

Oak Leaves

Vol. LXIII, Number 3

NOVEMBER 2020



The Practice of Gratitude by Parson John

I write this article a week before our national election, as the number of cases of COVID-19 are on the rise to new heights. To say that we are living with uncertainty and anxiety would be an understatement. Will there be post-election chaos as mail-in votes are counted? Will there be unrest taken into our streets? Will an increase in coronavirus cases send us into renewed practices of seclusion as the days grow shorter and colder? Already, we are hearing messages from some, encouraging us not to have large Thanksgiving gatherings.

In a time of challenge and sacrifice, it is especially important for us to find spiritual resources and practices to sustain us. Thanksgiving is, I believe, one of our most spiritually insightful holidays. It is based in the simple act of gathering around a meal in order to give thanks for our lives, our country, and the bounty which is before us. I love Thanksgiving because of its inherent simplicity. Sure, there is excess—the over-eating of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, pies, and the like. There are lots of carbs and other tasty dishes. But unlike many other holidays, there is not total commercialization, because its basic premise is simply to gather and give thanks; and, of course, to eat!

Maybe, we will experience loss this Thanksgiving. We might not practice it in the ways we did before. Maybe not. But this is one holiday that can remain rich and intentional, no matter what. In fact, its enforced simplicity of smaller gatherings might even serve to focus us on its true significance. It reminds us of our dependence on the fruitfulness of the earth, on the work of those who produce, harvest and deliver our food, and on God's eternal goodness and faithfulness.

The experience of loss and difficulty have a way of bringing us into focus on what is important. Challenge wakes us up to the blessing which is our life. We can be reminded that

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what really brings us happiness and wellbeing are relationships of love, the earth, and the blessings of creation. Yes, these are difficult and uncertain times. All the more reason to practice thanksgiving this month and every month. God's blessings to you all!

Worshipping Together in November



Sunday, November 1st, 2020 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: "What Are We Becoming?" by Rev. John W. Monroe, III

Scripture: 1 John 3:1-3 and Matthew 5:1-12

These readings point to the nature of our ultimate identity in Christ. Do we find ourselves being led into the quality of being of Christlikeness? If not, what changes do we make to more fully embrace our destiny now?

Sunday, November 8th, 2020 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: "Like Calls to Like" by Rev. John W. Monroe, III

Scripture: Philippians 4:1-9 and Matthew 22:1-14

We are made in the image of God and called to likeness with God. The image is a gift. The likeness is our work and decision and cannot be given without our striving. What stands in the way of our move to likeness with God? What may we need to get to find likeness? What may we need to give up?

Sunday, November 15th, 2020 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: "Growing the God Gene" by Rev. John W. Monroe, III

Scripture: Judges 4:1-7 and Matthew 25:14-30

If we think of the talents in this parable as our capacity for spiritual sight and wisdom, then it reads as a warning not to bury this capacity. It takes courage and fortitude to grow our spiritual capacity. How are we doing with this?

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Sunday, November 22nd, 2020 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: "The Arc of the Moral Universe" by Rev. John W. Monroe, III

Scripture: Ezekiel 34:11-16 and Matthew 25:31-46

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Is this not what this parable tells us, what the prophet Ezekiel too?

Sunday, November 29th, 2020 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: "The Cost of Being Called" by Rev. John W. Monroe, III

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 and Mark 13:24-37

We like to think of ourselves as part of those called into God's fellowship, but the call comes with a cost. It demands a response, a readiness not to coast, not to be unconscious, but always vigilant and awake.

For more services, visit rumsonpresbyterian.org/upcoming-services

Church School



Hi everyone!

I hope November's Oak Leaves finds you all healthy and well. I know the kids are resilient and are navigating through these strange times with a lot of heart. Please let me know how I can offer any support. I am here every Sunday via zoom and am looking forward to seeing more of their faces. Please reach out to me via my personal email mlegge210@gmail.com if you need anything at all.

Warm regards,
Marie, Church School Director

Music Program



Dear friends,

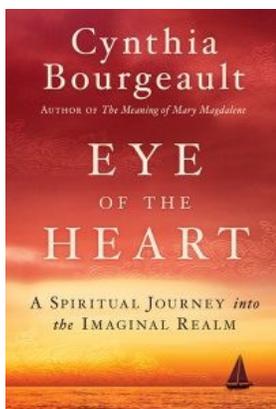
Members of the choir and I have already recorded musical selections to be put together in a mini-movie for the Cantata, which will be showcased in our Zoom worship service on Sunday December 20th. We are excited to share it with you all! In the meantime, if any of you would like to contribute a video of you reciting a favorite Christmas poem, or even a musical number, please let me know. You can email me at andreeafegan@gmail.com.

Thank you and looking forward to the weeks ahead.

All the best,

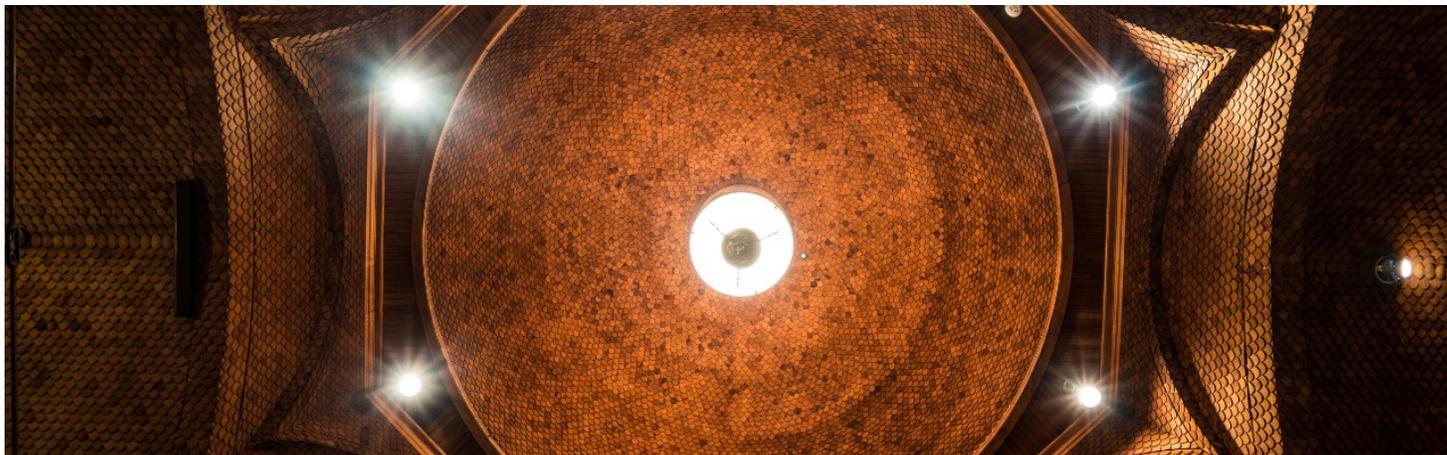
Andreea Fegan, Music Director

Adult Nurture



Wisdom Wednesdays: In our Wednesday Wisdom gatherings, we are looking at Cynthia Bourgeault's latest book, *Eye of the Heart: A Spiritual Journey into the Imaginal Realm*. Following in the lineage of the Christian contemplative tradition, Cynthia provides meaningful maps for those who feel drawn to explore how spiritual realms show up in human terrain. She demonstrates that the spiritual life does not have to be lost in subjectivity and self-deception. There are reliable markers to help sincere seekers of spiritual truth. You are welcome to join us (via Zoom) Wednesday evenings at 7:00 PM.

Church Mission



The November Mission envelope will go to support local ministries in a time of COVID-19.

Church News



Red Bank CROP Hunger Walk



A big thank you to those who have donated through the Rumson Presbyterian fundraising link!

Red Bank CROP Hunger Walk is part of a national network of community-based fundraising walks, raising funds to fight hunger in our local communities and in some of the most vulnerable communities around the world through the global partners of Church World Service.

The goal this year is to raise \$110,000. The link will remain online until December 31. Please

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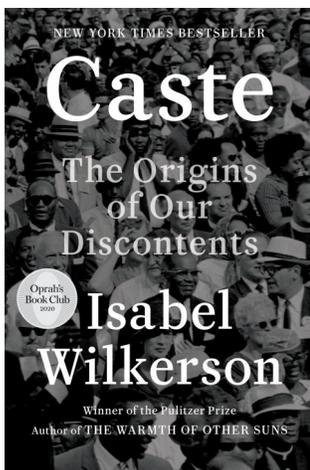
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donate as you are able. Funds raised support vulnerable people throughout the world, and support 15 non profits here in Monmouth County. The link to donate:

<https://www.crophungerwalk.org/redbanknj/Team/View/139302/Rumson-Presbyterian-Church>.

Remember that our world has changed and needs are great in 2020. The 15 local partners the Red Bank Crop Walk for Hunger supports along with the Global Partners of Church World Service (CWS) are appreciative as well. So please touch lives to Make A Difference in 2020.

Racial Equity : Exploring White Privilege and Anti-Racism



Our group is reading the book *Caste: The Origins of our Discontent* by Isabel Wilkerson. In October we discussed the first part of the book. On November 16 the group will participate in a joint event presented by the T. Thomas Fortune House, Red Bank Library and Two River Theater in a discussion on the book. Please register here:

<https://www.redbanklibrary.org/calendar-covid/fh78bzelmwsyyeglap6kebws7dhl9p>.

We plan to continue our discussion of the book in December. Please let the Church office know if you want to be added to the email list (admin@rumsonpresbyterianchurch.org).

Protocols for Reopening at Rumson Presbyterian Church



As our church leadership discerns how and when to allow in-person gatherings, we affirm our commitment to every person's safety and to the service and wellbeing of the community of church and community in which we are a part. We acknowledge that we are part of a which different needs and perspectives exist side-by-side. Just as we believe that Christ sees and

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values all, so we affirm our conviction that, as Christ's body, we are called to see and value all in this challenging time of global pandemic. Our commitment as Presbyterians is to seek the mind of Christ in all that we do and in creating and administering these protocols for in-person gatherings on church property.

Virtual worship will continue to be offered for the foreseeable future.

Protocols

1. We will not allow more than 30 people in the sanctuary for worship.
2. The date of our first in-person worship service will be September 13, 2020 at 9:45 AM.
3. All participants will be required to wear masks and abide by social distancing recommendations, at least six feet apart, with the exception of immediate family.
4. There will be no congregational singing. All hymnals, Bibles, cards, pencils and cushions will be removed from the sanctuary. Music may be provided by our Music Director and/or designated soloist, who will be at a safe distance from worshippers.
5. At least two trained ushers will be required for any in-person worship. Doors to the buildings will be locked until ushers are in place. Worshippers will be allowed to enter through one of two doors into the foyer from the parking lot or the door facing River Road. Worshippers will exit through the door leading to the porte cochere. One usher will be in the foyer, the other at the door leading to the porte cochere. Ushers will assist people in finding seating in places that are marked for seating. There will be no bulletins.
6. Offering plates will be set at the two entrance doors and the one exit door. They will not be passed around in worship.
7. On Communion Sundays, there will be no sharing of elements. Worshippers will either bring their own elements or partake symbolically.
8. There will be no fellowship gathering and no coffee hour after worship. If weather allows, worshippers may speak with each other outdoors after worship, observing social distancing and the wearing of masks.
9. Physical greetings such as handshakes and hugs will not be allowed. Thorough cleaning protocols will take place before and after every worship service.
10. The Sunday worship service will continue to focus on those participating by virtual mode.
11. Signed waivers will not be required for members or for Sunday worship.
12. Names of all worshippers will be recorded.
13. Downstairs bathrooms will be open and use encouraged only as necessary.

Giving

GIVE PLUS⁺

YOUR CHURCH GIVING APP

Rumson Presbyterian Church is excited to partner with the Presbyterian Foundation and Vanco Payment Solutions to bring you our GivePlus Online Giving page (<https://rumsonpresbyterian.org/giving/>).

We are also listed in the GivePlus Mobile App, which can be downloaded to your smartphone, making Online Giving even easier. This YouTube video explains how to get and use the App. In addition, here are links to two more documents about the service and the App: “Vanco GivePlus Church FAQs for Donors” and “Vanco GivePlus Church How it Works”.

Note: 2% of your GivePlus donation will be retained as an administrative fee by the Presbyterian Foundation.

Caring for God's Earth



Submitted by **Diane Burke** and **Sue Smith**

We are running a series of articles from Mission Crossroads on the impact of climate change around the world.

Are we really all on the same boat?

Or are some in Noah's Ark and others on the Titanic?

by **Burkhard Paetzold** | Mission Crossroads

Another hot and dry summer last year caused many heat-related issues and stresses for farmers in Central Europe. Plants had to be watered around the clock, just to keep them alive.

Thirty years ago, I remember we had to clean smashed insects from our car windshield practically every other day. Now we hardly have to do it at all because our insects are fewer in variety and number, and even our bees are in danger.

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People everywhere are talking about climate change and a silent war against nature. It's a necessity to talk about trees and bees, since they disappear as a signal of our complex wrongdoings as citizens of planet Earth:

- The vicious cycle of excessive meat production and consumption results in deforestation and harmful production of methane from cattle.
- Ever-increasing burning of fossil fuel has stripped us, in just a few years, from resources accumulated over thousands of years.
- Climate change has led to environmental degradation.
- Increasingly, migration is caused by the effects of climate change.

More and more people understand that the justice, peace and integrity of God's Creation form a triad. Justice needs peace and peace needs justice. A fair and humble use of natural resources is an important element of justice and thus a precondition for peace. A destruction or poisoning of or robbery of nature causes people to leave their homeland and limits our fairness to future generations.

Looking at 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, who started the movement of students in Sweden, I think these are fragile shoulders to carry the whole world. It's like when we delegated pacifism to 18-year-old conscientious objectors, while others hid. But this movement is growing. Youth in Europe have learned that their future is at stake. Students participate in "Fridays for Future," a campaign against fossil fuel. Communities are protecting their bees by spreading the word that "Cutting your lawn short should be embarrassing," and that people should plant flowers instead of maintaining carefully manicured lawns. Their slogan is "Wir sind hier, wir sind laut, weil ihr uns die Zukunft klaut," which translates to "We are here, we are loud, because you steal our future." This makes me sad.

In June, I attended Kirchentag, a large Protestant-German lay assembly in Dortmund in northern Germany. Together with tens of thousands of other attendees, I sang about God's beautiful Creation, discussed our ecological sins and, most importantly, encouraged others. I was also encouraged in the ongoing work of caring for Creation.

Europe is divided over the issue of migration and doesn't have a strategy. At the 2019 Kirchentag, we had opportunities to hear the voices of refugees and others who witness the suffering of refugees. We commemorated the thousands who have died in the Mediterranean and protested against criminalizing their helpers. (The former Italian interior minister didn't even allow rescue boats to enter Italian harbors.)

I was part of a group carrying long banners made by participants in the Kirchentag, listing the names of thousands of people who drowned. We hung the banners from one of the tallest church steeples in Dortmund.

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The populist neo-nationalist political party Alternative for Germany sees all this very differently. Many of my fellow church members and I were shocked to see them doubling their share of the vote in the recent elections (to now 23%). In my very secular state of Brandenburg, this party, which is led by a former neo-Nazi, sees my denomination (the Protestant Church in Germany) as part of a left-wing and ecological conspiracy. For the members of this neo-nationalist party, climate justice and support for refugees are misleading ideologies.

They say the church has lost God and only follows the current societal mainstream. However, in truth, they themselves are actually seeking to replace God with the idol of nationalism. That's something that's been tried before in German history, with terrible results.

There is a diversity in the streets that inspires me; from high schoolers to doctors; scientists to faith leaders; union members and everyone else demanding action on climate change from our country's leaders.

I believe that right now Christians on both sides of the Atlantic need each other very much. God placed humankind in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it" (Gen. 2:15).

Burkhard Paetzold, regional liaison for Central and Western Europe, connects Presbyterians in the U.S. to advocacy work for the Roma people and refugees through churches, organizations and programs associated with the Conference of European Churches and Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe.

A Meditation (from Richard Rohr)



Center for
Action and
Contemplation

Thomas Keating: The Secret Embrace

by [Richard Rohr, OFM](#)

October 21, 2020

*Before being born into the world of time,
The silence of pre-existence was all absorbing.*

*The transition from eternity to time
Is full of sufferings, fears, and little deaths.*

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*But, in the transition from death
To eternal life,
The silence of pre-existence
Bursts into boundless joy.
All that can be manifested emerges
From the endless creativity of
That Which Is.
But
The Secret Embrace
Of
The Source of all creation
With
Infinite Transcendence
Can
Never be revealed.*

—Thomas Keating, “The Secret Embrace”

Today we include the title poem, “The Secret Embrace,” in its entirety. Cynthia Bourgeault comments on one aspect of it in particular:

It is remarkable to trace how Thomas’ understanding of God evolved over the last three decades of his life. In the 1980s, when his first books and videos were beginning to appear, God was still very much framed within the classic Western model with God as “he”—a father figure. Thomas’ initial focus during the early years of his teaching was to shift that image away from a fearsome father, the wrathful God who has caused so much misery and woundedness for Western seekers, to a “divine therapist”: supportive, trustworthy, and a hundred percent behind us in our journey of transformation.

But by the end of his life, Thomas is in a very different place. God co-inheres and interpenetrates everything, the ocean-in-drop and drop-in-ocean, constantly exchanging in a dance of endless fecundity. God is not the “author” of creation, removed and overarching; the whole thing is God. There is not a single place in all creation where God is not, because God is creation itself, endlessly outpouring, endlessly receiving itself back. From top to bottom, we live and move and have our being in a participative reality, every fractal joined to every other fractal in a symphony of divine becoming pouring forth from that infinite wellspring.

In fact, with one singular exception, Thomas does not actually use the word “God” in this entire collection of poems. It is always “the Divine,” “I AM,” or “the Source.” He clearly did not want what he was trying to say here co-opted back into conceptions of a distant, male-gendered Being sitting up there in the heavens. He wanted us to keep our eyes on the big pic-

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ture.

But more important, he wanted us to swim in the ocean.

Some may say that Thomas took a turn late in life toward a more “Buddhist” approach to divinity, but I believe this is not really accurate. We are not talking about a theology here, but a level of consciousness, universal across all the religions and accessed primarily through the consistent practice of meditation. To see oneness, it is necessary to see *from* oneness, with the eye of the heart, not the binary skew of the mind. From his decades and decades of faithful Centering Prayer, along with some very courageous and painful inner work, the rewiring of brain and heart that supports this seeing was gradually accomplished within him. These poems are its joyful fruit. They are tiny cameos of what non-duality looks like when approached from a uniquely Western and Christian perspective.

Pastor John's Weekly E-Mail “Blasts” for October

St. Francis and COVID (Oct. 8th)

This coming Sunday, October 11, our Scripture readings will be Philippians 4:1-9 and Matthew 22:1-14. I am calling the sermon, “Majoring in Minors.” The hymn after the sermon will be “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” by the Beatles.

October 4 was the Feast of St. Francis, and, to mark this annual remembrance of this great contemplative Christian, Richard Rohr has been reflecting on his relevance to our time in his daily emails. One of Francis' primary values was the monastic vow of simplicity. Simplicity is a determination to live without excessive self-concern and to avoid the temptation of greed and acquisitiveness. A commitment to simplicity cultivates the Christian virtue of trust and faith, and diverts the attention from energies of fear towards the practice of gratitude. It brings the discovery of how a simple life is a blessed life, for it sees the great blessing of the extraordinary ordinary—the blessings of fall colors, a sunrise, a flower, a bird, a tree, a beloved, our lives.

Everything in our culture seems to propel us away from simplicity and towards a stance of anxiety and excessive self-concern. We are taught to fear the other, to compare ourselves with others in a never-ending game of judgment and self-justification, to calm our fragile inner state in a frantic pursuit of possessions which signal to ourselves and others our essential virtue. In contradiction to the messages of our culture, our Christian tradition assures us that

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our essential worth lies not in anything that we accomplish or possess. It lies in our identity which is hidden in and given by God. Our worth is unquestionable because it is grounded in God. Once we see this fundamental truth in the depths of our being, then we naturally gravitate towards a life of simplicity, because our human strivings for worth obscure the true knowledge of our worth in God.

One gift of COVID-19's disruption of our lives, is its invitation to simplicity. Some people have discovered more time for relationships, for meals, for thinking, for reading, for prayer. Instead of an endless pursuit of activity and striving, some have discovered the blessing of spaciousness and being. Even the challenges which come with disruption and isolation can lead to deeper blessing. As familiar props to our sense of self have been lost, we can, through the pain, learn of a deeper presence on the other side of our loneliness, fear, anger and despair. Simplicity, as contemplatives have discovered, leads us through dark nights of our souls into a more profound experience of God. It's the blessing of the way of the cross, which Jesus assured us, leads to true life.

Francis even counseled us to detach from the money purse of our own opinions. What a marvelous insight. For him, a simple life emptied oneself of attachment to a sense of me and all of my opinions which often need violent defending. A simple heart is a humble heart, a trusting heart, and a loving heart. During the violent Crusades, Francis alone convinced Muslim enemies that true Christianity could be a reconciling force in the world.

We might experiment in the next several weeks with a poverty of spirit (which Jesus recommended in the Sermon on the Mount) that does not automatically move to the reptilian brain's default response of fight, flight, or freeze. Notice how much we and others are constantly being thrown into these primitive energies in our highly anxious, dangerous, and divided times. It's not that sometimes we may not need to fight, or flee, or pause; but the trick is to do so consciously, from an inner place of awareness and connection with the divine heart. I know that I have failed in this practice much in these recent days. In humility and gratitude, we are always called to return to center, rest in God, and to act from that wiser and more loving place.

These practices are not easy, and that is why they can be so transformative. I wonder that this is what God is up to in this extremely taxing time. If we can practice Franciscan simplicity, what breakthroughs might we experience, for our good and the blessing of the world? See you in church!

The Wisdom of Unknowing (Oct. 14th)

This Sunday, October 18, our Scripture readings will be Exodus 33:12-23 and Matthew 22:15-22. I am calling the sermon, "The Unbearable Weight of Presence." The hymn after the sermon will be "Fix You" by Coldplay.

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My pastoral message for the week comes from my time of prayerful listening to Scripture as I began my day this morning. I am currently looking at the Gospel of John. I am finding such spiritual richness in John, that I am moving very slowly through it. This morning, I reflected only on one verse, John 3:4. In John 3:3, Jesus told a religious leader, named Nicodemus, that no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. Nicodemus responds, "How can anyone be born after having grown old?"

Nicodemus is stuck in his own experience and understanding of the world and how it operates. He cannot envision that, at its heart, the world could be different from what he has imagined it to be for all of his life. In this way, he is like most of us. We have grown old, meaning that we have much experience and accomplishment behind us and we want to hold onto the lives that we have created for ourselves, including our beliefs and expectations. We can't imagine letting all of our past go and starting over every day. We agree with Nicodemus when he asks, "How can anyone be born after having grown old?"

As I was turning this over in my mind and heart this morning, I wondered what my day would be like if I could bring a fresh and pure field of awareness to it, moment-by-moment. Can I bring a little of a toddler's innocence and surprise to my tasks and interactions? Instead of barely noticing others and my surroundings, which I have seen so many times, can I look at them as if I had never seen them before? Could I allow them to be something other than what my hardened expectations dictated as possible?

The day is not over and my awareness has not always been fresh and truly open; but I have caught myself occasionally and simply looked and been more present when I did. Right now, I am looking at a tree outside my window and marveling at how the sun and shadows intermingle on its trunk and branches. There is something stunningly beautiful about it. I find it harder, as I get into task orientation, to keep a truly open and unknowing stance about me. It's amazing to watch how my inner life becomes less spacious when I fall into productivity mode. Where does the more curious and vital part of me go as I switch into this mode?

Our lives are made up largely of very ordinary moments, doing very ordinary things. Somewhere along the way, perhaps, we simply fall asleep to the preciousness of it all. We stop really seeing. We stop really being alive. We grow old. We wonder if we can be born anew and shimmer with the mystery of life and presence which all of us carry into the world at birth. This is the true gift that Jesus brought us—the gift of deep presence and aliveness.

This is not to say that everything has to be exciting and breathless. It's not about constant activity and novelty. Rather, it is about learning to bring a quality of aliveness in us to the ordinary activities and encounters of each day, and seeing the blessedness of it all.

It seems like it would be such a simple thing to do, to be deeply present to each moment; but it is not. At least not for me. So many thoughts arise which judge or resist the moment and the blessing inherent in it. Where do these thoughts come from and why do we allow them to dic-

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tate to us? I want to take Jesus at his word and experience the birthing he offers, and to be able to see something of the divine presence which is always before us and within us. See you in church!

To Speak or not to Speak (Oct. 21st)

This Sunday, October 25, is Reformation Sunday. The plan is to have a virtual bagpiper as a nod to our tradition. The Scripture is Deuteronomy 34:1-12 and Matthew 22:34-46. I am calling the sermon, "Learning to See the Grandeur." Andreea will lead us in the hymn, "Here Comes the Sun."

Last night was our monthly Session meeting. We began our meeting with a brief period of sharing. We seem to be doing okay in a not okay time. Most of us are fortunate. We have resources to cope with our challenges. Not all are as fortunate. Concern was expressed about people's emotional wellbeing as we move into late fall and winter amid the pandemic. We talked about ways that we will try to address people's needs, especially as we move towards the holy period of Advent and Christmas. The holidays will be different this year. There was also mention made of the upcoming election and our anxieties and deep divisions, our inability to find common ground, common facts, common purpose. What will happen after November 3? What will be the implications for us as a country, for churches and faith communities across our land?

Never have I been more anxious about an election, about the state of our union, as I am now. I have spent much time asking God what is mine to say and to do as a Christian leader in this profound moment? So far, my sense has been to focus on the depths of the Bible's calling for us to have the mind of Christ. In other words, my focus has been on the inner springs of our personhood over weighing in on external political considerations. Ecclesiastes says that there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak. In our current context, I must confess that I feel that I miss the mark when I speak to our political reality and when I do not. This deep unknowing about what is mine to do has motivated me even more to dive into the abyss of God's silence each day and to ground myself in the ground of God's presence. There I learn to trust that there is a gift in all that is going on within and among us, difficult as the journey might be.

I have my point of view and you can guess what it is, even if we have not spoken directly about it. Most people I speak with agree that this election is about the soul of our country, even as we disagree about what constitutes our soul and what decisions and directions will nurture or destroy our souls. What distresses us the most is that our sense of oneness and our ability to meet in meaningful ways is unraveling. Do we avoid conversations about our political reality and miss true engagement with others in our lives, or do we speak and risk sev-

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ering our relationships? It's a decision all of us face daily and it is wounding us all.

As much as I am tempted to have my Martin Luther moment (it is Reformation Sunday after-all) and to say as he did, "Here I stand," I know that such communication would be misunderstood and experienced as alienating to some. I know too that my decision not to speak will be misunderstood and seen as a failure of nerve and faithfulness by others.

The truth is that weighing in with my political perspective would be easy. It might even make me feel good temporarily, as I give my rationale for my perspective, which would be armed with evidence, biblical and theological justification and my own prayerful listening to God. Everyone I listen to has their rationale, justifications and convictions. As a relative said to me after he had baited me into a political conversation some time ago, "You are not going to change my mind." What, then, would be the purpose of conversation?

We are at a stalemate and committed to defending our ground against each other. Our allowance of and participation in this state of affairs is folly. No one wins in a game of chicken. So, yes, vote, if you have not already. Pray. Dig deep into your heart and into the heart of God, and respond as best as you can from that space of deep and vulnerable meeting with God. Align your inner and outer worlds, as much as you can, with the words and life of Christ.

What was it that Jesus said in the Gospel last Sunday? "Give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and to God, what belongs to God." What belongs to God, of course, is everything, beginning with our hearts and souls. In the days ahead, meet with God in the silence, that God might speak to you, heart-to-heart and soul-to-soul. That's my political advice. Blessings!

Preparing for the Unknown (Oct. 28th)

This Sunday, November 1, marks our return to Standard Time. We get an extra hour of sleep this Saturday, but afterwards night will be falling by 5:00 PM. We need to prepare ourselves for our on-going adjustments to the pandemic as we move into a period of long nights and colder temperatures.

This Sunday is also All Saints Day. It's the day in which the church witnesses to the Communion of Saints, which includes the living and the dead. How appropriate that it falls on Communion Sunday. Remember to have your own elements on hand, even if you choose to come to in-person worship. During the Eucharistic Prayer, we will prompt people to unmute themselves and speak forth a name of a loved one who has died in the past year. The Scripture readings are John 3:1-3 and Matthew 5:1-12. The sermon is called, "What Are We Becoming?" and Andreea will lead us in singing, "Bridge Over Troubled Water."

In speaking to mental health professionals, there is widespread expectation that the next few months will bring challenge to everyone. That's why it is important for us to prepare our-

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selves. Seasonal Affective Disorder impacts all of us. Imagine the impact in a time of pandemic. Holidays may not bring as much socializing or travel as usual. We will need to be more intentional about our rituals and self-care than ever.

Andreea is already creating a virtual Pageant and Cantata for December 13 and 20. Marie is planning for a virtual Christmas Party. Sue Smith and I have begun talking about a “Blue Christmas” Service. We have not done one of these before, but the intention of these services is to help people acknowledge and grieve the sadness of this season for many. We will let you know more about our plans in time. Also, Session, Andreea and I are beginning to plan for Christmas Eve. We will communicate with you about how we plan to adjust Christmas Eve worship to the constraints of this time. Our deep desire is to provide opportunities for people to be a part of meaningful and inspiring services of worship in this unique moment.

I still believe that there are gifts for us in the days ahead. Solitude is a powerful tool for spiritual growth. Even being with sadness and depression can provide the pathway to a much deeper healing of our souls. Music, quiet, prayer, rituals, reading, and conversations even from a distance can be powerful modes of God’s presence within and among us. So, be compassionate to yourself and others. A little extra attention to our souls will be very necessary this holiday season. Blessings all!



First Presbyterian Church of Rumson NJ
P.O. Box 399
East River Road at Park Avenue
Rumson, NJ 07760

Nonprofit Organization

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL ENCLOSED

~Please check our website at www.rumsonpresbyterian.org for calendar updates~

NOVEMBER 2020				DECEMBER 2020			
Nov 1	Sun	Daylight-Savings Time ends		Dec 2	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Nov 3	Tue	Election Day		Dec 6	Sun	2nd Sunday of Advent - Pageant	9:45am
Nov 4	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm	Dec 9	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Nov 11	Wed	Veterans Day		Dec 13	Sun	3rd Sunday of Advent - Cantata	9:45am
Nov 11	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm	Dec 16	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm
Nov 16	Mon	Racial Equity Group	7:00pm	Dec 20	Sun	4th Sunday of Advent	9:45am
Nov 17	Tue	Session	7:00pm	Dec 21	Mon	First Day of Winter	
Nov 18	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00pm	Dec 24	Thu	Christmas Eve (Service)	7:00pm
Nov 26	Thu	Thanksgiving Day		Dec 25	Fri	Christmas Day	
Nov 29	Sun	1st Sunday of Advent	9:45am	Dec 31	Thu	New Years Eve	

**WATERSPIRIT sponsored event. All are welcome.*



www.rumsonprebyterian.org