

Church in the time of COVID

I think we can all agree that things have been challenging over the last few months ... to say the least. What we thought of as our “normal” way of life has been completely upended, and very little—if anything—feels “normal” anymore.



In the midst of all this up and down, as you can imagine, we at the church have been doing our best to learn and adapt and think and change on our feet as well. Some of those efforts have gone as well as can be expected. Some are still in the “growing and learning” phase. And, to be honest, some things have just fallen through the cracks a little bit. Our regular monthly newsletter has been one of those things, and for the lack of communication and disruption that has caused, we apologize.

However, we are working on righting that wrong. We thank you for your patience with us.

This information is as up-to-date as we have in terms of decisions made by the session, but we will be sure to keep you as updated as possible in the weeks and months ahead.

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 ...

Oh, my friends.
Oh, my church.

Do you know how dearly missed you are?

I miss watching everyone's cars drive in on Sunday morning.

I miss the buzz of conversation as everyone filters in and reconnects again on Sunday morning.

I miss the joking and the laughter.

I miss hearing everyone share their prayer requests with one another during

worship.

I miss watching everyone share the bread and cup with one another as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together.

I miss hearing everyone's voices join together in the Lord's Prayer.

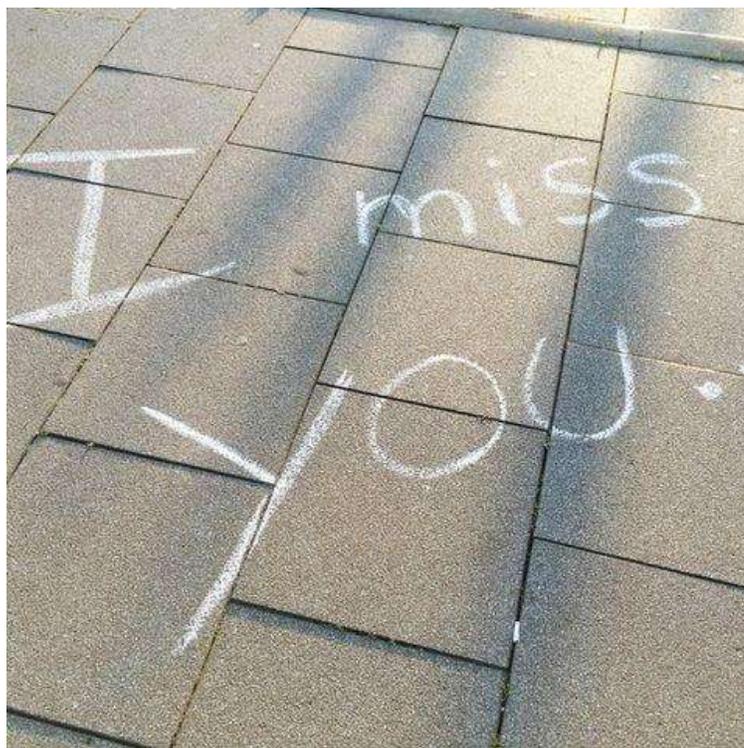
I miss the smell of coffee and whatever other refreshments have been brought to share during our coffee hour after worship.

I miss having other people in the building with me on Sunday morning.

I even miss your singing!

Surely, all, you are missed.

Dearly, dearly missed.



I miss you because I love you ... and because I love you, it's important – critical, even – that I miss you. We're still worshiping online, not in person, because we're trying to do everything we can to protect one another. We're trying to keep one another healthy and safe. And as difficult and painful as it is, the best way to do that in this time of COVID-19 is to stay away.

But it's not easy. Lord knows, it's not easy.

If ever there was a time to turn to the psalms, my friends, it's now:

*Lord, you listen to the desires
of those who suffer.
You steady their hearts;
you listen closely to them.
~ Psalm 10:17*

"You steady their hearts." This is a Hebrew word thick with meaning and possibility.

You will hear their hearts, God.

You will listen to their hearts, God.

You will examine their hearts, God.

You will understand their hearts – the pain, the loneliness, the longing, the anxiety, the fear, the hope, the uncertainty, and everything else we harbor in our hearts as we wait out this global pandemic.

We wait missing one another.

We wait missing "life as usual."

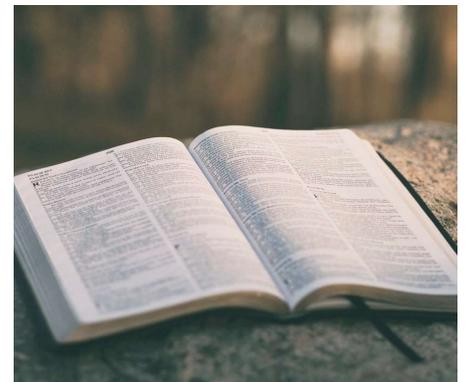
We wait missing our treasured little white church on the hill.

Pastor Lisa

Scripture readings for Fall

- Sunday, October 4: Exodus 12:1-13; 13:1-8
- Sunday, October 11: Exodus 32:1-14
- Sunday, October 18: 1 Samuel 1:9-11, 19-20; 2:1-10
- Sunday, October 25: Presbytery Virtual Guest Preacher
- Sunday November 1: 1 Kings 17:1-16
- **All Saints' Day**
- Sunday November 8: Jonah 1:1-17; 3:1-10; 4:1-11
- Sunday November 15: Isaiah 6:1-8
- Sunday November 22: Presbytery Virtual Guest Preacher
- Sunday November 29: Daniel 6:6-27

1st Sunday of Advent



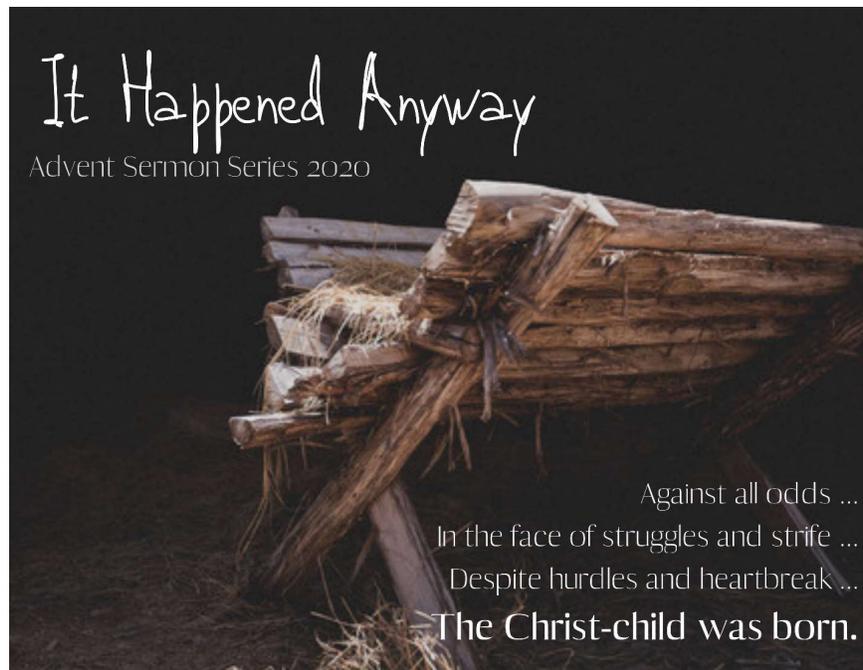
Advent Sermon Series

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 Broken Dreams
- Christmas Eve – Luke 2:1-20 → It Happened Anyway ... in the Face of Closed Doors and "No Room"



Next Session mtg.:
Wednesday , November 4
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, Karen Lohmann** and **Linda Sorensen** in prayer.



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. 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 out 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.

Star Word Prompts:

I know that we've missed a number of our Star Word prompt questions, so here's the catch-up:

- * **September: How could you use your star word and your journey with it to teach someone about faith?**
- * **October: Are there any actions, habits, etc. that you've decided need to fall by the wayside as you've reflected on your star word?**
- * **November: How has your star word inspired thankfulness in you this year?**

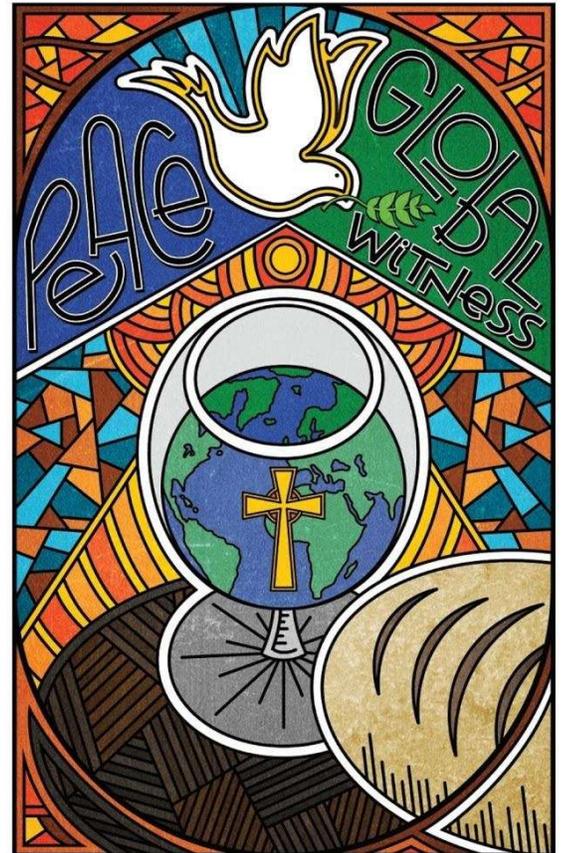


Peace & Global Witness Offering– World Communion Sunday

We make a special point of remembering our unity with Christians worldwide on World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of October. World Communion Sunday (formerly called World Wide Communion Sunday) actually originated within the Presbyterian Church and has been adopted by denominations and congregations around the world. The first World Communion Sunday was celebrated at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA in 1933 by Rev. Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr.

In the PC(USA) today, the Peace and Global Witness Offering encourages all parts of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to work for peace. Each congregation is invited to find ways to promote peace within the congregation and within the community. The Peace and Global Witness Offering supports the peacemaking efforts of the church at every governing body level and provides an opportunity to witness to God's gift of peace in the world.

Normally, we would collect the Peace and Global Witness Offering during worship on World Communion Sunday. Although we didn't get to worship in-person on the first Sunday in October 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 "Peace and Global Witness" 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."



 PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

At-Home Advent Wreaths

In an attempt to bring even the smallest amount of normalcy to this crazy, COVID, at-home, virtual worship life we're living right now, I'm going to be bringing around the supplies for every household to make an at-home Advent wreath. I plan on dropping these bags off on **Sat., Nov. 21** (sort of like I did with the Pentecost bags), so if you know you're not going to be home and would like me to put the bag somewhere else, please let me know.

After worship on **Sunday, November 22**, we will spend some time in the open Zoom listening to Christmas music, assembling the Advent wreaths, and basically enjoying some fellowship time together.



October and November Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♥ 10/1 Hadley Thompson
- ♥ 10/3 Brianna Clement
- ♥ 10/8—Ted Midthun
- ♥ 10/10—Keanan Peterson-Rucker
- ♥ 10/13 Ron & Karen Peterson-Rucker
- ♥ 10/18 Clyde Johnson
- ♥ 10/28—Ellen Simon
- ♥ 11/7 Anthony Vallejo
- ♥ 11/10 Helen Craft
- ♥ 11/11 Lance & Linda Sorensen
- ♥ 11/18 Kamyn Peterson-Rucker
- ♥ 11/20 Karen Lohmann
- ♥ 11/21 Harlow Wickre
- ♥ 11/24—Margie Lowrie
- ♥ 11/24 Carol Tiede
- ♥ 11/25 Cindy & Brian Luhman



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>



Virtual Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service



This year, the Pine Island Ministerial Association is putting together a pre-recorded, virtual, ecumenical Thanksgiving service. Participating congregations are St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Pine Island, the Pine Island United Methodist Church, Zwingli United Church of Christ in Berne, and our congregation. The tech guy from St. Paul's will be doing all the editing for this video (thank God!!) The pastors of the participating congregations, school administrators, local community leaders, and some members from the participating congregations will all be contributing short video clips. From our congregation, I need **3 households** willing to make a video recording of them reading a prayer. St. Paul's tech guy is going to take all the videos of congregation members from all the churches and splice them together into one smooth video prayer. *If you are interested in being one of these 3 households, please contact Pastor Lisa.*

Once the video is complete, it will be made available on the Monday before Thanksgiving. That should give you a chance to worship with your household at a time that works best for everyone. You could even work it into your Thanksgiving Day schedule.

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 for their work in South Sudan and Uganda and for the newest phase of their journey as a family in Oxford, England.



In this time of social distancing and sheltering in place, we have to remember that Shelvis and Nancy and their family are still working and learning and living. They still need our prayers. They still need our support. Clearly, we are 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.

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 the 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 literally in *every place* to celebrate at the table together.

I wear my mask in public for three reasons.

- 1.** Humility: I don't know if I have COVID as it is clear that people can spread the disease before they have the symptoms.
- 2.** Kindness: I don't know if the person I am near has a child battling cancer, or cares for their elderly mom. While I might be fine, they might not.
- 3.** Community: I want my community to thrive, businesses to stay open, employees to stay healthy. Keep a lid on COVID helps us all.

Drive-In Congregational Meeting

Both the session and the congregation have some important decisions we need to vote on in the coming months – things like budgets, salaries for staff, leadership positions (new/re-elected elders and deacons), etc. However, there is no language in our by-laws that allows for any kind of electronic voting – either for the session or the congregation. So far, the session has gotten around this by simply approving of each month’s minutes and saying that we will ratify those approvals when we’re able to meet in person again. But it’s looking more and more like that won’t be for a while, and many of these decisions cannot be put off.

To that end, we’re holding a drive-in congregational meeting on **Sunday, October 25 at 11:00 a.m.** to add language to our by-laws that will allow for electronic meeting and voting. There will be language added to two different sections of our by-laws: the “Congregational Meeting” section and the “Session” section. The proposed language is as follows:

To the “Congregational Meeting” section:

11. Electronic voting. *In the case that meeting in person is not possible, the congregation may meet and vote by electronic means if all members have reasonable notice of the electronic meeting and the ability to discuss and vote on business items. The quorum for such a meeting is ten percent of the active members of the congregation in good and regular standing.*

To the “Session” section:

17. Electronic voting. *In the case that meeting in person is not possible, the session may meet and vote by electronic means if all elders have reasonable notice of the electronic meeting and the ability to discuss, deliberate, and discern the will of God and vote on business items. The quorum for such a meeting consists of the Moderator and three (3) Ruling Elders.*

We will be asking all members who can attend this meeting to park in the back/south part of the parking lot. Pastor Lisa will moderate the meeting by standing outside with a speaker system so everyone can hear, and we will ask you to vote by a show of hands. Please bring a copy of the proposed new language with you if you desire to have one. Copies will not be provided at the church. We ask that all members try to attend this meeting if possible so that we are sure to have a quorum. It won’t do us much good to have the meeting if we can’t actually vote because we don’t have enough members present.

Parables

R Z C Z Y T B S R G G V N Q S U R O C K I J N H P
 T L N E B F Z Y T D N P I C F J K T F L P T L M H
 L X E U U F X Z I C Q G A H A A J N C L J C N J K
 E K F V F O S H E E P Q P B T L H E A V E N M O Y
 K M K D I S Q C P Q H L W S H N Y P E O R K S I F
 S W Z E F T K L O S C I Y A E K J N K A G S A J O
 F F P H C S E S R I T Z G G R H A K G S A R M F G
 T B Z E C D L V H W N X X H G I J E H W L F A A O
 E K C V I F F H R T H I B G W S J B W N C G R Z O
 A J J R L S W K W Y N N G W S A F V A C B Y I K D
 C L T R E A S U R E G T X A M M Y Z V X N K T Z O
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 N T A O H I O L S J D S D U G X O R S A M H C V C
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 O G A X G N G E Y N D W R Q P U A J N H R I H G K
 U V B A F T U G Y S H E E E S A B T Q B O L F A C
 Q S J V R O K H R A W R N F P T G M S R D E J Z N
 F W W S U A I L V L R W I A R O N J O K I V L Z W
 K P S W J R N P Q C L D Z R C Y U K P Q G W E I G
 A J S X Y Q G H K A T Y W I D O W T S N A J S G U
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 S U D W X M M F V Y O J J E O I W B C W B V N D N
 F J S T D Y E V S E Y D B X J U Q Z V M B U P P X

Samaritan
 Kingdom
 Lesson
 Seeds
 Sower
 Rock

Prodigal
 Highway
 Sheep
 Levite
 Lost
 Son

Treasure
 Heaven
 Goats
 Teach
 Coin

Vineyard
 Father
 Widow
 Jesus
 Good