



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

December 2020

Virtual Christmas Eve Service

As difficult as it's going to be, our Christmas Eve service is going to be online-only this year. I will so dearly and desperately miss having all of you here in the sanctuary with me, but I'd rather miss you now and see you safe and sound later.

We'll be streaming our Christmas Eve service using Zoom and Facebook Live simultaneously just like we've been doing since March. Here's the information you'll need:



Date: Thursday, December 24

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Zoom ID: 812 8007 5525

Password: church

I'll send out an email before the service with the Zoom ID and password, link, and worship write-up as usual. *We will celebrate communion during our Christmas Eve worship, and we will end the service with our candle lit "Silent Night" as well. There should've been enough candles in your Advent bags, but if you need more, please let Pastor Lisa know so we can make sure to get enough to you.*

Pastor: Rev. Lisa Johnson

Church Staff

Secretary: Brianna Clement

Organist: Katha Johnson

Church Leadership

Mike Rand, Clerk of Session
Ellen Warner, Ruling Elder
Lance Sorensen, Ruling Elder
Ron Peterson-Rucker, Ruling Elder
Janice Ostrom, Ruling Elder
Todd Wickre, Ruling Elder
Brenda Longman, Ruling Elder

Kim Stanton, Treasurer
Gail Rucker, Deacon
Ellen Simon, Deacon
Joanne Schenck, Deacon
Cindy Luhman, Deacon
Karen Peterson-Rucker, Deacon



From the Pastor ...

I had so much fun driving the Advent bags around today, all. It was such a joy to be in the presence – the actual, physical presence – of so many of you today. I know I've said it before, but I miss seeing y'all every Sunday, and I know you miss seeing one another as well.

Not surprisingly, there was one theme that came up in many conversations: it's time for 2020 to GO AWAY!! Bye bye, 2020. Time to move along!

And, friends, I couldn't agree more.

This year has been **rough** for So. Many. Reasons. !!!

Health reasons ...

Political reasons ...

Social reasons ...

Economic reasons ...

Financial reasons ...

Relationship reasons ...

Personal reasons ...

There are things we've endured.

There are things we've postponed.

There are things we've missed.

There are fears we've harbored.

There are stresses we've endured.

There are turbulent waters we've navigated ... barely.

It's. Been. **Rough.**

However, as we look back, we'll hopefully recognize some blessings among the remains – some joys, some celebration moments, some smiles, some encouragement, some hope. There have been new births and more birthdays. There have been new engagements and more anniversaries. There have been moments of laughter. There have been moments of beauty. There have been God-moments – undeniable, inescapable God-moments.

For the past 8 yrs., on the Sunday after Christmas – always the last Sunday of the year – we've celebrated a worship service in which we look both back at the year that's been and ahead at the year to come. And as part of that service, I've asked you to share your responses to two questions:

*Where have you seen God in the past year?
Where do you hope to find God in the year ahead?*

Because of the limitations of the way we're worshiping right now, this type of service is going to be too difficult to coordinate. But as we look at turning the page on 2020 and getting a fresh start in 2021, I

commend these questions to you for reflection, for journaling (if you're a journaling person), for prayer, and for your time with God. Even in all the distresses and distractions of 2020, where have you seen God? Even in all the uncertainty and upendedness that we've currently living in, where do you hope to see God in 2021?

The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him.

– Colossians 3:15-17

Pastor Gina

Scripture readings for December

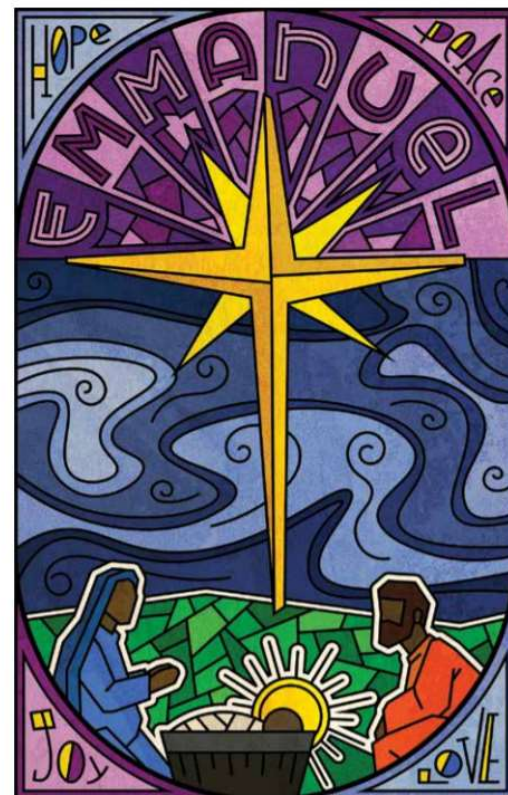
- Sunday, December 6: Joel 2:12-13, 28-29
2nd Sunday of Advent
- Sunday, December 13: Isaiah 61:1-11
3rd Sunday of Advent
- Sunday, December 20: Luke 1:26-45
4th Sunday of Advent
- Thursday, December 24 @ 5:30 p.m.
Christmas Eve Service (online)
- Sunday, December 27: Guest Preacher



Christmas Joy Offerings

In the PC(USA) today, the Christmas Joy Offering reflects that God is with us, through the generous gifts that support church leaders among us, retired, present and future, who have pointed us to God. Even as we support our current and former church leaders through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, God is calling new leaders for our church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related school and colleges equipping communities of color – offering students the means for a brighter future and enhanced opportunities to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come. Of the funds raised through the Christmas Joy Offering, 50% helps students learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color, and 50% provide assistance for current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs.

Normally, we would collect the Christmas Joy Offering during worship on Christmas Eve. Although we didn't get to worship in-person on Christmas Eve this year, you can still help support this critical denomination-wide offering. Visit <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/>. Click on "Give Now," make sure "Give Once" is highlighted, then select "Christmas Joy" from the dropdown menu titled "Designated Offering." On the next page, as you fill in your information, include "Presbyterian Church of Oronoco" in the box labeled "Name of Local Congregation."



 CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
LEADERSHIP, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Next Session mtg.:

**Wednesday, December 2
6:30 p.m. (via Zoom)**

Next Presbytery mtg.:

TBD

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 **Sandy Bowers, Eunice Markham, Helen Craft, Joyce Rucker, Carol Tiede, Ed Simon, and Linda Sorensen** in prayer.



New Treasurer

We want to extend a warm and grateful THANK YOU to Ellen Warner who has agreed to take on the rotating Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer position with Kim Stanton. Ellen, thank you for your willingness to learn and to serve (again ... since she's also currently serving on session!). We appreciate you!



About Per Capita

As 2020 comes to a close, I wanted to give you a reminder about per capita payments. Here's a brief rundown 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*

This year's per capita payment is \$36.50 per member. Of that \$36.50, 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 or Hadley Thompson.

The per capita for 2021 is the same as last year: \$36.50.



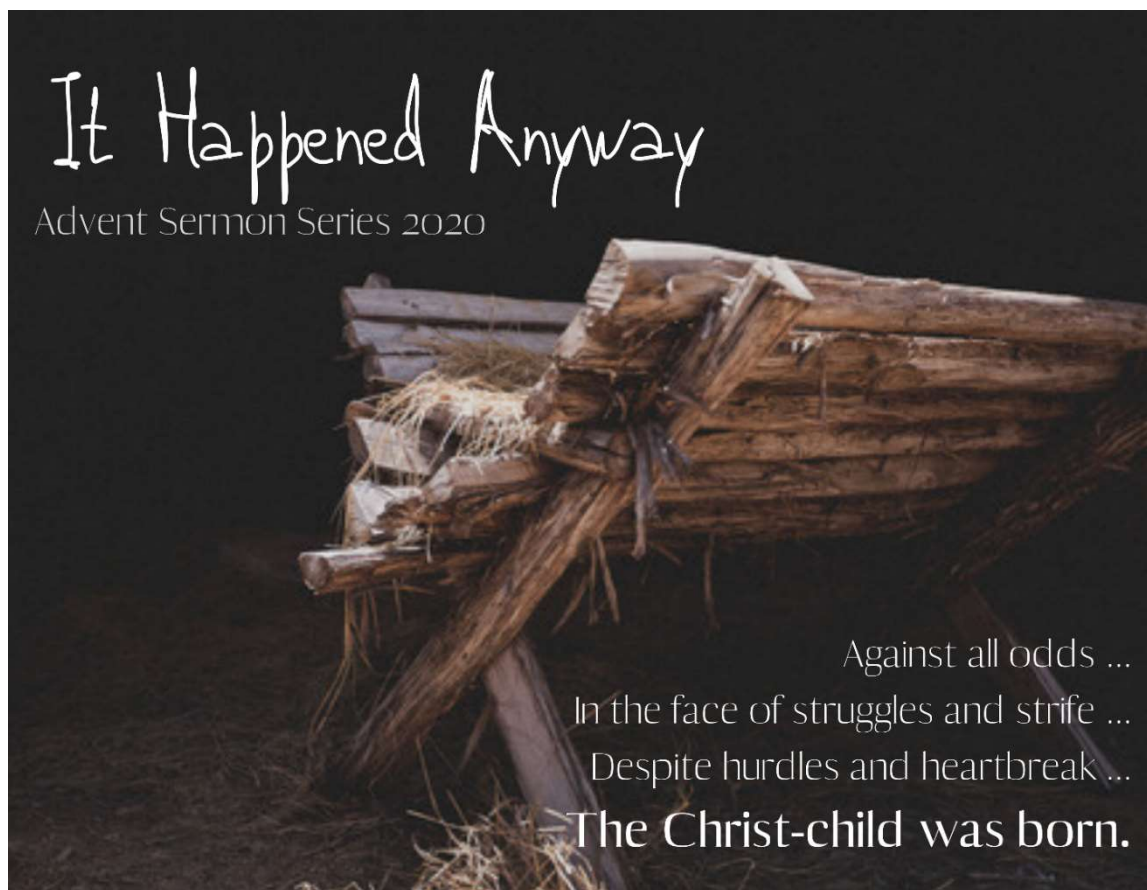
Advent Sermon Series

This year, Advent is going to look entirely different. It's going to look like no Advent we've ever been through before, and not in a way that we're probably excited about.

But despite all the challenges and missing pieces that this holiday season will bring, Jesus is indeed coming. The Star of Bethlehem will shine. The angels will sing. And the Christ-child will be born. It will happen anyway, even in the face of all the trials and tribulations we've all been dealing with since March 2020.

And that's the focus of this year's Advent sermon series: "It Happened Anyway." Following along with the Narrative Lectionary readings, we're going to dive into ways that God has shown up in the past despite all the crud and crisis happening in the lives of God's people. Here's the breakdown:

- 1st Sunday– Daniel 6:6-27 → It Happened Anyway... in the Face of Danger and Fear
- 2nd Sunday– Joel 2:12-13, 28-29 → It Happened Anyway... in the Face of Our Own Failings
- 3rd Sunday– Isaiah 61:1-11 → It Happened Anyway... in the Face of Things That Hold Us Back
- 4th Sunday– Luke 1:26-45 → It Happened Anyway... in the Face of Closed Doors and "No Room"



December Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♦ 12/13– Alyssa Luhman
- ♦ 12/19– Kim & Rachel Stanton
- ♦ 12/19– Don Ottman



Together Again?

I know that various businesses around the state and around the country have started cautiously opening up again. And I know a lot of us are wondering when our beloved church will do the same. The quick answer is: we don't know yet. Pastor Lisa and the Session continue to have conversations about this and look into the latest recommendations and resources that are available – CDC, Minnesota Department of Health, Olmsted and Goodhue County resources, . Of course, we want to be back together again because we know we all miss one another, but we also want to make sure we're doing what's best and safest for one another's health.



The most recent decision was that we would remain online-only through **January 2021**. I know that this is difficult, especially as it means we will not be able to worship in-person together on Christmas Eve. But helping one another stay safe and healthy is our number one priority.

As we continue to make these decisions, we ask for both your input and your prayers. Please feel free to contact any of the session members or Pastor Lisa with your input.

Communion During Distancing

I think that one of the hardest things to be apart for is communion. However, we remain the body of Christ wherever we are, and we will continue to celebrate a shortened communion service together on the first Sundays of the month just like we would if we were together.

For the elements of this, I encourage you to bring whatever you have to our virtual table. Bring crackers. Bring bread. Bring bagels. Bring cookies. Bring Goldfish. Bring juice. Bring wine. Bring water. Bring tea. These are truly the elements of our daily lives right now ... just like the elements that Jesus first used were.



So come as you are in all your pajama-ed and coffee drinking, redeemed and beloved glory. For God will indeed meet us as we meet each other, gathered together literally *in every place to celebrate at the table together*.



December Star Word Prompt

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

Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers



We've been helping to support Shelvis and Nancy and their family for a few years now. We've been collecting our 2nd Sunday Spare Change offering and lifting them up in prayer. We need to lift them up even more in prayer right now, friends. The COVID-19 pandemic has rocked their world as well. In their most recent update letter, they shared that Nancy is pregnant again but there may be some problems with the baby's heart. In addition to this concern, ahead of the U.S. borders closing this past March, they decided to leave Great Britain and come home to be with family in the U.S. As they have attempted to find some semblance of being settled, they have moved their entire family a number of times this year already: 4 different homes in the last 6 months, according to their letter. Like many overseas missions organizations, the PC(USA) has extended their travel ban for mission personnel to June 30, 2021, so they know they aren't headed back to Africa anytime soon. And because of choices and restrictions put in place by Oxford University, Shelvis is unable to continue his doctoral program at this time and has had to take a temporary leave of absence.

It is a lot, friends. In this time of uncertainty and upheaval, Shelvis and Nancy and their family clearly still need our prayers, and they still need our support. I know that we're not gathering our spare change offering as we continue to meet virtually, but you can still help support Shelvis and Nancy. Visit their Presbyterian Mission Agency 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 to the ministry of Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather." This will redirect you to a page that describes RECONCILE, the organization that Shelvis and Nancy continue to work with in South Sudan and Uganda. If you click the yellow "Give" box on that page, you'll be redirected 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.

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.presbyterytwincities.org>

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Office: 800-728-7228

Email: info@pcusa.org

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



Winter Weather Procedure

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. Even during this pandemic time, we may have to do this occasionally as all the streaming equipment is still at church. The following are our procedures when this happens:

- Pastor Lisa will make the decision based on the weather forecast, current conditions, and road conditions
- 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.
- Pastor Lisa will contact KAAL, KTTC, KIMT, and Fox 47 to put the cancellation on to local "Closings and Delays" lists as well

Pastor Lisa will keep the Zoom event open for the day for anyone who may want to virtually gather for some fellowship and open prayer time. Pajamas and coffee cups welcome!

Please be sure to check one of these sources if the Sunday morning weather



Advent & Christmas

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incarnate

Bethlehem

shepherds

Nazareth

darkness

Emmanuel

waiting

manger

purple

Christ

candle

donkey

census

Joseph

angels

Herod

light

peace

star

white

Magi

hope

love

pink

inn

Mary

Son

joy