



# Portal

JANUARY 2023

Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe

Senior Pastor

## ON MY MIND: THE BITTER AND THE SWEET

*As you have done for the least of these, so you have done for me. (Matt 25:40)*

I like a white Christmas as much as anyone, but the storm that hit last week was more than anyone had bargained for. My whole family was coming for Christmas and luckily everyone arrived in the nick of time, just before the storm struck. The weather went from picturesque to deadly in a matter of hours. While things never got really bad in East Lansing, I began to worry about friends and family who were still traveling. Then came the news about interstates snarled with accidents, people trapped in their cars, parents running out of baby formula. In Buffalo, NY, which has gotten over 50 inches of snow, power outages have been widespread and stores are running out of food. Worst of all, the death toll from the storm continues to climb. It's hard to believe something that is so beautiful can also wreak such havoc and cause so much damage.

Worried about the roads, my sister Kaia and her family left for home on Christmas Day. The snow had stopped but the temperature had plummeted into the single digits, which was a problem. The RV they had rented didn't have adequate heating and, once they were on the highway facing a stiff wind, the interior temperature of the vehicle dropped to 45 degrees. It was so cold, the toilet froze. Their two boys thought it was great fun, but my 82-year-old mother couldn't get warm, even wrapped in a sleeping bag. Three hours into the trip, it was clear they needed to stop, get some food and warm up. The problem? It was Christmas Day and everything was closed.

A Google search ("open restaurants near me") gave just one answer: a bar & grill just a few miles off the highway. They made their way to the place, which looked deserted. As they trudged in, cold and weary, the bartender said, "Sorry folks, the kitchen is closed." Close to despair, they decided to sit and have a drink and make a plan.

As they sat there talking about their options, they got into a conversation with the only other people in the bar, two middle-aged couples who lived in the area. They asked where Kaia was going on such a cold day with small children and an elderly woman in tow. My sister, who tells a great story, told them about the RV, the frozen toilet, and the need to find food. Their new friends suggested a good hotel and started calling around to see what restaurants might be open. One of the women said, "There's a great Chinese restaurant that's open but they don't have a website." So she called her son and had him take a picture of the menu on the fridge and send it to Kaia.

By the time Kaia and her family were ready to leave, they had a hotel reservation and a plan for dinner. When Kaia's husband went to settle the tab, he discovered their new friends had already paid the bill. "It felt like a Christmas miracle," Kaia remarked when she told me about it later. An awful trip became bearable through the kindness of strangers.

There are similar stories coming out of this storm of the century. Strangers are sharing baby formula, checking on neighbors, sharing shovels and buying groceries for people in need. I even heard a story about a man in New York who took in a bus full of South Korean tourists stranded near his home. In the midst of an awful time, little miracles seem to appear.

Perhaps this is a lesson for the New Year. I don't know what 2023 will bring. If the last three years are anything to go by, there will surely be good times as well as challenging times. What I do know is that when things go wrong or life seems bleak, small acts of kindness feel like miracles. May your small acts of kindness in the coming year be a source of miracles for others.

Happy New Year!

**Rev. Dr. Shawnthea Monroe**



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A NATURE-BASED PRESCHOOL?

DANA JOHNSON, PEOPLES CHURCH PRESCHOOL

Even before I learned that Peoples Church Preschool could be 'officially' designated as a Nature-Based Preschool, I knew it always has been. Almost 30 years ago, when I began my position, Peoples Church Preschool had already been around for 43 years.

It was the early 90's and the early childhood curriculum I was taught in school was full of primary colors and plastic toys. This was also the way it was in the first preschool I directed for a couple years before coming to The Peoples Church. Having been nature oriented all my life, I knew that this program would be the perfect fit as soon as I arrived.

The existing teachers back then - Jan Calkins, Pam Mayle, and Judy Pfleger; under the direction of Yvonne Hafner, were ahead of their time. They regularly brought bouquets of 10-ft sunflowers and osage orange cross sections into the classroom, and had the children painting with Queen Anne's Lace.

Now, I have attended the Nature Preschool Institute, the Preschool has been a member of the Natural Start Alliance for many years, and we have had a certified Nature Explore Outdoor classroom since 2016.

While the Preschool has celebrated International Mud Day each June for many years, we joined the celebration of International Stone Play day in November for the first time last year. The photos in this article are examples of some of the experiences the teachers prepared for the children on this special day.



## WING-LEADERS WANTED

KATHI MITCHELL, CHILDREN'S EDUCATION DIRECTOR



The Children's Education department celebrated a wonderful December!

The highlight was our amazing Christmas pageant, with the youngest members of the church doing a fabulous job! They showed us their hard work during the pageant and on Christmas Eve. I have absolutely loved hearing their sweet voices fill the church!

Did you know that one of our biggest pageant successes was that all the angel wings stayed on during the performance? One set even broke as the children were lined up to start! We discovered that over time, many of the elastics have deteriorated, feathers have fallen off, etc. We are looking for volunteer(s) to take on the project of refurbishing our wings so we know whether to purchase new ones before next year. If you would like to be our 'wing-leader', please contact me at [kmitchell@thepeopleschurch.com](mailto:kmitchell@thepeopleschurch.com). Thank you!

Our December celebration continued with a Christmas party where we asked our students to bring a friend to join us! We had a great time playing games, making snowflakes and getting presents. We look forward to January, with all of our kids back into Sunday School and classes growing - a wonderful sight!



## PEOPLES CHURCH YOUTH GROUP

ELISHA SMITH, YOUTH DIRECTOR

Hello PCYG students and families!

Hope you've had a restful and warm winter break, and enjoyed lots of time with friends and loved ones! I'm looking forward to the fun we will have this year...There is lots in store (D&D, cooking lessons, art projects, etc.)! We will continue meeting on Sunday evenings, but please watch the calendar for special events. You should've received the calendar in your email, but it's also available on Facebook.

If you have questions about the calendar, need help accessing the Facebook page, or know any students interested in PCYG, please reach out to me at [esmith@thepeopleschurch.com](mailto:esmith@thepeopleschurch.com)!

## 2023 COUNCIL OF ELDERS

*The Council of Elders meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Robertson Room. All members of The Peoples Church community are welcome to attend, or contact the chair (or another elder) prior to a monthly meeting to be included as part of an evening's agenda.*

<b>Class:</b>	<b>Member:</b>	<b>Position:</b>
2025	Emily Anderson	Community Engagement Ministry
2025	Sarah Dymond	Worship Ministry
2025	Ben Essyelinck	Christian Education Ministry
2025	Erik Mackey	Community Engagement Ministry
2025	Susan Nowicki	Building & Grounds Ministry
2025	Bob Steinkamp	Welcome Ministry
2025	<b>Bob Watson</b>	<b>Chair</b> , Building & Grounds Ministry
2025	<b>Dave Brower</b>	<b>Treasurer</b> , Finance Ministry
2024	Sandy Dragoo	Personnel Ministry
2024	<b>John Lindley</b>	<b>Vice-Chair</b> , Elders & <b>Chair</b> , Finance Ministry
2024	<b>Kari Naghtin</b>	<b>Chair</b> , Campus Ministry
2024	<b>Rich Patterson</b>	<b>Clerk</b>
2024	Dottie Spousta	Worship Ministry
2024	<b>Brad Williams</b>	<b>Chair</b> , Personnel Ministry
2023	<b>Diane Shafer</b>	<b>Chair</b> , Council of Elders
2023	Kim Schramm	Building & Grounds Ministry
2023	<b>Mary West</b>	<b>Secretary</b>
	<b>Shawnthea Monroe</b>	<b>Senior Pastor</b>

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

There will be a Congregational Meeting on January 29th during 10:30 worship to vote on the 2023 budget.

## ADULTS CONNECTING & HAVING EVENTS

YOUNG ADULT GROUP

We meet on the 1st and 3rd  
Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m.



I am so thankful for the community we've built and the fun we've had these last few months! Our main avenue of communication is email, so if you'd like to be added to the email list to receive updates, please reach out. Updates will also be available through Facebook and Instagram.

Looking forward to connecting and growing with you this year!

Joyfully,

Elisha Smith

[Esmith@thepeopleschurch.com](mailto:Esmith@thepeopleschurch.com)

## PUB THEOLOGY

2nd Thursday of the  
month at 6:30 p.m.

Engage in conversation  
about faith, life, and  
what is happening in  
the world.



### GREEN WORD FROM EARTH STEWARDSHIP

The holidays can generate a lot of cardboard. Did you know that in addition to shipping boxes, other types of cardboard can be recycled? This includes toilet paper and paper towels rolls, tissue boxes, and boxes for dry products that you would have in the pantry. Some frozen food boxes can also be recycled. Always flatten boxes for recycling. For more information check out <https://recyclingaccoons.org>.

## TELL-A-TAIL

The Library Committee is sponsoring the Tell-a-Tail program for children on the second Wednesday of every month from January to May, 6p.m. – 7p.m. in the Church Library. Children will be able to practice reading aloud to Reba, a therapy dog. Reading aloud to a dog has been shown to improve reading proficiency. Children may bring their own book or select a book from the Library. Reading sessions will last about 10 minutes per child. Please plan to come **January 11th**.





## UPCOMING BLOOD DRIVES AT PEOPLES

### FRI, JAN. 13

10:00 a.m - 3:00 p.m.

Snider Social Hall

### FRI, FEB. 17

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Robertson Room

### THURS, MARCH 23

10:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Robertson Room

### FRI, APRIL 14

10:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Robertson Room

The need for blood is constant and only volunteer donors can fulfill that need for patients in our community. Nationwide, someone needs a unit of blood every 2 to 3 seconds and most of us will need blood in our lifetime.

Click [here](#) to make an appointment.

Thank you for supporting the American Red Cross blood program!

Download the Red Cross Blood Donor App on the [App Store](#), [Google Play](#) or text BLOODAPP to 90999. Schedule appointments, view your blood type and results of your mini-physical, and track your donations.

### January Birthdays

80 & above

Susan Allis

Fran Bradley

Pat Brogan

Carol Dooley

James Harrison

Jane Harrison

Barbara Houghtaling

Jeanne McKowen

Jean Moore

Helen Ward

Randy Wirth

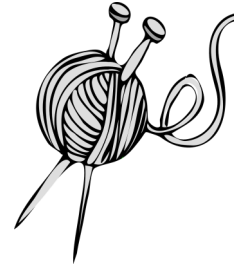


A huge **THANK YOU** to all members and friends who supported the Edgewood Village Christmas gift project this year! We were able to provide a gift for 97 children who requested a gift. We are grateful for your prayers, generosity and your kindness.



**The Reading People** will meet on January 19th in the Robertson Room from 1:30 to 3 p.m. to discuss *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi. Led by Liz Raduazo, we will discuss this award winning novel about Lakshmi, a woman who escapes from an abusive marriage and becomes a highly regarded henna artist and confidante to the wealthy women of Jaipur, while her own secrets remain hidden. We invite you to join us for a lively discussion!

**The Knitting People** will meet on January 26th from 1-3 p.m. in the Robertson Room to bless completed items and work on baby blankets, mittens, hats, slippers, shawls, and other current projects to give to people in our community. Knitters and crocheters are welcome to join us for fellowship and the sharing of patterns, yarn, and good ideas.



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## AROUND THE CORNER AND AROUND THE WORLD

The Fine Arts Committee invites you to explore their latest exhibit, "Around the Corner and Around the World," a collection of watercolors by Chicago-based artist Laura Karsh Eaton. The exhibit includes 38 pieces from the artist's collection. They are displayed in the hall running along the west side of the Sanctuary, in the Kiosk, and in the Thompson case. The exhibit will be on display through February 9, 2023.

Laura began her painting career sketching watercolor postcards while traveling, once even mixing the paint on her leg sitting on the beach. In middle school, Laura moved to England with her family. A field trip to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland influenced her to choose a career combining her love of travel and community service. Laura graduated from Michigan State University's James Madison College with a B.A. in International Relations, and received an M.A. in International Relations from Boston University.

On sunny summer mornings, Laura loves painting the flowers she grows in her own garden, and often draws inspiration from the architecture of the places she visits on vacation or while walking around her community. Having spent more than 20 years in a beach town near Boston, Laura particularly enjoys capturing coastal scenes. When she began painting in 2009, Laura found it improved her ability to observe and be present, noticing the beautiful scenes and moments to treasure around the corner and around the world.





## JANUARY TAIZE SERVICE

This month's Taizé Service is on  
**January 29th**  
at 6:30 p.m. in the Chapel

Services consist of repetitive and meditative singing, prayer, Scripture, and silence. It is a powerful, quiet, contemplative worship experience. This service is inter-denominational and all are welcome.



## VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY



**January 8th at 9:30 a.m.**  
**in the Robertson Room**

**Speaker:** Tom Bres, Chief Information Officer at Sparrow Health System

**Topic:** *What's Next for the Healthcare in Lansing*

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ThePeoplesChurch.com

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