

The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

Welcome Rev. Aaron Punt & Family!

The Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) is excited to welcome Rev. Aaron Punt, Elsie, Atticus, Edmund, and Marilla to PCO. Please join us after service on **Sunday, July 26** for a light reception welcoming them to the church family and our community! Welcome, Rev. Punt and family!

For those who were unable to be with us on April 19 when the congregation affirmed Aaron's call to PCO, below is a brief introduction to Aaron and the Punt family. The full brochure can be found at: https://www.okemospres.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Rev_Aaron_Punt_intro.pdf

We will share contact information after the Punts get settled in.

The Punt family comes to PCO from Slayton, Minnesota where Aaron has been serving as a Minister of Word and Sacrament to First Reformed Church in Slayton since December of 2013, and to the Presbyterian Church of Slayton since August of 2021.

Aaron is a Michigan native and spent most of his formative years in the small town of Sioux Center, Iowa, where his family were active members in the Reformed Church of America. He met Elsie at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa.

After graduation they moved to Holland, Michigan to attend Western Theological Seminary, with both of them graduating from the Masters of Divinity (M.Div) program.

Joining Aaron and Elsie are Atticus, who will be starting 6th grade, Edmund who will be starting 4th grade and Marilla, who will begin 1st grade in the fall.



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Deadline for the August Grapevine is Wednesday, July 22nd.

Summer Sabbath: Play, Pray & Read in July Join us for an All-Church Book Read

As we have done in the past few years, we will enjoy some Sabbath time this July. Our regularly scheduled meetings will go on hiatus, with committees only meeting if there are important needs. We will be intentional about taking time for personal renewal and drawing closer to God. Our worship series *Deeper in Faith* will provide opportunities to develop new spiritual rituals, rhythms that can sustain us throughout the year. Following Sunday worship, we encourage you take extra time to visit with each other and have deeper congregations. Check out a book from the church library and curl up on the couch for some time of reading. Take a walk on the prayer path. Walk the labyrinth and enjoy the benches surrounding it.

All Church Book-Read: In the Beautiful Country

As part of *Play, Pray, & Read July*, we invite you to join in a shared reading experience. The Immigrant & Refugee Resource Collaborative (IRRC) is featuring a Community Book Read of *In the Beautiful Country* by Jane Kuo, a story about family, belonging, resilience, and the pursuit of opportunity.

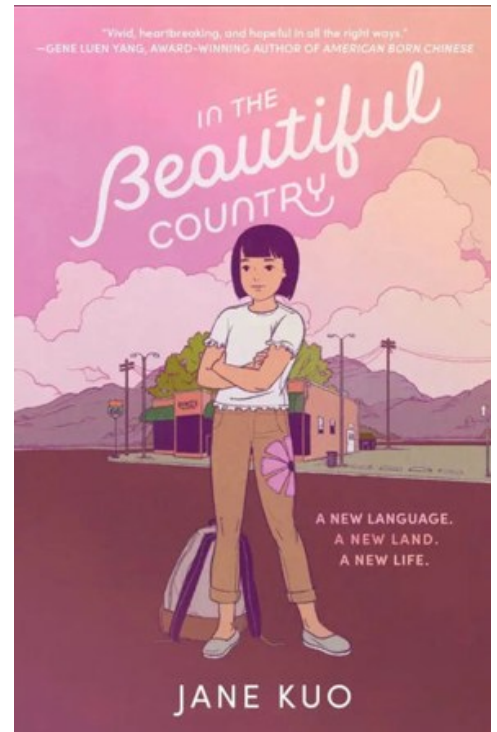
The IRRC intentionally chose a book that could be enjoyed by a wide range of readers, recognizing that some of the most profound stories are told through the eyes of our youngest friends. While this story centers on a young person, the theme speak powerfully to readers of all ages. You can learn more about the book and community read here: <https://www.irrc Lansing.org/copy-of-read-with-us>

We will have a copy available in the church library. In addition, it is available through the Capital Area District Library and the East Lansing Public Library and can be purchased online or at Schuler Books, Hooked, and Barnes & Noble. Let Schuler's know you are reading this for a book group to receive a discount. And stay tuned for an opportunity to share your reflections on the book later this summer.

Journey to 2030 Infrastructure Update

At its the June meeting, the PCO Session approved two motions from the Administration Committee moving the Journey to 2030 Infrastructure Work forward. Session approved the general scope of the project: 1) maintenance of our facility and improving our environmental stewardship; 2) providing spaces for intergenerational ministry; 3) enhancing our "welcome" and "connection"; and 4) providing spaces for church and community partnerships. Session also approved allocating up to \$75,000 of funds from the Doemel Bequest for lighting upgrades, to be repaid to the account within 5 years at 4% interest per year.

Session also committed to keeping the congregation informed about the infrastructure projects as they progress. Be on the lookout for monthly articles in the Grapevine, and notices in the e-announcements about upcoming work.



Upcoming in July— New Roof !

The new roof is scheduled to be installed by Palmer Construction during **the week of July 6**. If you need to visit the church during the week, please take extra care.

If you have questions about the project, you can pass them on to Pastor Lisa. We will also have a Question box available in Fellowship Hall. Another Town Hall meeting will be planned for the fall to share information about the next phases.

If you missed the Infrastructure Town Hall on Sunday, May 31, a recording of the presentation is available on Zoom at this location:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84481111111>

Passcode: THWB26T. (*period must be included; it is part of the passcode*).

Contact the church office if you'd like the link emailed to you.



From the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is seeking names for Elders and Deacons to serve three-year terms. We ask you to prayerfully consider serving or recommending faithful and committed members of PCO. Service for Elders and Deacons will begin in March 2027. Please send recommendations to the Nominating Committee: Gail Lytle Lira (chair), Jeff Conroy-Krutz, Bill Given, David Horner, Christine Meland, Jane Paterson and Siri Rainone.



NEW Grief Group

The Board of Deacons plans to establish a grief group that will begin meeting in late summer or early fall. This will be an in-person group led by a trained facilitator. No date or time has been set yet.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Bill Given or Pastor Lisa so we can keep you in the loop as plans go forward.



As Summer is in full swing, many activities are on hiatus while some continue on modified schedules. Check out the weekly e-Announcements for the most up-to-date information about what's happening here at PCO. Below is info about what's currently scheduled for July.

Retirees in July

The Retirees will meet **Monday, July 20** at noon in Fellowship Hall to continue our discussion of favorite vacations. Please join us to share stories, pictures and memorabilia from your trips.

Caregiver Support Group

We will meet on **Wednesday, July 22** from 5:00-6:00 p.m. on Zoom 892 3955 1708 . If you are caring for a loved one, we offer support and resources and a place to share joys.

Birthday Cake Sunday

We will celebrate our July Birthdays on **Sunday, July 19**. If you were born in July, please check the list posted on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall and add your name by Sunday, July 12, if it is not already there.

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—*On hiatus for the summer.*

Writing Life's Stories – 1st Sundays, **2:00 p.m.**, Zoom 848 6124 7191— next meeting is July 5.

Birthday Cake Sunday—3rd Sundays following worship unless otherwise noted. This month will be on **July 19**.

Women's Connection— *On hiatus until fall. We will see you in September!*

MONDAYS

Women's Dinner Out— *On hiatus for July. Watch e-Announcements for information about August*

Retirees – 3rd Mondays of the month at 12:00 noon at PCO. This month will be on July 20.

TUESDAYS

Men's Group – Weekly, 8:00 a.m. Zoom 813 7514 8286.

PCO Crafts Ministry— *No regularly scheduled meetings for summer. Watch e-announcements for possible impromptu meetings.*

Artists Circle—*No regularly scheduled meetings for summer. Watch e-announcements for possible impromptu meetings.*

WEDNESDAYS

Conversation & Contemplation—*On hiatus for the summer*

Caregiver Support Group - 4th Wednesdays, **July 22nd**. 5:00 p.m. on Zoom 892 3955 1708

THURSDAYS

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

**Independence Day
Is Saturday, July 4!**

From the Stewardship Committee

Stewardship happens all year through what the congregation does for the church and the community. PCO comes to the members each fall to ask for commitments of time, effort, expertise, cleverness and of course treasure for the coming year. But it is from the fulfillment of those commitments that PCO can provide love, charity and hope to its members and the community.

Our church building and the associated infrastructure is home to much of what we do. We spend time together each Sunday morning. We spend time in groups throughout the week. We host musical concerts and performances: Jazz Weekend, Lessons & Carols, the Collage Concert, as well as performances by our scholarship musicians and recitals by young developing musicians in our church and community. We plan mission projects. We teach our children. We make meals to share among ourselves and for those less fortunate.

Sometimes these activities are shared through technology, making it possible for those unable to get to our building to fully participate.

We can do all this through the generosity of our members' time, effort, expertise, cleverness and treasure. Last month at the PCO Infrastructure Town Hall, Pastor Lisa informed us of all the many pieces that go into our infrastructure and the work done to keep it going now and in the future.

Those members who know how things work and what to do, or how to find out what to do, provide the time, effort, expertise and cleverness that makes our church desirable for our members and relevant to our community. Ongoing and future activities include organ refurbishing and even expansion, lighting upgrades, furnace maintenance and repairs, roof replacement, room reorganization, security cameras, livestreaming system maintenance, computers, and sound systems, including T-coil. These projects have a cost and contributions of treasure throughout the year are making them possible.

We appreciate your support of PCO throughout the year.

Thank you,

The Stewardship Committee

Patty Wilson, Chair



Save the Date for a PCO Tradition

Lansing Lugnuts Faith & Family Night

Saturday, August 22
7:05 p.m.



Tickets will be \$12 each.

The game against
the Peoria Chiefs
will be followed by a
fireworks show
courtesy of LAFCU.



Financial Asset Management Committee **What is it? Why do we need it? What will it do?**

Before the bequest to our church from Chris Doemel, the only major financial asset owned by the Presbyterian Church of Okemos was the Endowment Fund. This fund was created in 2010 with an original balance of \$44,000. An endowment committee was established at that time and charged with making decisions about how best to invest and use this fund. The committee placed the endowment fund assets into the Presbyterian Foundation Family of Mutual Funds (entitled the New Covenant Funds) specifically in the New Covenant Balance Fund, which invests in both stocks and bonds. The funds have remained there since that time and the Endowment Fund, after earnings and donations, now reflects a balance of \$507,000. A portion of the proceeds from the investment of these funds is drawn each year and used for purposes outside of the General Operating Budget of the Church. The endowment committee by-laws give the Endowment Committee control over the investment of these funds.

In 2016, Chris Doemel, upon his death, left the Presbyterian Church of Okemos a large unrestricted gift of just over 1 million dollars. At that time the Session created an ad hoc committee to decide where these funds should be placed and invested. That committee recommended that the funds be invested with the Presbyterian Foundation's Trust Company (New Covenant Trust) and invested in socially responsible instruments. Today those funds are invested with \$48,000 in Money Market Funds (cash) \$252,000 in Fixed Income Instruments and \$457,413 in Equities.

The Administration Committee recently advised the Session that no entity has been established since the original committee to oversee this fund or any of the church's assets (outside of the Endowment Fund). The Administration Committee recommended that a standing committee be appointed by and report to Session and charged with oversight of all the church's financial assets. At their last meeting Session voted to create the "Financial Asset Management Committee" (FAM) and appointed the Treasurer (Mike Stokes), the Bookkeeper (Doug Paterson), a member of the Endowment Committee (Barbara Given), a member of Session (Patty Wilson) and a member at large (Rich Martin) as members. Pastor Lisa also will sit on the committee as ex officio.

Currently, discussions are taking place to contemplate if it is best for the Endowment Committee to retain oversight of the investment of the Endowment Fund or whether we should consider oversight of that fund under the purview of the FAM as well. The current by-laws of the Endowment committee do charge that committee with oversight, so any decision to change that would require approval of a by-law change by both Session and the Congregation.

We will keep the congregation informed of any final decisions and well as decisions about any changes to our investments as they currently stand.

Doug Paterson, Bookkeeper

For the Young and the Young at Heart

The **Montreat Youth Conference** draws thousands of youth every summer to the mountains of North Carolina, where they have an opportunity to experience faith formation alongside other youth and adults through worship, keynote speakers, small group, shared meals, and play.

Youth leave Montreat knowing that:

- Their faith matters
- They are loved as they are
- They are part of a broad community of faith

This year, PCO youth attending are Becca Boldrey, Lizzie Conroy-Krutz, Nina Roya, Claire Mayhew and adult leader Christine Meland. They will be joined again with Maddie Pearson and two youth from Eastminster Presbyterian Church, Ben and Tim, and their mother Marcia as the second adult leader.

The group will be traveling from **Saturday, July 18th until Saturday, July 25th**. They will stay in a house together, and worship together with friends from New Hope Presbyterian in Chapel Hill, NC. The New Hope group has doubled in size this year, so unfortunately, there is not enough room to share a house. The group will be commissioned in worship on July 12.

You are invited to accompany the group in these ways:

Pray: safe travels, growing faith, experiencing nature, fun, and friendship

Provide: snacks for the road (it's a 10+ hour drive)

Notes of encouragement for the participants

Food donations for meals (*look for a sign-up sheet on the kiosk in Fellowship Hall or a link to Google sheet in the Friday e-Announcements.*)

[Montreat Meal Donations](#)

Please deliver items to the church by July 17. Reach out to Pastor Lisa or Christine with any questions.



PCO YOUTH CALENDAR SUMMER 2026

- **HOMEWORK & HANGOUT (WITHOUT THE HOMEWORK!)**
 - **TUESDAY, JULY 7 FROM 2-4 PM**
 - **TUESDAY, AUGUST 11 FROM 2-4 PM**
 - **NEW LOCATION: THE FLAKY CROISSANT**
- **JULY 18 - 25: MONTREAT YOUTH CONFERENCE**
- **JULY 28: PRESBYTERY YOUTH CANOE TRIP IN STURGIS, MI**
 - **JOIN YOUTH FROM THROUGHOUT THE PRESBYTERY OF LAKE MICHIGAN FOR A DAY OF CANOEING; DETAILS TO FOLLOW**
- **SUNDAY AUGUST 16: YOUTH GROUP KICK-OFF PICNIC 5 - 7 PM**
- **SATURDAY AUGUST 22: LANSING LUGNUTS GAME AT 7 PM**

Missions and More

PCO USED BOOK SALE

This November the Mission Committee plans to hold a gently Used Book Sale as part of the Alternative Christmas event. We know you all like to read and have many books sitting around your homes. So, we invite you to start setting those books aside now for the Alternative Christmas Event in November.

Please do not bring them to the church yet. We will let you know when we are ready to start collecting them

PCO FOOD CART

Thank you for all your contributions to the PCO Food Cart this year. As you know, the need for food in our community is greater this year than it has been in recent years. Thanks to your generosity we have been able to deliver food to Okemos Community Food Pantry and the Lansing 1st Presbyterian Food Pantry to help those in need.

Please remember that the need continues throughout the summer as well.



PCO Members and friends recently prepared and served a meal at Advent House in Lansing. Advent House is dedicated to helping people out of poverty and homelessness.

Public Policy Report By Ellen Hoekstra

Because this is an election year, the state legislature will be in session for less time than last year, and so many fewer bills that have been introduced are likely to move forward, let alone pass and be enacted. However, that doesn't mean that there is no "policy" news:

- The House and Senate have both passed budget bills that preserve current funding programs to feed the hungry. However, passage of the overall state budget, including K-12 education funding, by the July 1 statutory deadline is not guaranteed. It is particularly important for school districts to know what state funding they can expect by July 1 so that they can make their own budgets, have enough teachers hired, etc.
- One in five farms has disappeared in Michigan, and farmers are experiencing increased stress from the increased costs of fuel and fertilizer. Farmers already have 5 times the state average suicide rate due to a combination of factors that include economic uncertainty, isolation, and the lack of time off from work.
- Medicaid rolls have dropped 5% in 16 months. Although this means a reduced cost for the state, it raises concerns that there will be a sharp increase in the uninsured, given that it is unlikely that the majority of these nearly 150,000 residents will have employer provided insurance.
- The program Rx Kids--which provides financial support for low income pregnant women and moms-- has received positive response from public health researchers for increasing birth weights and decreasing both neonatal mortality as well as NICU admissions. However, some lawmakers have questioned what recipients are spending the money on—"big screen tv's"? Others have asked whether the program provides financial support to undocumented immigrants; the program's advocates state that no state funding is used for that segment of recipients.
- The Corunna school district, which serves 55% economically disadvantaged students, has increased its enrollment in AP classes six-fold by increasing its AP offerings. Only half of Michigan's districts provide any AP classes. Schools in the wealthiest districts offer 7 times the AP options vs. those in the highest poverty districts. The state provides funding to enable low income students to take AP exams for just \$5. Of course, successful scores on AP exams give students a headstart on college completion and reduce their higher education costs.
- A Muskegon prison has half its prisoners in quarantine due to an outbreak of the highly contagious disease scabies. Also, the state's only prison for women is under scrutiny due to three recent deaths of prisoners.

PCO Library News

For July and August, the PCO Library presents a collection of new books for summer reading chosen from the *Englewood Review of Books 2026 Summer Reading Guide*, a weekly online book review published by Englewood Christian Church of Indianapolis. They focus on books related to the themes of community, mission, imagination, and reconciliation. You can find a more detailed description of their organization, and the summer reading guide, in the library. (All quotations are from the publishers or the reading guide).

Becoming Neighbors: The Common Good Made Local by Amar D. Peterman

“Peterman explores how the common good can be cultivated through the practice of neighbor love. And he encourages Christians to join their neighbors...to work toward the flourishing of the whole.”

Watch and Wonder: Birding as a Spiritual Practice by Ragan Sutterfield

“Sutterfield’s work lies at the intersection of pastoral ministry, personal devotion, and the natural world. His writing is accessible but probes deep theological ideas.”

What Grows in Weary Lands: On Christian Resilience by Tish Harrison Warren

“Warren draws from both her own season of exhaustion and the rich well of Christian tradition – particularly that of the earliest Christian monks – to discover the habits and mindsets that anchor us in times of doubt, difficulty, and spiritual dryness.”

On Witness and Repair: Essays by Jesmyn Ward “Two-time National Book Award winner Jesmyn Ward reflects on literature, personal tragedy, and raising a Black son, exploring themes of resilience and hope through powerful essays.” Note – the word *repair* is not a typo. It means “the return of hope after a period of despair”.

Whistler: A Novel by Ann Patchett “The acclaimed, prize-winning #1 *New York Times* bestselling author returns with a moving, luminous novel that reminds us of the sweetness and impermanence of life and the power of connection to defy time.”

Python’s Kiss: Stories by Louise Erdrich “Accompanied by specially commissioned artwork by Aza Erdrich Abe – an intimate and revelatory creative collaboration between mother and daughter – these stories offer an opportunity to celebrate the wisdom and brilliant, bountiful imagination of one of America’s most important writers.” The following book has been added thanks to a PCO member recommendation:

Theo of Golden: A Novel by Allen Levi “A beautifully crafted novel about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the invisible threads of kindness that bind us to one another.”

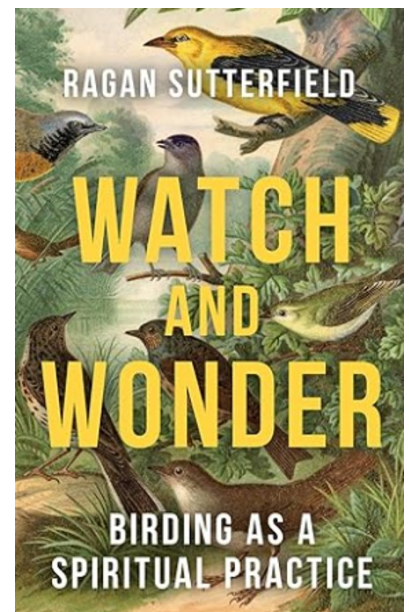
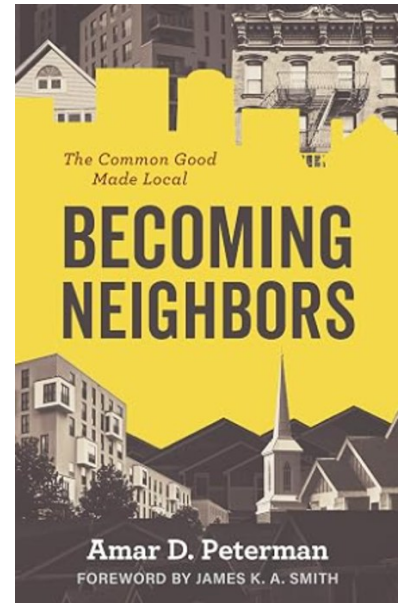
While you are visiting the library, feel free to take one the back issues of magazines that we are weeding from the library. Issues of *Christian Century* and *Horizons* will be available for you on the round table in the library.

Kathi Cook

Reminders from Pastor Lisa

While I am available to meet with individuals, couples and families for pastoral care, I am not a trained therapist or mental health counselor. If care needs are greater than I can provide, I am happy to connect people to a psychologist, psychiatrist or therapist. During emergency situations, I will do my best to make myself available for the requested time. Please note that pastoral care is confidential. You will not be placed on the prayer list or information shared with the Deacons unless you specifically request or are asked to confirm.

Through the Board of Deacons, funds are available to help congregation and community members with emergency financial needs. All requests are confidential. Please note that the church cannot be used as a “pass through fund” or designated gifts fund. If you personally would like to help out someone, you are encouraged to reach out to them directly. Funds cannot be funneled through the church as a charitable contribution. We do welcome contributions to Pastor Discretionary/Deacons Fund, which will be disbursed as the discretion of the Pastor(s) and Deacons.



BOOK NOOK

By Ron Davr

The Story of Ruby Bridges and Other Books

by Robert Coles

Under court order, on November 14, 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges entered William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans. She thought all the people shouting outside the school were celebrating something like Mardi Gras. Federal marshals, however, were protecting her from screaming segregationists who did not want to integrate their all-white school. Ruby spent all day in the principal's office while every white student in the building cleared out.

Ruby's first-grade teacher welcomed her into her classroom and taught her lovingly for the rest of the year. She even asked Ruby why she stopped and talked to the crowd on one occasion. Ruby said that she was not talking but praying for the people resisting integration. Her forgiveness and persistence paid off. White students started to come back to classes. Twelve years later, Ruby Bridges graduated from high school.

Robert Coles was a child psychiatrist serving in the Air Force in the 1960s. He and his wife were impressed by young Ruby's quiet courage, discipline, and her parents' efforts to educate their children. For three years, Coles visited Ruby and her family, asked questions, listened intently, brought paper, and encouraged Ruby to draw. In 1995, he published The Story of Ruby Bridges, a fine children's book, illustrated well by George Ford.

In the 1970s, Dr. Coles used this experience to write Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear. It became a five-volume series concerning the children of sharecroppers, urban minorities, Eskimos, and privileged families. Volumes 2 and 3 won a Pulitzer Prize, focusing on the ways in which children like Ruby showed extraordinary love, courage, and resilience in the face of adversity and hostility. Coles followed that series with two other remarkable books on the moral and spiritual lives of children, including drawings by kids.

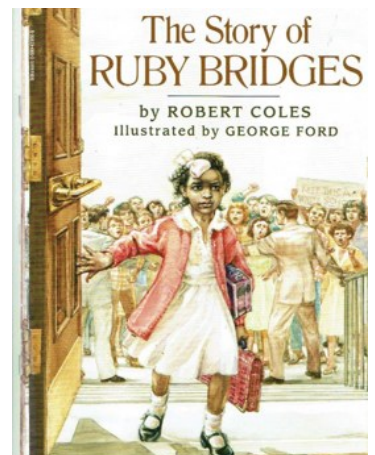
Later, Ruby Bridges urged Coles to move from the lives of children to those of adults. In Women of Crisis: Lives of Struggle and Hope, Coles and his wife, Jane Hollowell Coles, focus on ten women—young, maturing, ethnically diverse, blue- and white-collared, poor and well-off, often facing great difficulties but finding greater sources of resilience and renewal. A strong-minded Black migrant worker in Florida hates, resists, yet empathizes with her cruel boss. An Alaskan resists Anglophiles but prizes her grandparents' Eskimo spirits and finds an individuality of intimacy with her husband and oldest daughter. Visitors in my classes have wished that they had had the opportunity to read about the tensions between love and work, for instance, in these books.

In The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination, Coles stresses story telling. "Their story, yours, mine—it's what we all carry with us on this trip we take; and we owe it to each other to respect our stories and learn from them."

Robert Coles wrote 80 books and hundreds of essays in his lifetime. I greatly appreciated and benefited from his published work. A doctor and social scientist, he was, above all, a story teller. People counted more than statistics. He preferred specific details rather than abstractions, lived experience instead of theories, people's common language in place of high-falutin language, revealing ambiguities and contradictions rather than indecipherable social scientists' jargon. In his work, particular people in particular circumstances spoke and did particular things with particular effects and consequences. I used him as a model in teaching first-year college students how to think clearly, narrate well, rely on specific evidence, and always look for telling facts.

On June 4, Robert Coles, 97, died of Alzheimer's disease. He maintained a lifelong relationship and conversation with Ruby Bridges. After high school she became a travel agent, then a social activist. The Ruby Bridges Foundation has supported several endeavors in education. Barbara Henry, Ruby's first-grade teacher in 1960-1961, has remained a lifelong friend.

A month before Coles died, Bridges visited him in Massachusetts. She learned from his visits with her, and he learned from her story. At this last meeting, Coles responded with "a huge smile," recalling New Orleans and their mutual gratitude at being a part of efforts to integrate public schools in 1960. It was an emotional conversation and an even more moving story.



Presbyterian Church of Okemos

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Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M.

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