



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

December 2023

Christmas Cookie Sale

It's time to start thinking about/planning for what has become our most popular, anticipated event of the year ... our Christmas cookie sale!!

Date: **Sat., Dec. 9**

Time: **9:00—11:00 a.m.**

Cost: **\$7/pound**

If possible, we're asking everyone to bake at least **18 dozen** cookies to contribute (though, of course, if you'd like to contribute more than that, we'll be happy to take them!) *As always, we make sure everyone knows that our cookies are all baked in private homes, so we cannot guarantee no cross-contamination for those with nut allergies.*



When you bring your cookies to church that week, feel free to set them anywhere in the fellowship room. Please make sure you label them:

A) with a name of some kind.

B) with whether or not there are nuts in them.

As far as PR goes, we've got full-sized fliers as well as ¼-sheet mini-fliers that could still be distributed around the area. We've also got a Facebook event (search for "Christmas Cookie Sale" or find it under the Events section of the church's Facebook page). Share the event on your own pages and help us get the word out!

Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Lisa Johnson

Pianist: Rocky Nisbit

Church Leadership

Mike Rand, Clerk of Session, Ruling Elder
Ellen Warner, Treasurer, Ruling Elder
Todd Wickre, Ruling Elder
Brenda Longman, Ruling Elder

Geoff Warner, Ruling Elder
Cindy Luhman, Ruling Elder

Ellen Simon, Deacon
Joanne Schenck, Deacon
Karen Peterson-Rucker, Deacon
Jenny Rand, Deacon



From the Pastor ...

Our Advent wreath is going to look a little different this year. After last year, our purple and pink candles were spent, so we needed to order new candles. I decided to take this opportunity to explore something new ... something old but also new.

So this year, instead of using purple as our liturgical color for Advent, we'll be using blue. But ... why?

Throughout history, the color purple has been the color of royalty, and throughout the season of Advent, we await the birth of the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings.

Traditionally within the liturgical life of the church, the color purple has been used as a color denoting preparation—another completely appropriate description of the focus of advent.

That being said, purple is also the liturgical color for the season of Lent. Lent is certainly another season of preparation, but it's a different kind of preparation. Lent is about preparing for the death and resurrection of Christ through repentance. It is a somber season, a solemn season. On the other hand, the season of Advent is about preparing for both the birth of Christ child and the second coming of Christ. It is a season characterized by one word in particular—a word that is also what differentiates it from the season of Lent: HOPE.

“But when God our Savior’s kindness and love appeared, he saved us because of his mercy, not because of righteous things we had done. He did it through the washing of new birth and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, which God poured out upon us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior. So, since we have been made righteous by his grace, we can inherit the hope for eternal life.” ~ Titus 3:4-7

As full as a cup of hot chocolate with a carpet of marshmallows covering the surface, Advent is a season brimming with hope. As brilliant as a display of Christmas lights shining on a crisp December night, Advent is a season twinkling with hope. As fizzy as the bubbles in your favorite Christmas punch, Advent is a season effervescent with hope. As soft as a cozy pair of pajamas, a thick pair of wool socks, and a warm fleece blanket, Advent is a season that wraps us up in hope. As we are reminded by the classic 90’s Christmas movie *Home Alone*, “This is Christmas, the season of perpetual hope.”

Our hope lies not just in that long-ago Bethlehem birth that we honor and remember every year, but also in everything that came after: the life and teaching and love of Jesus;

the crucifixion and death of Jesus; the miraculous resurrection of Jesus, and the command with which he left his disciples: “Go make disciples of all nations.” Our hope is tied to the Grand Story of faith that God has been telling throughout the millennia and continues to tell in each of our hearts and through each of our lives every day. So I pray that, as you make your way through this Advent season, you would feel the hope that it embodies and that that hope would linger with you—in your body and mind and spirit—long after the last remnants of the season have been packaged away for next year. The good news is this, friends: God’s hope is indeed eternal.

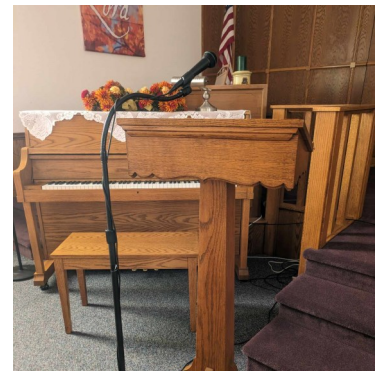
Pastor Gira

Advent Readers

Believe it or not, Advent is just around the corner! The first Sunday of Advent is Sun., Dec. 3. If you’re interested in being one of our Advent readers/candle lighters, please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Readings are in a labeled envelope hanging below the sign-up sheet, so you can take them with you for practice that day. In advance, thank you!

Advent readers needed:

- Sun., Dec. 3 **(covered)**
- Sun., Dec. 10
- Sun., Dec. 17 **(covered)**
- Sun., Dec. 24—morning worship
- Sun., Dec. 24—Christmas Eve worship



Scripture readings for December

- **December 3—Advent 1:** Mark 13:24-37
- **December 10—Advent 2:** Isaiah 40:1-11
- **December 17—Advent 3:** Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
- **December 24—Advent 4 (morning):** 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16
- **December 31—*A Look at the Year Behind & the Year Ahead***



Christmas Eve Service



This year, our Christmas Eve service will be:

Sunday, Dec. 24 at 4:00 p.m.

Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers

We continue to receive (roughly) quarterly updates from Shelvis and Nancy about their life and work and mission in Uganda and South Sudan. And we continue to donate our 2nd Sunday Spare Change offering to the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) in honor of that work.



Donations can still be made in honor of specific mission co-workers – Shelvis and Nancy, in our case. And of course, we can always pray for them and their family in all times and places. But if you can't be here in person to contribute to our Spare Change offering, you can still help. Visit their PMA page:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/shelvis-and-nancy-smith-mather/>. From there, you can click on the green box under their (completely adorable) family picture that says, "Give in honor of the ministry of Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather." This will redirect you to the PMA donation page.

You can also click on the blue box that says "Subscribe to our letters" to start receiving Shelvis and Nancy's occasional updates in your inbox. They send a wonderful, entertaining, touchingly personal update roughly quarterly.

Next Session mtg.:

**Monday, Dec. 11
6:30 p.m.**

Next Presbytery mtg.:

**Thurs., Jan. 25, 2024
12:00 p.m.
(hybrid—location TBA)**

Prayer Requests

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” ~ Philippians 4:6-7

And so we lift up **Helen Craft, Curt Burt, Keanan Peterson-Rucker, Kamyn PR-Nielsen, family of Karen Lohmann and family of Jack Rucker** in prayer.



Food Shelf: Item of the Month

We’ve got a new monthly piece that will be showing up in the newsletter! The OFS volunteer responsible for ordering has given us a list of monthly needs – a specific item that the Food Shelf could use that month. This monthly item will also be posted on our church Facebook page, so feel free to find it every month and share the image!



Busy Bags Assembly

We will be putting together busy bags for Ronald McDonald House again this year. We'll assemble the bags sometime in January (date TBD), but now is a great time to be on the lookout for anything that we could put in the bags: small toys, coloring things, books, games, etc. I'll put the box out at church. Feel free to drop donations off anytime.



Star Word Prompts

Reflect on your star word journey this year – where it’s taken you, what you’ve learned, etc.





Electronic Donations

You can donate to the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco online anytime using either the link on our website (www.oronocochurch.org at the bottom of the homepage) or by using this QR code:

Per Capita—The “Glue” That Holds Presbyterians Together

What is it? The Presbyterian Church is a connectional church. We worship, serve, and govern together. Per capita contributions fund the shared governing responsibilities for the whole church (Presbytery, Synod, General Assembly), no matter the size of an individual church.

How old is it? It is mentioned in the Synod of Philadelphia minutes in 1738!

How much is it? As per the vote during the Nov. 2022 presbytery mtg., the 2023 per capita will also be \$37.50.

Where does the money go? 66% to our Presbytery; 17% to our Synod; 17% to the General Assembly (national office).

Why is it important? Per capita monies support the work of the church globally to nationally to locally, including the technology grant we received earlier this year to worship remotely.

What is our church’s policy? It is, and has been, the policy of the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco to pay our per capita every year, whether individual members have contributed their portion or not.

Have I paid this year? If you are not sure, please contact Ellen Warner (ellenjwarner@gmail.com) to find out.

How do I pay? You can write a check to the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco and simply write “per capita” on the memo line.



December Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♫ 12/13—Alyssa Luhman
- ♫ 12/19—Don Ottman
- ♥ 12/18—Kim & Rachel Stanton



Spouse Grief Group

We've started hosting a congregational spouse grief group. It's a very informal group—just a safe, supportive space to talk about beloved spouses that have passed, the ways that we deal with grief, and anything else. We meet:

3rd Monday of the month—5:30 p.m.



Staying in Touch

Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

Office: 507-367-4711

Email: oronocopc@bevcomm.net

Website: <http://www.oronocochurch.org>

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

Office: 651-357-1150

Fax: 651-357-1141

Email: office@ptcaweb.org

Website: <http://www.ptcaweb.org>

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Office: 800-728-7228

Email: info@pcusa.org

Website: <http://www.pcusa.org>



Winter Weather Procedures

As the winter months are once again upon us, just a reminder that occasionally, we do have to close church due to weather and road conditions. The following are our procedures when this happens:



- Pastor Lisa and the Session member assigned to open and close the church for the month will decide whether it is appropriate to close
- Pastor Lisa will send out an all-church email alerting people of the closing. It will also be posted to our Facebook page (Presbyterian Church of Oronoco) and our website.
- Session members will call people to let them know of the closing using the calling list that we have established. *If you think your contact information may need to be updated, please let Pastor Lisa know.*
- Pastor Lisa will contact KAAL, KTTC, KIMT, and Fox 47 to put the cancellation on the local “Closing and Delays” lists as well.

Quiet Christmas Service

At Christmastime, the constant refrain we hear about joy and togetherness and celebrating doesn't resonate with everyone. Some people are hurting and lonely, worried and fearful, sad and grieving during this time of year as well. We need space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern. We need to know that we are not alone. We need to know God's presence is with us during this season. So we invite you to experience a meditative worship service that holds time for remembering, sharing our hurting places with God, and preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ. God's Word is a light in our broken places. Always.



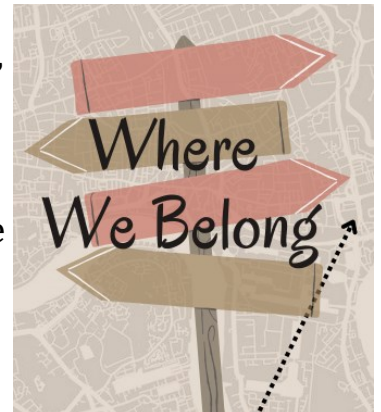
Sunday, Dec. 17
4:30 p.m.

If you don't feel comfortable attending this service in person, we will be streaming it just like we do with all of our regular services – on Facebook and our website. You can also share our Facebook event to spread the word about this service: <https://fb.me/e/ObiwppsJ>.

Advent sermon series: Where We Belong

This year, our Advent worship series will be “Where We Belong.” The material comes from *A Preacher’s Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series, vol. 2* (compiled by Jessica Miller Kelley). In describing this series, Tuhina Verma Rasche says,

“Advent and Christmas are a sort of homecoming. God found a new home among us in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. ... The dwelling places where we find Christ today can be in our mangers, surrounded by our parents, shepherds, magi, and a variety of animals—and also through the moves of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes those dwelling places can take us by surprise; sometimes those dwelling places can also be where we experience the most comfort and joy, where we truly belong in creation. ... As the liturgical year begins anew, where do we physically, mentally, and spiritually find ourselves as we make preparations for the coming of Christ?”



- Dec. 3: “The End of the World as We Know It”
- Dec. 10: “Where the Wild Things Are”
- Dec. 17: “Homecoming”
- Dec. 24 (morning): “Pitching the Tent”
- Christmas Eve: “Home in the Word”

Clothes Closet

Some of the regular helpers with the Oronoco Food Shelf have started a clothes closet for food shelf clients—a chance for them to take whatever clothing they need. As the weather gets colder, this is a vital ministry and one for which the food shelf clients have already expressed great appreciation. We’ve made space for them in the closet area on the landing on the north end of the building (near the food shelf volunteer entrance). If you have any clothing you’d like to donate (new or gently used), please bring it to church. All sizes are appreciated, especially larger adult sizes.

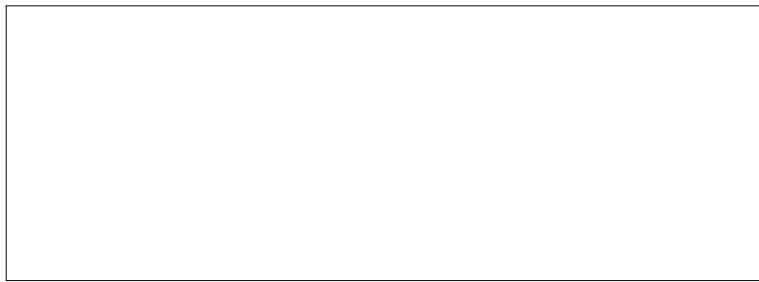


Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

P.O. Box 118

Oronoco, MN 55960

507-367-4711



Basic Information

Website: <http://www.oronocochurch.org>

Facebook: Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

Instagram: @oronocochurch



Worship—10:00 a.m.
Communion—1st Sunday of the month
Fellowship hour following worship

Rev. Lisa Johnson—contact information:

Cell: 507-995-7310

Email: PastorLisaJ@gmail.com

Blog: <http://pastorlisaj.com>