

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC ZUMBROTA
and
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO**

December 2015 Newsletter

Christmas Eve Services

4:00 PM in Zumbrota

7:00 PM in Oronoco



"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to all."

(Luke 2:11-14, KJV)

On Christmas Eve, we will once again gather as beloved children of God - old and young, near and far, family and friends, long-time members and new faces alike - to celebrate the birth of this Christ Child, God's ultimate "I love you" to the world. Join us on Christmas Eve at either Zumbrota or Oronoco as we worship and pray, sing and celebrate communion. Join us as we hear again the age-old tale of Mary and Joseph, angels and shepherds, a stable and a star, and a blessed baby Savior, Emmanuel, God With Us.

A Word from Our Pastor



When I was a little girl, the only lullaby I ever remember my dad singing to me was “We Three Kings.” He always said it was the only song he could remember. So I’ve always had a soft spot for those three ragamuffin, nomadic mystics from an ancient land.

Despite every Christmas crèche, children’s Christmas story, and most Christmas scene depictions, the Wise Men didn’t appear at the stable simultaneously with the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth.

We like to envision them as three grand gentlemen in extravagant robes, coming with the simple intent to pay homage to this newborn Savior-King.

But this isn’t quite the way it was.

The gospel of Matthew – the only place in Scripture in which we encounter those mysterious figures – calls them magi: wise men, astrologers, magicians “from the east,” meaning they were more than likely Zoroastrian priests. From the number of gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh – we in Western Christianity assume that there were three of them. (The tradition in Eastern Christianity is actually 12 magi.)

Scripture tells us they originally set out from their homeland seeking the newborn king of the Jews in order to honor him. Unfortunately, one of their stops along this journey was the palace of King Herod, king of Judea at the time of Jesus’ birth. As far as we know, Herod wasn’t aware of the birth of this “new king” until the magi share this news with him:

They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.” When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him (Matt 2:2-3).

Uh oh. Herod was a ruthless man who thoroughly enjoyed his power and prestige. He was born a Jew and appointed as governor of Galilee by the Romans

– a position that he defended through brutality and oppression. When his nephew forcibly deposed him, Herod went crawling back to the Roman officials and begged for a new position. They made him King of the Jews, of the nation of Judea – a title he defended with even greater brutality than he’d previously displayed.

And by asking the simple question of where this “newborn king of the Jews” might be, the magi focused the attention of this cruel and powerful king on the helpless, newborn Son of God. In a sneaky attempt to find this newborn threat, Herod tries to elicit the help of the magi, asking them to “Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.” (Matt 2:8). Essentially, Herod turns these mysterious sojourners into spies.

Fortunately, God is greater. As we know, the magi do indeed find the Christ-child. They follow the star. They enter the house of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. They fall to their knees and honor the new king, worshipping him and giving him their gifts. And then, before they can head back to the treacherous Herod and tell him all about this baby king, they are “warned in a dream not to return to Herod,” (Matt 2:12) so they head back to their home country by another road. Likewise, Joseph is warned in a dream that Herod is coming.

“Get up. Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod will soon search for the child in order to kill him.” Joseph got up and, during the night, took the child and his mother to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod died. (Matt 2:12-15)

And so we find the Christ-child, the Savior, the One for whom the world has waited, the Prince of Peace, God Incarnate – we find the only Son of God Most High a refugee in a foreign land fleeing a terrorist king focused solely on destruction and death.

Imagine what the history of our faith may have looked like had the people of Egypt closed their doors to this refugee family.

1. Mt 2:1-12.

2. “Biblical Magi.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Magi

Pastor Gina



(O/Z) Pastor's Christmas Open House

We want to invite you to our home for some holiday goodies, some holiday cheer, and some low key, low stress holiday fellowship. Bring your families. Bring your friends. Bring yourselves. Please don't bring gifts.

Date: Sun., Dec. 20

Time: 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Place: Our home – 829 Dubuque Blvd., Zumbrota

(Z) Advent Reminders

POINSETTIAS: If you wish to order a poinsettia for Christmas Eve worship, please use the order form on the back table at church. **Last day for orders will be Sunday, December 6.** You may leave a check for \$14 payable to "Flowers on Main", or enclose cash in the envelope provided. Another option is to purchase your own poinsettia and deliver it to the church by 10 a.m. on Christmas Eve morning. If you have questions, please contact Coleen Johnston (843-4719) or Bonnie Rolland (732-7098).

CHURCH DECORATING: We will gather at **9 a.m. on Sunday, December 6**, to decorate the sanctuary for the season. Please to come to join in what is always a time of smiles and fellowship. Worship follows at 11 a.m., with communion.

TOWERS DINNER: It's not too late for you to find a way to participate in the Towers Dinner on **December 6**. Please contact Chad (cvath@crenlo.com) or Nattalie Vath (nvath@lbagency.com) to find out how to donate or help serve.

GOODIE BAGS: We'll be filling bags for the young at heart in our midst on **Sunday, December 13, before worship**. Please have your goodies delivered to church by 10 a.m., or come at 10 to help with the packing. Deliverers will be needed, too.

ADVENT READERS: Opportunities to participate in worship abound! Please sign up, or talk to Pastor Lisa.

(Z) Towers Soup and Salad Dinner

It's that wonderful time of year again for our church to host the annual Towers Soup and Salad Dinner.

Mark your calendars for **December 6th at 5:00 PM** in the Towers dining room.

This will be a fun filled evening spending time with people in our community and share a meal. It also gives our congregation an excellent opportunity to share some of those traditional salads and maybe experiment with some new ones.

The Vath family will be providing Cheese Broccoli Soup, Heather and Richard Rolland Beef Barley soup, and Bob and Bonnie Rolland will present a new twist with GOULASH and will be looking for someone else to make another soup.

There will be sign-up sheets in the back of the church for salads, pies, misc. items and people who would like to help.

We look forward to this event and hope to see as many of you there as possible.

(O) Christmas Bake Sale and Decorating



We'll be holding our annual Christmas Bake Sale after the 9:00 a.m. service on **Sun., Dec. 6**. And once you've got your delicious holiday goodies, stick around to help us decorate the sanctuary and fellowship hall for Christmas. Fa la la la la!

(O/Z) In Our Prayers

Dave Kaempfer, Eunice Markham, Dick Wedge (Jim's brother), Dorothy French, Ann Hawkins, Sue Wedge, Jo Ludington and Joan Swarthout.

(O/Z) Advent Readers

Believe it or not, Advent is just around the corner. If you're interested in being one of our advent readers/candle lighters, please add your name to the sign-up sheet in the back of the sanctuary (Z) or on the bulletin board (O). You can pick up the readings at either church.

(O/Z) Confirmation Class

We are excited to have a number of youth ready for confirmation! We already have a class of 3-4, but if you know of any middle schoolers (6th-9th grade) who would be interested in being confirmed in either church – O or Z – please contact Pastor Lisa. We're still working out all the details, but because the class will be starting in Jan. 2016, we've got some time to get everything settled.

(Z) Caroling

Here we come a-caroling...

Join us for caroling in Zumbrota on Wednesday, December 16, (Beethoven's birthday). Meet at the church at 6:30 p.m. We will gather for refreshments and fellowship afterwards. Please contact Parker (507-732-7761) if you would like to participate or if you would like a visit from the carolers.

We are not daily beggars,
That go from door to door!
But we are friendly neighbors,
Whom you have seen before!
Love and joy come to you,
And a merry Christmas too.



(O/Z) Confirmation Mentors Needed

Studies have showed that one of the most influential elements of keeping youth in the church after confirmation is solid, authentic relationships that they have with adults in the congregation who are not their parents or their pastor. Basically, confirmation mentors are incredibly important to the confirmation process!

So we need some confirmation mentors for our upcoming class. We need to males from O, and one male and one female from Z. For those who are considering this, you need to be willing to spend quality time with your mentee throughout the entire confirmation process, which, at this point, looks like it will be an 18-24 month process. If you're interested in being a confirmation mentor, please talk to Pastor Lisa.

(O) Food Shelf News



Our food shelf hours through March will be 4-6:00pm to accommodate those who have difficulty driving in the dark.

(O) Bible Study

We're starting a monthly Bible study. It will be held the 2nd Wed. of the month from 6:00-7:00 p.m. (This means that Session will meet at 7:00 p.m.) The first meeting in Nov. went really well, and we'd love for anyone else to join us. If you're interested, please talk to Kim Stanton or Peter Johnson.

In Gratitude

(O) Many thanks to all who helped serve and prepare for the delicious casserole luncheon on Oct 21st. It was a small turnout but we raised \$232 for our outreach programs. Thanks again for all the hard work.

(O) Christmas Joy Offering—December 20

Watch for the special envelopes for your Christmas Joy offering. This is the last of four special offerings collected each year by the Presbyterian Church (USA). Whether providing financial assistance to current and former church workers and their families or providing opportunities for deserving students to attend Presbyterian-related racial ethnic colleges and schools, your generous gift to the Christmas Joy Offering will support past, present & future church leaders.

(O) Ronald McDonald House and Women's Shelter Busy Bags

Thank you to all who have donated to the 'busy bags'. Donations must be dropped off to the church by December 13th. Following worship that morning, we will gather to assemble the bags to ready them for delivery.

(Z) Country Store Nets \$2,042.96 For Hunger Relief

The Zumbrota Area Food Shelf, Oronoco Food Shelf, and Refugee Relief (MN Conference UCC) will each receive \$681 thanks to the generosity of those who supported the UCC Country Store on October 31. Thanks again to all who worked to make this annual event such a success, and to those who came to join in the good food and great fellowship of the day.



(O/Z) Readers of OZ

The book discussion group will not meet in December. Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 2016, at the home of Rex and Lynn Wiederanders (40054 Highway 58 Boulevard, Goodhue). If you need help with directions, give them a call at 507-251-3034.

Our selection this time is "All The Light We Cannot See" by the highly acclaimed, multiple award-winning Anthony Doerr. This winner of the Pulitzer Prize is a beautiful, stunningly ambitious, instant New York Times bestseller about a blind French girl and a German boy whose paths collide in occupied France as both try to survive the devastation of World War II.

Be sure to use these next two months to sneak in a little reading and join us for the January discussion.

Readings for the Month of December

Sun., Dec. 6 – Isaiah 26:1-12; Luke 1:68-79
2nd Sunday of Advent

Sun., Dec. 13 – Zephaniah 3:14-20; Philippians 4:4-7
3rd Sunday of Advent

Sun., Dec. 20 – Micah 5:2-5; Luke 1:46-55
4th Sunday of Advent

Thurs., Dec. 24 – Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20
Christmas Eve

Sun., Dec. 27 – *various readings*
Celebrating the Year Behind and the Year Ahead

(Z) Christmas Fund Offering December 20

For 113 years, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a leading light in our mission. The Christmas Fund is one of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ and provides us with a means to directly assist those who have so faithfully and selflessly served and now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

Through the generosity of so many UCC congregations and individuals across the country, a total of \$1,538,531 was received in last year's Offering. This enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Pension Supplementation, Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals and families in need.

In the spirit of love, you are encouraged to prayerfully consider and support this year's appeal, and to spread the word so that others will join in this essential ministry.

On behalf of the hundreds of clergy and lay employees and their families whose lives were touched by your support of last year's Christmas Fund Offering, thank you for your generosity and love.

This year's Christmas Fund Offering will be collected on Sunday, December 20th.

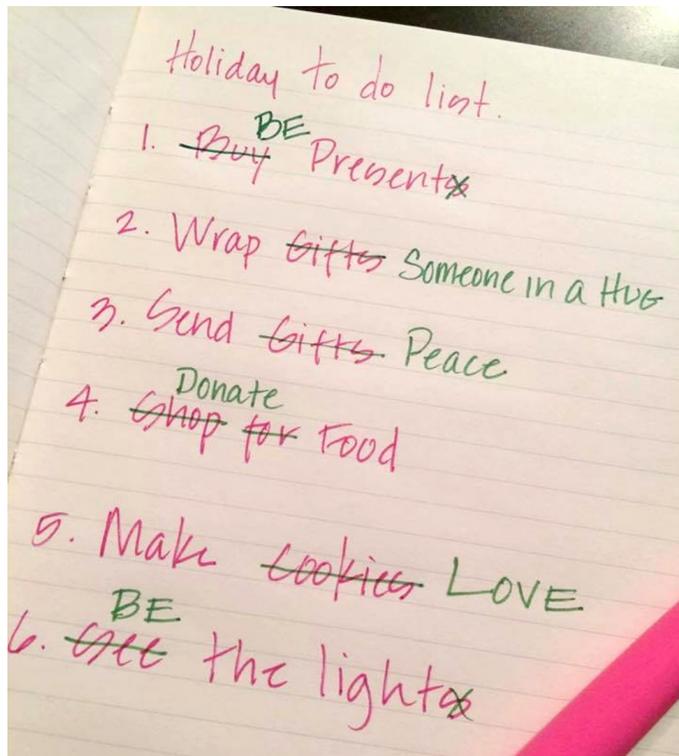
December Birthdays

12/5 Lynn Wiederanders
Jonetta Rolland
Daphne Langbehn
12/7 Sandra Thomforde
12/12 Travis Hawley
12/17 Wendy Kylo
12/18 Jim McIntire
12/19 Don Ottman
12/20 Brandon Roth
12/27 Stacey Paulson
12/28 Freedom Hunt
12/30 Connie Wendt



IN THE COMMUNITY

Shopko would like to extend an invitation to attend a special shopping event for senior citizens. Seniors, age 55 and over, will receive a 15% discount off all their total purchases on Wednesday, December 2nd, 2015. **Some restrictions do apply.*



Church Staff

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

UCC Leadership Team

Bob Hawley, Moderator
Cindy DeBlicek, Clerk
Amy Pahl, Financial Clerk
Parker Quammen, Treasurer
Connie Hawley, Trustee
Rex Wiederanders, Trustee
Arlen Kylo, Trustee
Bruce Johnston, Deacon
Nattalie Rolland-Vath, Deacon
Hailey Vath, Deacon
Bob/Bonnie Rolland, Deacon
Coleen Johnston, Deacon
Wendy Kylo, Deacon

Presbyterian

Leadership Team

Mike Rand, Clerk
Kay Erdahl, Treasurer
Kim Stanton, Asst. Treasurer
Lance Sorensen, Ruling Elder
Ellen Simon, Ruling Elder
Joy Bertsinger, Ruling Elder
Mike Rand, Ruling Elder
Brenda Longman, Ruling Elder
Peter Johnson, Ruling Elder
Sandy Bowers, Deacon
Deb Nelson, Deacon
Carol Tiede, Deacon
Ted Midthun, Deacon
Jenny Rand, Deacon
Gail Rucker, Deacon

People of the Church

Janice Ostrom Co-Moderator
Joanne Schenck, Secretary

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday in Oronoco 10:00-3:00
Thursday in Oronoco 10:00 -3:00

Office Phone (507) 367-4711
Email address: oronocopc@bevcomm.net

December 2015 Daily Lectionary

These Scripture readings are from the two-year daily lectionary of the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship (Westminster John Knox Press 1993). The readings from the three-year Revised Common Lectionary for Sundays and Festivals are not included in this document.

Tuesday, December 1

Morning: Pss. 33; 146
Evening: Pss. 85; 94
Amos 3:1–11
2 Peter 1:12–21
Matt. 21:12–22

Wednesday, December 2

Morning: Pss. 50; 147:1–11
Evening: Pss. 53; 17
Amos 3:12–4:5
2 Peter 3:1–10
Matt. 21:23–32

Thursday, December 3

Morning: Pss. 18:1–20; 147:12–20
Evening: Pss. 126; 62
Amos 4:6–13
2 Peter 3:11–18
Matt. 21:33–46

Friday, December 4

Morning: Pss. 102; 148
Evening: Pss. 130; 16
Amos 5:1–17
Jude 1–16
Matt. 22:1–14

Saturday, December 5

Morning: Pss. 90; 149
Evening: Pss. 80; 72
Amos 5:18–27
Jude 17–25
Matt. 22:15–22

Sunday, December 6 2nd Sunday of Advent

Morning: Pss. 24; 150
Evening: Pss. 25; 110
Amos 6:1–14
2 Thess. 1:5–12
Luke 1:57–68

Monday, December 7

Morning: Pss. 122; 145
Evening: Pss. 40; 67
Amos 7:1–9
Rev. 1:1–8
Matt. 22:23–33

Tuesday, December 8

Morning: Pss. 33; 146
Evening: Pss. 85; 94
Amos 7:10–17
Rev. 1:9–16
Matt. 22:34–46

Wednesday, December 9

Morning: Pss. 50; 147:1–11
Evening: Pss. 53; 17
Amos 8:1–14
Rev. 1:17–2:7
Matt. 23:1–12

Thursday, December 10

Morning: Pss. 18:1–20; 147:12–20
Evening: Pss. 126; 62
Amos 9:1–10
Rev. 2:8–17
Matt. 23:13–26

Friday, December 11

Morning: Pss. 102; 148
Evening: Pss. 130; 16
Hag. 1:1–15
Rev. 2:18–29
Matt. 23:27–39

Saturday, December 12

Morning: Pss. 90; 149
Evening: Pss. 80; 72
Hag. 2:1–9
Rev. 3:1–6
Matt. 24:1–14

Sunday, December 13 3rd Sunday of Advent

Morning: Pss. 24; 150
Evening: Pss. 25; 110
Amos 9:11–15
2 Thess. 2:1–3, 13–17
John 5:30–47

Monday, December 14

Morning: Pss. 122; 145
Evening: Pss. 40; 67
Zech. 1:7–17
Rev. 3:7–13
Matt. 24:15–31

Tuesday, December 15

Morning: Pss. 33; 146
Evening: Pss. 85; 94
Zech. 2:1–13
Rev. 3:14–22
Matt. 24:32–44

Wednesday, December 16

Morning: Pss. 50; 147:1–11
Evening: Pss. 53; 17
Zech. 3:1–10
Rev. 4:1–8
Matt. 24:45–51

Thursday, December 17

Morning: Pss. 18:1–20; 147:12–20
Evening: Pss. 126; 62
Zech. 4:1–14
Rev. 4:9–5:5
Matt. 25:1–13

Friday, December 18

Morning: Pss. 102; 148
Evening: Pss. 130; 16
Gen. 3:8–15
Rev. 12:1–10
John 3:16–21

Saturday, December 19

Morning: Pss. 90; 149
 Evening: Pss. 80; 72
 Zeph. 3:14–20
 Titus 1:1–16
 Luke 1:1–25

**Sunday, December 20
4th Sunday of Advent**

Morning: Pss. 24; 150
 Evening: Pss. 25; 110
 1 Sam. 2:1b–10
 Titus 2:1–10
 Luke 1:26–36

Monday, December 21

Morning: Pss. 122; 145
 Evening: Pss. 40; 67
 2 Sam. 7:1–17
 Titus 2:11–3:8a
 Luke 1:39–48a (48b–56)

Tuesday, December 22

Morning: Pss. 33; 146
 Evening: Pss. 85; 94
 2 Sam. 7:18–29
 Gal. 3:1–14
 Luke 1:57–66

Wednesday, December 23

Morning: Pss. 50; 147:1–11
 Evening: Pss. 53; 17
 Jer. 31:10–14
 Gal. 3:15–22
 Luke 1:67–80 or Matt. 1:1–17

**Thursday, December 24
Christmas Eve**

Morning: Pss. 18:1–20; 147:12–20
 Evening: Pss. 126; 62
 Isa. 60:1–6
 Gal. 3:23–4:7
 Matt. 1:18–25

**Friday, December 25
Nativity of Jesus Christ /
Christmas Day**

Morning: Pss. 2; 148
 Evening: Pss. 98; 96
 Micah 4:1–5; 5:2–4
 1 John 4:7–16
 John 3:31–36

Saturday, December 26

Morning: Pss. 116; 149
 Evening: Pss. 119:1–24; 27
 2 Chron. 24:17–22
 Acts 6:1–7
 Acts 7:59–8:8

**Sunday, December 27
1st Sunday after Christmas**

Morning: Pss. 34; 150
 Evening: Pss. 19; 121
 1 Sam. 1:1–2, 7b–28
 Col. 1:9–20
 Luke 2:22–40

Monday, December 28

Morning: Pss. 2; 145
 Evening: Pss. 110; 111
 Isa. 49:13–23
 Isa. 54:1–13
 Matt. 18:1–14

Tuesday, December 29

Morning: Pss. 96; 146
 Evening: Pss. 132; 97
 2 Sam. 23:13–17b
 2 John 1–13
 John 2:1–11

Wednesday, December 30

Morning: Pss. 93; 147:1–11
 Evening: Ps. 89
 1 Kings 17:17–24
 3 John 1–15
 John 4:46–54

Thursday, December 31

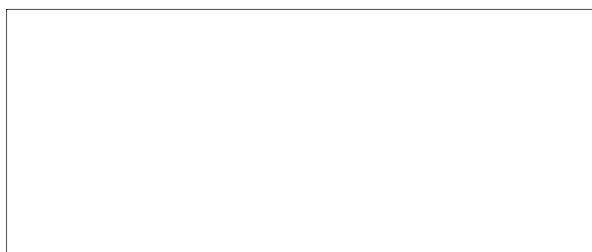
Morning: Pss. 98; 147:12–20
 Evening: Pss. 45; 96
 1 Kings 3:5–14
 James 4:13–17; 5:7–11
 John 5:1–15



First Congregational UCC
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Presbyterian Church of
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PO Box 118
Oronoco, MN 55960



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

Worship Times for the Month of December 2015



12/6	9:00 (O)	11:00 (Z)
12/13	9:00 (O)	11:00 (Z)
12/20	9:00 (O)	11:00 (Z)
12/27	9:00 (O)	11:00 (Z)

Christmas Eve Candlelight Services 12/24 (Z) 4:00 (O) 7:00

Reverend Lisa Johnson - Contact Information
Cell Phone 1-507-696-8753 Email address: pastorlisaj@gmail.com