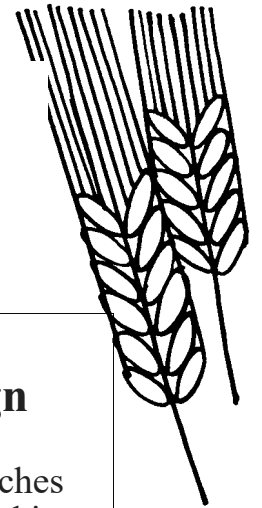


FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC ZUMBROTA
and
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO



March 2017 Newsletter

(O/Z) Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign

For more than 30 years, the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches has partnered with local food shelves to bring food to those in need in communities throughout the state. The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign brings together hundreds of companies, civic groups, schools and congregations to help keep 300+ food shelves statewide stocked throughout the year. This grassroots campaign is our most enduring program. Schools, business, restaurants, congregations and stores are invited to participate in specified action weeks in March, so we will be joining in “A Different Kind of Food Fight” (this year’s campaign) by signing up your group or organization and join the fight against hunger here!

Throughout March, we will be collecting food donations and funds for the local food shelves – Z church for the Zumbrota Area Emergency Food Shelf and O church for the Oronoco Food Shelf. At the end of the month, we will total up our donations in dollars and pounds and report it to the Minnesota FoodShare organization, joining our efforts with those of other businesses, schools, and organizations around the state. There will be a designated place in each church for donations.

As part of this campaign, on Sun., Mar. 26, we will participating in **Pack the Pews**. The goal is to literally pack the church pews with as many donations – food and financial – as possible.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Jesus returned from the Jordan River full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he was tempted for forty days by the devil. – Luke 4:1-2

Wilderness journeys ...

That's what Lent is all about. It's a time of year paralleling those 40 days of Jesus' in the desert – 40 days of searching, 40 days of self-examination and reflection, 40 days of turning and returning to God.

Have you ever seen a picture of the wilderness that Jesus wandered through? It's not like the wilderness that we have up here in the northern part of the world – trees and soft grass or pine needles underfoot, bushes with berries or mushrooms or other possibly edible things, shade and brooks babbling here and there with their refreshing water, an abundance of shelter possibilities.

No.

That was not the wilderness that Jesus wandered through. Jesus' wilderness was barren and dry. Jesus' wilderness was rocky and desolate – littered with only a few scraggly bushes, some tough and bristly desert grass, and very, very little water.



It wasn't a pretty place.
It wasn't a safe place.
It wasn't an easy place.
It wasn't an enjoyable place.

For Jesus, this wilderness wandering was no vacation. The difficulty of his journey over those 40 days is meant to inspire repentance and contrition in our own Lenten journeys. That's why many people give up things in which they normally find great enjoy-

ment during Lent – chocolate, social media, meat, etc. This sacrifice makes them a little less comfortable, a little less easy ... a little more challenged, a little more aware of struggle and discomfort.

But Lenten sacrifices are not the only wildernesses we find ourselves in, are they?

Grief can be a wilderness far vaster than any other.

It isn't a pretty place.
It isn't a safe place.
It isn't an easy place.
It isn't an enjoyable place.

It is the place in which I recently found myself over Christmas and through January – grieving the loss of not one but two children for which I had so desperately wished and prayed and hoped and dreamed. It was my 40 days of wilderness – ugly, insecure, difficult, and horrible. And that rocky, desolate path of grieving was just as real as the carpet and concrete beneath my own feet.

When we are grieving, very often we need people to walk alongside us. We are desperate for compassion – for a kind word, a gesture that reminds us in the midst of our sorrow that we are not alone. As Jesus wandered the wilderness for those 40 days, there were no other people with him ... but God remained by his side. God was with him as he faced his temptations – as he literally faced off with Satan. And in the face of those battles, God strengthened him. God held him up, encouraged him, and protected him.

In the midst of our own grief, we can feel like we are facing off against our own demons – inner, outer, or somewhere in between. But like Jesus, we are not alone. God walks with us. God blazes a path before us in the darkness. God shelters us when no other shelter can be found and nourishes our spirits when the food and the water are scarce. God reaches out a hand to us, very often in the form of the people who love us and hold us dear, to remind us that even in the ugliest, more insecure, hardest, and more horrific places, we are beloved children.

Thanks be to God.

Pastor Gina

(O/Z) Pastor Out

Pastor Lisa will be out of the office at a conference in Kansas City from Mar. 12-15. I will have my cell phone with me if you need to get a hold of me.

(O/Z) Good Friday Readers

I need two people who are willing to help with the readings on Good Friday. The service is in Oronoco, but readers could be from either congregation. As in the past, we will be taking turns reading portions of the story of the last days and hours of Christ's life up to the crucifixion. I can get you the readings as soon as you let me know. If you can help, please contact Pastor Lisa.

(O/Z) Lenten Sermon series: Boot Camp for the Soul

By now, you're probably all pretty familiar with the fact that I like to embark on sermon series for special times of year ... including Lent. During this Lenten season, we will be embarking on a sermon series called "Boot Camp for the Soul." Lent is a time that emphasizes interiority, personal investigation, and contrition – the intentional work of seeking a change of heart or actions ... maybe even both. But this type of personal faith work can be **hard work**. Lent can be a little bit like a boot camp for the soul – a restart of sorts in a very focused area. We walk this season together, demanding the best of ourselves, ready to support one another, and prepared to see truths that may shatter our self-understanding.

We get the term "boot camp" from the military, but it has expanded far beyond that specific setting in recent decades. We now encounter boot camps in various areas of life: particularly rigorous exercise regimens, a period of training before a new job, or even an intensive retreat for personal transformation. In all of these settings – and in our Lenten journey – the goal is to push beyond what we think our limits are in ways that strengthen us.

(O) Busy Bags Were a Hit!

Thank you to everyone who donated items for the busy bags. They were a real treat. 15 busy bags

were delivered to the Women' Shelter and 15 to Ronald McDonald House. Both agencies were delighted to receive the gifts. Thank you to everyone who furnish items and helped fill the bags.

If you are shopping this winter and find inexpensive fleece on sale, that material was very easy to sew. You can leave it in the office for Joanne.

(O/Z) 50th Anniversary of the Yoke

Believe it or not, we are coming up on this incredible milestone – on the 50th anniversary of the OZ yoke!! We are in the process of planning a joint celebration (including a joint worship service) for April 2017, but we need your help ... especially those of you who have stories about the yoke. Maybe it's a story of your own experience. Maybe it's a story that you heard from one of our dearly departed saints of the church who was present during the yoking.

To make things a little easier on everyone's schedules, the ICC has decided to take on the planning for this event. So stay tuned for more information!

In Gratitude

(O) Presbyterian church,

Thank you so much for your generous donation of Busy Bags! Your gift will directly benefit the children and families who call us their home-away-from home. Thanks!

Keri (staff)
Ronald McDonald House

Dear Presbyterian Church of Oronoco,
Thank you for your support and for your generous donation of \$100 to Mission 21 during 2016. Your financial support is extremely valuable in helping us to continue providing services to child victims of sex trafficking in our state and their families.

Sincerely,
Stephanie Holt

Readers of OZ Next Meeting March 14



The book discussion group will meet on Tuesday, March 14 at 7:00 PM. We will gather at the home of Parker and Linda Quammen for a discussion of "Every Man Dies Alone" by Hans Fallada.

"Based on a true story, this book tells the tale of a working class couple in Berlin who decide to take a stand against the Nazis. More than an edge-of-your-seat thriller, more than a moving romance, even more than literature of the highest order, it's a deeply moving story of two people who stand up for what's right, and for each other."

The Readers of OZ meet the second Tuesday of the month, September through May (usually). New members are always welcome. For more information or directions, call Parker or Linda at 507-732-7761.



(O) POC Luncheons

Thanks to all who donated food and helped serve at the February luncheon. We had a great turnout and raised \$194 dollars! Thank you all!

March 15th will be the last luncheon for the year with hot dishes, salads and desserts on the menu. Watch for the sign up sheet to see how you can help. Extra posters are available on the fellowship room credenza if you can help us get the word out. Be sure to invite your friends and family.

(O/Z) Confirmation Schedule

Wed., Mar. 1, 7:00 p.m. @ Oronoco – Ash
Wednesday service (required)

Wed., Mar. 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m. @ Zumbrota –
*Please note: **This is a date change.** I will be driving home from a conference on Wed., Mar. 15, so we will meet the following Wed. instead.*

Readings for the Month of March 2017



Sun., Mar. 5 – Psalm 32; Matthew 4:1-11
Boot Camp for the Soul, #1

Sun., Mar. 12 – Genesis 12:1-4a; John 3:1-7
Boot Camp for the Soul, #2

Sun., Mar. 19 – Exodus 15:22-27; John 4:4-15, 25-26, 39-42
Boot Camp for the Soul, #3

Sun., Mar. 26 – 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Ephesians 5:8-14
Boot Camp for the Soul, #4

(O/Z) Confirmation Dinners

Each time we meet for confirmation, we come together for a meal first. This gives us a great opportunity to participate in fellowship together and to unwind a bit before the "real" class starts. Each month, we meet in both congregations once - the first Wed. at O, the third Wed. at Z. I'm asking for people to help make meals for those gatherings - another great way we as congregations can support these confirmation students in this journey. Here's the schedule:

Oronoco

Zumbrota

~~Wed., Mar. 1~~

Wed., Mar. 22 – Vaths

Wed., Apr. 5

Wed., Apr. 19

Wed., May 3

Wed., May 17

There are sign-up sheets at both churches. At Z, the sign up sheet is on the back table with the bulletins. At O, the sign up sheet is on the bulletin board.

Note: We will not need dinner on Wed., Mar. 1 as that is Ash Wednesday. The confirmation students are required to attend the Ash Wed. service at 7:00p at O church.

(O/Z) Easter Garden Flower Orders



(Z) Everyone is looking forward to spring flowers after our long winter, and we will all have our chance to make the UCC chancel bloom on Easter Sunday by ordering lilies and other potted plants (hydrangeas, cyclamen, kalanchoes, etc.) well ahead of that. Watch for a sign-up sheet at the back of the church and for more information in the March bulletins. All orders must be in no later than March 26th.

If you can't be at church during this time, you can contact Wendy Kylo, who will help you with your order. Call her at 507-732-5999. She can give you the prices and the address for mailing in your check. Thanks for helping to make this special day a beautiful one, too. You are welcome to take your plant home with you after the Easter service, or to designate another destination for it.

(O) The Presbyterian Church of Oronoco will be offering Easter flowers, similar to last year, for display during the Easter service as part of a memorial garden. Choices will be lilies, cyclamen and tulips. Watch for more information in the near future. Order forms will be on the table in the fellowship room. Your order form must be given to Joanne Schenck no later than March 26th. If you have any questions, please call Joanne at 289-0093. Thank you!



(O) Donations for Pine Haven

We are once again collecting donations for Pine Haven Care Center in Pine Island. There's a box along the western outside wall to gather the items. We're looking for the following items:

- socks
- sweatsuits for men and women – sizes L or XL
- lap blankets

We will be taking these donations through the month of March.

(O/Z) Lenten Photo Challenge

Last year, throughout Lent, we did a joint Photo Challenge. We assigned a word to each day of Lent – something to get us thinking and praying and digging deeper into our faith in some way. Sometime throughout the day, you take a picture that makes you think of that word. For example, if the word was “light,” you could take a picture of a candle or the sun rays or the smile of a friend (as it LIGHTS up your day), etc.

We got such a great response from this last year (both from people in the OZ congregations and friends and family outside our beloved little churches!) that we're going to do another one this year. You can find a copy of the word list in this newsletter as well as at both churches, on the websites, and on our Facebook pages. There are two ways to participate. First, you can take a picture and post it to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Include the word of the day with your post as well as **#OZLentPhotos**. If social media is not your forte, you can still participate. Take the pictures with your phone or your regular camera and keep track of which pictures go with which words.

In advance, thank you!

IN TOUCH WITH THE WIDER CHURCH

United Church of Christ Contact Information

UCC national website...ucc.org

Minnesota UCC website...uccmn.org

Minnesota UCC weekly email newsletter...contact kareng@uccmn.org United Church News bi-monthly magazine...online at ucc.org/ucnews or free subscription at United Church News, P.O. Box 247, Bellmawr, NJ 08099 or call 1-800-363-0575

Presbyterian Church Contact Information

Presbyterian national website...pcusa.org

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area website...ptcaweb.org

PTCA weekly email newsletter...contact communications@ptcaweb.org

Presbyterians Today monthly magazine...subscribe (at cost) to Presbyterians Today, P.O. Box 5178, Brentwood, TN 37024-9931 or call 1-800-558-166

(O) Clearwater Forest Summer Camps

Registration for Clearwater Forest summer programs 2017 is going strong! Go to www.clearwaterforest.org today to check out the 2017 lineup and register online! The theme this summer is “Branching Out: Connecting Through Christ,” where campers will explore the many ways that our relationship with Christ can connect us with individuals and communities for the rest of our lives. Clearwater Forest offers programs for anyone grades 3rd through recent graduates, and with all of the fantastic options available this summer there is sure to be something for everyone!

Campfires, kayaking, high ropes, sailing, worship, hiking, archery, swimming, giant games on the Playfield, and s’mores are only part of what Clearwater Forest is all about. Living in community, learning independence and cooperation simultaneously, developing new friendships in a safe environment, experiencing outdoor ministry, and developing a deeper relationship with Christ makes a week at Clearwater Forest a truly life-changing experience.

For more information please check out www.clearwaterforest.org or give the office a call at 218-678-2325.

(O) About Per Capita

We’ve talked a bit in our announcements lately about per capita, but the Session wanted to be sure it got in the newsletter, too. So let me give you a brief run-down of what per capita is and how it works.

“One of the great strengths of our denomination is its connectionism. Presbyterians in Minnesota and Wisconsin are tied to the larger church in ministry. One concrete form of that connection is through our per capita. Every Presbyterian church in the country is required to pay a certain amount for each active member on its rolls. This money goes to support the work and ministry of our church throughout the country.” – *from the website of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area*

The per capita payment for 2017 is \$33.75 per member. Of that \$33.75, the largest portion (66%) is used by our presbytery while the rest is shared equally (17% each) between our synod (the Synod of Lakes and Prairies) and the General Assembly (national office).

It is and has been the policy of the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco to pay our per capita by the end of every year, whether individual members have contributed their apportionment or not. If you haven’t paid your per capita for this year, please consider doing so. You can make a check out to the O church and simply write “per capita” in the memo. If you’re not sure whether you’ve paid your per capita this year, please contact Kim Stanton.

(Z) Per Capita

So the Presbyterians aren’t the only ones that pay per capita! The United Church of Christ collects funds based on church membership as well. Our congregation sends a per capita payment to the MN Conference every year to help fund the missions and ministries of the UCC here in Minnesota, across the nation, and around the world. It is the practice of First Congregational to pay the entirety of that per capita payment every year, whether we’ve had members contribute to off-set their portion or not.

The **per capita payment for the UCC** has remained steady for a number of years at **\$10 per member**. Please consider contributing your portion of our per capita payment. You can put it in an envelope marked “Per Capita” or simply write “Per Capita” on the memo line of your check. Thank you for helping us support the important work of the wider church.



(O) One Great Hour of Sharing Offering will be received Easter Sunday, 4/16

The Christian season of Lent is historically marked with fasting, a traditional practice of giving up food and devoting yourself to prayer.

But this isn't the only type of fasting the Bible talks about. Isaiah 58 describes a new kind of fast, not to give up bread but to share it. Isaiah calls us to "loose the bonds of injustice," to "let the oppressed go free," to "share bread with the hungry" and to "invite the homeless poor into our homes." We are called to offer help to those in need and restoration to those who have been broken down. One way we answer this call is through our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

Our gifts to this Offering helped "loose the bonds of injustice" for Olga Pedraza and others like her who received support in accessing a job after a prison sentence and beating drug addiction. Self-Development of People invests in communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, and injustice, and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these societal ills. By investing in those like Olga who have reformed their lives after prison, we help reduce the number of people who end up back in prison.

Our gifts helped alpaca farmers in Peru whose livelihoods were threatened by the poisoning of their water sources. What began as an apparent need for assistance with irrigation grew into a partnership between these farmers and the Presbyterian Hunger Program to support a host of environmental initiatives. Environmental degradation and climate change are primary threats to the world's hungry and vulnerable, and the Hunger Program's work is part of our response.

Gifts to the Offering also rebuilt 40 apartments and houses destroyed during the Syrian civil war, so that those made homeless by its violence could return to a home of their own. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has provided essential support to refugees throughout this crisis, including education for refugee children, emergency supplies for refugees journeying to new lands, and assistance for US congregations receiving refugees into their communities.

Our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing will do much more than these few examples. They will join congregations all over the country as we seek to answer God's call and make a difference in the lives of

many more people. As we respond through our sharing, Isaiah 58 also provides a promise. As we respond to injustice, feed those who are hungry, and provide places for those without homes, our "light will break forth," and we shall be called "repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to live in."

Please give generously.

(Z) Our One Great Hour of Sharing Offering Helps People Like Souad and Rahaf:



Syrian Refugee Souad Kasem Issa combs the hair of her 9 year old daughter, Rahaf. She is a Syrian refugee in Amman, Jordan . She and her husband and six children fled the city of Homs as fighting there worsened in 2012 . Their home in Syria has since been destroyed by bombing, and they are struggling to survive in Jordan's capital city.

Our faith calls us to respond to people in crisis . Unfortunately, crisis such as war, disaster, changing climate or a devastated economy have forced millions of people over the years to seek safety as refugees . Today, our world is facing a refugee crisis beyond anything we have seen in recent generations . At this moment, there are more refugees in the world than at any time since World War II . Millions of people are alive today only because they have escaped perilous situations .

The **One Great Hour of Sharing Offering** is rooted in responding to Christ's call to welcome the stranger. The offering provides assistance beyond emergency food, water and shelter . The United Church of Christ has stepped forward to serve as co-sponsors, mentors and friends to newly arrived refugees on behalf of the Church, helping people in need begin a new life free from violence, persecution, or a shifting climate . The offering provides financial support to help refugees, such as the Issa family, who are living in a country that's not their home . We are helping families begin a new life with hope for a better future .

The OGHS Offering will be received at Z on March 26th, the Fourth Sunday in Lent. As we respond generously, may we recognize that in giving, we are on a personal journey to live in Christ's image!

Birthdays for the Month of March

3/1 Carlyle Johnson
3/2 Rex Wiederanders
3/3 Lance Sorensen
3/6 Jace Matthees
3/7 Bill Budensiek
3/9 Deb Nelson
3/10 Bonnie Rolland
3/13 Theodore Larson
3/18 Bruce Johnston
3/19 Ron Peterson-Rucker
 Eunice Markham
3/24 Kim Stanton
3/27 Joyce Rucker
3/28 Jaxon Hartzell
3/29 Sarah Wedge Maguire
3/30 Darin Hartzell
 Doug Maguire



***Please Note the Leadership Changes**

Church Staff

Organist: Katha Johnson
Secretary: Sue Johnson
Custodians: (O) Sue Johnson
 (Z) Debbie Floan
Pastor: Rev. Lisa Johnson

UCC Leadership Team

Chad Vath, Moderator
Amy Pahl, Financial Clerk
Bob Hawley, Treasurer
Connie Hawley, Trustee
Hailey Vath, Trustee
Jim Wendt, Trustee
Bill Wendt, Deacon
Jo Ludington, Deacon
Molly Hunt, Deacon
Marlene Kosobucki, Deacon
Kay Wilshusen, Deacon
Wendy Kylo, Deacon

Presbyterian Leadership Team

Kay Erdahl, Treasurer
Kim Stanton, Asst. Treasurer
Mike Rand, Clerk of Session
Ron Peterson Rucker, Ruling Elder
Brenda Longman, Ruling Elder
Janice Ostrom, Ruling Elder
Mike Rand, Ruling Elder
Linda Sorensen, Ruling Elder
Lance Sorensen, Ruling Elder
Deb Nelson, Deacon
Joanne Schenck, Deacon
Karen Peterson Rucker, Deacon
Jenny Rand, Deacon
Gail Rucker, Deacon

People of the Church

Janice Ostrom, Co-Moderator
Jenny Rand, Co Moderator



In Our Prayers

Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:6-7

Joyce Rucker, Eunice Markham, Bob Rolland, the friends and family of Sue Wedge.

Secretary's Office Hours

Tuesday in Oronoco 10-3:00
Thursday in Oronoco 10-3:00
Office Phone# 507-367-4711
Email: oronocopc@bevcomm.net

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455 East Avenue
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(507) 732-7015



Presbyterian Church of Oronoco
PO Box 118
Oronoco, MN 55960
(507) 367-4711



Check out our websites at
www.oronocochurch.org
www.ucczumbrota.org



Worship Times for the Month of March 2017

3/5	9:00 (Z)	11:00 (O)
3/12	9:00 (Z)	11:00 (O)
3/19	9:00 (Z)	11:00 (O)
3/27	9:00 (Z)	11:00 (O)

Pastor Lisa Johnson - Contact Information
Cell Phone (507) 696-8753 E-mail address: pastorlisaj@gmail.com
Pastor Lisa's Office Hours
Mondays 1-4:00 p.m. at Oronoco
Pastor's Blog: pastorlisaj.wordpress.com