become rooted in God and to choose a new way of life involving ourselves and others. Draw deep and dwell deep, the author is saying, and live deep and abundant Christian lives.

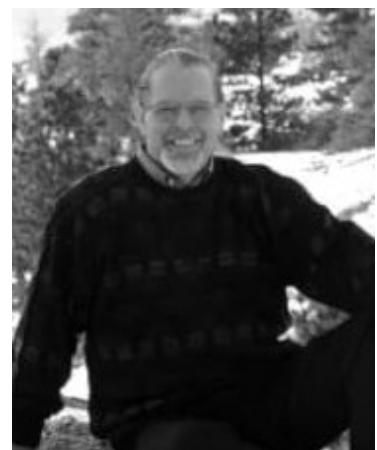
The inward disciplines are meditation, prayer, fasting, and study. The outward disciplines are simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. And the corporate disciplines are confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. All 12 disciplines, however, are tied together, and all 12, paradoxically, are enveloped by a spirit of freedom. In Foster's words, "meditation heightens spiritual sensitivity, which, in turn, leads us into prayer. Very soon we discover that prayer involves fasting as an accompanying means. Informed by these three Disciplines, we can effectively move into study, which gives us discernment about ourselves and the world in which we live.

"Through simplicity we live with others in integrity. Solitude allows us to be genuinely present to people when we are with them. Through submission we live with others without manipulation, and through service we are a blessing to them.

"Confession frees us from ourselves and releases us to worship. Worship opens the door to guidance. All the Disciplines freely exercised bring forth the doxology of celebration."

There is a chapter for each of these 12 disciplines. In nearly all of the chapters, Foster shows us the spiritual bases for each discipline, tells us what the discipline is and what its dangers are, and gives us specific practical steps with which to cultivate such a discipline. From Foster we can learn more fully how to meditate, pray, fast, study, and the rest—he shows us how. For their part, the disciplines bring focus, freedom, balance, control, and joy into our lives. More important, they place us "before God so that he can transform us."

The tone of the book is gentle, unassuming, and yet pointed. In the opening passages quoted above, I have tried to whet your interest. Foster's words, grounded in Scripture, are filled with a wise and understanding heart. The effects would be revolutionary if its contents were practiced. Next month, I will continue my assessment of the book, its many strengths, and the changes in the 40th anniversary edition, published in 2018.



Author, Teacher & Former Pastor Richard J. Foster

Presbyterian Church of Okemos

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

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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

