



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

March 2021

## Amazon Smile

Good news! A while back, the Session discussed setting up an Amazon Smile account for the church. The first time I tried it, it was before Kim went through the incredible amount of work he did to re-establish our 501(c)3 status. I was recently reminded of this endeavor (thanks, Mom!), so I thought I'd try again. And it worked!



So how does Amazon Smile work? For your designated organization, Amazon donates .5% of eligible Amazon purchases to that organization. And now, you can officially designate the church as your organization! There are two ways that you can do this:

- 1) Type this link into your web browser and click the "Start shopping" button.  
<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/41-1434567>. Another page will pop up with a checkbox that says, "Yes, I understand that I must always start at smile.amazon.com to support Presbyterian Church of ORONOCO." Click the checkbox, then click the "Start shopping" button. Anytime that you shop with Amazon after that, you need to do so by going to <http://smile.amazon.com>, not the regular Amazon homepage.
- 2) Go to the Amazon homepage and type "Amazon Smile" into the search bar. If you've already got a charity that you've been donating a portion of your Amazon purchases to and would like to switch to the church, simply click on the "Change my organization" link. If not, search for "Presbyterian Church of Oronoco" and select us as your designated organization.



Pastor: Rev. Lisa Johnson

**Church Staff**  
Secretary: Brianna Clement

Organist: Katha Johnson

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

### Church Leadership

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



## From the Pastor ...

I've always thought of Lent as a time of emptying ...

Many people give things up for Lent – food, vices, social media, and so on.

Many churches participate in the practice of “burying the alleluia” – refraining from uttering the joyous expression during Lent.

Many elements of worship throughout Lent – regular Sunday services as well as special services – includes some sort of element of self-emptying: confession, repentance, humility, seeking forgiveness.

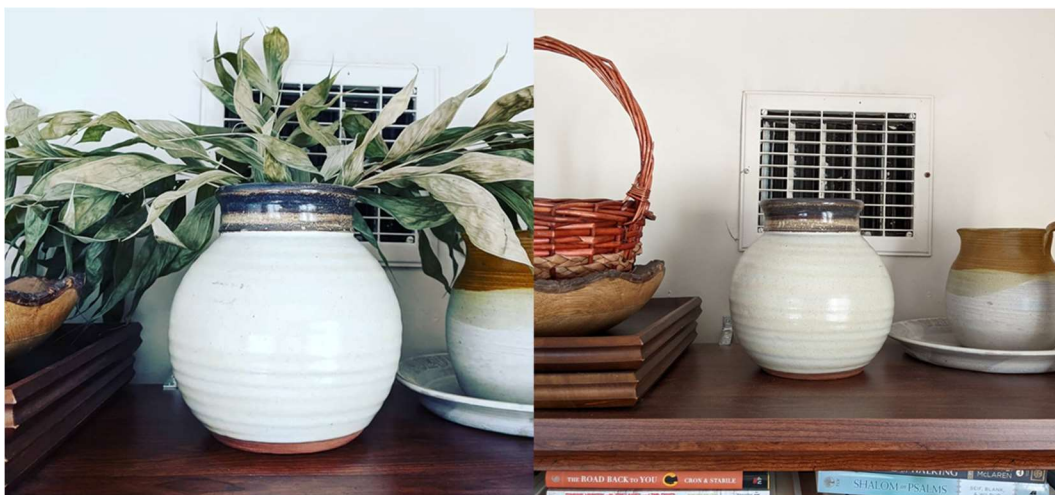
We speak of this emptying when we hear and recite together the words of Psalm 51 on Ash Wednesday:

*You don't want sacrifices.  
If I gave an entirely burned offering,  
you wouldn't be pleased.  
A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God.  
You won't despise a heart, God,  
that is broken and crushed.  
~ Psalm 51:16-17.*

There's something in my office that illustrates this for me throughout the season of Lent – something that I'm sure you've seen if you've been in my office ... even if you didn't realize it.

On top of my tall bookshelf, there are a number of things. There's a basket, a shallow wooden bowl, and a couple of wooden trays all stacked up together on the left side. There's a communion set from the church I grew up in on the right side. In the middle, there's a large ceramic jar. For 319 days of the year, it's full of palm branches from our Palm Sunday service – branches that get drier and drier as the days go by. But on Ash Wednesday, I take those branches out and burn them to create the ashes that we use during the service. Then, throughout the 46 days of Lent (40 days plus Sundays), the jar remains empty, waiting for another batch of Palm Sunday branches.

For now – for the next 46 days – the jar is and will be empty.



Lent doesn't have to be a time of self-emptying that means struggle and hardship and daily sacrifice. It doesn't have to be something to dread and slog through and "survive" until we get to Easter again. Lent should be, paradoxically, a self-emptying for the purpose of deepening. We engage in prayer, Scripture reading, and contemplation as we try to declutter our hearts and our lives to make more room for God and for the things of God: love, compassion, service, gratitude, and hope. As my favorite Lenten prayer by Rev. Howard Thurman says,

Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me

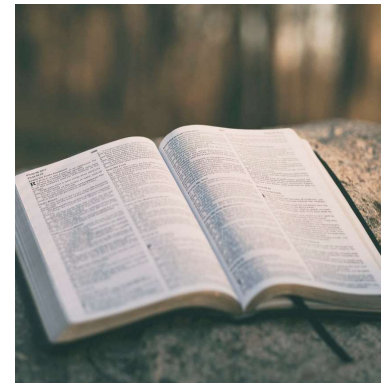
Open unto me, light for my darkness  
Open unto me, courage for my fear  
Open unto me, hope for my despair  
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil  
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow  
Open unto me, strength for my weakness  
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion  
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins  
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness  
Open unto me, love for my hates  
Open unto me, Thy Self for myself

Lord, Lord, open unto me!

*Pastor Gina*

## Scripture readings for March

- **Sunday, March 7**– Luke 15:1-10  
3rd Sunday of Lent
- **Sunday, March 14**– Luke 16:19-31  
4th Sunday of Lent
- **Sunday, March 21**– Luke 18:31-43  
5th Sunday of Lent
- **Sunday, March 18**– Luke 19:29-44  
Palm Sunday



## 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 (another girl: Alice) but there is a problem with the baby's heart that will require surgical intervention when she is a year old. 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

**Next Session mtg.:**

**Wednesday, March 3  
6:30 p.m. via Zoom**

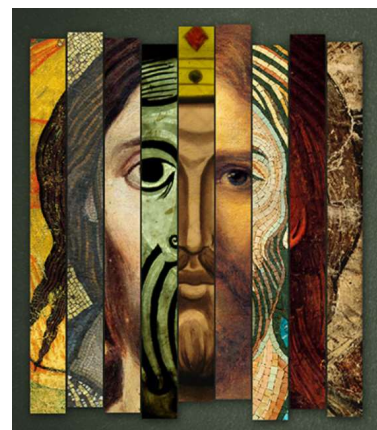
**Next Presbytery mtg.:**

**TBD**

## Lenten Sermon Series

This Lent, we'll be walking through the gospel of Luke and taking a look at who Jesus is to us – the timeless and eternal roles that Jesus plays in the lives of those around him and those around us. It will remind us that the lessons Jesus taught millennia ago are lessons that we still need to hear and learn day in and day out. We'll engage with:

- *Jesus Who Shows Compassion – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent*
- *Jesus Who Calls Us to Repent – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent*
- *Jesus Who Finds Us – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent*
- *Jesus Who Brings Justice – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent*
- *Jesus Who Lifts Us Up – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent*
- *Jesus Who Comes – Palm Sunday*
- *Jesus Who Mystifies – Easter Sunday*



## Zoom Worship

I'm making a slight change in the mechanics of our Zoom worship, all – probably a change I should have figured out a long time ago. Remember, I'm learning this technology alongside all of you! Up to this point, I've been scheduling a different Zoom meeting for every single worship service. However, starting in February, I've started scheduling our Sunday morning worship as a recurring meeting. That means that the Zoom ID will be the same for every worship meeting. *This will make it easier to continue streaming our worship service from now on, even after we've returned to in-person worship.*



**\*Please note: This is only for regular Sunday morning services. Any special services (Ash Wednesday, for example) will have a different ID and link\***

So from now on, here's the Zoom information you'll need for worship:

**Zoom ID:** 835 1191 8878

**Password:** church

If you're someone that prefers using the link, I will continue to email that out every Sunday morning as I have been doing until we return to in-person worship. Once we do come back together in the building, the link to each morning's worship will be on our website.



## Dorothy Day House Needs

The Dorothy Day House has some perpetual needs that we can fill anytime. Those items can be placed in the large Dorothy Day box in the fellowship room and are:

- Warm weather clothes (new or gently used)
- Adult clothing (new or gently used) – sweatshirts, sweatpants, etc.
- Adult socks
- Blankets (new or gently used)
- Tins of coffee

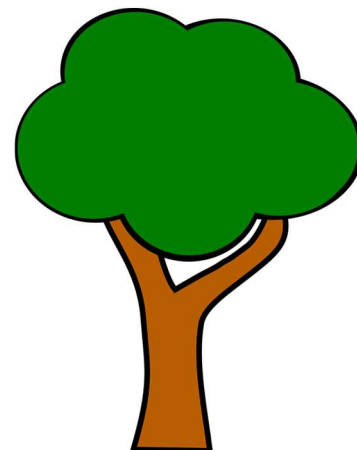


## Stewardship Giving Tree

I know we haven't talked about it in a while, but ...

Our Giving Tree envelopes are still available, even from afar. You don't even need an envelope! If you'd like to contribute to one of the designations on the Giving Tree, you can send your check to the church with a note either in the "Memo" line or on a Post-It note or something indicating for Kim or Ellen what it's for. As a reminder, here are envelopes and amounts. (Some are half the monthly amount.):

- Snow removal: \$70/time
- City of Oronoco water: \$22/month
- The Upper Room: \$16/bi-monthly
- Bevcomm (phone/internet): \$45/month (half)
- Neuro Hospitality House: \$45/night
- Minnesota Energy Gas: \$71/month (half)
- Insurance: \$109/month (half)
- People's Energy Co-Op Electricity: \$119/month



## Oronoco Food Shelf Monthly Item

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!



## 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 **March 2021**. We have a tentative hope that we'll be able to gather for in-person worship on Easter Sunday, April 4 ... but we're not. During our March meeting, the Session will again be discussing what our next steps will be, so please keep all of your Session members (Ron Peterson-Rucker, Ellen Warner, Brenda Longman, Janice Ostrom, Lance Sorensen, Todd Wickre, and myself) in your prayers as we think over, pray about, and discuss this decision. As always, 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.

## 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, and KIMT to put the cancellation on to local "Closings and Delays" lists as well

Pastor Lisa will keep the Zoom event open that morning 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 is looking iffy.







## Lenten Photo Challenge

We're doing it again – our Lenten Photo Challenge. Actually, I feel like this Lent – when we continue to be the church apart from one another – makes this practice even more connected and soul-feeding than it may have ever been before. Each day of Lent is assigned a different word – something to get us thinking and praying and digging deeper into our faith in some way. Sometime throughout the day, 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.

There are copies of this year's word list in this newsletter. Lent doesn't begin until Wednesday, February 17. There will also be copies of the word list at church, on the websites, and on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

There are two ways to participate. First, you can take a picture and post it to Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram. Include the word of the day with your post as well as **#PCOLentPhoto** so we can all find and enjoy each other's photos. 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. You can either share them with others on Sunday morning during fellowship, or if you want, get them to Pastor Lisa and she can post them on the church's Facebook page for you (either credited to you or anonymously, whichever you choose).

## LENTEN PHOTO CHALLENGE 2021

Post to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram using **#PCOLentPhoto**

Feb. 17: <b>purpose</b>	Mar. 3: <b>cover</b>	Mar. 17: <b>faithful</b>	Mar. 31: <b>humanity</b>
Feb. 18: <b>enter</b>	Mar. 4: <b>play</b>	Mar. 18: <b>memory</b>	Apr. 1: <b>feast</b>
Feb. 19: <b>talent</b>	Mar. 5: <b>trust</b>	Mar. 19: <b>mindful/ness</b>	Apr. 2: <b>to be still</b>
Feb. 20: <b>seeds</b>	Mar. 6: <b>wonder</b>	Mar. 20: <b>test</b>	Apr. 3: <b>far</b>
Feb. 21: <b>compassion</b>	Mar. 7: <b>find</b>	Mar. 21: <b>rise</b>	
Feb. 22: <b>sacrifice</b>	Mar. 8: <b>something treasured</b>	Mar. 22: <b>see</b>	
Feb. 23: <b>bless</b>	Mar. 9: <b>sunset</b>	Mar. 23: <b>warm</b>	
Feb. 24: <b>shadow</b>	Mar. 10: <b>journey</b>	Mar. 24: <b>cold</b>	
Feb. 25: <b>nature</b>	Mar. 11: <b>happiness</b>	Mar. 25: <b>community</b>	
Feb. 26: <b>Bible</b>	Mar. 12: <b>longing</b>	Mar. 26: <b>connection</b>	
Feb. 27: <b>fortitude</b>	Mar. 13: <b>wait</b>	Mar. 27: <b>a thought</b>	
Feb. 28: <b>repent</b>	Mar. 14: <b>justice</b>	Mar. 28: <b>witness</b>	
Mar. 1: <b>temper</b>	Mar. 15: <b>prosper/ity</b>	Mar. 29: <b>quiet</b>	
Mar. 2: <b>bloom</b>	Mar. 16: <b>land</b>	Mar. 30: <b>holy</b>	

Easter bonus:  
**REJOICE**

## March Birthdays & Anniversaries

- |                             |                            |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ♥ 3/1 Carlyle Johnson       | ♥ 3/13 Mark Pinney         |
| ♥ 3/3 Lance Sorensen        | ♥ 3/19 Eunice Markham      |
| ♥ Geoff Warner              | ♥ 3/19 Ron Peterson-Rucker |
| ♥ 3/9 Debbie Nelson         | ♥ 3/24 Kim Stanton         |
| ♥ 3/11 Dick & Janice Ostrom | ♥ 3/27 Joyce Rucker        |



## 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.

## Staying in Touch

### Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

Office: 507-367-4711

Email: [oronocopc@bevcomm.net](mailto: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](mailto:office@ptcaweb.org)

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

### Presbyterian Church (USA)

Office: 800-728-7228

Email: [info@pcusa.org](mailto:info@pcusa.org)

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

