

# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

September 2017 Newsletter



On Sept. 10, we will launch what we're calling "Coffee & Conversation" 9:00-9:45 on Sunday mornings – a time of discussion on faith, life, and everything in between. This will be a time to come together with coffee and snacks (or breakfast ... depending on how early you get up 😊) and have some discussions around a variety of faith topics – some Bible study, some prayer, some faith formation, some topical studies. Anyone is welcome – to attend, to lead the discussion, to suggest a new topic of study.

# A Message from Our Pastor



As Presbyterians, we are counted among those of the Reformed tradition, following the specific theologies and church structures of the like of John Calvin and John Knox. Within the Reformed tradition, two pillars stand as testaments to how we continue to learn from and interact with our faith. The first should be no surprise: Scripture. We place great weight on the enduring importance of God's word in our lives. To put it simply, Scripture is a pretty big deal.

The other instructional pillar central to the Reformed tradition is the confessional documents – the voices of the past. We believe that when we gather together, we are better tuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We can certainly listen for and hear God within our own personal times of prayer and devotion, but when we come together to discern where the Holy Spirit may be leading us, the more voices and sources of input, the better. And in that vein, we put great weight on the confessional documents that have been adopted by our church (the PCUSA, not our local congregation). These confessions are so important, in fact, that as part of the Presbyterian Church (USA), they make up Part I of our Constitution (Part II being our Book of Order).

Up until 2016, there were 11 confessions included in this book: the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed, the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Shorter Catechism, the Larger Catechism, the Theological Declaration of Barmen, the Confession of 1967, and A Brief Statement of Faith. Each of these confessions comes from a different time and place within the long life of the Church – from the very beginning (the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds) through the Reformation (the Scots Confession through the Larger Catechism) and beyond (the Theological Declaration of Barmen and all that follows).

In 2016, the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly overwhelming voted to add a new voice to the Book of Confessions, the first time a confession had been added since the

reunion of the United Presbyterian Church (USA) of the northern and the Presbyterian Church (US) of the south in 1983. The confession that was added is called the Belhar Confession, a deceptively simple name for a complex and powerful document.

The Belhar Confession was originally published in Sept. 1986 when it was adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa. It is a document that comes out of the dark and divisive time of apartheid in South Africa, and it is a confession that lifts up both the value of all human life, regardless of race or color or gender or creed, as well as the unity of the body of Christ. It is a document that speaks loudly and clearly against racism in all its evil and heartbreaking forms. The Belhar Confession is not a long document, and I encourage you to read it sometime for yourself. You can download a copy here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/belhar-confession/>.

So why am I giving you this little history lesson? Because the racist rhetoric – words of hatred and brutality and separateness – have been flying freer and more loudly in our nation for quite some time. We like to think that we left all that exclusion and vitriol and violence back in the 1960s with the Civil Rights Movement. But that is not the truth. Recent events around our nation have proved that false. Racism is still very much alive and well in America, and it is growing bolder by the day.

As I said, as Presbyterians, we hold both the words of Scripture and the words of the Confessions near and dear in our understanding of our faith and how God continues to interact in our lives. In accordance with those beliefs, there are words that I must share with you:

*<sup>1</sup> Shout loudly; don't hold back; raise your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their crime, to the house of Jacob their sins. <sup>2</sup> They seek me day after day, desiring knowledge of my ways like a nation that acted righteously, that didn't abandon their God. They ask me for righteous judgments, wanting to be close to God. <sup>3</sup> "Why do we fast and you don't see; why afflict ourselves and you don't notice?" Yet on your fast day you do whatever you want, and oppress all your workers. <sup>4</sup> You quarrel and brawl, and then you fast; you hit each other violently with your fists. You shouldn't fast as you are doing today if you want to make your voice heard on high. <sup>5</sup> Is this the kind of fast I choose, a day of self-affliction, of bending one's head like a reed and of lying down in*

*mourning clothing and ashes? Is this what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? <sup>6</sup> Isn't this the fast I choose: releasing wicked restraints, untying the ropes of a yoke, setting free the mistreated, and breaking every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Isn't it sharing your bread with the hungry and bringing the homeless poor into your house, covering the naked when you see them, and not hiding from your own family? <sup>8</sup> Then your light will break out like the dawn, and you will be healed quickly. Your own righteousness will walk before you, and the LORD's glory will be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup> Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and God will say, "I'm here." If you remove the yoke from among you, the finger-pointing, the wicked speech; <sup>10</sup> if you open your heart to the hungry, and provide abundantly for those who are afflicted, your light will shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be like the noon. <sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you continually and provide for you, even in parched places. He will rescue your bones. You will be like a watered garden, like a spring of water that won't run dry. <sup>12</sup> They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account; the foundations of generations past you will restore. You will be called Mender of Broken Walls, Restorer of Livable Streets. ~ Isaiah 58:1-12*

“We believe that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God’s Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain; [and] that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted. ... Therefore, we reject any doctrine which, in such a situation sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.” ~ The Belhar Confession

Friends, this is not a conservative or a liberal issues. It’s not a right or left issue. It’s a human issue. There is no place for hatred in the family of God. There is no place for racism in the family of God. Scripture speaks to it. Our confessions say it clearly: **“This unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything**

**which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted.”** Sometimes it is hard to speak these words, but we have to know and understand deep within our souls just how necessary they are because our POC (people of color) brothers and sisters in faith are hurting. They are literally living in fear, for their own lives and for the lives of their children. And *nothing* about that is okay. WE MUST SPEAK OUT because *that* is what our faith calls us to do.

*Pastor Lisa*

## **Fall Sermon Series #1: The Uncomfortableness of Faith**

It is no secret or surprise that as a congregation, we are in a place of transition and growth. Places like that can be incredible blessings, but they can also be incredibly uncomfortable. So throughout the first part of the fall, we’re going to be tackling a 6-week sermon series on the uncomfortableness of faith – on how we are sometimes called to inhabit and live into those uncomfortable places and how we can best support and encourage each other in the midst of that uncomfortableness. I hope that you can join us week after week!

## **Communion Date Change**

The session has voted to move the celebration of communion for the month of Sept. due to our “usual” communion Sunday falling on a holiday weekend. Because of the Labor Day holiday weekend, we will be celebrating communion on Sun., Sept. 10. **Please note: We will still have worship on Sun., Sept. 3.** We simply will not celebrate communion that day.

## **(O) Presbytery Meeting**

The next Presbytery meeting is **Tues., Sept. 12 at 4:00 p.m.** at First Presbyterian Church in Red Wing. As always, Presbytery meetings are open to anyone. If you’re interested in coming, please contact Pastor Lisa.

## All Around the Campfire



We had so much fun with our campfire gatherings last summer that we're at it again this summer! One Sunday a month, we'll be gathering in the evening on the church lawn. There will be a campfire. There will be lawn games. There will be s'mores. This is a chance for us to spend some fun, relaxed, unstructured time together, and to invite people who may not be as comfortable coming through the church doors for the first time. Bring your neighbors and friends. Bring kids. Let's have fun!

Sept. 24: 6:00-8:00 p.m. **LAST ONE!!**

## Mowing Sign-Up

There are a few more open slots on the sign-up sheet for mowing the lawn. The sign-up sheet remains on the bulletin board. If you can help, please sign up for the week you intend to mow. The church mower is in the shed. Talk to Ron Peterson-Rucker or Pastor Lisa if you need the shed key.

## Update from Revs. Shelvis & Nancy Smith-Mather

Revs. Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather are the missionaries serving in South Sudan and Uganda who we support with our 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Spare Change Sunday funds. Shelvis, Nancy, Jordan, and Adalyn welcomed another daughter/sister into their lives in October – baby Nicole. If you would like an update on the incredible work that Shelvis and Nancy are doing with RECONCILE International and how their family is doing, please go to <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/shelvis-and-nancy-smith-mather/>. In the top right portion of the screen you will find a box with link to their 10 most recent update letters. Also on this page, you can find links to contact both Shelvis and Nancy as well as information on how to contribute financially as an individual to their mission.

## “Moving Forward” Sunday

Throughout the summer, we've had some great brainstorming/visioning sessions. There are large sheets of paper up all over the fellowship area full of ideas and thoughts about who we are as a congregation and what we want to do.

Now, it's time to **do something** with all those visioning sessions! To quote Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, stated clerk of the PC(USA), let's "get off our blessed assurance and do something for the Lord!"

So on Sun., Sept. 10, we're going to come together after worship to make some decisions about how to move forward. What are we going to do – what projects/ideas are we actually going to tackle? As a church, who do we want to become?

## (O) Peace & Global Witness Offering (World Communion Sunday) October 1, 2017

We make a special point of remembering our unity with Christians worldwide on World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of October (10/1/17). The Peacemaking 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 Peacemaking 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. Please watch for the special envelopes and consider how you may help.



*The Lord is near to all who call on Him,  
To all who call on Him in truth.  
He fulfills the desire of all who fear Him;  
He also hears their cry and saves them.*

Psalm 145:18-19

Karen Vallejo, Eunice Markham

## (O) Dorothy Day Dinner

The annual September Dorothy Day House dinner will be served on Wednesday, September 27. Mike & Jenny Rand are coordinating the event and will be looking for volunteers to prepare and serve food. A signup sheet for salads and dessert is posted on the bulletin board. See Mike or Jenny for the meal plan. This is a great way to “Play It Forward” and experience God’s love. Your help is greatly appreciated by all the Dorothy Day residents.

## IN TOUCH WITH THE WIDER CHURCH

### Presbyterian Church Contact Information

Presbyterian national website...[pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org)  
Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area website...  
[ptcaweb.org](http://ptcaweb.org)  
PTCA weekly email newsletter...contact [communications@ptcaweb.org](mailto:communications@ptcaweb.org)  
Presbyterians Today monthly magazine...subscribe (at cost) to Presbyterians Today, P.O. Box 5178, Brentwood, TN 37024-9931 or call 1-800-558-166

## Birthdays for the Month

9/14 Sarah Rand  
Peter Johnson  
9/15 Mia Ke Zhen Tiede  
9/23 Mike Rand



### Secretary's Office Hours

Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Thursdays 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Office Phone# 1-507-367-4711  
Email: [oronocopc@bevcomm.net](mailto:oronocopc@bevcomm.net)

## Readings for the Month of September

Sun., Sept. 3 –

**Labor Day weekend**



Sun., Sept. 10 – Deuteronomy 6:4-9;  
Hebrews 4:12-16

**The Uncomfortableness of Faith, #1**

Sun., Sept. 17 – Jonah 3-4; Colossians 3:12-17

**The Uncomfortableness of Faith, #2**

Sun., Sept. 23 – Daniel 3:13-27; Matthew 14:22-33

**The Uncomfortableness of Faith, #3**

### Church Staff

Organist: Katha Johnson  
Secretary: Sue Johnson  
Custodians: Sue Johnson  
Pastor: Rev. Lisa Johnson

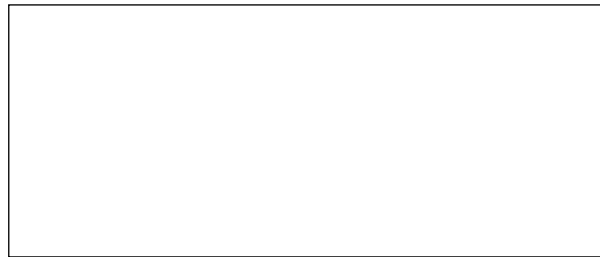
### Presbyterian Leadership Team

Kay Erdahl, Treasurer  
Kim Stanton, Asst. Treasurer  
Mike Rand, Clerk of Session  
Ron Peterson Rucker, Ruling Elder  
Brenda Longman, Ruling Elder  
Janice Ostrom, Ruling Elder  
Mike Rand, Ruling Elder  
Linda Sorensen, Ruling Elder  
Lance Sorensen, Ruling Elder  
Deb Nelson, Deacon  
Joanne Schenck, Deacon  
Karen Peterson Rucker, Deacon  
Jenny Rand, Deacon  
Gail Rucker, Deacon

### People of the Church

Janice Ostrom, Co-Moderator  
Jenny Rand, Co Moderator

Presbyterian Church of Oronoco  
PO Box 118  
Oronoco, 367-4711



**Check out our website at  
[www.oronocochurch.org](http://www.oronocochurch.org)**

**Worship is held at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday  
Communion is on the first Sunday of each month**



**Reverend Lisa Johnson—Contact Information:  
Cell Phone 1-507-995-7310 Email address: [pastorlisaj@gmail.com](mailto:pastorlisaj@gmail.com)  
Pastor Lisa's blog: [pastorlisaj.wordpress.com](http://pastorlisaj.wordpress.com)**