



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

January 2021

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.

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 ...

As I was trying to figure out what to write for the first newsletter piece of 2021, I looked back at what I wrote last January. (*Pastoral secret*: I often do that when I'm working on newsletter stuff. I do it to jog my brain and to make sure I don't repeat myself!) As January 2020 opened up the year we'd probably all love to forget, I used the passage from Isaiah 40 about youths growing weary, trusting in the Lord, and renewing our strength. And I finished it off with a prayer from St. Augustine:

*Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch,
or weep tonight, and give your angels and saints
charge over those who sleep.
Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ,
Rest your weary ones,
Bless your dying ones,
Soothe your suffering ones,
Pity your afflicted ones,
Shield your joyous ones,
And all for your love's sake. Amen.*

Oh, how desperately we would end up needing that prayer only a few short weeks into 2020. How weary we have all become. How fiercely we have longed for God's strength each and every day to get us through – amidst the racial injustices, the political vitriol, the catastrophic losses, and, of course, the pandemic.

Hindsight is 20/20, after all. Or is it 2020?

So how do we start off this year? Where do we want and need to begin after the absolutely insanity and havoc of last year?

To even begin to answer this, I looked back again. Perhaps like many of you, I spent a good amount of time during 2020 in the psalms. There are happy psalms and sad psalms. There are hopeful psalms and angry psalms. There are desperate psalms and exultant psalms. The psalms express the full array of the human experience in a way no other section of Scripture does. No matter what you're feeling, there is comfort, reassurance, and affirmation to be found throughout. Even the psalms that express pain, frustration, and desolation also include some spark of hope or faith in the enduring presence of God.

Psalm 39 is a perfect example of this. It's a psalm of sorrow and pain, of anxiety and despair that speaks of pain and plagues and a cry for help. And yet nestled exactly in the middle of these words of pain and despair, we find this:

So now, Lord, what should I be waiting for? My hope is set in you.
Psalm 39:7

And that, friends, is where I have landed as 2020 finally comes to a close and we look toward 2021. At this point, I don't feel like I even know what to be waiting for ... what to be asking for ... what to be

hoping for. And yet, I know that my hope is set in the Lord – the One who hears our cries, the One who knows us better than we know ourselves, the One who spread his arms wide on the cross to show us just how unconditional and all-encompassing God’s love for us truly is.

This is our God.
We are God’s people.
Whatever else happens, that does not change.

Pastor Gina

Scripture readings for January

- **Sunday January 3:** Luke 2:41-52
- **Sunday January 10:** Luke 3:1-22
- **Sunday January 17:** Luke 4:14-30
- **Sunday January 24:** Luke 5:1-11
- **Sunday January 31:** Luke 6:1-16

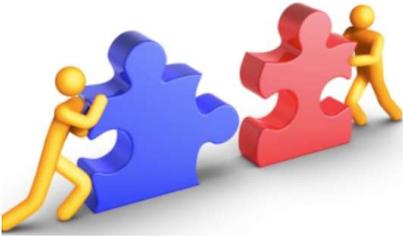


Annual Meeting

During the January meeting next week, the Session will be discussing and scheduling our 2021 annual meeting. Whether the whole meeting is virtual or not, there will definitely be a virtual attendance option for anyone who doesn’t feel comfortable coming in person. More details to come.

*A reminder to all those responsible for committees/reports: Please have your reports to Brianna by **Sunday, January 24, 2021** 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.*

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 **January 2021**. During our January meeting, 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.



Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

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

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.*

Dorothy Day House Needs

As a congregation, we've committed to providing on-the-go breakfast items for the Dorothy Day House for the 2nd week in January (starting Sunday, January 10). Pastor Lisa has created a Google doc so that anyone who wants to can sign up for it, or, if you'd prefer, you can look through the list below and contact Pastor Lisa so she can add your name to the list for whatever you'd like to contribute. For these items, there is a special, smaller box in the fellowship room labeled "Dorothy Day Breakfast Donations." The items are:



- Fruit
- Individually packaged granola bars
- Single-serve yogurts
- Individually packaged muffins/Danishes

*****Please bring these breakfast items to church no later than Thursday, January 7. Thank you.*****

There are other, more regular needs that the Dorothy Day House has as well – 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)
- Tins of coffee

January Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♥ 1/1—Malachi Johnson
- ♥ 1/1—Lisa Johnson
- ♥ 1/4—Robert Rueber
- ♥ 1/12—Jack Rucker
- ♥ 1/14—Thomas Hadley
- ♥ 1/28—Malachi & Annie Johnson
- ♥ 1/28—Janice Ostrom



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!



Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers



We've been helping to support Shelvis and Nancy and their family for a few years now. We've been collecting our 2nd Sunday Spare Change offering and lifting them up in prayer. 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.

Filling Busy Bags



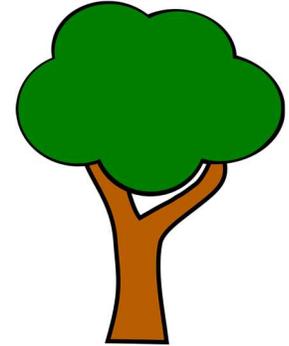
Socially distant though we are right now, we are still looking into what organizations in Rochester might be willing recipients of some busy bags that we could fill. We aren't sure whether our usual drop-off sites (Ronald McDonald House, the Women's Shelter, etc.) are taking donated items like that during the pandemic. When we know more about when/if/how we'll be doing busy bags this year, we will pass that information along to you.

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



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, KIMT, and Fox 47 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.

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, Karen Lohmann, Helen Craft, Joyce Rucker, Carol Tiede, and Linda Sorensen** in prayer.

