



The Messenger

Osceola Presbyterian Church

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December 5, 2025

*“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, says your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.”
(Isaiah 40: 1-3)*

These words of Isaiah open Handel’s great oratorio, MESSIAH. The first words sung are words of comfort and forgiveness. God speaks to those exiled in Babylon. Judah had been conquered by Babylon and taken into exile in a strange land. There was a long period of dislocation, during which the exiles voiced their grief and dismay. Judah groaned and cried out as if to an empty sky. They felt forgotten by God. Abandoned. Through the prophet the voice of God breaks the silence of exile and transforms the fortunes of Judah. This speech of the Lord breaks both the despair of Judah and the power of Babylon. It fills the emptiness of exile with possibilities and hope.

Throughout the bible God speaks words of comfort and forgiveness. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” (Isaiah 9:2) “For unto us a child is born...his name shall be Wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) “For unto you is born this day...a savior who is Christ the king.” (Luke 2:10-11) “He is not here, he is risen.” (Luke 24:6) “...death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55)

God’s continues today to speak words of comfort and forgiveness to us. During this Advent and Christmas season let us be reminded that through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, God breaks both the despair of our sin and the power of death. Our bonds of slavery to sin and death are broken, and we are filled with possibilities and hope. We are free to be the people God created us to be.

Let us remember that this birth signifies God with us. God is with us in all our lives. As we watch the events on the television, we realize we live in a broken world. The future seems uncertain and frightening. A child was born, a son given to us for such a time as this. God breaks the bonds of our sin and the power of death.

Rejoice, rejoice greatly of daughter of Zion! O daughter of Jerusalem, for lo, your king comes.
(Zechariah 9:9) Rejoice, rejoice greatly O people of Newtown, for lo, your king comes, comes as a tiny baby. And you are set free!

The merriest Christmas and the happiest New Year to you all.

In Christ’s Love, Pastor Bobbie



Advent Calendar 2025

Saturday, November 29th

~ "Deck the Halls" ~

2:00 pm - Decorating the church for Christmas
singing and Refreshments

Sunday, November 30th

~ First Sunday of Advent ~

10:00 am Worship – lighting the Candle of "Hope - Expectation"

Saturday, December 6th

~9-11 am Christmas Pancake Breakfast~

Many Baskets TrickY Tray/Ugly Sweater contest

Sunday, December 7th

~ Second Sunday of Advent ~

10:00 am Worship – lighting the Candle of "Peace - Prepare"

Sunday, December 14th

~ Third Sunday of Advent ~

10:00 am Worship – lighting the Candle of "Joy - Rejoice"

2:00 pm – "Carols, Cookies, Community-Christmas Around the World" Musical event
Refreshments with Coffee and Cocoa bars (Tea as well)
Free-will offering taken

Sunday, December 21st

~ Fourth Sunday of Advent ~

10:00 am Worship – lighting the Candle of "Love - Receive"

Tuesday, December 24th

~Christmas Eve~

7:00 pm – lighting of the Christ Candle
Traditional Candlelight Service with Communion

Sunday, December 29th

~First Sunday of Christmas~

10:00 am Worship Service, Epiphany Star Sunday
11:30 am- "Christmas Movie and Lunch-Fellowship Hall

Upcoming Events

Christmas Pancake Breakfast and Many Baskets Tricky Tray and Ugly Sweater

Pancakes, bacon and sausage, oh my! Get ready! Our Christmas Pancake Breakfast/Many Baskets Tricky Tray and Ugly Sweater Contest is just around the corner on Saturday, December 6, from 9 AM to 11 AM. The event will be held in Fellowship Hall and be open to the public. Tickets will be needed. Advance ticket prices are Adults: \$10, Child (under 10): \$5, Under 3: Free. For tickets, call: (908) 276-5300 or Email: pastorosceola@gmail.com



Carols, Cookies & Community – Christmas Around the World

Save the date and come to Osceola's new music program, "Carols, Cookies & Community," at 2 pm in the Sanctuary on Sunday, Dec. 14. The program will include a variety of music presentations and a carol sing-along followed by cookies and other holiday treats. You won't need a ticket, but there will be a free will offering. Bring some friends to share the Christmas spirit! There will be a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for cookie donations for the event.



2025 Advent Journal: "Songs of Blessing"

The birth of the Christ child is God's blessing to the world. This Advent season we will be singing our own songs of blessing and praise, as we look at some favorite Christmas hymns that speak of hope, peace, joy and love. Each week during Advent a different carol will be highlighted in the worship services. The Advent Devotional Journal will also center on familiar and not-so-familiar carols and songs. As we sing these carols of hope, peace, joy and love found in this tiny babe, may they speak to us words of comfort and forgiveness.



Epiphany Stars

Epiphany is from a Greek word meaning, "to make known." It is a manifestation or appearance. Light is a powerful symbol of Epiphany. It represents God's manifestation as Jesus, the Light of the world. The star that led the Wise Men to the child Jesus is the central image of Epiphany. Sunday, December 28, Epiphany Stars will be given out. You are invited to take an Epiphany Star. The word written on the back of the star has a special meaning for you and you alone. The word may be an affirmation of things that you are doing in your daily life. It may be a challenge for you to move ahead and take some chances to make changes. It may be a word of comfort, something you need to hear, or it may be a word you need to think about and prayerfully consider. Take a star and spend some quiet time reflecting on the meaning of that star. Ask God what God is trying to say to you and believe that God will help you to discern its meaning.

Deacons Continue To Serve

The Deacons at Osceola are grateful for the ongoing opportunity to serve our church family — and we want you to know we're here for you. No need is too small, and no ask is too big. Need help raking leaves? We've got you. Looking for a ride to a church event? Just let us know. Feeling overwhelmed or just need someone to talk to? We're here to listen. If you, or someone you know, could use a hand (or if you'd like to receive Home Communion) we'd love to hear from you. Your current Osceola Deacons are:

- Jimmy Dietze
- Linda Dodson
- Brooklyn Germano
- Theone Matz
- Jane Santiago
- Brady Walton



Join us after worship each Sunday to reconnect, share some laughs, and enjoy delicious treats with your church family! We're continuing with our monthly Fellowship Hour themes, with the theme for December being holiday treats! Think of all the festive sweets like Christmas cookies, peppermint cocoa, gingerbread – maybe even a fruitcake! If you love to bake (or shop!), we'd love your help. A sign-up sheet is in the Narthex now for anyone who'd like to bring some of your favorite holiday goodies to share.

The Deacons continue to sponsor a Food Pantry collection each month on each Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of the month. While all non-perishable food items are always welcome, we'll also be sharing a suggested item each month to help focus our efforts. Keep an eye on the Friday email blast, church announcements, and our Facebook page for updates! For the month of December, the suggested item is canned fruit and jelly.



Lunch and a Movie



On December 28th, everyone is invited to join the Congregational Life committee for a viewing of "The Star" beginning at 11:30. The Star is a 2017 computer-animated film that retells the Nativity story from the perspective of a young donkey named Bo. Bo escapes his daily life and embarks on an adventure with a sheep named Ruth and a dove named Dave, eventually becoming part of the Christmas story by helping Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem. The film balances humor and heart while following the core biblical narrative with added subplots.

There are sign-up sheets in the narthex to let us know what you can bring to the potluck. Drinks and popcorn will be provided.

Giving Thanks

On Thanksgiving Eve, "we gather(ed) together to ask the Lord's blessing" for a special worship service led by elder Alice Dietze. Through songs, prayer and a message on "Praying Hands," we took time to thank God for His bountiful goodness. We even celebrated with some "finger food" and fellowship!



Sunday School Fills Shoeboxes

Osceola's Sunday School classes participated in a favorite mission project – Operation Christmas Child. The kids filled shoe boxes with toys, school supplies and hygiene items to send to children all over the world. Thanks to the generosity of our Sunday School families, church members and friends in the community, a total of 122 boxes were filled this year!



Osceola's Mission Commission helped the cause by contributing \$1,000 to be used for the shipping costs. Each box included a letter from our Sunday School classes and the kids traced their handprints inside the box lids with a loving message. During worship on November 18, the boxes were blessed and waited for delivery to the drop-off site later that week.



The Sunday School kids also prepared “thank you” cards that were handed out to the congregation right before Thanksgiving. The youth learned how the Bible tells us to be thankful “in all things” as we are certainly thankful for our church family!!

Advent is a time for our Sunday School classes to learn about Jesus' birth and there will be a “Happy Birthday Jesus” celebration on December 21. No Sunday School classes will meet on December 28, but classes will resume on January 4, 2026.

Santa's Helpers

The Youth Group helped deliver our filled shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child to the drop-off site. They loaded all 122 boxes into our “sleighs,” unloaded them at the site and then spent the evening assisting with loading larger boxes. Eventually, these larger boxes were then loaded onto a tractor trailer to be taken to the distribution site.



On December 2nd, the kids will prepare treat baskets and handmade Christmas cards to be included in the December Food Pantry distribution. Our annual Christmas Mystery Event will be on December 9th, and the youth will be visiting numerous locations in and around Clark, singing and eating along the way. That will be our last gathering of the year, but we'll start off the new year with a post-Christmas celebration at the Dietze home in early January.

Food Pantry Helps Make Holidays Festive



November and December are always a very, very busy time for Osceola Food Pantry. We pack lots of extra “holiday fixin’s” for Thanksgiving and Christmas. It’s also a time when we are blessed to receive huge donations from a variety of sources. Clark’s Cub Scout Pack #145 brought the food collected during their food drive the Friday before Thanksgiving. We also received \$1,000 in gift cards from 1st Presbyterian Church of Cranford and a donation of 23 turkeys from Jane Santiago’s son, Jimmy. Osceola volunteers came out to help sort all of the food from recent donations.

Our families will be receiving overflowing boxes for the holidays that included pumpkin or apple pie (from the Youth Group) for Thanksgiving and treat bowls and handmade cards for Christmas. Our Sunday School classes have prepared holiday crafts to include in the food boxes as well. In addition, the families were able to make gift selections from an assortment of new items donated throughout the year and some used Christmas decorations.

Even more “special touches” will be included in the December distribution.



There’s still time for anyone willing to bake (or buy) at least 4 dozen Christmas cookies for our December Food Pantry distribution. Please contact Alice Dietze (732-574-8956 or adietze@verizon.net) if you can have cookies ready by December 21. Pick-up of donated cookies is also available.

Each of the children of our Food Pantry families will also receive a Christmas present in December, courtesy of the Osceola’s Angel Tree project. Gifts should be brought in by Sunday, December 14.



Looking ahead, we still need holiday items for December and winter items for January:

Stuffing mix	Instant potatoes	Gravy
Hot cocoa mix	Crackers	Dessert mixes (pudding, Jello)
Cookies/snack cakes	Oatmeal	

Save the Date!

On Tuesday, January 13, 2026, Osceola's Mission Commission will again partner with Friendly's for a fundraiser from noon-8 p.m. Stop by for lunch or dinner and help support the local business and mission programs at Osceola. A portion of each check will be donated to Osceola's Mission Commission if you mention the fundraiser.

Thank You to Our “DECK THE HALL-ers”



We are grateful to the entire “decorating crew” who came out the Saturday after Thanksgiving to help “deck the halls” (and Sanctuary) for Advent and Christmas! It was a festive day of cooperation and beautiful results!!



Carols, Cookies & Community – “Christmas Around the World”



Save the date and come to Osceola’s second annual music program, “Carols, Cookies & Community,” at 2:00 pm in the Sanctuary on Sunday, December 14th. The program will include a variety of music presentations and a carol sing-along followed by cookies and other holiday treats. You won’t need a ticket but there will be a freewill offering and we hope you will bring some friends to share the Christmas spirit! The program will not be shown on Zoom or Facebook, so we hope you plan to be there!

This year’s theme is “Christmas Around the World.” Some members will be sharing traditions of their ancestry and musical presentations from a variety of nations will be presented. There will be lots of

musical sing-alongs as well!

We also need donations of cookies (any kind will do, but it would be wonderful if we had some treats from other countries as well!) Cookies may be brought to the church on December 14th but there is also a sign-up sheet in the Narthex (or contact Alice Dietze).

Christmas Eve

Osceola’s Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be on Wednesday, December 24th at 7:00 pm. Our service will be led by the Rev. Roberta Arrowsmith and include Holy Communion and special music by our Christmas Choir. All generations are invited to join us as we observe the birth of Emmanuel!



Holiday Greetings

If you’d like to send a Christmas card to the entire church family, write out your card and bring (or mail) it to church to be mounted on the holiday board in the Narthex. Spread some tidings of great joy!!



WHOM SHALL I CALL?

If you...	Contact:
Are/or a family member is sick and in need of a pastoral visit	Pastor Bobbie Arrowsmith
Or a family member would like to receive Home Communion...	Jimmy Dietze, Jr.; Pastor Bobbie
Know of someone in need of a visit or a meal...	Deacons/ Jimmy Dietze, Jr.
Need a ride to a doctor's appointment or event....	Deacons/ Jimmy Dietze, Jr.
Have a concern about anything in the building or church property...	Bob Cunningham
Have a concern you want brought to Session...	Paul Hadsall (Clerk)
Are interested in learning more about Osceola...	Any of the Elders
Are interested in becoming a member of Osceola...	Pastor Bobbie Arrowsmith
Are interested in serving as a Worship Assistant or an Usher...	Jim Dietze, Sr.
Would like to help with Fellowship Hour...	Deacons / Jane Santiago
Are interested in helping with the Food Pantry...	Alice Dietze
Are interested in serving as an Elder or a Deacon...	Liz Coffey-Dawe
Have pictures or information to share with the congregation...	Paul Hadsall, Beth Parks
Would like to teach or help with Sunday School...	Alice Dietze
Would like to get involved with a Bible Study...	Alice Dietze
Would like to plan congregational gatherings...	Fredy Reyes
Have a musical talent to share....	Jim Dietze, Sr., Fabrizio Germano
Are interested in working with any of the Commissions...	Commission Chair

10/2025