

The Grapevine

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OKEMOS

From Pastor Lisa Schrott

ALL IN

**PCO STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN
2026-2027**

WE BUILD COMMUNITY TOGETHER

**HELP US FULFILL
OUR JOURNEY TO 2030 VISION**



CARE



CONNECTION



SERVICE

Are you ready to be **All In**? To show your love for God and for your neighbor through care, connection and service?

All In is our 2026 Stewardship Theme as the Holy Spirit guides us as we seek to fulfill the Journey to 2030 vision of being:

- A welcoming congregation where meaningful connections are made.
- A congregation that is intergenerationally inclusive.
- A congregation actively building partnerships.

Throughout October and early November, we will be sharing scriptures and stories and hearing from members of the church on ways we can be:

All in With Our Hearts

October 18: Pastor Lisa will preach from Matthew 22: 36-40.

All in With Our Hands

October 25: Pastor Aaron will preach from John 13:1 -17.

All in With Our Resources

November 1: Pastor Aaron will preach from Mark 10:17-31.

All in With Our Future

November 8: Pastor Lisa will preach from Luke 5: 1-11.

Dedication Sunday will November 15 as Pastor Lisa will share how the ancestors of our faith declared themselves to be **All In** as the people of God, bringing the word of God into the newly constructed Temple in Jerusalem. King Solomon's prayer and blessing of the Temple will frame our work this season: "Now may you be committed to the Lord our God with all your heart by following God's laws and observing God's commands, just as you are doing right now." -- 1 Kings 8:61-63 (CEB)

I invite you to be part of this exciting time in the church as we continue to grow into our vision of being a welcoming, partnering, and intergenerationally inclusive church. Stewardship packets will be available for pickup at the church or mailed out to you in the end of October.

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**Due Date for November Grapevine is
Thursday, October 22.**

Happening In October at PCO



Thanksgiving Baskets
in partnership with Meridian Cares
October 4 - October 25, 2026

**Baskets for collection of funds will be
in Fellowship Hall.**

**Give online thru our website or send a
check to the church.**

**Help us make Thanksgiving special for
families in Meridian Township.**

Greater Lansing CROP Hunger Walk

An annual tradition at PCO, this year's walk is scheduled for **Sunday, October 11** beginning at Grace United Methodist Church, 1900 Boston Boulevard in Lansing. Watch for times and sign-up information from the Mission Committee or visit <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/chw/event/lansingmi>

From there, you can sign up to participate or donate funds.

Please join the fight against hunger in our own community and support programs that increase food security around the world.



More info about baskets on page 4.

PCO Crafting Group Doubles Up

The PCO Crafting Group will meet twice this month to knit for the Alternative Christmas Market (see page 7) and to keep kids warm this winter (see page 6). Meetings are scheduled for **6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 6** and **4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 20**. Please note the different times on each date. Both meetings are scheduled to take place in Fellowship Hall.

Women's Dinner Out

Our October gathering is scheduled for **Monday, October 5** at **5:30 p.m.** at Ozzy's Kabob, 3536 Meridian Crossing, Suite 260 in Okemos. Please let Judi Harris know during Sunday Fellowship Time if you plan to attend.

Chili Cook-off & Game Night



**Sunday,
October 18, 2026
5:00-7:30 PM
All Ages Event!**

Join our church family for a delicious & fun evening!
Come in from the cold and cozy up with a great meal and fellowship with friends. Bring chili, a side dish or dessert to share with the group. Feel free to bring along your favorite game, too!

From Pastor Aaron: Intergenerational Education

From the earliest stories of Scripture, through countless generations, right down to today, the people of God have passed down knowledge of our Lord through a simple and time-honored tradition: sharing from one generation to the next. This has been done through oral tradition (teaching through storytelling), through the written word, and through careful instruction for thousands of years. We are no exception.

We have the opportunity and the duty to share the teachings of scripture, the good news of the gospel, and our own experiences with a gracious and loving God with one another. While parents have a particular responsibility to share faith with their children, all who are in the church have a role to play in building one another up in faith through mutual instruction and encouragement.

Intergenerational education seeks to recapture a part of the life of the church that has faded with increasingly specialized programming and education models over the years. While there is certainly a place for age-specific instruction, there is also much to learn from one another across generations, as well.

Those who are older and wiser have much to share from their own experiences and hard-learned life lessons. Those who are younger frequently ask questions or encounter challenges that invite us all to think about how faith and life intersect, and bring new perspectives of faith in an ever-changing world. And Jesus himself pointed out that the youngest among us can have a kind of faith that the elders among us should take note of. Each generation contributes to the life and thought of the church—but only if we take the time to both listen and speak to one another.

If you would be interested in taking part in an intergenerational education opportunity, I encourage you to consider joining us for the Colborate study on Sundays during the education hour. We will be starting with the New Testament material. While all ages are, by definition, welcome, I extend a special invitation to our youth, young adults, and all who are open to a discussion-oriented exploration of scripture.

Adult Education & Fellowship

Password for Zoom meetings unless otherwise noted is 48864. Days and times are subject to change.

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 – October meeting is **October 4**.

Birthday Cake Sunday-3rd Sundays following worship unless otherwise noted. This month will be **October 18**.

Women's Connection – 4th Sundays at 12:30 p.m. This month will be **October 25**.

MONDAYS

Women's Dinner Out – 1st Mondays unless otherwise scheduled, 5:30 p.m. This month will be **October 5**.

Retirees - 3rd Mondays at 12 noon in person at PCO. This month will be on **October 19**.

TUESDAYS

Men's Group – Weekly at 8:00 a.m. on Zoom 813 7514 8286. Hybrid (In-person and on Zoom) this month is **October 6**.

PCO Crafts Ministry – Monthly on 1st & 3rd Tuesdays in Fellowship Hall. This month will be on **October 6 at 6:00 p.m. and on October 20 at 4:00 p.m.** *Note different times for each date.*

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

Caregiver Support Group – 4th Wednesdays unless otherwise noted at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom 892 3955 1708. This month will be **October 28**.

THURSDAY

Bible Study – Weekly, 9:30 a.m. on Zoom <https://msu.zoom.us/j/51474400526>



More Happenings in October

Caregivers Support Group

The Caregiver Support Group will meet on **Wednesday, October 28 from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m.** on Zoom #892-3955-1708. Please note the new start time. We invite those caring for a loved one to join us for support and sharing of resources and experiences.

Retirees

The Retiree Group will meet on **Monday, October 19 at noon** in Fellowship Hall, and will continue on the third Mondays throughout the year. In September, the group discussed various topics and activities they would like to include in the upcoming program year. Getting to know each other better through meaningful conversations and enjoying fellowship time and community activities will be the focus.

A few members are scheduled to share their favorite vacations in October, followed by our reflections of the country's celebration of its 250 birthday. What activities have had meaning for you? What more would you like to see?

Women's Connection

We will meet on **Sunday, October 25 at 12:30 p.m.** All women are invited for fellowship, lunch, and to hear our featured speaker. Shelby Laird is PCO Choir Director, and this is a perfect opportunity to get to know her better. Even if you're in the choir and meet weekly, you will learn more about Shelby's life and faith journey.

Please plan to join us, mark your calendar, and invite friends

Conversation and Contemplation

Every Wednesday from 10:00-11:30 a.m. the C&C group meets on Zoom 905 709 104. We alternate between Lectio Divina, focusing on the lectionary for that week, and a book study. We will be beginning *Heart Storming: Creating a Place God Can Call Home* by Robert Wick in October. Various members facilitate meditation, prayer, Bible study and book discussion.

Helping Our Neighbors

PCO is again partnering with Meridian Cares to collect donations for Meijer Food Cards, which will be given to local families in need. The average gift card is \$75 and sometimes more to accommodate the needs of larger families.

A collection area will be located within Fellowship Hall, from October 4 through the 25, to receive donations for this effort. Donations can also be made through the church's website, by mailing a check to the church or placing your contribution in PCO's weekly offering.

Please be sure to include the words Thanksgiving Baskets on the memo line of your check.



Prayer Request and Learning Opportunity

PCO continues to lift up prayers for David Hoekstra, who is hoping to receive a kidney transplant. He is raising awareness about kidney donation and would be grateful for any who are called to learn more about this life-saving gift as potential donors. Living donors don't need to be biologically related and are generally only ineligible due to several conditions.

For more information go to www.exploretransplant.org to learn how to help and about the medical advances that make kidney donation safe.

You can also call the University of Michigan Living Kidney Donor Coordinator at 800-333-9013 or visit www.uofmhealth.org/medical-services/transplant, mentioning David's birthdate, 4/29/82, and residence in Okemos.



YOUTH CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2026

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL COMBINED

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 3: CASS COMMUNITY MISSION TRIP
(NO YOUTH GROUP ON OCTOBER 4)**

OCTOBER 11: LUNCH & CROP WALK 12:30 PM

OCTOBER 18: CHILI COOK-OFF AND GAME NIGHT 5 – 7:30 PM

**OCTOBER 25: TRUNK OR TREAT 4 – 6 PM AT OKEMOS
COMMUNITY CHURCH; CARPOOL FROM CHURCH AT 3 PM**

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NOVEMBER:

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS MARKET ON NOVEMBER 14

UKIRK TRIVIA NIGHT ON NOVEMBER 15



Mission & More

PCO Supports Kids at Dwight Rich

Communities in Schools Michigan, one of PCO's mission priorities, is back in the Lansing Public Schools. Students at Dwight Rich School of the Arts, a K-8 school with an enrollment of about 560, are now receiving assistance from CISM. PCO members' contributions will be supporting these children with a \$500 donation through the Mission Committee for winter outerwear such as boots and jackets. Additionally, members of the Crafting Group will be making hats and scarves to be sure every child can play outside during recess. If any individual members would like to add to this effort, please contact Kent Workman.

CISM staff have said that being able to provide winter outerwear helps improve school attendance, a critical element for academic success. Thank you, members, including knitters!



Policy Report Ellen Hoekstra

The November 3 election will include two items of public policy on the ballot, in addition to candidates:

*Prop. 1—whether citizens approve having a constitutional convention to develop a new state constitution. This proposal is required under the current 1963 State Constitution, which mandates that voters have an opportunity to make this decision every 16 years.

*Prop. 2— a proposal called “Money Out of Politics”, which would prohibit large utilities and large-scale state government contractors from donating in state elections. Prop. 2 also proposes increased donor transparency.

Members may want to review the pros and cons of these two ballot items.

Issues that did not make the ballot for this November include:

- A proposal to eliminate property taxes in Michigan that did not obtain enough signatures.
- A proposal to increase requirements for voters to prove that they are US citizens. The Board of State Canvassers determined through a sampling process that there were insufficient valid signatures.

Although the legislature is not currently in session, several policy issues include:

- Michigan students' reading scores again declined for grades 3-7. For example, only 38.2% of 3rd graders scored as proficient in English Language Arts, down from the already low 38.9% last year. State Superintendent Glenn Maleyko has indicated that improving students' reading proficiency is a top priority for the Michigan Department of Education.
- Controversy abounds regarding Michigan's child welfare. The State Auditor General has criticized the Department of Health and Human Services for staff not meeting the 24-hour requirement for child welfare investigations following a complaint. The federal judge involved in oversight over Michigan's child welfare system has stated that there has been improvement but that Michigan still falls short of sufficiently protecting children in care.
- A different controversy stems from the \$50 million state subsidy to build copper mines near the Porcupine Mountains. Upper Peninsula legislators strongly support the subsidy because of high unemployment in western UP, but environmentalists are opposed due to the potential impact on Lake Superior.

Book Collection Continues – Continuing through October, we are collecting gently used books to sell at the PCO Alternative Christmas Market on November 14. All proceeds from the book sale will go to support UKirk at MSU's book distribution program for community children and youth. Please look through your personal libraries for books that you would like to contribute. We're looking for all kinds of books, including fiction, non-fiction, and children's books. *No textbooks, magazines, or audio-visual materials, please.* This is your chance to go through that stash of books! You'll find collection bins in the coat room where you can leave your used books. Thank you for your participation in the market and the book sale, and thanks to all of you who have already dropped off books! *For more information, see Kathi Cook.*

PCO Library News

Fall into reading this October with a good book from the PCO Library. The new additions to our collection this month include the following (all quotations are from the publishers):

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger "Enger brings us eleven-year-old Reuben Land, an asthmatic boy in the Midwest who has reason to believe in miracles. Along with his sister and father, Reuben finds himself on a cross-country search for his outlaw older brother. Their journey unfolds like a revelation, and its conclusion shows how family, love, and faith can stand up to the most terrifying of enemies, and the most tragic of fates."

Light for the Way: Seeking Simplicity, Connection, and Repair in a Broken World from the editors of *Sojourners* magazine "Explore the work of beloved writers from *Sojourners* magazine on spiritual thriving, living simply, and engaging with our communities. Even in the most dire and demoralizing times, practices of contemplation, sabbath rest, and community offer sustenance and power."

Fish with Feet: Human Evolution and the Image of God by Janet Kellogg Ray "Makes room for both scientific truth and sacred meaning, showing that our emergence from ancient waters and our connection to all life doesn't diminish our spiritual identity; instead, it enriches our understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God."

All Who Are Weary: Easing the Burden on the Walk with Mental Illness by Emmy Kegler "A hope-filled, compassionate look at the increasingly widespread struggle with mental illness. Kegler joins the reader on the long walk of reflection, understanding, and compassion, trusting in the promise of a lighter load for us all."

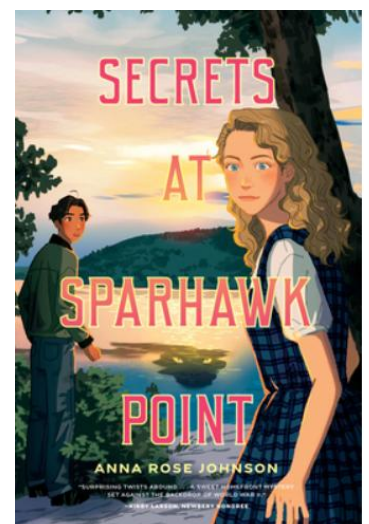
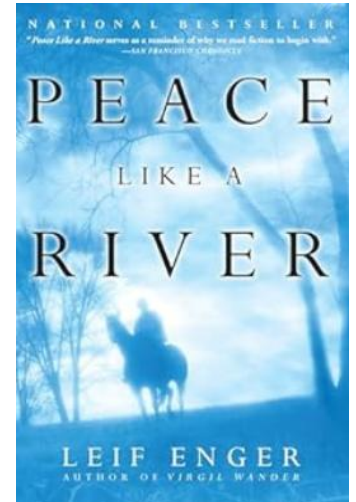
And the Sea Was No More: Reading the Bible in the Deep by Dave Nienhuis "When panic attacks shattered his world, leaving him drowning in a chaos he couldn't name, biblical scholar Dave Nienhuis discovered something unexpected: Scripture itself offered the language for his anguish. The Bible's recurring image of the menacing Deep – the watery chaos that threatens to overwhelm – spoke for him when he had no words of his own."

Secrets at Sparhawk Point by Anna Rose Johnson "In 1943 Sparhawk Point, Michigan, the Swedish Ahlstrom girls and Ojibwe Robicheaux boys claim to see Mishipeshu, a creature from Ojibwe legend, to attract tourists and save their families, but when the story backfires, they must find a way to undo the damage. Warm and richly evocative, it has a hint of magical realism and a wholesome, heartfelt message." (This book is located in the Youth section).

And don't miss the newest section, called "What Did I Miss?" This area features titles that are no longer on the shelves of new books, but may still be of interest to you. This display will change monthly.

Borrowing a book is easy. Please write the title, your name, and the date in the binder on the round table in the library. The suggested loan period is two months. When you are finished, please leave the books in the basket for returns. Thank you!

Kathi Cook



Coming in November

Save the Date for the Alternative Christmas Market

The PCO Alternative Christmas Market and Used Book Sale will be held on Saturday November 14 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Bread Bites is scheduled to be there to provide lunch for purchase, and our PCO youth will be selling treats again.

The vendors will be some of your past favorites as well as a new one - House of Promise. This is a local non-profit organization that involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of female victims of sex-trafficking. Jean Cymbalski and Jill Tribell will be selling their beautiful cards with their proceeds going to support the Simbolei Girls Academy. Our PCO crafters guild will be selling their lovely items to support the Greater Lansing Food Bank. Nyaka will be back selling lovely Ugandan Baskets made by grandmothers to support the orphanage there.

This year we will also be selling used books with the proceeds going to U-Kirk, our Presbyterian partner at MSU. Please come and enjoy this fun event and support many wonderful charities that serve those in need locally and also internationally. You can purchase many unique gifts for those on your Christmas list.

See you on November 14th!

Jayne Zuhlke, Pastor Lisa Schrott, Jill Tribell, Becky Gillespie, Barbara Scott, Kathi Cook, and Emily and Lizzie Conroy-Krutz.

A Note from Pastor Lisa: The Church and Elections

It is hard to ignore that elections are on the horizon. Each election cycle I receive questions about what the church (big Church and our congregation) is permitted to do and not do. Rather than look at this from perspective of do's and don'ts, I prefer to think about this from the perspective of how we live out our call to love God and love our neighbor.

The quote below from Presbyterian Pastor Robert McAfee Brown from his book *Spirituality and Liberation* sums this up for me:

For the Reformed Christian, "active participation in civil society is not a luxury. It is not a right we can choose to exercise or not as our whims may drive us. It is part of our calling as Christians to be active participants in God's ordering of the earthly commonwealth."

That said, any actions taken, or statements made, on behalf of the PCO congregation are approved by Session. We recently participated in a non-partisan "get out the vote" drive. This "See. Love. Vote." was an interfaith event, sponsored by a Roman Catholic organization hosted by First Presbyterian, Lansing and approved by the PCO Session.

Individual members of the congregation are encouraged to express their political viewpoints as they feel led by the Holy Spirit and their convictions. I ask that people respect that we have a diversity of political opinions at the church, and refrain from advocating for or against specific candidates on Sunday mornings.

As a pastor and a citizen, I take my calling to be engaged in the world seriously and this includes supporting free and fair elections. I have shared with the Personnel Committee and the Session that I will be serving as a Poll Chaplain during the upcoming elections. Poll Chaplains provide a calming presence to reduce tension and foster a peaceful environment; support voters, particularly vulnerable groups, monitor for intimidation or voter suppression and help connect people to resources. I did a training for this work over the summer.

If you are interested in specific guidance, the PC(USA) provides the following: "the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), at all levels (i.e., General Assembly, synod, presbytery, and particular congregation), is permitted to engage in a limited, insubstantial amount of witnessing or lobbying activities which attempt to influence legislation or issues. It is strictly prohibited, however, from engaging in political activity which includes, but is not limited to, participating or intervening, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for elective public office." You can read more here:

<https://pcusa.org/resource/political-activity-guidelines-pcusa-organizations>

Book Nook

by Ron Dorr

Remembering Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry wrote more than 50 books in his 92 years of fruitful life. Once calling himself an amateur poet, he was in fact a masterful professional writer, devoted family man, old-fashioned farmer, and articulate citizen.

In his poem, "A Marriage, an Elegy," he consoled me when my parents died. "They lived long, and were faithful / to the good in each other. / They suffered as their faith required. / Now their union is consummate." In his fiction, according to one critic, Berry "observes people carefully, understands them precisely, and cares about them deeply." And in his essays, he indicts the highly industrialized, bureaucratic, and consumer-centered world that has destroyed the small-town, rural agrarian life in America. Here I will concentrate on his short stories and novels.

His fiction re-creates A World Lost, especially that agrarian way of life, love, community, and membership before World War II that Hannah Coulter celebrates. Like William Faulkner, Berry has created an alternate vision—a fictional community of faith-filled, flawed characters living and moving and having their being around Port William, Kentucky. It is the life of small farmers, strong women, loyal kin, people who work the land, know their roots, and speak their mind. It is the life of common sense, community, compassion, and reverence for the land. In Hannah Coulter's "truest self, that stream always astir inside her. . . was at once pity and love, knowledge and faith, forgiveness, grief, and joy." Greed, murder, disappointment, and "the larger, looser, darker order" of love and loss also appear. So do Biblical passages.

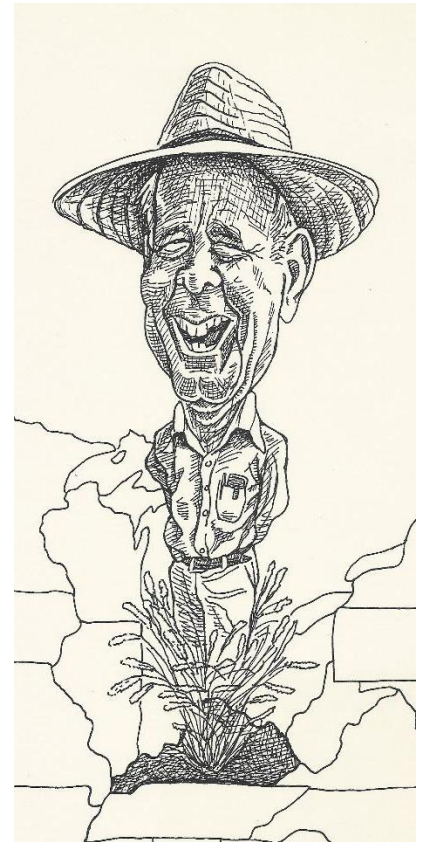
Among the five stories in Fidelity, the most complicated and absorbing ones are "Pray without Ceasing" and "Fidelity." In the former, Thad Coulter, under the influence of failure, drunk, and feeling betrayed, angry, and joyful all mixed up, kills his best friend, Ben Feltner. To right such "bottomless sorrow" that he has caused, Coulter kills himself. Seventy-eight years later, Andy Catlett, recalling the story from his Feltner grandmother, realizes that love has clarified grief, that his own father, Wheeler, has brought the Coulter and Feltner families back together, and that Andy is a child of his grandfather Mat Feltner's forgiveness.

Two lessons emerge from this story (a killing in 1912) within a story (told in 1965) within a story (memories in 1990). "If God loves the ones we can't," Andy's grandmother says, "then finally maybe we can." The second lesson is the mystery of time and eternity, the "transformation in which the living, by dying, pass into the living," a lesson learned in "grief and love and wonder." Renewal prevails.

Because of its combination of outer humor and inner seriousness, "Fidelity" is my favorite story. This 83-page novella is filled with distinctions and descriptions that are discerning: To Hannah Feltner Coulter, fearful yet unafraid, "They were her study, these Coulter men." In this story, Danny Branch puts his dying father, 82-year-old Burley Coulter, in a hospital, then realizes his mistake. In the middle of the night, he "kidnaps" his father and takes him to the woods to give him a more dignified and fitting death, one free of all the tubes, tests, poking, prodding, and bureaucracy of the "best of modern medical care." In the hollow where he belongs, Burley Coulter, "by calling and by devotion a man of the woods and streams," dies.

Family members and friends, who believe that "people belong to each other and to God," successfully thwart the efforts of a young detective to solve the "crime." And in his attorney's office, Wheeler Catlett gives an impromptu but eloquent eulogy of his friend, Burley Coulter. "He took care of his mother until she died. He was a good and loyal partner to his brother. He was a true friend to all his friends. He knew himself and he told the truth. . . . He looked at the world and found it good. . . . He learned what he had to, and he changed, and so he made himself exceptional. He was. I will sav. a faithful man."

Like the rest of Wendell Berry's fiction, FIDELITY is filled with such faithful men and women.



The caricature above of author Wendell Berry was drawn by PCO member Jack Harkema. It was published in The Christian Century magazine in November of 1994.

Presbyterian Church of Okemos

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