



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

March 2022

Seeking Musicians

We are overjoyed to announce that we have hired two people who will be sharing the church musician position: Raquel "Rocky" Nisbit and Zara Boon.

Read the Getting to Know our New Musicians on page 12!

That being said, we are still seeking 1-2 more musicians willing to play for worship on a rotations basis. That could mean playing the organ or the piano or even a guitar! Pay is \$85 per Sunday. Anyone interested can contact Pastor Lisa via email (pastorLisaJ@gmail.com) or on her cell phone (507-995-7310).



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 ...

“Tell me a story.”

We all love a good story, don't we? That's why we read books ... go to the movies or the theater ... watch TV shows. We just can't help but love a good story.

But how often do you think about your own good story? Especially when it comes to your faith?

You see, each and every one of us has our own particular faith story. In “churchy speak,” we call that a testimony. Now, before you start getting uncomfortable, pause for a minute. I know that in the Protestant tradition – especially in the Midwestern Protestant tradition – we don't really like the word “testimony.” We think that sharing testimonies are things that charismatic church-types do. We think that testimonies have to be big, emotional, “when God changed the direction of my entire life” moments.

And sure, sometimes our testimonies – our faith stories – involve moments like that – moments in which God reached down into our very hearts and lives and made a real and powerful change. If that's your story, that's truly wonderful.

But if that's not the way your relationship with God has gone, that doesn't mean you don't have a testimony. That doesn't diminish the power and importance of your own story. Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence, author and professor of preaching at Columbia Theological Seminary, says testimony is “standing in the biblical text and in your own life and saying what you see and believe about God.”¹ I love this definition because it's wide open. It leaves space for all the different ways that we encounter God in our lives: the moments when God holds us up, the moments when God blesses us through other people, the moments when God uses us to bless other people, those little moments when we catch a fleeting but undeniable glimpse of God in the world around us. All of those moments are part of our faith stories. All of those moments are our testimony.

As you'll read in other parts of this newsletter, we're going to be spending Lent this year working on our testimonies: thinking about them, praying about them, engaging with them, organizing them, and getting them down on paper (in whatever format works best for you – notes ... full sentences ... outline ... whatever). Part of the reason we're focusing on testimony for Lent this year is because our Scripture readings all come from the gospel of John, and John's gospel is heavily testifying gospel. There's a lot of theology in it. There's a lot of public witness in it both from Jesus himself and from many of those with whom he comes in contact. My hope is that you'll be inspired to think about your own testimonies as you hear John's testimony – and Jesus' testimony in John – week after week.

But it's about more than that. More importantly, we're going to spend time working on our testimonies – on our faith stories – because it's my sincere hope that these stories will give us a chance for reconnection as a community. We've had a challenging and painfully disconnected couple of years. It's my hope that, after working on these stories throughout

Lent, we'll be able to spend some time sharing them with one another as a way to come back together again – a way to get acquainted with one another (some of us *reacquainted*, some of us acquainted for the first time), a way to hold sacred space for one another in companionship and compassion, a way to bring some strength and hope and God's love back into this family of faith after our long and trying absence. In fact, it's my hope that we'll be able to have some celebratory, connectional time to share those faith stories – those testimonies – with one another during our Pentecost worship this year!

Finally, it's critical to be able to articulate and find God in your own story because in order to grow in our own faith – in order to be able to move forward in our journey – it's important to be able to recognize where we've been. And similarly, as we walk alongside others on their journey – others in our own families, in this congregation, and in all the other circles in which we travel throughout our lives – knowing and understanding our own stories is a way to not only connect with others and their stories but also to inspire them and be inspired by them. When we're aware of and can follow the threads of our own faith stories, we're better able to see how they are woven together with the threads of others stories and especially how they're woven together with God's Grand Story of Faith. As Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians (and part of the Scripture passage that's on your special Lenten testimony-writing pens):

*[Christ's] purpose was to equip God's people for the work of serving and building up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of faith and knowledge of God's Son. God's goal is for us to become mature adults – to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ.
... By speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ.
~ Ephesians 4:12-13, 15.*

If you're struggling with any part of your testimony or if you have any questions or if you just want someone to be a sounding board, I would love to sit down with you anytime. Friends, I can't tell you how excited I am to see where God takes us all – as individuals and together as a community – as we explore Story together.

So please ... tell me a story.

Pastor Lisa

Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers

First, the update: According to their last newsletter, Shelvis has finally been able to return to Oxford University in England to resume his doctoral work in peacebuilding strategies. Nancy and the kids – Jordan, Addie, Nicole, and Alice – remain here in the United States.



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. A few times a year, our treasurer would deposit whatever had accumulated from that offering in the bank, then send the total as a donation directly to the Smith-Mathers’ Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) account.

Recently, however, PMA has decided to change the way they distribute their mission funds. Instead of individual people and/or congregations contributing directly to the accounts of specific mission co-workers, all contributions will go into a general fund and distributed to all mission co-workers from there. This change has been made in an attempt to make mission co-worker support more equitable, especially for those co-workers who may be serving in areas that are especially remote or even dangerous and therefore cannot easily relay updates or connect with supporting individuals/congregations.

Donations can still be made in honor of specific mission co-workers – Shelvis and Nancy, in our case. And of course, we can always pray for them and their family in all times and places. 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-and-nancy-smith-mather/>. From there, you can click on the green box under their (completely adorable) family picture that says, “Give in honor of the ministry of Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather.” This will redirect you 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.

Next Session meeting.:

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 6:30 p.m.

Note that because of our Ash Wednesday Service this is not our regular meeting date

Next Presbytery Meeting:

May 20, 2022

Time and location TBD

Unconventional Ways to Give



- Designate “Presbyterian Church of ORONOCO” as your Amazon Smile organization, and 0.5% of all your eligible Amazon purchases will come back to the church on a quarterly basis.
- Give online through our Presbyterian Foundation account using either the link on our website (www.oronocochurch.org at the bottom of the homepage) or this QR code



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!

In addition to this month's highlight item, we've been told the Oronoco Food Shelf is also in need of toilet paper and paper towels.

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.

Lent 2022- “Your Story is God’s Story”

As we continue to follow the Narrative Lectionary, this year our Lenten Scripture readings come from the gospel of John. Each of these readings (which you can find listed below) finds Jesus testifying about God’s love, God’s power, and God’s work through his words and his actions.

By definition, testifying means bearing witness, giving evidence, or making a solemn declaration. In this case, bearing witness to or making a solemn declaration about one’s faith journey, one’s relationship with God. Or, as Rev. Dr. Anna Carter Florence, professor of preaching at Columbia Theological Seminary, puts it, testimony is “standing in the biblical text and in your own life and saying what you see and believe about God.” Your testimony is your own very personal account of where God’s Story shines through and intertwines with your own story.

As we read these texts that walk us through some of Jesus’ own moments of testimony during Lent, we’re also going to take some time thinking about and working on our own testimonies. As we celebrate Ash Wednesday together, we’re going to put together a sort of testimony prayer journal/workbook that you can use throughout Lent (*see “Lenten Testimony Workbooks” for more information*) to truly begin to work through your own story of faith.

For the time being, the plans for our various Lenten services are still up in the air. We will have our Ash Wednesday service on **Wednesday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m.** as well as our Good Friday service on **Friday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m.** While I dearly wish that we could resume our soup and bread worship on Maundy Thursday, I don’t feel like we can safely resume that with the current COVID case counts in Olmsted, Goodhue, and Dodge counties. If something changes drastically between now and then, we can reconsider. But for the time being, plan to celebrate Maundy Thursday (Thursday, April 14) at home, and I will plan on putting together an at-home worship package for everyone.



1st Sunday in Lent – March 6: John 11:1-44

Testimony gives voice to my journey without making excuses or apologies for it. Testimony is personal.

2nd Sunday in Lent – March 13: John 13:1-17

Testimony holds space for love.

Testimony is hospitable.

3rd Sunday in Lent – March 20: John 18:12-27

Testimony speaks my story without trampling another's story.

Testimony is truth-telling.

4th Sunday in Lent – March 27: John 18:28-40

*Testimony gives voice to **my** experience.*

Testimony is insistent.

5th Sunday in Lent – April 3: John 19:1-16a

Testimony is born from my experience of truth.

Testimony is unapologetic.

Palm Sunday – April 10: John 12:12-27

Testimony speaks again and again and again.

Testimony is sincere.

Easter Sunday – April 17: John 20:1-18

Testimony inspires and affirms others.

Testimony is invitational.

Scripture readings for March

Wednesday, March 2– Ash Wednesday Service. 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 6– John 11:1-44

1st Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 13– John 13:1-17

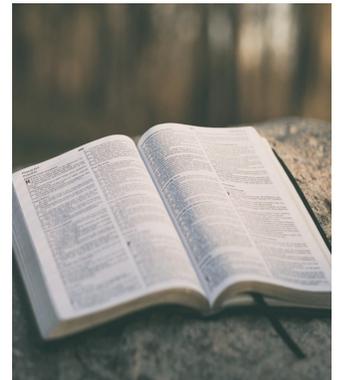
2nd Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 20– John 18:12-27

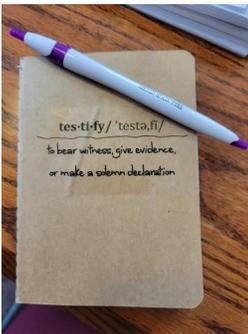
3rd Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 27– John 18:28-40

4th Sunday of Lent



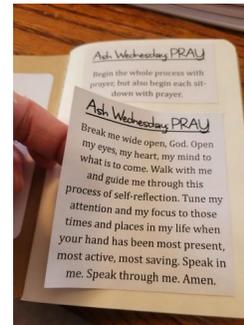
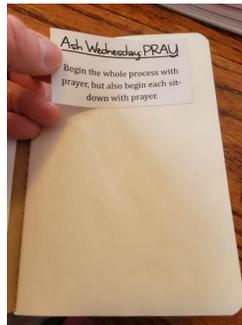
Lenten Testimony Workbooks



During our Ash Wednesday worship service, we're going to be assembling the pieces of our testimony workbooks. With these workbooks, we'll be walking through the process of writing our testimonies – our faith stories – week by week, addressing one phase after another as we journey through the season together. Each week, you'll have a specific question/writing prompt to help you start engaging with the next phase of your story. You'll also have a prayer that you're welcome to use in



Then, you will pick up label stickers for each week of Lent: one prayer sticker and one reflection question/writing prompt sticker. I've put them on stickers so that you can place them in the workbook wherever you need to as the weeks go on, giving you the freedom to use as much or as little space as you need to for writing or note-taking or sketching – whatever way it works best for you to reflect on and organize your faith story.



In the back of each workbook is a small binder clip to keep your prayer and writing prompt stickers securely in the back of the



If you can't be here in person on Ash Wednesday, feel free to contact Pastor Lisa. She'll put together as many booklets as you need for your household and either leave the items in a bag for you at church so you can pick it up or drop it off at home for you.

Lenten Photo Challenge

The Lenten Photo Challenge is back! 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. There will also be copies of the word list at church, on the websites, and on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

To participate, 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. (Actually, if you search the hashtag on any of those social media platforms, you’ll even be able to find photos from previous years.)

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 mornings, 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).

This year, we’re also going to try a new way to engage with this word list. In the fellowship room, there will be a display board along with a bunch of Post-It notes and pens. Each Sunday, the words for the following week will be posted on the board. On Sunday morning, you could spend a few minutes contemplating the words for the coming week, then add a Post-It with a few notes or maybe the description of an image you might associate with each word. Every day, Pastor Lisa will post a picture of the words board with the hashtag as well.



Lenten Photo Challenge 2022

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

Mar. 2: devotion	Mar. 20: deny	Apr. 4: roots
Mar. 3: prayer	Mar. 21: direction	Apr. 5: understand
Mar. 4: uncertainty	Mar. 22: vision	Apr. 6: found
Mar. 5: family	Mar. 23: plan/s	Apr. 7: near
Mar. 6: companion	Mar. 24: creative/creativity	Apr. 8: study
Mar. 7: thirst	Mar. 25: being	Apr. 9: worship
Mar. 8: breath	Mar. 26: simple/simplicity	Apr. 10: invite
Mar. 9: childlike	Mar. 27: Who am I?	Apr. 11: patience
Mar. 10: gather	Mar. 28: promise	Apr. 12: wrestle
Mar. 11: receive	Mar. 29: practice	Apr. 13: anticipation
Mar. 12: confidence	Mar. 30: ground/ed	Apr. 14: share
Mar. 13: hospitality	Mar. 31: listen/ing	Apr. 15: remember
Mar. 14: weakness	Apr. 1: rest	Apr. 16: lost
Mar. 15: help	Apr. 2: wander	
Mar. 16: word	Apr. 3: surrender	
Mar. 17: confess/ion		
Mar. 18: world		
Mar. 19: give up		

Easter bonus:
SEEN

2022 Lenten Photo Challenge

<u>Ash Wed.,</u> Mar. 2 devotion	<u>Mar. 14</u> weakness	<u>Mar. 26</u> simple/ simplicity	<u>Apr. 7</u> near
<u>Mar. 3</u> prayer	<u>Mar. 15</u> help	<u>Mar. 27</u> Who am I?	<u>Apr. 8</u> study
<u>Mar. 4</u> uncertainty	<u>Mar. 16</u> word	<u>Mar. 28</u> promise	<u>Apr. 9</u> worship
<u>Mar. 5</u> family	<u>Mar. 17</u> confess/ion	<u>Mar. 29</u> practice	<u>Palm Sun.,</u> <u>Apr. 10</u> invite
<u>Mar. 6</u> companion	<u>Mar. 18</u> world	<u>Mar. 30</u> ground/ed	<u>Apr. 11</u> patience
<u>Mar. 7</u> thirst	<u>Mar. 19</u> give up	<u>Mar. 31</u> listen/ing	<u>Apr. 12</u> wrestle
<u>Mar. 8</u> breath	<u>Mar. 20</u> deny	<u>Apr. 1</u> rest	<u>Apr. 13</u> anticipation
<u>Mar. 9</u> childlike	<u>Mar. 21</u> direction	<u>Apr. 2</u> wander	<u>Maundy Thurs.,</u> <u>Apr. 14</u> share
<u>Mar. 10</u> gather	<u>Mar. 22</u> vision	<u>Apr. 3</u> surrender	<u>Good Fri.,</u> <u>Apr. 15</u> remember
<u>Mar. 11</u> receive	<u>Mar. 23</u> plan/s	<u>Apr. 4</u> roots	<u>Easter Vigil,</u> <u>Apr. 16</u> lost
<u>Mar. 12</u> confidence	<u>Mar. 24</u> creative/ creativity	<u>Apr. 5</u> understand	<u>Easter, Apr. 17</u> SEEN
<u>Mar. 13</u> hospitality	<u>Mar. 25</u> being	<u>Apr. 6</u> found	

Post to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram using #PCOLentPhoto
or email your pictures to Pastor Lisa (if you're willing to share them) and she can post them.

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



March Star Word

In this season of Lent, what repentance or self-examination has come from your star word so far?



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.

Getting to Know our New Musicians



From Zara

Hello, I'm Zara! I'm sixteen years old and I love to read. I've been playing piano for ten years, but this is my first time playing for a group. I use all pronouns and I live in Byron. I can't wait to get to know the people of this wonderful community.

From Rocky

Hello, everyone! My name is Raquel Nisbit, (pronounced RUH-kel NIZ-bit) but you may call me Rocky since that's easier to pronounce and it sounds way cooler than Raquel. My pronouns are she/her/hers. Now, here's a little bit about me: I have been playing piano for fourteen years and have loved it ever since I started. I loved it so much that I started teaching piano lessons as well! I first began teaching when I was the young age of thirteen, and I still teach to this day with about 50-60 students give or take. I also play other instruments: Bass guitar, electric guitar and ukulele, but my main instrument is piano for sure. I've been playing on a worship team since 2015, and I have been through a lot of struggles, like someone forgetting to send me the sheet music, someone saying I play too loud or "over-the-top," and recently having to help fill in for someone's first day as a



worship leader since he had some family problems to deal with. I felt a lot of pressure, but I remember that we are all humans and it's okay to make mistakes. If someone were to come up to me and say, "Wow, that was awful." I would simply respond, "How about you get up there and do what I just did?" With that being said, I view worship as a relationship between God, the congregation, the pastor and myself. I feel that when I am playing piano, it is my job to help the church members hear from God. It feels like I can lead them into worshipping God through my music. What an awesome and rewarding job to do! With me being at this wonderful small town church, I want to lead you all into worship. It's not about me, it's not about the way I play the piano, it's not about how amazing or terrible we sound when singing, it's about showing God your thankfulness and respect. That's worship to me.

March Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♥ 3/1 Carlyle Johnson
- ♥ 3/3 Lance Sorensen
- ♥ 3/4 Geoff Warner
- ♥ 3/9 Deb Nelson
- ♥ 3/13 Mark Pinney
- ♥ 3/19 Ron Peterson-Rucker
- ♥ 3/24 Kim Stanton



Staying in Touch

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Fax: 651-357-1141

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

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Office: 800-728-7228

Email: info@pcusa.org

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



Lenten Testimony Words

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

circumstances	difference	testimony	spiritual
breaks in	presence	witness	problem
journey	present	moment	before
pivotal	prayer	faith	ahead
learn	story	road	life
Acts	Paul	word	God