



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

February 2021

## Virtual Ash Wednesday Service

As we're still worshipping virtually, all, we'll be doing virtual Ash Wednesday service as well. Pastor Lisa is going to put together some small Ash Wednesday and Lenten worship bags with a few helpful elements including some individual pots with ashes so you and the people in your household can bless one another with the sign of the cross.



This time, I'm hoping everyone can stop by church sometime to pick their bags up. They will be assembled by Friday, February 12. If you'd like to stop by when no one else will be here, I will leave them on one of the large round tables in the fellowship room. Please just be sure you check your name off on the list (also on the table) so I know everyone has their bag. If you'd like to stop by sometime when I'm here, I'll be in my office Monday, February 15 and Tuesday, February 16 from 8:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Also, if you are not leaving your house at all, please let me know and I will deliver your bag to you.

Our virtual Ash Wednesday service itself will happen on **Wednesday, February 17 at 6:30 p.m.**

Because this is a special service instead of one of our regular Sunday services, the Zoom information will be different. As always, I will email the link out before the service, but if you would like the Zoom ID, here it is:

Zoom ID: 898 2630 4058

Password: church

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 ...

A few years ago, for my February newsletter article, I chose to honor I Love to Read month by sharing some of my favorite book recommendations with you. Since I got a lot of good feedback about that (and since we're all still socially distancing and maybe have a little extra reading time), I thought I'd do it again. So if you're looking for a good book, check out .....

### ***Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons by Jan Richardson***

Jan Richardson is an ordained United Methodist Church minister as well as an author and an artist. I've given one of her other poetry books – *A Cure for Sorrow* – to a number of people experiencing grief because she has a way of expressing words and ideas and feelings you may not have even known you were harboring until you read her works. This book *Circle of Grace* is a similar book of faith-expressing poetry based off the liturgical year. There are poems for Advent and Christmas, Epiphany and Women's Christmas, Transfiguration, Lent, Holy Week and Easter, Ascension and Pentecost, and even Ordinary Time. Richardson's poetry is short and accessible but also undeniably impactful.

### ***When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanathi***

Paul Kalanathi was an accomplished neurosurgeon until the unthinkable: he was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. This little but powerful book is mostly his words as he processed everything about his diagnosis, the progression of his disease, the birth of his daughter, and eventually even his death. Paul was working on this book at the time of his death in 2015, so it includes a beautiful and touching epilogue written by his widow, Lucy. This book will make you think. It will make you wonder. It will make you cry. It will make you hope.

### ***Blessed Is She: The Transforming Prayer Journeys of 30 African American Women by Victoria Saunders McAfee and other contributors***

This is a fabulous and faith-filled little book that weaves together the stories of the prayer journeys of a number of African American women, some commentary and theological guidance by Victoria Saunders McAfee, Scripture references, and some reflection questions. The prayer stories in this book include stories in which the authors were those offering the prayers as well as the recipients of the prayers. They include stories of strength and stories of weakness, stories of joy and stories of pain, stories of love and stories of grace. It is truly a joy to travel through prayer with these incredible women.

### ***Bless This Mess: A Modern Guide to Faith and Parenting in a Chaotic World by Rev. Molly Baskette and Ellen O'Donnell, PhD***

Rev. Molly Baskette, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and Ellen O'Donnell, a child psychologist and medical school instructor, come together to offer this frank, thorough, and faith-filled text that tackles a lot of the crazy ups and downs of parenting in the world in which we live. They deal with a lot of the challenges of parenting – from discipline and “The Talk” to teaching kids about money, serving others, and forgiveness – from a solid, Scriptural foundation. They are real. They are raw. They are practical. And they are funny. Interspersed throughout the chapters are short prayers that parents can pray themselves or share with their kids from ages 2-22 and beyond.

***So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo***

For anyone who wants to start thinking and talking about the problem of systemic racism in America but isn't sure where to start, this book is a great jumping-off point. Ijeoma Oluo is a freelance writer and speaker whose works have appeared in numerous nationwide publications including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Elle magazine*. *In this completely accessible text, she addresses a number of the questions and talking points that surround the issue of systemic racism in America, discussing each one thoroughly and intelligently, including some of her own experiences as well as the experiences of other People of Color to emphasize her points.*

***The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson***

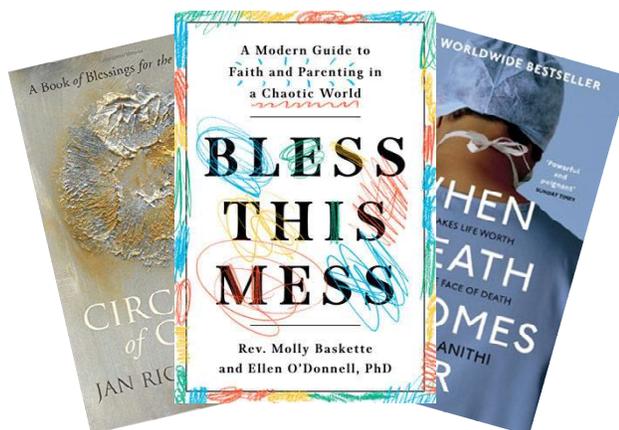
Time to throw in a little fiction at the end! This is a fabulous story that takes place in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It's the story of Cussy Mary Carter, one of the infamous Pack Horse Librarians that traveled throughout the countryside at that time delivering books and other reading material to people who wouldn't have had access to it otherwise. But Cussy Mary is unlike any of the other pack horse librarians because her skin is a distinct and noticeable shade of blue. This story of triumph and heartbreak, of challenge and overcoming adversity is based in a great deal of truth. The Pack Horse Librarians were real as were the Blue People of Kentucky.

The book of Proverbs speaks often of wisdom and the pursuit of wisdom. Along these lines, Proverbs says:

*I teach you the path of wisdom.  
I lead you in straight courses;  
When you walk, you won't be hindered;  
when you run, you won't stumble.  
Hold on to instruction; don't slack off;  
protect it, for it is your life.  
~ Proverbs 4:11-13*

If you're interested in reading any of these books, the vast majority are on my shelf. (The only one I don't own is *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek*.) *Of the books I do have, I would love to loan them to you. Happy I Love to Read Month!*

*Pastor Gina*



## Scripture Readings for February

- **Sunday February 7:** Luke 7:1-10  
**Annual Meeting**
- **Sunday February 14:** John 17:20-26; 1 John 4:7-19
- **Wednesday February 17:** *Ash Wednesday service,*  
*6:30 p.m.*
- **Sunday February 21:** Luke 10:25-37  
**1st Sunday of Lent**
- **Sunday February 28:** Luke 13:1-9, 31-35  
**2nd Sunday of Lent**



## 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, and Linda Sorensen** in prayer.

## February Star Word Prompt

You've been sitting with your star word for a month. What struggles, challenges, and/or uncomfortable growing areas have you encountered through your star word?





## Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held **via Zoom** on **Sunday, February 7** during our regular 10:00 a.m. worship. Your annual reports are done and in the mail (maybe even in your homes already). We don't have any major votes to make this year, but we do have some necessary committee positions to fill. Please take a close look at the Nominating Committee report. Here's the information that you'll need for the Zoom:

Zoom ID: 835 1191 8878

Password: church

## Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers



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 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.

## 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 mtg., 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 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.

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.



## 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!



## 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.

## 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.

## 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)

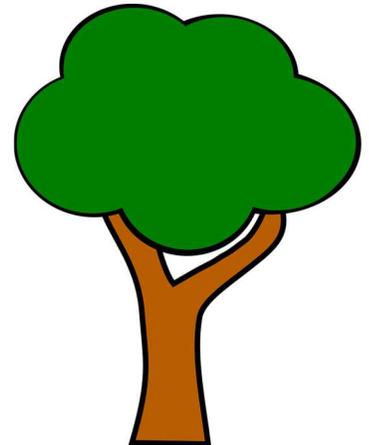


## Stewardship Giving Tree

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



**Next Session Meeting:**

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

**Next Presbytery Meeting:**

**Saturday, February 6  
9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. via Zoom**

## 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>bles</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**

## February Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♥ 2/2—Annie Johnson
- ♥ 2/12 Hayward Johnson
- ♥ 2/12 Dick Ostrom
- ♥ 2/18—Ann Hawkins
- ♥ 2/20 Jacky Rueber



## Filling Busy Bags

Joanne Schenck contacted the Ronald McDonald House, and they made it clear that they would happily receive and distribute busy bags again. Joanne has made a number of bags, and, due to trying to stay as safe and socially distant as possible, Joanne has also offered to assemble and deliver all the bags herself. But she needs all the fun stuff to put in them! So we're looking for small toys, games, coloring items, etc. In the fellowship room is a box labeled "Busy Bag Donations" where you drop off your donations. Joanne has also said that you can drop your donations off directly at her house in Rochester if that's easier for you. We ask that you have everything delivered – either to church or to Joanne's house – by **Sunday, February 14** so that Joanne can assemble and deliver the bags.



## 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>

