



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ORONOCO

A SMALL CHURCH WITH A BIG MISSION

May 2024

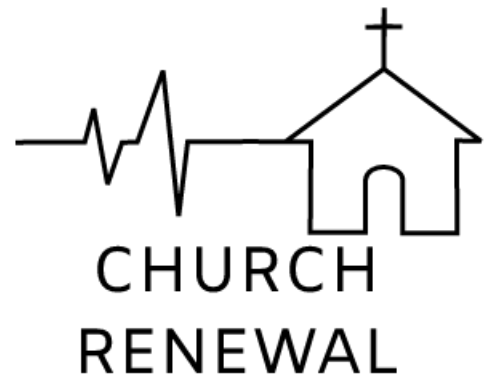
## 2024: Year of Renewal

It's no secret that we are a congregation in need of renewal right now. Our membership is down. Sunday attendance is down. Our 2024 budget is a severely deficit budget. Our Session recently crunched the numbers, and financially, we have roughly 3 years of funds left before the coffers are empty.

With that in mind, 2024 will be our Year of Renewal. There are three basic phases to this:

- ✦ **Phase 1: Congregational book study/discussion**—We're going to spend 6 weeks talking about renewal using the book *Your Church Can Thrive: Making the Connections that Built Healthy Congregations* by Harold Percy. These discussions will happen after worship on 6 Sundays in May and June. *\*Find more information about this in this newsletter.\**
- ✦ **Phase 2: Congregational workshop with LeaderWise**—While Pastor Lisa is on sabbatical, some congregational consultants will come down from LeaderWise (located in the Twin Cities) to lead a day-long (9a-3p) workshop aimed at discerning who we are and who we want to be. This will be some Saturday in September (date TBD). It is crucial that as many people participate in this as possible.
- ✦ **Phase 3: Congregational reunion & reimagining**—After Pastor Lisa gets back from her sabbatical, our LeaderWise consultant will come down again so we can come back together and do some visioning and planning together. This will be a few hours on a Saturday in October (date TBD).

There will be more information about Phases 2 and 3 in upcoming newsletters. There will also be information in the weekly emails and Sunday announcements. We cannot emphasize enough: It is **crucial** that everyone participate in this.



### Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson

Pianist: Rocky Nisbit

### Church Leadership

Mike Rand, Clerk of Session, Ruling Elder  
Ellen Warner, Treasurer  
Todd Wickre, Ruling Elder  
Brenda Longman, Ruling Elder

Geoff Warner, Ruling Elder  
Cindy Luhman, Ruling Elder  
Ron Peterson-Rucker, Ruling Elder

Gail Rucker, Deacon  
Joanne Schenck, Deacon  
Karen Peterson-Rucker, Deacon  
Jenny Rand, Deacon



## From the Pastor ...

May is Mental Health Awareness month. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), “since its inception in 1949, Mental Health Awareness Month has been a cornerstone of addressing the challenges faced by millions of Americans living with mental health conditions.” Yet even now, 75 years after the establishment of Mental Health Awareness month, the statistics surrounding mental health issues are somewhat vague estimates because the stigmas surrounding mental health struggles continue to keep people from seeking the help they need. NAMI estimates that more than 57.8 million adults in the U.S.—more than one in five adults—struggle with mental health.

Within the realm of the church, like the rest of society, we have not always been good at addressing mental health in ways that are authentic, compassionate, helpful, and inclusive/welcoming. I have known too many friends who have been told that their mental health struggles are the result of a lack of faith or an insufficient faith. They’ve been told that relying on medications to help them manage their mental health means they “aren’t praying hard enough.” They’ve been told that seeking outside help for their mental health—therapy or counseling—was “opening them up to the devil.”

Hear me now, and hear me well, friends: **These statements are unequivocally wrong.**

Mental health struggles are not an indication of your faith (or lack thereof).

Mental health struggles are not an indication of your ability to pray.

Mental health struggles are not something you have to shoulder alone.

Rev. Sarah Lund, the current Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice for the United Church of Christ and Senior Pastor at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Indianapolis, is also the author of a book entitled *Blessed are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence About Mental Illness, Family & Church*. In this book, Lund writes,

*Mental illness cannot be wished or prayed away. The stigma and shame about mental illness only increases its destructive power. Hiding in our closets, we are swallowed up by shadows. ... It is my hope that the church can be a community of truth tellers, decreasing stigma as we create safe, welcoming spaces for people with mental illness. It is my testimony that God is with us, even when there’s crazy in the blood. It is my gospel truth that blessed, not cursed, are the crazy for we will be called children of God.<sup>i</sup>*

i. Sarah Griffith Lund. *Blessed are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence About Mental Illness, Family & Church*. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2014), 102.

Throughout her book, Lund shares stories about growing up with mental illness in her family and the way that continues to affect every aspect of her life, her faith, and her calling to ministry.

Psalm 34 reassures us:

*I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be in my mouth. I praise the Lord—let the suffering listen and rejoice. Magnify the Lord with me! Together let us lift his name up high! ... The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those whose spirits are crushed. (34:1-3, 18)*

In this, and in Lund's testimony, we are reminded that we belong to God and also to each other. "No matter who you are, no matter where you come from, no matter what you bring with you, **you are WELCOME here in this community.**" That pertains to more than just what you wear to church on Sunday morning or what you bring to the latest food sharing event. That pertains to the whole state of your being—your body, your mind, your spirit, your physical health *and* your mental health. We are the body of Christ **together**. We hold each other up when we need it. We give each other strength when we need it. We accept the struggles one another are facing together, and in the midst of those struggles we encourage one another and do anything we can to help.

Friends, no matter what, you are a child of God, beloved and awash in God's grace. If you feel like you need help, reach out. Call me. Call another trusted loved one or friend. Call the mental health crisis line at 988.

You are loved.  
You are loved.  
You are loved.

*Pastor Gina*

## Scripture readings for May

- **May 5**—John 15:1-8
- **May 12**—1 John 5:9-13
- **May 19**—Acts 2:1-21, *Pentecost Sunday*
- **May 26**—John 3:1-17



## Dorothy Day Dinner



We will be returning to providing and serving dinner at the Dorothy Day House in Rochester on Wednesday, May 22, 2024. **\*Note: This is the 4th Wednesday of May, not the last Wednesday of May.\*** Janice Ostrom is coordinating the event and will be looking for 5-6 people willing to provide food and 3-4 volunteers to help serve. A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board.

This is a great way to “Pay It Forward” and experience God’s love. Your help is greatly appreciated by all the Dorothy Day residents.

## Sabbatical Helpers

These are the tasks that still need to be covered while Pastor Lisa is on sabbatical. If you can help with any of them, please contact her.



- † **BULLETINS:** I need a few people who are willing to format, print, and fold the bulletins each week. I will send the document format to those who are doing pulpit supply, so you’ll have everything you need. I’ll show you how to turn that document into bulletins (regular and large print), and we can make a sign-up sheet for the various Sundays.
- † **STREAMING:** If we’re going to continue streaming our worship, I need a few people willing to get all the streaming up and running throughout each service. Again, we can make a sign-up sheet for the various Sundays.
- † **FOOD SHELF BREAD DONATIONS EMAIL:** I need someone who can adjust the Google doc that we use for the bread sign-up sheet every few weeks and send it out. This literally takes about 5 minutes twice a month, and it’s super easy.

**Next Session mtg.:**

**Monday, May 6  
6:30 p.m.**

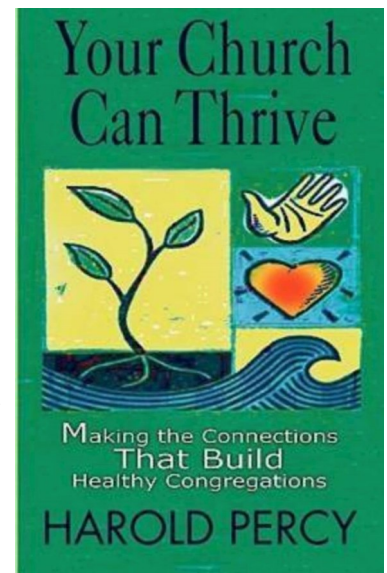
**Next Presbytery mtg.:**

**Thursday, Sept. 12, 2024  
late evening  
(hybrid—location TBD)**

## Year of Renewal: Phase 1 Congregational Book Study/Discussion

Pastor Lisa encountered this book through her doctorate work, and it's the perfect book for a congregational study and discussion setting. The description from the back of the books says: "How is your church going to grow? Will it grow by fine-tuning worship, the preaching, the Christian educations, and the like? Or will it grow by making strategic assessments of the people it is most likely to reach and focusing the ministries of the church on the goal of offering the gospel to those people? In this brief, practical book Harold Percy helps congregations answer these critical questions about their mission and ministry. ... He offers solid, easy-to-follow advice on how churches can understand the needs of these groups and reach out to them."

It would be **great** if others could read this book alongside Pastor Lisa. It can be found on Amazon, Barnes and Noble's website, and many other book distribution websites. There are also 2 copies at church that you could borrow. However, the beauty of this book is that it can generate plenty of discussion even if you haven't read the book. **Bottom line: Please stay for these discussions, whether you've read the book or not.**



Discussion dates will be:

<b>May 5</b>	<b>June 2</b>
<b>May 12</b>	<b>June 9</b>
<b>May 19</b>	<b>June 16</b>

### Food Shelf: Item of the Month

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 is also posted on our church Facebook page, so feel free to find it every month and share the image!



## All Around the Campfire



It's that time again! 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, un-structured 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!

- June 23: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

*\*Note: This is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, NOT the last Sunday of June.\**

- July 28: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

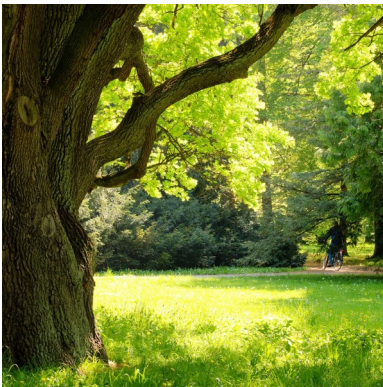
- August 25: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

- September 22: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

*\*Note: This is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, NOT the last Sunday of Sept.\**

## Beloveds Tree

Over the last 18 months, we've collected a lot of wonderful donations and names for our Beloveds Tree—the tree that we'll be planting in honor and memory of loved ones that we've lost.



The Session will be contacting Sargent's sometime in the next month or so to select the tree and have them come out and plant it.

We'll be ordering a plaque with the names on it soon as well, and we want to make sure we get all the names on it before it gets ordered. While we had originally hoped to be able to order an adjustable plaque—one that we could add names to as the years go on—we haven't been able to find one.

So if you've been thinking about either contributing or adding a name to your contribution, please contact Pastor Lisa soon.

## May Birthdays & Anniversaries

- ♫ 5/2—Greg Huey
- ♫ 5/3—Ian Johnson
- ♫ 5/3—Luke Johnson
- ♫ 5/12—Jenny Rand
- ♫ 5/14—Maddie Rand
- ♫ 5/14—Joy Bertsinger
- ♫ 5/18—Jane (Glabe) Shanks
- ♫ 5/31—Curt Burt
- ♥ 5/21—Geoff & Ellen Warner



## Star Word Prompts

As we prepare for Pentecost, how has the Holy Spirit lit a fire in you in/through your star word? What new thing has it inspired you to do?



## 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  
 Email: [office@ptcaweb.org](mailto:office@ptcaweb.org)  
 Website: <http://www.ptcaweb.org>

### Presbyterian Church (USA)

Office: 800-728-7228  
 Email: [info@pcusa.org](mailto:info@pcusa.org)  
 Website: <http://www.pcusa.org>





## Spouse Grief Group

We've started hosting a congregational spouse grief group. It's a very informal group—just a safe, supportive space to talk about beloved spouses that have passed, the ways that we deal with grief, and anything else. We meet:

**3rd Monday of the month—5:30 p.m.**

## 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** and **Hadley Thompson** in prayer.

## Keeping Up with the Smith-Mathers

We continue to receive (roughly) quarterly updates from Shelvis and Nancy about their life and work and mission in Uganda and South Sudan. And we continue to donate our 2nd Sunday Spare Change offering to the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) in honor of that work.



If if you can't be here in person to contribute to our Spare Change offering, you can still help. Visit their PMA 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.



## Synod School 2024

This year is a very special year. It's the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Synod School!! This incredible gathering of Presbyterians from around the country has been blessing families and ministries and congregations and lives for 70 years! From the Synod School catalogue: "Synod School is a learning and personal enrichment experience for people of all ages. We seek to create an environment of hospitality, healing, and hope. The week is designed for laity, clergy, individuals and families with classes and activities for adults, youth, and children." This is truly a family-friendly experience. Everything about Synod School is doable whether you're bringing a 1-month-old or whether you yourself are 91 yrs. old!



This year's theme is "More Than We Can Imagine," based on Ephesians 3:20-21: *Now to God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us, to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*

Again, from the Synod School catalogue: "The group that gathered to plan for the first Synod School event seventy years ago could not have imagined what brings us to Synod School in 2024. It has become more than they could have imagined! Multi-generation families, tie dye, more classes proposed than we have room for, 'the best week of the entire year' ...

As we look to the future of the Church, what will it look like? What innovations are already happening? What is yet to come? As we think about the lives of the young people in our lives, what will their futures be? What innovations will renew their lives and ministries? God is already doing things we cannot even imagine. What difference can that make in our lives and ministries?"

Pastor Lisa won't be at Synod School this year because of her sabbatical, but she would love to talk to you about it if you're interested in going! For more information, visit <https://lakesandprairies.org/engaging-leaders/synod-school/>.

**Registration opened April 1!**

**Presbyterian Church of Oronoco**  
P.O. Box 118  
Oronoco, MN 55960  
507-367-4711



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## Basic Information

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

Facebook: Presbyterian Church of Oronoco

Instagram: @oronocochurch



**Worship—10:00 a.m.**  
**Communion—1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month**  
**Fellowship hour following worship**

**Rev. Dr. Lisa Johnson—contact information:**

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Email: [PastorLisaJ@gmail.com](mailto:PastorLisaJ@gmail.com)

Blog: <http://pastorlisaj.com>