

Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

Next Session Meeting

Wednesday, February 4 6:30 p.m.

Please note, this date is NOT our normal 1st Wed. of the month.

Next Presbytery Meeting

Saturday, March 21 9:00 a.m.

Valley Community Presbyterian
Church, Golden Valley, MN

February Scripture

Readings

Sunday February 2—

Mark 5:21-43

Annual Meeting

Sunday February 12—

Mark 6:1-29

Sunday February 19—

Mark 7:1-23

Sunday February 26—

Mark 8:27-9:8

Wednesday February 26—

Ash Wednesday service, 7:00 p.m.



From the Pastor

The headline was big, splashy, and certainly attention-grabbing:

Cottage Grove church to usher out gray-haired members in effort to attract more young parishioners.

That was a headline from the Twin Cities Pioneer Press on January 18, 2020. The short article that followed told the tale of a small and struggling United Methodist congregation – Grove Church in Cottage Grove, MN – that had allegedly asked all of its older parishioners to “stay away” as the church attempted a soft closing and reopening. It also alleged that, if those older parishioners were still interested in being part of this church, they could speak to the pastor about becoming members again but only after two years had passed.

This short and sparse article certainly made the rounds. I saw it on the Facebook profiles of a number of my friends. It was sent to me via Facebook personal message by two different people. We talked about it at our local monthly gathering of Presbyterian pastors. It was emailed to me by a parishioner. All in only 4 days’ time.

And I will be completely honest, friends. My initial response was probably similar to yours: “How could they do that? That’s terrible! My church would never do that.” But there was also a shadow of a question floating in the back of my mind – a sense of discomfort and wondering: *Was this the whole story? I’ve had my fair share of experience with how quickly half-truths and false stories can circulate and how painful it can be when those distortions are perpetuated by the church – by a place and a people that are supposed to be grace-filled and purport to speak from a place of love.*

Not surprisingly, the article from the Pioneer Press was, indeed, **not** the whole story. The truth? A few decades ago, the Cottage Grove church joined with a larger, more stable church eight miles down the road in Woodbury. In June, the Cottage Grove church will be closing for 15-18 months before opening again with a new look, feel, and strategy. No one was told to leave. No one was asked to “stay away.”

But thanks to an article full of inaccuracies and misrepresentations, Grove Church, the Minnesota Conference of the United Methodist Church, the incoming transitional pastor (named in the article), and many of my colleagues in ministry around

the state and even around the country (UMC and otherwise) have been put on the defensive, trying to straighten out a story that never should have been so sensationalized in the first place. There has been damage done by the spreading of this story.

In his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul says,

“Don’t let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say. Don’t make the Holy Spirit of God unhappy—you were sealed by him for the day of redemption. Put aside all bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil. Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.”

—Ephesians 4:29-32

A podcast that I like to listen to – *Harry Potter and the Sacred Text* – did an entire episode on rumors a while back. I was relistening to that episode the other day, and one of the hosts makes a really important distinction about rumors and gossip and sharing information. She said that we have to examine our purpose and intent for sharing a particular piece of information. Are we sharing to inform? Are we sharing to further our own learning in some capacity? Or are we sharing purely for our own selfish reasons – as a way to prove to others that we’re “in the know,” as a way to entertain ourselves or those around us through malice or spite, as a way to lift up ourselves and our own circumstances by degrading the circumstances of someone else? Are we sharing for the sake of the spark of knowledge or for the zing of a good punch line? Because it makes for good, nurturing, enlightening conversation or because it makes for a splashy, attention-grabbing headline?

Paul is pretty clear on this. The goal is truth. The goal is grace in all that we do and say. The goal is lifting others up and building up the community in kindness, compassion, forgiveness, and in truth. It’s about checking facts and figures, sources and accuracy before we share information. But more than that, it’s about checking our hearts and our motives for sharing.

In that vein, I want to leave you with a list of 10 factual inaccuracies from the original Pioneer Press article that have been distributed by the Minnesota Conference of the UMC:

- Members were never asked to stay away for two years. They were asked to move into an alternative worship arrangement for 15-18 months during this transition. They were invited to attend worship at the Woodbury campus of The Grove and/or continue worshiping as a group at a different time and/or location after the Cottage Grove building closes.
- Members were encouraged to reach out to church planter Jeremy Peters to support their transition back to the Cottage Grove campus after the relaunch. They were never asked to “reapply.”
- The plan to relaunch is about mission and sustainability, not the ages of our people in Cottage Grove. The same thing was communicated to all members, whatever their age.
- Pastor Dan Wetterstrom met with the members to explain the relaunch plans; he didn’t communicate it in a memo. To provide transparency, he did offer them his speaking notes after the meeting so members who couldn’t attend could read them.
- Leadership has never had a conversation about financial giving related to this project with Cottage Grove members.
- Because the maintenance of the Cottage building is meaningful work to some members, they were invited to continue that work if they desired. There was no expectation for them to do so.
- Moving to lay-led worship in 2012 was determined after a consultation process that showed the worshippers could not support a pastor salary; it was not determined by Methodist officials.
- Jeremy is a United Methodist Pastor appointed by the Bishop to this project. While he has experience in this type of work, he is not a specialist.
- Jeremy is 32 with three kids, not 30 with two kids.
- Dan Wetterstrom has been the lead pastor of The Grove for more than a decade; he is not a visiting pastor.

Pastor *Shia*

Lenten Photo Challenge

We're doing it again – our Lenten Photo Challenge. 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 There will also be copies of the word list at church, on the website, 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 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).

2020 Lenten Photo Challenge

Post to Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram using
#PCOLentPhoto

Feb. 26: solemn	Mar. 14: honesty	Mar. 30: virtue
Feb. 27: think	Mar. 15: something	Mar. 31: Fast
Feb. 28: repent	transformed	Apr. 1: poor
Feb. 29: meditate	Mar. 16: Feel	Apr. 2: knowledge
Mar. 1: possible	Mar. 17: treasure	Apr. 3: truth
Mar. 2: lift	Mar. 18: prophet	Apr. 4: waste
Mar. 3: steadFast	Mar. 19: endure	Apr. 5: power
Mar. 4: shelter	Mar. 20: discipline	Apr. 6: alive
Mar. 5: Failure	Mar. 21: place	Apr. 7: transcend
Mar. 6: success	Mar. 22: charity	Apr. 8: direct
Mar. 7: grow	Mar. 23: stop	Apr. 9: cup
Mar. 8: examine	Mar. 24: beauty	Apr. 10: stone
Mar. 9: mercy	Mar. 25: Forgive/ness	Apr. 11: Fear
Mar. 10: Flexibility	Mar. 26: lead	
Mar. 11: wise	Mar. 27: wilderness	
Mar. 12: brokenness	Mar. 28: mighty	
Mar. 13: Freedom	Mar. 29: burden	

Easter bonus: go

Lenten Spiritual Practice— PaRDes

Throughout Lent, I'm going to be giving you a new spiritual practice to try – a new way to interact with Scripture and dig a little deeper. It's a practice called pardes (pronounced *par-dais'*), and it comes from Judaism.

The word “pardes” is actually an acronym layered with a secondary meaning. It stands for four different layers of Scriptural interpretation: *P’shat, Remez, D’rash, and Sud* – PRDS. *When you add vowels to this acronym, making it PaRDes, you also get the Hebrew word for “garden” or “orchard,” the fruits of which produce layer upon layer of enjoyment and nourishment.* For the spiritual practice, each layer of interpretation is meant to bring us deeper into the text – to reveal new ways of thinking and praying and challenging ourselves through potentially familiar passages. You begin with the simple, obvious, intended meaning of the text and work your way down through the layers until you end up listening for God to reveal the hidden, mystic meaning to you.

Every Sunday in Lent, there will be an insert for the week that includes the Scripture passage that we read during worship and some guides to help you dig deeper into that passage using the practice of pardes with a single verse every day of the week. (*If you miss a Sunday but would like the week’s pardes guide, Pastor Lisa would be happy to email it to you.*) It is my hope that this practice will give you a chance to explore God’s word in ways that unexpected and meaningful and reflective during this season of self-examination and repentance.

Here are the basics of pardes:

- **P’shat** (pronounced *peh-shaht’*): plain, simple meaning of the text – the shorter story/parable in which its located, the larger context, the movement of the people and the context/setting in which the verse is found, etc.
- **Remez** (pronounced *reh-mez’*): the “hint” – What’s implied by the text? What is it alluding to? For example, Proverbs 20:10 says, “Different weights, and different measures, both of them are like an abomination to the Lord.” The remez – the implication – has to do with fairness and honesty.
- **D’rash** (pronounced *deh-rahsh’*): the teaching or interpretive meaning (or one could say the sermon!) – this takes the simple meaning and the hint and builds on them. One way to follow the d’rash is to consider other places (in the larger passage ... in the chapter ... in the gospel ... in the whole New Testament or even all of Scripture) in which a particular word or short phrase from the verse is repeated.

Lenten Spiritual Practice— PaRDes Continued

- **Sud** (pronounced *sawd* or *sood* [like “wood”]): *the hidden, secret, mystic meaning – This one is tricky. It may come to you easily. It may not come to you at all. It may come as a flash and disappear just as quickly. As you’re contemplating what the sud could be, use this time to sit in silence with God and with the text.*

Stewardship Giving Tree

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

Our Giving Tree envelopes are still available. We will keep them in a basket on the table next to the bulletins throughout the year. Yes, we emphasize stewardship in the church once a year, but the truth is that we have a responsibility to be good stewards of our time, talents, resources, and devotion all day every day – 24/7/365. So if you perhaps missed your opportunity to pick up a few envelopes or would like to continue that giving into 2020, feel free to pick up more envelopes.

We’re also adding a mission giving envelope this time around. Neuro Hospitality House reached out to us, and one of the ways that we can help them is by sponsoring/paying for a night for people. Those staying at NHH are asked to pay if they can, but some certainly can’t. A night is \$40, so we’re adding some envelopes to sponsor a night for someone.

Thank you!

Filling Busy Bags

We are continuing to collect items for busy bags – small toys, games, arts & crafts supplies, stickers, etc. Joanne Schenck has already made all the busy bags themselves. Once again this year, we have decided to wait until after the holiday season to fill and distribute the busy bags. There’s a box in the fellowship area to start collecting donations. Thanks for your support!

Matthew 25 Congregation

At our January meeting, the session voted to become a Matthew 25 congregation. Matthew 25 is an initiative of the Presbyterian Church (USA) that takes its inspiration from Matthew 25:31-46, the passage in which Jesus says to his disciples, “I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothes to wear. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me … I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.” It is an initiative that calls us “to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities.” Matthew 25 congregations pledge to do this in three particular ways:

- Building congregational vitality
- Dismantling structural racism
- Eradicating systematic poverty

As a session, we feel that our congregation is already working toward a number of these goals – through the Oronoco Food Shelf, through the luncheons that we provide, through our many and various mission giving (financially as well as giving to things like our Christmas families and the busy bags), and so on. In the months to come, we will also be embarking on a wider discussion of racism and white privilege as a congregation (more information about that to come).

If you’re interested in more information regarding the Matthew 25 initiative, visit <http://pcusa.org/matthew25>.



Update from Revs. Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather

Revs. Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather are the missionaries serving in South Sudan and Uganda who we support with our 2nd 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/>. **Shelvis has also recently begun research with Oxford University's School of Anthropology and Theology as well as Africa Studies Centre.** 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.

About Per Capita

As 2019 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.



150th Anniversary

The Presbyterian Church of Oronoco is turning **150 this year!!!** That's pretty amazing, friends! So we want to CELEBRATE!! The session will certainly be talking about this in the months to come, but if you have any ideas for ways to celebrate or would like to be part of the planning for that, please talk to Pastor Lisa



Church Merch!

We've been working on designing some great new church merchandise bearing our new logo. Starting in January, there will be a sign-up on the bulletin board with a few options (a hat, a polo shirt, a regular t-shirt, a travel mug, an apron, and a canvas bag) and prices next to them. If you're interested in purchasing any of those items, please add your name underneath the item name. For many of the items, we need at least 12 items for the order.

Church Instagram Account

In an attempt to make it easier for all of us to share pictures of church activities and events, we've created a Presbyterian Church of Oronoco Instagram account:

@oronocochurch



*Follow us on
Instagram*

Feel free to either tag the church account in your own postings or, if you aren't on Instagram and have pictures you'd like to share, email or text them to Pastor Lisa and she'll post them. And remember to follow our account so you can keep up with all our fun and hijinks!

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.



2020 Luncheons

Let's get them on your calendar now: LUNCHEONS!
Here are the dates:

Wednesday, February 19
Wednesday, March 18

Keep an eye out for luncheon sign-up sheets on the bulletin board. Next up: soup and pie. YUM!!



Ash Wednesday Service

Our Ash Wednesday service will be held at **7:00 p.m.** on **Wednesday, February 26**. This will be a special service of prayer, reflection, and the imposition of the ashes.

Annual Meeting

The Presbyterian Church of Oronoco's annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday, February 2 during the 10:00 a.m. worship. We will follow the meeting with a potluck lunch.

A reminder to all those responsible for committees: Please have your reports to Brianna by Sun., Jan. 19, 2020 so she has a chance to assemble the annual meeting packet. Copies of reports can be emailed (oronocopc@bevcomm.net) or placed in the labeled file folder on her desk.

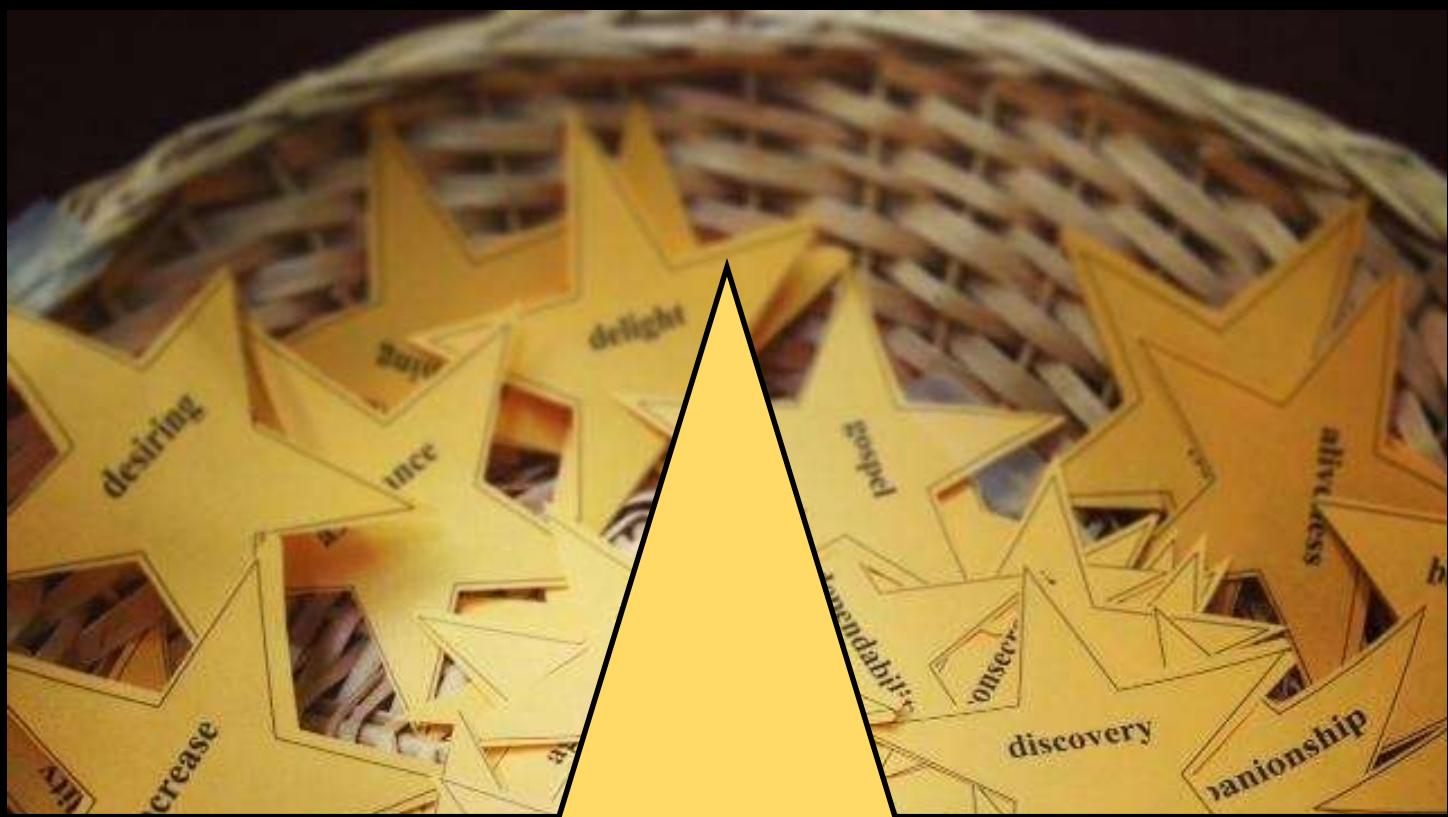
Epiphany Star Words

This year, we once again marked Epiphany on the first Sunday in January with Star Words: simple, star-shaped piece of paper with a word printed on it. This year, as we continue to ponder what significance this word might have in your life and how God may be speaking to you through that simple message, we're going to engage a little bit more consistently throughout the year, both individually as well as in community together.

In each month's newsletter throughout 2020, you'll find a prompt to help you keep thinking and praying about your star word and how it continues to affect, inform, and guide you. On the first Sunday of every month, as we celebrate communion and birthdays, we're also going to designate one of our large fellowship tables as our "Star Table" for anyone that wants to have a discussion about where their star words are taking them throughout the year. And sometime during the summer, we'll do a sort of "Star Check-In Service" to remember and rededicate those words and the work we've done with them.

If you missed receiving a star and would still like one, let Pastor Lisa know. She will happily save a word for you.

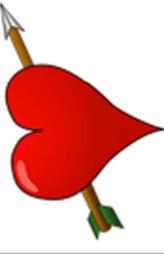
February Star Word Prompt:



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

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF ORONOCO
E-MAIL ADDRESS:
oronooco@devcomm.net
WEBSITE
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February 2020
Lisa Johnson, Pastor
507-995-7310
Email: pastorlisai@gmail.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
2 Annie Johnson's Birthday Worship and Annual Meeting 10 a.m.	3 4	5 	6	7	8	
9 Worship 10 a.m. Confirmation 11:30	10	11 	12 Hayward Johnson's Birthday Food Shelf 5:00	13	14 	15 Dick Ostrom's Birthday
16 Worship 10 a.m.	17 	18 Ann Vawkins' Birthday	19 Luncheon 11:30	20 Jacky Rueber's Birthday	21	22
23 Worship 10 a.m. Confirmation 11:30	24	25	26 Food Shelf 5:00	27	28	29 