



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

December 2021

Katha Retiring

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

– Colossians 3:15-17



Oh, my friends. It is with a heavy heart that I have to share with you that our beloved organist, Katha Johnson, is retiring. With the back trouble that she's been having, she cannot continue to sit at the organ and tickle those well-loved ivories.

Katha's been blessing this congregation with her musical gifts since December 1, 1985. (And I can't tell you how much she wanted to be able to make it to that 36-year anniversary!) And before her time here in Oronoco (and Zumbrota before the yoke was dissolved in 2017), she played her beautiful music in many other congregations. In fact, Katha's been playing in church since she was 12 years old – first in the churches where her father was the pastor, and then other churches after that. Admittedly, though, after 70 years behind the keyboard, I think we can all agree that Katha's earned some incredibly well-deserved rest.

I know I'm not the only one that's going to feel an unmistakable absence in the sanctuary with us on Sunday mornings – her smile, her laugh, her sincerity, her faith. And I know she wouldn't mind a chat if anyone wanted to give her a call to check in. We're working on coming up with a time and a way we can celebrate her in a worship service, and when we get that worked out, we'll get that information out ASAP.

Until then, we lift up prayers of overwhelming thanksgiving and prayers of healing for Katha.

Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Lisa Johnson

Secretary: Brianna Clement

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 ...

December 21.

The winter solstice.

The longest night of the year.

The sun will rise at 7:42 a.m. and set at 4:35 p.m., giving us a mere 8 hrs. and 53 mins. of daylight.

It's a day that's been celebrated in one way or another for millennia in ways that both honor the long darkness and celebrate the returning of the light in the morning. Rituals and celebrations of the winter solstice around the world and throughout the ages have included things like gift-giving, dancing, games, purification rites, prayers, feasts, the telling of ancient and sacred tales, and gathering with friends and family.

It's not often a day we mark in the Christian tradition. Too often, we get swept up into the glitz and gleam of the holiday season (usually far sooner than we'd like to as stores set out their Christmas merchandise/displays earlier and earlier). Too often, we get swept up in the cheery carols and manic to-do lists whether our hearts are feeling the joy and anticipation of the season or not. And if we're **not** feeling that joy and that cheer – if we're hurting ... if we're lonely ... if we're grieving ... if we're anxious ... if we're uncertain – we feel unseen. We feel like there's something wrong with us. We feel swallowed up by those 15 hrs. and 7 mins. of darkness, unsure whether we can even find the light again.

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Fortunately, more and more, Christian churches are starting to recognize and acknowledge the need to make space for all the experiences of the holiday season – the cheerful ones and the troubling ones. More and more congregations are holding a special service before Christmas – a service dedicated to holding sacred time for those who need to find quietness and contemplation, rest and healing in the midst of the holiday rush. Some call it a Blue Christmas service. Others call it a Service of Longest Night. A couple of years ago, Weekend Editions (a program on National Public Radio) did a piece on Blue Christmas/Longest Night services. In that piece, Deena Prichep spoke with Ben Stewart, professor of worship at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, and Stewart points out, "There's this sense at Christmas that God's own self identifies with that sort of aloneness, and comes to be with people. ... Christians need liturgies and theologies deep enough to hold the darkness – the blue alongside the Christmas joy. But it's a deep, hopeful, midnight blue – one that has us looking toward the dawn."

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So on Tuesday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m., that is exactly what we will do. We will hold a Quiet Christmas service. We will hold sacred space and time for all those feeling that aloneness and needing to feel the blue alongside the joy. Because in reality, we cannot have light without darkness, and we

cannot have darkness without light. We do not stay in the darkness of the night because the dawn is coming. So whether that light is bright and brilliant or small and flickering for you this holiday season, know that your experience is valid. You are seen. You are love. You are precious in God's eyes. And there is a place for you here.

*The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.
- Isaiah 9:2.*

Pastor Gina

Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers



For the last few years, we've been helping to support Shelvis and Nancy and their family with our 2nd Sunday Spare Change offering and our prayers. Of course, we can always pray from anywhere, but if you can't be here in person to contribute to our Spare Change offering, you can still help support Shelvis and Nancy. Visit their Presbyterian Mission Agency page: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/shelvis-is-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.

Scripture readings for December



Sunday, December 5 – Ezekiel 37:1-14

2nd Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 12– Isaiah 55:1-13

3rd Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 19– John 1:1-18

4th Sunday of Advent

Sunday, December 24– Christmas Eve Service at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 26– A Look at the Year Behind and the Year Ahead

Next Session meeting:

**Wednesday, December 1
6:30 p.m.**

Next Presbytery meeting:

**February 18 & 19 2022
(via Zoom)**

Current Worship Requirements

It is such a joy to be back together for worship!! I love not being the only one in the building on Sunday mornings!

Just a reminder about the main requirements for coming back to worship in the building:

- Until further notice, masks are **required** regardless of vaccination status
- Sanitize your hands upon coming into the building
- Maintain social distancing in the building, both the sanctuary and the fellowship area

Because of these precautions, the Session has decided that we can return to singing in worship, so feel free to belt it out on Sunday mornings!

And, of course, if you're not comfortable coming back to worship in person yet, we will continue to livestream our worship services on Sunday mornings directly 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!



Busy Bags for Ronald McDonald House

We will be putting together busy bags for Ronald McDonald House again this year. We'll assemble the bags sometime in January (date TBD), but now is a good time to be on the lookout for anything that we could put in the bags: small toys, coloring things, books, games, etc. I'll put the box out at church. Feel free to drop donations off anytime.



December Star Word Prompt

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



Amazon Smile



We've been signed up with Amazon Smile for a few months now and are already seeing funds trickling into the church from other's designated purchases, so a huge **THANK YOU** to those who have already designated our church as your organization of choice!

Still unsure of how Amazon Smile works? For your designated organization, Amazon donates .5% of eligible Amazon purchases to that organization. There are two ways that you can designate our church:

- 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.



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, Curt Burt, Helen Craft, Janice Ostrom, Katha Johnson, Carol Tiede, and Linda Sorensen** in prayer.



At-Home Advent Wreaths

I know that a lot of people enjoyed their at-home Advent wreaths that we made and used during virtual worship last year. I hope you can find some time to reassemble your wreaths this year so you can continue using them in your home, even if you're coming to worship in person as well.

If you need any replacement pieces – candles, candle holders, or lights – let me know. I have a few extras here at church.

Advent 2021: Salvation Comes...

As we journey through the season of Advent together this year, we'll do so with different Scriptures that give voice and vision to the coming Savior. We'll begin with the words of three different prophets who foretold the coming of God's salvation – the prophet Jeremiah, the prophet Ezekiel, and the prophet Isaiah. And just before we celebrate the birth of the Christ-child on Christmas Eve, we'll move to the prophetic words that begin the gospel of John. We'll spend the season contemplating the ways in which salvation comes:

- ~~November 28 – Jeremiah 29:1, 4-14: Salvation Comes in the Waiting~~
- December 5 – Ezekiel 37:1-14: Salvation Comes in Breath
- December 12 – Isaiah 55:1-13: Salvation Comes in Abundance
- December 19 – John 1:1-18: Salvation Comes in the Word



Online Giving

We have recently set up a special account with the Presbyterian Foundation that affords us the capacity for online giving. *NOTE: This is different than the automatic electronic giving that many of you have already signed up for. This online giving does not affect that monthly or bi-monthly system in any way.*

This online giving is both safe and secure. It can be a one-time donation or can be set up on a schedule. It's a great opportunity for anyone who can't join us and contribute an offering on a regular basis. It's also a great opportunity for guests, whether they're here for a Sunday morning service or a special service like a wedding or funeral.

You can find the "Give Now" button on our website.



Christmas Cookie Sale

Date: **Saturday, December 4**

Time: **9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

Cost: **\$7 per pound**



We've had so many people asking about our Christmas cookie sale again – asking Pastor Lisa, asking through Facebook, calling the church, and asking various congregation members. After much

discussion with both the Session and the congregation after worship, we've decided that we can hold our Christmas cookie sale again this year but with a few alterations to procedure.

1. All boxes will be prepackaged by church volunteers wearing masks and gloves. There will be 2 different weights: 1 lb. and 2 lbs.
2. All boxes will include the same kinds of cookies. To ensure that, we're going to ask everyone who wants to contribute cookies to bake 20 dozen of *one kind of cookie instead of all sorts of different kinds. We'll also have a sign-up to be sure we don't end up with multiple people contributing sugar cookies or gingerbread cookies (so if you want to contribute one of those, sign up early!)*
3. Everyone coming to pick up a box of cookies will sign up beforehand using a Google form (*in progress*). *On the form, people will let us know what size box they'd like (and whether they'd like more than one box), whether they want a nut-free box, what time they'll be picking up their box in 15-min. slots, and who will be picking it up. We'll be able to limit the responses to 10 people per 15-min. slot so we don't have crazy traffic back-ups on Minnesota Ave. .*

We'll label the boxes:

- a. By the name of who's picking it up
- b. By weight
- c. With a list of the cookies in the box
- d. If it's a nut-free box

As always, we make sure everyone knows that our cookies are all baked in private homes, so we cannot guarantee no cross-contamination for nut allergies.

Also, we are considering a “drop in” time to come pick up cookie boxes at the end – perhaps the last 30 mins. – for anyone that didn't or couldn't sign up using the Google form. For that drop-in time, it would be first come, first serve. When the cookie boxes are gone, they're gone.

On December 3, we will also need at least **6 people** to pack and label the boxes. And on December 4, we'll need at least **6 people** to help distribute the boxes and make change. There are 2 sign-up sheets on the bulletin board at church – one for the cookies (please write what kind of cookie you're planning on making/bringing so we don't double up) and one for those coming to work either on Friday or Saturday (or both!)

We've got full-sized fliers as well as ¼-sheet mini-fliers that need to be distributed around the area. We've also got a Facebook event (search for “Oronoco Christmas Cookie Sale”) that you can share on your own Facebook pages. Help us get the word out!

Directory Update

It's time to update our directory again, friends! As we work on additions/corrections, there's a large-print copy of the directory on a table in the fellowship room. If you're coming into the building, please take a look at it. Make any additions or corrections that need to be made. If your entry is still fine as is, please make a note on the page so we know you've looked at it – a checkmark or "ok" or something like that. If you're not coming back into the building yet, Brianna will email out a PDF copy. You can reply with any additions or corrections that need to be made. You can also email Brianna a new picture if you'd like a different one. *Please don't send these corrections to Pastor Lisa.*



Advent Readers

Believe it or not, Advent is just around the corner! The first Sunday of Advent is Sunday, December 1. If you're interested in being one of our Advent readers/candle lighters, please add your name to the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Readings are already ready and will be in a labeled envelope hanging below the sign-up sheet, so you can take them with you for practice that day. In advance, thank you!

Advent readers needed:

- ~~Sunday November 28~~
- Sunday, December 5
- Sunday, December 12
- Sunday, December 19
- Friday, December 24



2021 Budget Deficit

We know that the last 21 months (and counting) have been difficult in a lot of ways. As you know, they haven't been easy for the church either. Because we are the church together and because we want to be as open and transparent as possible, the Session thinks it's important to share our current budget situation with you.

As of the November Session meeting, we are running over our budget. On a month-by-month basis, our average budget is \$7,237– a budget that we've stuck to pretty consistently. However, our monthly income has been running behind projected.



Per Capita– The “GLUE” That Holds Presbyterians Together

What is it?

The Presbyterian Church is a connectional church. We worship, serve, and govern together. Per capita contributions fund the shared governing responsibilities for the whole church (Presbytery, Synod, General Assembly), no matter the size of an individual church

How old is it?

It is mentioned in the Synod of Philadelphia minutes in 1738!

How much is it?

In 2021, \$36.50 per member. And as per the vote during the November 11 Presbytery meeting, the 2022 per capita will also be \$36.50.

Where does the money go?

66% to our Presbytery; 17% to our Synod; 17% to the General Assembly (National Office).

Why is it important?

Per capita monies support the work of the church globally to nationally to locally, including the technology grant we received earlier this year to worship remotely.

What is our church's policy?

It is, and has been, the policy of the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco to pay our per capita every year, whether individual members have contributed their portion or not.

Have I paid this year?

If you are not sure, please contact Ellen Warner (ellenjwarner@gmail.com) to find out.

How do I pay?

You can write a check to the Presbyterian Church of Oronoco and simply write “per capita” on the memo line.

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. The following are our procedures when this happens:

- Pastor Lisa and the session member assigned to open and close the church for the month will make the decision
- 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.
- Session members will call people to let them know of the closing using set calling lists that we have established
- Pastor Lisa will contact KAAL, KTTC, KIMT, and Fox 47 to put the cancellation on to local “Closings and Delays” lists as well

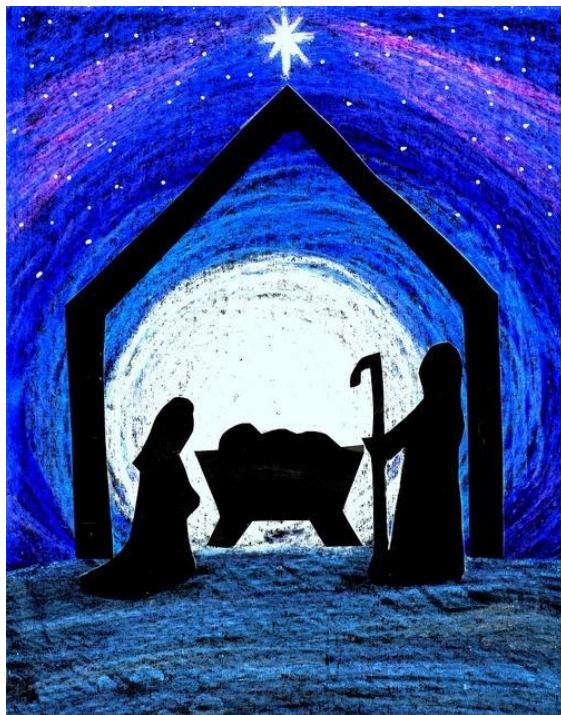
Please be sure we have your accurate contact information in case of a weather-related closing. We want to be sure everyone remains safe during this frigid season.

Quiet Christmas Service

At Christmastime, the constant refrain we hear about joy and togetherness and celebrating doesn't resonate with everyone. Some people are hurting and lonely, worried and fearful, sad and grieving during this time of year as well. We need space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern. We need to know that we are not alone. We need to know God's presence is with us during this season. So we invite you to experience a meditative worship service that takes time for remembering, sharing our hurting places with God, and preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ. Join with us to hear scripture, offer prayers for healing and wholeness, and to hear songs that acknowledges that God's presence is for those who mourn, those who grieve, and those who struggle as much as it is for those who rejoice and lift their voices in praise. God's Word is a light in our broken places. Always.

Tuesday, December 21
7:00 p.m.

If you know of anyone – church member/friend or not – who could benefit from this service of remembrance, prayer, healing, and quietness, please extend the invitation. If you don't feel comfortable attending this service in person, we will be broadcasting it virtually as well just like we do with all of our regular services – on Facebook and our website. If you plan on coming to this service in person or know anyone that is, please remember that masks are required in the building.



Please also consider sharing our Facebook event on your social media to spread the word about this service. You can find it on our church page or here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/566762387722501>

Nominating Committee

We're coming up on that time of year when the nominating committee will be contacting people to fill some of our open positions in church leadership for next year. We will be looking for:

- Members for a few committees for next year: budget, audit, and nominating committees

Thank you for all who have already volunteered to serve in the 2 Ruling Elder/Session spots and 1 Deacon spot that we need to fill: Mike Rand (RE), Geoff Warner (RE), and Jenny Rand (D).

Please prayerfully consider how God may be calling you to help serve and lead this congregation that we love so much. If you are feeling called to any of those positions, please talk to Pastor Lisa, Ron Peterson-Rucker (chair of the nominating committee), or any other Session member.

**NOMINATE
NOW**

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♥ 12/9 Don Ottman
- ♥ 12/13 Alyssa Luhman
- ♥ 12/18 Kim & Rachel Stanton



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>



Christmas Carols

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

Bethlehem

Midnight

Emmanuel

Angels

On High

Little

Infant

Silent

Manger

Herald

Lowly

Night

Clear

Come

Heard

Sing

Hark

Holy

Town

Away