



# Oak Leaves



Vol. LXII, Number 6

FEBRUARY 2020

## *Bringing Our Whole Self to God*

*by Parson John*

Our mind is a wonderful gift from God. It should be used fully. My mother, a deeply spiritual woman, taught me from as early as I remember to love the life of the mind, the heart, the body (though I did pick up on some shame around sexuality), and the soul. Jesus told us to love God with our heart, mind, soul and strength—all of us. About the life of the mind she said that an education is one thing that can never be taken away from you. It wasn't until I got to college that I truly feel in love with the life of the mind. Since the age of 18, I have never been without good books as constant companions.

The life of the mind, however, is not the whole self. There is also the heart, soul and body. How do we love God with these? In the days when I was engaged in higher education, these other aspects of the self were largely ignored, at times even ridiculed. The supposed objectivity of reason was what was valued. The subjective self, all of those messy and so-called lower aspects of self like emotions, physicality and spirituality (even in seminary) were not welcomed in the classroom.

Maybe this development was a necessary stage in our evolution as a species. Reason, perhaps, needed to be untangled from these other parts of ourselves to bring us to greater clarity of vision. But somewhere in the 20th century, the modern faith in the efficacy of reason began to implode. Religious fundamentalism began to rise. Anti-intellectualism and skepticism about science came to the fore. The search for a reasonable middle-ground in government became replaced by a drive for “no compromise” extremes. Expertise was ridiculed and passion and entertainment became supreme virtues. Is there a way to bring us through the chaos of our moment?

I believe that the way forward is staring us in the eyes, and my mom was onto it sixty years ago. Love God with our whole selves. Learn to bring all parts of ourselves into this journey we call life. Don't let any aspect of self have tyranny over the other.

Study, yes! Discipline the mind. Stretch with continual growth. Take in new and challenging information and ideas. Let truth take us where it will, even if it means questioning cherished beliefs and views. But don't just worship God with our heads. Learn to bring the heart into the equation. This is where the renewal of the Christian

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Bringing Our Whole Self to God (...continued from previous page)

contemplative tradition is so promising for us. Look at Richard Rohr's email meditation in this month's newsletter. He is at the forefront of the renewal of our contemplative heritage. Our spiritual ancestors knew that in order to hear God well we have to have some ability to quieten our obsessive minds. They told us to learn to put our minds in our hearts. For anyone who engages in contemplative practice, there is this internal recognition which emerges about the irrational nature of our thoughts. Some call it "monkey mind." And then, when the monkey mind begins to slow down, one experiences this shift within in which the heart and mind start to work together. Studies have shown how the brain waves of meditators begin to align with the rhythms of the heart. Observers can see a shift in us from the outside and practitioners can experience a difference within, with a new-found capacity to be less reactive and more fully present.

Jesus' command for us to love God with our whole selves was not just a sentimental wish. It was a command based on a deep knowledge of the human being and God. Until we become whole, we will necessarily be dis-eased. Our tradition knows how to help us become whole. Are we willing to step out of our limiting boxes and embrace wholeness? It's what we are trying to do here at First Pres. See you in church, for our healing and the healing of the world!



## *Worshipping Together*

### *February Services*

**FEBRUARY 2, 2020**

**1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12**  
**"Nice Guys and Gals Finish First"**

**FEBRUARY 9, 2020**

**1 Corinthians 2:1-12; Matthew 5:13-20**  
**"Avoiding Sloppy Agape"**

**FEBRUARY 16, 2020**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37**  
**"The Sting of the Christian Path"**

**FEBRUARY 23, 2020**

**Exodus 24:12-18 and Matthew 17:1-9**  
**"The Cloud of Unknowing"**

## Church School News



Happy February!

Big shout out to Andrea and Josie for all their help in January!

If anyone would like to volunteer, please sign up or let me know. The kids love seeing new faces and the unique quality each person brings!

Thank you as well to all of our nursery volunteers! You guys are the best!

Here's the schedule for February:

2/2: The Beatitudes and cooperative games

2/9: All You Need is Love- Valentine's Day Activity

2/16: That's a Wrap- Genesis and environmental activity making plastic free "Saran Wrap"

2/23: Family Worship

**Marie Van Cleve, Director of Christian Education**

## Music Program News

Dear friends,

Attention all of you who love to sing! The invitation still stands: if you would like to come and sing with the Adult Choir, even for a short period of time to try it out, please let me know. We'd love to have you visit a rehearsal to enjoy a fun and uplifting experience!

Looking into February, we have a few dates to note in your calendars:

Sunday, February 2nd: Vince Mottern will join us and perform in music worship

Sunday, February 23: Youth Choir performs in worship.

Thank you, and looking forward to connecting in church!

**Andreea Fegan, Director of Music**



## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

will be held

**Wednesday, February 26th, 2020**

**7:30 p.m.**

## Sermons Online

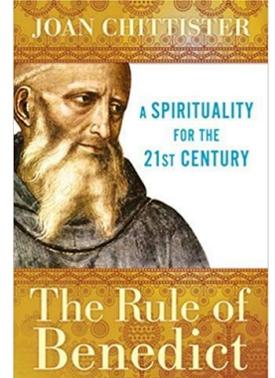
Please note that you can listen to our sermons online by visiting our website:

[www.rumsonpresbyterian.org](http://www.rumsonpresbyterian.org).

If you have difficulty with this please contact the church office for assistance.

## Adult Nurture Gathering

**Wisdom Wednesdays:** With the New Year, our Wednesday wisdom meetings will begin to explore The Rule of Benedict as a long-tested source for our spiritual awakening in daily life. We will begin by using Joan Chittister's book, *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*. Benedict's Rule seeks to create a balance and rhythm to support a life of continual turning to God. God is to be found in every task and in every encounter. We need intention and support to become more deeply present to the God who is always with us. Our Wednesday meetings will follow a pattern of a brief body prayer, chanting, silent meditation and contemplative conversation around Chittister's book. All are welcome .



## Memorial Garden



A new display for plaques in our Memorial Garden is in motion. We have noticed that the plaques weather better when they are mounted on a slant than when they are flat. We have ordered three small granite blocks, each of which can hold twenty-eight plaques. The blocks will be placed in appropriate areas of the garden, with an eye to maintaining the natural beauty of it. The cost will be about \$5000.

We have received several generous gifts to support this improvement and are asking for others. Any gifts which bring us above the cost of the new displays will go into a fund for the maintenance of the garden. This is very important for the garden. These past two years, especially, have created an environment conducive to weeds. We need a fund to support regular weeding, mulch and trimming of plants.

The Memorial Garden is a much used and appreciated part of our church grounds. Thank you for your support which will enable us to maintain its beauty.

## Stewardship Drive

Thank you to all members who have taken the time to support this year's Stewardship Drive. Your support is greatly appreciated.

## Ushers Needed!!!



We are in need of a few more volunteers to be ushers or alternate ushers. We try to maintain around 10 usher teams, and each team usually ushers 5-6 weeks each year. Thank you very much for your support.

Contact **Rosanne Monroe** at [rosannecanore@gmail.com](mailto:rosannecanore@gmail.com) if you are interested.

## Nursery Volunteers



Please keep in mind that we will still be looking for nursery school volunteers for the summer months! Please reach out if you or interested or know someone that may be! Pay is \$25 for the hour, or the hour can be used to fulfill community service requirements.

Contact **Maria Van Cleve** at [mlegge210@gmail.com](mailto:mlegge210@gmail.com) if you are interested.

## Coffee Hour Volunteers



We all enjoy the coffee and delicious treats served Wilson Hall after Sunday's church service. Congregational Life is looking for volunteers for next September and beyond to keep this WONDERFUL program running.

**A sign-up sheet is located on the bulletin board.**

Please contact **Rosanne Monroe** at [rosannecanore@gmail.com](mailto:rosannecanore@gmail.com) with any questions.

## Rumson Senior Citizens Club

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 11:00 am**

This month we will meet on **February 10th** and **February 24th**.

We meet at the **Rumson Presbyterian Church**. Any questions or for more information, please contact **Sharon Cook** at **732-570-3787** (cell) or [mygemini671@comcast.net](mailto:mygemini671@comcast.net).



**All seniors are welcome.**  
**It's not just for Rumson residents.**



## Neighbor to Neighbor

We request and continue to accept donations of the following items: CANNED GOODS, TOMATO PRODUCTS, PASTA, RICE, BEANS and FRESH GARLIC. Many thanks for your ongoing support!

**Nan Hosna**

## Per Capita Update for 2020

The Per Capita envelope found just before your first Sunday in February Stewardship Envelope is used in a special way. Each year every member of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is assessed a certain amount that is paid by the local congregation to the National Church. In turn, that money is divided among the General Assembly, the Synod of the Northeast and the Presbytery of Monmouth according to a set formula. Per Capita money is used by those governing bodies to pay for administrative costs such as salaries of staff persons, office expenses, program materials, etc. In 2020, the Per Capita amount for the Rumson Presbyterian Church is **\$40.00** per person. By using this special envelope and including an amount equal to three and a half weeks of your regular pledge, we can avoid using scarce operating dollars. We thank you in advance for your support.



### ***Please see the upcoming events with Waterspirit***

***Meditation for Earth***

***Tuesdays 12:15 PM***

*Quiet meditation and contemplative prayer for the Earth.*

***Eco-Anxiety Support Group***

***Fridays 10:00 AM***

*This January, Waterspirit will host the next round of an eco-anxiety peer support group using the Good Grief Network's "10 Steps to Personal Resilience and Empowerment in a Chaotic Climate" method. An informational meeting takes place on January 24th. The series runs through April 3rd.*

***Transformational Breath Introductory Workshop***

***Friday, February 7th, 6:30 PM***

*Experience the benefits and application of a full, deep, connected breath! Eliminate restrictive breathing patterns and heal yourself - physically, mentally, emotionally. Live fully & be joyful!*

***Waterspirit Book Club***

***Monday, February 24th, 6:00 PM***

*Please join us as we discuss the novel Learning Love from a Tiger by Daniel Capper. Pizza and salad will be served.*

***Unless noted, events are at WATERSPIRIT  
(co-located at the First Presbyterian Church of Rumson)***

***4 East River Road, Rumson, NJ 07760***

***Call or email for registration and information:***

***732-923-9788 or [water@waterspirit.org](mailto:water@waterspirit.org)***

The background of the page is a painting of a desert landscape. In the center, a figure with a halo is depicted in a cave or grotto, surrounded by rocky terrain and sparse vegetation. The overall color palette is dominated by earthy tones like ochre, brown, and green.

## Action and Contemplation : The Prayer of Quiet

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM

*The Desert Fathers and Mothers withdrew from cities to the desert to live freely, apart from the economic, cultural, and political structure of the Roman Empire. At first, the empire persecuted the church, but in 313 CE, Constantine gave Christianity a privileged status, not out of enlightenment or goodwill but in service of uniformity and control. The Desert Fathers and Mothers knew, as we should today, that empire would be an unreliable partner. They recognized that they had to find inner freedom from the system before they could return to it with true love, wisdom, and helpfulness. This is a useful dynamic for all of us who want to act on behalf of the world. If we stay immersed in culturally acceptable ways of thinking and doing, Christianity's deep, transformative power is largely lost.*

*So how do we find inner freedom? We can begin by noticing that whenever we suffer pain, the mind is always quick to identify with the negative aspects of things and replay them over and over again, wounding us deeply. This pattern must be recognized early and definitively. Peace of mind is actually an oxymoron. When you're in your mind, you're hardly ever at peace, and when you're at peace, you're never only in your mind. The early Christian abbas and ammas knew this and first insisted on finding the inner silence necessary to tame the obsessive mind. Their method was originally called the prayer of quiet and eventually referred to as contemplation. It is the core teaching in the early Christian period, but it has been emphasized much more in the Eastern Church than in the West.*

*In The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Benedicta Ward relates this story, one of the briefest but most popular of all the desert sayings: "A brother came to Scetis to visit Abba Moses and asked him for a word. The old man said to him, 'Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.'" [1] But you don't have to have a cell, and you don't have to run away from the responsibilities of an active life, to experience solitude and silence. In another story, Amma Syncletica said, "There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town, and they are wasting their time. It is possible to be a solitary in one's mind while living in a crowd, and it is possible for one who is a solitary to live in the crowd of his own thoughts." [2]*

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## Action and Contemplation : The Prayer of Quiet (...continued)

*By solitude, the desert mystics didn't mean mere privacy or protected space, although there is a need for that too. The desert mystics saw solitude, in Henri Nouwen's words, as a "place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born, the place where the emergence of the [person] occurs." [3] Solitude is a courageous encounter with our naked, most raw and real self, in the presence of pure Love. This level of contemplation cannot help but bring about action.*

### Reference:

[1] The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection, trans. Benedicta Ward, rev. ed. (Cistercian Publications: 1984, ©1975), 139.

[2] Ibid., 234

[3] Henri Nouwen, The Way of the Heart (Harper Collins Publishers: 2009), 27.

**Image credit:** *Vendimian of Bythinia* (Menologion of Basil II) (detail), Anonymous artist, 981 CE.

**Inspiration for this week's banner image:** *Solitude is a courageous encounter with our naked, most raw and real self, in the presence of pure Love. This level of contemplation cannot help but bring about action.* —Richard Rohr

## FEMALE WINTER QIGONG SERIES

WITH JOYCE VIRANI

TUESDAY AFTERNOON 1 - 2:30



# Time for Reflection

## In Other Words



We're so accustomed to hearing the Bible's "love chapter," 1 Corinthians 13, at weddings and other occasions that we may not really hear its meaning anymore. It can help to listen to something familiar said in different words. What new understandings of love does this paraphrase from The Message Bible reveal to you?

"Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always 'me first,' doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end. Love never dies" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, MSG).

## Better Together

Racial reconciliation is a hot topic among Christians these days. In Sikeston, Missouri, which has a history of segregation, two church bodies recently decided to live out the gospel's message of unity by merging.

Kenny King, pastor of the mostly black Smith Chapel, and William Marshall, pastor of the mostly white Trinity Baptist, had become friends. They realized both churches, while healthy, were undergoing transitions, so they joined forces. The new congregation's name, Grace Bible Fellowship, represents God's grace and the grace we extend to others — no matter their skin color.

"We want to ... give people the benefit of the doubt instead of letting these issues divide us," King says. "The gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to keep us together and not keep us separated."

## Love-ly Superlatives

To fall in love with God is the greatest of romances, to seek him the greatest adventure, to find him the greatest human achievement.

—St. Augustine

## Words of Wisdom

"A smile is the light in your window that tells others that there is a caring, sharing person inside."

—Denis Waitley

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you."

—Anne Lamott

"There is only one happiness in this life: to love and be loved."

—George Sand

**First Presbyterian Church of Rumson NJ**  
**P.O. Box 399**  
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**Rumson, NJ 07760**

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**DATED MATERIAL ENCLOSED**

~Please check our website at [www.rumsonpresbyterian.org](http://www.rumsonpresbyterian.org) for calendar updates~

**FEBRUARY 2020**

Feb 1-29	<b>African-American History Month</b>		
Feb 4	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Feb 5	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Feb 7	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Feb 10	Mon	Rumson Seniors Meeting	11:00am
Feb 11	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Feb 12	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Feb 14	Fri	<b>Valentine's Day</b>	
Feb 14	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Feb 17	Mon	<b>Presidents' Day</b>	
Feb 18	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Feb 18	Tue	Session	7:00pm
Feb 19	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Feb 21	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Feb 23	Sun	<b>Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday</b>	
Feb 24	Mon	Rumson Seniors Meeting	11:00am
Feb 25	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Feb 26	Wed	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	
Feb 26	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Feb 28	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Feb 29	Sat	<b>Leap Day</b>	

**MARCH 2020**

Mar 1	Sun	<b>First Sunday of Lent</b>	
Mar 3	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Mar 4	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Mar 6	Fri	<b>World Day of Prayer</b>	
Mar 6	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Mar 8	Sun	<b>Daylight-Savings Time begins</b>	
Mar 9	Mon	Rumson Seniors Meeting	11:00am
Mar 10	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Mar 11	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Feb 13	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Mar 17	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Mar 17	Tue	Session	7:00pm
Mar 18	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Mar 19	Thu	<b>First Day of Spring</b>	
Mar 20	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Mar 23	Mon	Rumson Seniors Meeting	11:00am
Mar 24	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm
Mar 25	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Mar 27	Fri	Climate Anxiety Group*	10:00am
Mar 31	Tue	Meditation*	12:15pm

*\*WATERSPIRIT sponsored event. All are welcome.*



[www.rumsonpresbyterian.org](http://www.rumsonpresbyterian.org)