

# Oak Leaves

Vol. LXIV, Number 8

April 2022



## *Approaching Holy Week*

*by Pastor John*

Holy Week looms on the horizon. Palm/Passion Sunday is April 10. Our Holy Week worship schedule will include a Maundy Thursday service at 7:30 PM, a Good Friday service at Noon, and one Easter service at 9:45 AM. There will be in-person and virtual options for all services except for Maundy Thursday, which will be held in Wilson Hall. It is a brief and powerful service which ends in darkness and silence.

Holy Week is so powerful and potentially transformative, because it shakes us out of our mental constructs for how life should be. Fairy tales speak of “happily-ever-after” and our modern, secular, consumerist culture tells us that we can have whatever we want. Holy Week shows up in the midst of these dreams and tells us that God came to be among us and we put God to death. How’s that for a wake-up call?

During Holy Week, the humanity of God shows up on full display. We see Jesus’ vulnerability and his incredible faithfulness. He longs for intimacy with his disciples at the Last Supper. He pleads with God for escape from what is coming and yet consents to God’s unfathomable will. He cries out on the cross and experiences God’s absence. And he dies. Only the most hardened among us are not deeply moved by this story.

In some way this powerful story is also our story. We think that life is supposed to be smooth sailing and all light. Inevitably darkness and sorrow show up and we are undone. It helps to know that we are not alone, even if we feel that we are. It helps to know that God knows what we are experiencing and has gone before us to help us make the journey. It helps to know that suffering and death are not how the story ends, that there is a life that never dies. The calling is to take the journey with Jesus. As Paul wrote in Romans, if we die with Christ, we will also be raised with Christ. This is not so much a theological proposition, as it is an invitation to “taste and see that the Lord is good!”

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We are right to call this week, Holy Week. It offers a portal for our own transformation as we give ourselves to its wisdom and surrender ourselves to the same path that Jesus took. May it indeed be so for us all. See you in church!

## *Worshipping Together in April*



**Note:** Except where noted, both online and in-person worship options are available at this time. Check our website for updates.

**Communion Sunday, April 3, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: **"Love's Math"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **John 12:1-8**

As Mary shows, love is extravagant and doesn't fit well into spreadsheets. How does love's extravagance inform our discipleship?

**Palm/Passion Sunday, April 10, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: **"Stones' Concert"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **Luke 19:28-40; Philippians 2:5-11**

The Pharisees were into crowd control as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus assured them that if the crowd was made quiet, a concert from stones would break forth. Sometimes, it appears, God is in favor of noise.

**Maundy Thursday Service, April 14, 2022 @ 7:30 PM**

**Rev. John W. Monroe III**

**Good Friday Service, April 15, 2022 @ 12:00 PM**

**Rev. John W. Monroe III**

**Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: **"R.I.P., Death"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **1 Corinthians 15:19-26; Luke 24:1-12**

The human lineage has lived under the sway of death since Adam, since the beginning. Christ has ushered in a new era of resurrection and with it a new trajectory to the human story.

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**Sunday, April 24, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "**Getting Used to Resurrection**" by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31**

The Resurrection so explodes our rational minds, that we don't know what to do with it. In various ways, we hold onto the old and resist the implications of the new.

For updates & more services, visit [rumsonpresbyterian.org/upcoming-services](http://rumsonpresbyterian.org/upcoming-services)

## *Church School*



I hope everyone is enjoying the beginning of Spring! I know nothing makes me happier than to see the trees starting to bud and the daffodils proudly welcoming the warmer weather. I am planning a "Spring Fling" on Palm Sunday, April 10th directly after Worship. We will have light refreshments outside (hopefully the weather cooperates) and an Easter Egg Hunt for the children. All are welcome! I would appreciate it if you could rsvp if your children will attend the egg hunt just so I have enough eggs prepared. Also, feel free to contact me with any issues or requests at [churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org](mailto:churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org) or (732) 768-9913.

### **April Church School Calendar**

- April 6th:** "How God Keeps Score" : Weekly Nourishment Recipe Book
- April 13th:** "Stones' Concert" : Palm/Passion Sunday : Spring Fling
- April 20th:** Easter Sunday
- April 27th:** Family Worship

As always, looking for "volunteers" for the Nursery. Please reach out to me at [churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org](mailto:churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org) or (732)768-9913 if you know someone who may be interested. The pay is \$25 per session or credit for volunteer hours.

Sandi Van Cleve, Director of Christian Education

# Music Program



Thank you to everyone who participated in the Lenten worship music, including soloists, the adult choir, and guest musicians. We so appreciate your gifts to the church, and your willingness to share them with others!

There are a few dates to note going forward into April:

- Thursday, April 14:** Maundy Thursday (service is 7:30 pm)
- Friday, April 15:** Good Friday (service is noon)
- Sunday, April 17:** Easter (one service, held at 9:45 am)

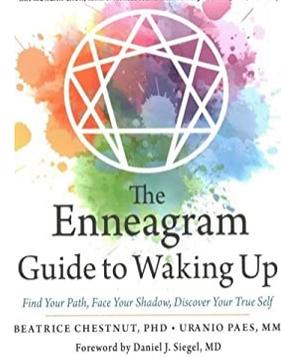
If you love music and are interested in joining the choir for these special services, we can certainly use the voices. Please reach out to me by emailing [AndreeaFegan@gmail.com](mailto:AndreeaFegan@gmail.com). We'd love to have you join in, even on a temporary basis!

Blessings to you and your family,  
Andreea Fegan, Music Director

# Adult Nurture



...a groundbreaking book that offers precise steps to take to make up to the self-limiting habits of your personality  
...at risk of your own ego, and you yourself the gift of becoming more of your higher-most authentic self."  
-IAN MORGAN CRON, author of *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*



**Wisdom Wednesdays:** Wisdom Wednesdays: Beginning Wednesday, March 9, our weekly Wisdom Group will begin a study of **The Enneagram Guide to Waking Up** by Beatrice Chestnut. All are welcome to join in this study. Simply get a copy of the book and join on our Zoom meetings from 7:00 to 8:30.

# *Mission News*



This update from the Mission Commission summarizes activities spanning two meetings, the first held on February 28th and the second on March 28th. Overall, for the first quarter of 2022, the Commission has approved donations totaling \$33,123, with an emphasis on directing funds to organizations positioned to provide relief and support services to the people impacted by the war in Ukraine. These include International Rescue Committee, Doctors without Borders and the Presbyterian Church USA disaster assistance fund for Ukraine. Each of these organizations have outstanding programs in place to offer a broad range of critical services to refugees who have been displaced due to crises around the globe. We feel fortunate to have this very impactful avenue to assist with their missions.

With Spring upon us, we also turned our focus to environmental organization, funding donations to Clean Water Action, an environmental advocacy group founded in 1972 during the campaign to pass the landmark Clean Water Act with a stated mission to protect the environment, health, economic well-being and community quality of life; Clean Ocean Action with their motto of “Making Waves to Save our Seas”, protecting marine water quality in the New York Bight since 1984; and Food and Water Watch, an group focused on mobilizing citizens to build political power to advocate for uncompromised solutions to the most pressing food, water and climate problems of our time.

Mission continues to support the local food bank, providing a quarterly donation to FulFill. We approved donations to Oasis TLC, an organization we have supported in the past whose mission is to promote inclusion and acceptance of autistic individuals into their local communities by establishing environmentally exemplary farm centers that provide meaningful work, peaceful and healthy residences and community interaction. We also approve a donation to Don't Shock Me - Maddy Massabni Foundation for Toxic Shock Awareness, a local organization founded by Maddy's mom following her tragic passing in March 2017. Continued fund-raising challenges due to the Covid pandemic make our support even more crucial to the sustained financial well-being of these groups.

Mission Commission meets the fourth Monday of each month at 7:30pm. We welcome anyone who is interested to join at any time.

Anita Waters, Mission Chair



Giving

**GIVEPLUS<sup>+</sup>**

YOUR CHURCH GIVING APP

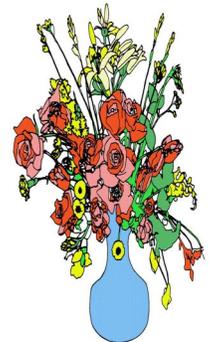
Rumson Presbyterian Church is excited to partner with the Presbyterian Foundation and Vanco Payment Solutions to bring you our GivePlus Online Giving page (<https://rumsonpresbyterian.org/giving/>).

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.

## Sanctuary Flowers

Just a reminder that you are invited to have flowers placed in our sanctuary in memory of a loved one or in celebration of an important event or person in your life. The standard flower cost is \$25. To make arrangements, contact Steve Buchanan by phone at 732-842-0429 or by email at [sbuchanan@rumsonpresbyterian.org](mailto:sbuchanan@rumsonpresbyterian.org).



Sanctuary Flowers

## Rumson Presbyterian Scholarship Fund

**College, Camp or Seminary Scholarship**

**Application (see next page)**

Any student who is interested in applying for the Rumson Presbyterian Scholarship can get a scholarship form from the **office, church website, or the April and May issue of Oak Leaves**. Please fill out, sign and return the application to:



**NURTURE COMMISSION**

c/o Church Office

Rumson Presbyterian Church

P.O. Box 399

Rumson NJ 07760

***All applications are due back by June 1st***



## Rumson Presbyterian Scholarship Fund COLLEGE, CAMP OR SEMINARY SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Applying for: Camp Johnsonburg \_\_\_\_\_ College \_\_\_\_\_ Seminary \_\_\_\_\_

Other Faith-Based Summer Camping Program (*please explain*) \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant confirmed member of Rumson Presbyterian Church: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

### For Camp Scholarship: Check off Church activities which apply to child/youth:

- Attends Church School
- Attends our youth group
- Participates in music program
- Performed or participated in church services
- Attends church services with some degree of regularity
- Has officially represented our church in performing a community service
- Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### For College/Seminary Scholarships:

Please attach a one-page essay on the following topics:

**Entering Freshman:** What faith-based activities have you participated in while in high school? What leadership responsibilities have you held in these activities? How have these activities been meaningful to you in your faith journey? How do you plan to continue your faith journey as you enter college?

**Upper Class:** What faith-based activities have you participated in college? What leadership responsibilities have you held in these activities? How have these activities been meaningful to you in your faith journey? If you were responsible for providing opportunities on your campus to reach out to students struggling with their faith, what would you do?

We will meet with each seminarian from Rumson on a case-by-case basis.

PLEASE FILL OUT APPLICATION, SIGN IT, AND MAIL IT TO:

NURTURE COMMISSION

c/o Church Office Rumson Presbyterian Church P.O. Box 399 Rumson, NJ 07760

ALL Scholarship applications are due back June 1st

# Presbyterian Church News



## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING SPECIAL OFFERINGS

HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

March 2 - April 17, 2022

For over 70 years, One Great Hour of Sharing has provided Presbyterians a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need around the world.

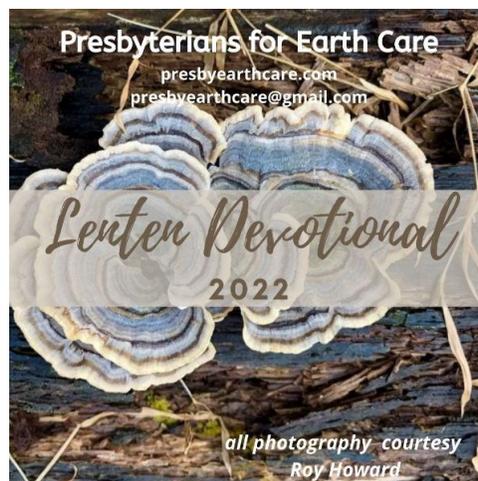
In a world of disaster, hunger, and oppression, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity.

The three programs supported by our church - One Great Hour of Sharing, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People - all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

To learn more, pick up a brochure from the literature shelf in the narthex (just outside the sanctuary) or visit: <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/oghs/give>

To give, there is an envelope in your Stewardship booklet (March 13th), you can pick up an envelope from the literature shelf in the narthex, or you can visit: <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/make-a-gift/gift-info/oghs/>

## Lenten Devotional



### **PEC Lenten Sunday Devotional is Here (and Free)!**

New Lenten Devotions based on Sundays' Revised Common Lectionary texts from Creation Care Perspectives: We hope this resource will help preachers, lectionary Bible study groups,

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families and individuals with new insights on these beloved texts during this special season. We hope the devotions will inspire more people to help care for God's creation in these challenging times.

Please consider sharing a link to the devotional in an email to your church members, family and (nearby and online) friends. You can also ask your Presbytery to share the links with churches and pastors. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/mtj5ydx7> to download the PEC Lenten Devotional.

THANK YOU to all the contributors to this devotional and especially to PEC Coordinator Mindy Hidenfelter whose work made it all possible.

This Lent Devotional was made possible by the volunteers contributing their devotions as well as financial donations that covered the cost of recruiting contributors, editing, laying out, web posting and promotion online, by email and Facebook. Your donation towards our ongoing work is needed and appreciated. You can give online through our secure website [presbyearthcare.org/giving](http://presbyearthcare.org/giving) or by mail to P.O. Box 3851, Allentown, PA 18106 (please note new mailing address for donations).

## *Community News*



### Early Risers



If you want to stop drinking call: 1-908-687-8566  
or (toll free from NJ area codes): 1-800-245-1377  
24 hours a day / 7 days a week.

For a list of other local A.A. meetings, visit [www.nnjaa.org/#](http://www.nnjaa.org/#)

For information about A.A. visit [www.nnjaa.org](http://www.nnjaa.org)

Meetings: Fri. from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM at Rumson Presbyterian Church

# Waterspirit Event Calendar



## **Hike-A-Thon Launch** Sat., Apr. 2 from 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Throughout the month of April, the more time you spend outdoors, the more money you can raise for Waterspirit! Set your goal, share your progress with your friends & family, and celebrate the spring by getting outside for a good cause! Your team of supporters can use your special link to donate as you hike. Don't forget to tag #WaterspiritHikeathon when you share this event on social media! Why is this hike-a-thon virtual? Because you can hike as much or as little as you would like, anywhere in the world! If you are located in New Jersey, please join us for our kick-off hike on Saturday, April 2 at 2 p.m. We will meet at the gazebo near the playground at the Atlantic Highlands Marina and walk the Henry Hudson Trail to Popamora Point, Highlands, and back (approx. 3.5 miles roundtrip). Thank you for supporting our eco-spiritual programming and clean water advocacy by participating in this virtual hike-a-thon.

## **Meditation for Earth** Every Tues. from 12:15 PM - 12:45 PM

Please join Waterspirit for a "Meditation for Earth" . We read a short blessing, followed by an excerpt from Hal Borland's 12 Moons of the Year. Then we lead a simple meditation followed with silence, for a flourishing Earth. The meditation and silence last approximately 30 minutes. There are two ways to meditate for Earth with us: 1) In-person in the Sanctuary at Rumson Presbyterian Church; 2) Online on our YouTube channel. All of our meditation videos are filmed by our Programs and Communications Consultant, Abbey Koshak, with loving care.

## **Community Advocacy Meeting** Thu., Apr. 28 from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Please save the date, 28th April, for our next working meeting! We will meet and discuss how to actively empower ourselves with key legislative tools toward our statewide and local coalition goals.

All are welcome. Please visit their website ([waterspirit.org](http://waterspirit.org))  
for more information about these events.

# *Caring for God's Earth*



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

The Presbyterian Hunger Program of the Presbyterian Church urges all individuals and congregations to strengthen our witness to the world and work for greater change in the care and keeping of the earth we inhabit. If we restore thriving nature, we all live healthier, more fulfilling lives while addressing climate change. The Church is committing to act on climate change by providing some new theological and pragmatic tools and resources to support congregations. They are partnering with Blessed Tomorrow, a program by people of faith for people of faith, to shape new guides, tools, and messaging that will help us to reduce energy use, speak with friends, family and policy makers about climate change, and help sustain a livable world for future generations.

Blessed Tomorrow has recently published a new Climate Action Fact Sheet, "Restoring Nature = Restoring Ourselves" which provides insight and actions to take in your neighborhood today: <https://bit.ly/3GksooR>. We invite you to take a look at it.

## *A Meditation*



Center for  
Action and  
Contemplation

### **Paul: The Misunderstood Mystic : An Enlightening Experience**

by [Richard Rohr, OFM](#)

**March 20, 2022**

*In this week's Daily Meditations, Father Richard Rohr focuses on Saint Paul as a mystic, beginning with Paul's transformative encounter with the Risen Christ:*

Paul is probably one of the most misunderstood and disliked teachers in the Church. I think this is largely because we have tried to understand a nondual mystic with our simplistic, dualistic minds.

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It starts with Paul's amazing conversion experience, described three times in the Book of Acts (chapters 9, 22, and 26). Scholars assume that Luke wrote Acts around 85 CE, about twenty years after Paul's ministry. Paul's own account is in his letter to the Galatians: "The Gospel which I preach . . . came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:11–12). Paul never doubts this revelation. The Christ that he met was not exactly identical to the historical Jesus; it was the risen Christ, the Christ who remains with us now in Spirit as the Universal Christ.

In Galatians, Paul describes his pre-conversion life as an orthodox Jew, a Pharisee with status in the Judean governmental board called the Sanhedrin. The Temple police delegated him to go out and squelch this new sect of Judaism called "The Way"—not yet named Christianity. Saul (Paul's Hebrew name) was breathing threats to slaughter Jesus' disciples (see Acts 9:1–2). He says, "I tried to destroy it. And I advanced beyond my contemporaries in my own nation. I was more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers than anybody else" (Galatians 1:13–14). At that point, Paul was a dualistic thinker, dividing the world into entirely good and entirely bad people.

The Acts account of Paul's conversion continues: "Suddenly, while traveling to Damascus, just before he reached the city, there came a light from heaven all around him. He fell to the ground, and he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The voice answered, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:3–5).

Paul must have wondered: "Why does he say 'me' when I'm persecuting these other people?" This choice of words is pivotal. Paul gradually comes to his understanding of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–13) as an organic, ontological union between Christ and those whom Christ loves—which Paul eventually realizes is everyone and everything. This is why Paul becomes "the apostle to the nations" (or "Gentiles").

This enlightening experience taught Paul nondual consciousness, the same mystical mind that allowed Jesus to say things like "Whatever you do to these least ones, you do to me" (Matthew 25:40).

Until grace achieves the same victory in our minds and hearts, we cannot really comprehend most of Jesus and Paul's teachings—in any practical way. It will remain distant theological dogma. Before conversion, we tend to think of God as "out there." After transformation, as Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) wrote, "The soul . . . never doubts: God was in her; she was in God." [1]

**Reference:**

[1] Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. Mirabai Starr (New York: Riverhead Books, 2003), 123.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *St. Paul: The Misunderstood Mystic* (Albuquerque, NM: Center for Action and Contemplation, 2014). Available as CD and MP3 download.

# *Pastor John's Weekly E-Mail "Blasts"*

## **Inner and Outer Journey (Mar. 2)**

This Sunday, March 6, is the first Sunday of Lent. The Scripture reading is Luke 4: 1 – 13 and the sermon title is "Addition by Subtraction." The "hymn" after the sermon will be "One Tin Soldier." It is Communion Sunday.

As we enter into the season of Lent, our church is doing much to provide opportunities for growth and service. Linda Goeddel is offering a four-week gathering in which she will lead all participants in making Ukrainian Easter eggs. It is a very meditative experience rich with Christian symbolism and the end result is truly beautiful. Linda has led groups in the past and sensed that this year it would be especially meaningful for everyone. If you want to participate, please let us know ASAP so that Linda can begin organizing the group.

Last night, Mission Commission met and made many decisions about ministries to support. Aware that refugees are pouring out from Ukraine, the Commission will send \$3,000 each to the International Rescue Committee and to Doctors Without Borders. A church member has been involved in supporting an Afghan immigrant family and Mission sent \$2,500 to help them with getting beds and other furniture as they begin living in our country. The Commission also is making gifts to many other local groups serving deserving populations nearby and also several organizations doing important environmental work.

In addition, our Wednesday night Wisdom group is inviting anyone who wants to join in a new study of the enneagram as a tool for greater awareness of our inner world and how this can open the way for a deeper spiritual life. Starting March 9, we will begin an exploration of the book, *The Enneagram Guide to Waking Up* by Beatrice Chestnut. Join the group via Zoom on Wednesdays from 7:00 – 8:30. A practice which helps us to surface our unconscious motivations and habits, and which offers a way toward greater freedom and obedience to Christ is a perfect Lenten discipline.

The church has always recognized Lent as a time for intentional spiritual practice and giving. As you can see, there is much that we are doing to be faithful to our calling. I wish for us all that this will be a season of deepening in and among us for our healing and the healing of our world. Blessings!

## **Awakening to God (Mar. 9)**

This Sunday, March 13, the Scripture readings are Philippians 3: 17 – 4:1 and Luke 13: 31 – 35. The sermon title is "Mindset" and the "hymn" after the sermon is "Both Sides Now."

The invitation of Lent is to travel into the depths of ourselves and into the depths of each moment. We are invited to do this, because Jesus did this and in Lent we seek to journey with Jesus. We do this also because we sense in Jesus a presence and life which we are

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drawn to and long for. Jesus was able to see and be with people in such loving, challenging, and healing ways, because he had travelled into his interior depths and met there the Source of all life. Within himself the energy of love overcame the natural energy of fear which we all carry. He lived in trust and radical acceptance, awakening that same potential in others. He told his followers to take the same path as he took, so that they and we can experience the same transformation and healing.

What we are doing in various Lenten disciplines which bring us into a time of silence, is moving our attention away from the surface aspects of ourselves and our lives into our true essence. In our deepest self, we discover an unbreakable oneness with God, which enables us to encounter our lives with much less reactivity. In the growing experience of oneness with God, our attachment to likes and dislikes and even our identification with the surface aspects of our self, start to become less important to us. We know that these are not the truth about us. We know that there is so much more going on than meets the physical eye. With the eye of our heart, we begin to see as God sees.

The real trick is to begin to pour ourselves into our lives, into each moment, and to move to a posture of curiosity and acceptance. Beneath all of our fears and likes and dislikes, we can begin to see God's mysterious presence reconciling all things into Godself. Everything serves a higher good, and we recognize that we are not the judge of what should and shouldn't be. There is always more going on than we can grasp from a perspective that remains attached to the surface of things.

Make some time for silence and aloneness this Lent and pay attention to what begins to show up within you. God will be there, is always there. Blessings!

## **Masks Optional (Mar. 17)**

This Sunday, March 20, the Scripture readings are Isaiah 55: 1 – 9 and Luke 13: 1 – 9. The sermon title is "What Does God Expect?" and the "hymn" after the sermon is "Higher Love" by Steve Winwood.

Session met last night and has voted to make the wearing of masks optional for worship and church events. We will reinstate a simple coffee hour which will either be indoors in Wilson Hall or outdoors, depending on the weather. After two years, this marks a turning point in church life for which we are grateful. Of course, many may continue to wear masks or to participate virtually and virtual options will remain in place.

The other decision which we want you to aware of concerns Easter Sunday. We will hold only one service at 9:45, with in-person and virtual availability. Our Good Friday service at noon will also provide in-person and virtual options. Maundy Thursday service, however, will be held in Wilson Hall and will not be broadcast on Zoom or Livestream. We hope that you will want to take part in this profound service in-person.

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Session also spends time at each meeting in spiritual conversation and discernment. Last night, we sat with three emails from Richard Rohr which had to do with church life. Richard talks about how spiritual life begins with a person, like Jesus or Saint Francis, and then becomes a movement with energy and uncertainty, and next becomes institutionalized or mechanized, and then it becomes a monument, and then finally a memory. We raised many good questions in our discussion and pledged to engage in more prayerful and imaginative listening around Rohr's emails as we begin to look to the future.

My intention has been to focus on the church calendar which I certainly will do through Easter. After Easter, you may sense a subtle move toward an acknowledgment of my coming retirement and transition for the church. There is important work for us to do and ways that we can prepare ourselves for change. I am beginning to invite Session into this kind of work and anticipate doing so more broadly in the future. In the meantime, we have important spiritual work to do during Lent, as we continue to travel with Jesus toward the cross and resurrection. Blessings all!

## **Mid-way Through (Mar. 23)**

This Sunday, March 27, the Scripture readings are 2 Corinthians 5: 16 – 21 and Luke 15: 1 – 3, 11b – 32. The sermon title is "Our Part in God's Work" and the "hymn" after the sermon is "The Heart of the Matter" by Don Henley.

We are now three weeks into Lent, about halfway through this faith journey with Jesus. Most of us experience a mid-way lull in most any venture we undertake. We call Wednesday "hump day" in recognition that mid-way through the week, we need an extra jolt of energy to get over the hump. At this point in Lent, whatever disciplines we have taken on for ourselves, we may be feeling some doubts and discouragement. Can we continue? This is harder than we thought. Easter still seems a long way off. Most of us need a bit of encouragement to continue with Jesus on the way.

Don't be alarmed or afraid if this is the case with you. The spiritual journey toward union with God requires profound transformation of self and along the way our nerve fails and our determination stalls. This does not mean that God is no longer around. It seems that way, because we associate God with feeling inspired—in-spirited. But the feeling of abandonment by God is an unavoidable experience on our way toward true union. It's what John of the Cross described so powerfully as a "Dark Night of the Soul." Various emotional and psychological crutches are taken away from us and the experience can be excruciating. But in the experience of an absence, a new awareness and receptivity to God is being forged in us.

Can we be present to the darkness, without running away or finding a new or familiar crutch to support us? Can we trust God enough to simply be with what is, our own inner poverty? If we can, something new will happen—eventually. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said Je-

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sus, “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” When we are stripped of our usual comforts and escapes and supports, then we can begin to see more clearly and know that God is present in it all.

The spiritual realm doesn’t make sense to our rational minds. Its truths require faith and trust to see. For those brave enough to continue the Lenten journey with Jesus, there will be a discovery beyond all description. Blessings all!

## **The Cave of the Heart (Mar. 30)**

This Sunday, April 3, is the fifth Sunday of Lent and Communion Sunday. The Scripture reading is John 12: 1 – 8 and the sermon title is “Love’s Math.” The hymn after the sermon is “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” in the Hawaiian version which has become so meaningful for many.

We are much closer to the end of our Lenten journey with Jesus to death and resurrection. Palm/Passion Sunday is April 10, followed by Holy Week, with church services for Maundy Thursday (7:30 PM), Good Friday (Noon), and Easter (9:45 AM). What has the Lenten journey been for? What are we to discover in this season of deepening and attuning of our hearts to God?

The whole purpose of the Scripture which we have been led to read and whatever practices in which we have engaged has been to peel away the fears, obsessions, and attachments of the human self that we think that we are, in order to begin to taste the quality of our essential self in God, which lies at the very core of ourselves. The central failing of our culture and even most of church culture I am afraid to say, is this losing of any meaningful contact with the divine presence which resides within. As Paul told us, we are temples of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus told us, the kingdom of God is within. Having lost experiential knowing of this bedrock truth of our faith, we have ended up projecting a God out there somewhere far away, distant and unreal. We have been left with no other alternative, but to put all our chips in the basket of our constructed selves and to defend them to the hilt.

But our narrative selves are so unstable and vulnerable, that we are destined for disappointment and, yes, eventual death. My father’s death last week has brought this truth home once again, powerfully. What Jesus taught and lived is that there is in us a union with Source. In order to know this in a life-changing way, we must let go of our attachments, conscious and unconscious, with the narrative self and experience the God who dwells within. It has been described as a process of dying before we die, so that we touch into eternal life here and now.

The journey to this discovery is not easy, but it is what we are here to do. In these final days of Lent, let us go deeper and allow God’s Spirit to meet us in the silence and emptiness and in our deepest fears and vulnerabilities. For it is there that we begin to taste the true life that never dies. 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](http://www.rumsonpresbyterian.org) for calendar updates~

**APRIL 2022**

Apr 5	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Apr 6	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
Apr 10	Sun	<b>Palm Sunday</b>	9:45 AM
Apr 11	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Apr 12	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Apr 13	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
Apr 14	Sun	<b>Maundy Thursday</b>	7:30 PM
Apr 15	Sun	<b>Good Friday</b>	12:00 PM
Apr 17	Sun	<b>Easter Sunday</b>	9:45 AM
Apr 19	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Apr 19	Tue	Session	7:00 PM
Apr 20	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
Apr 22	Fri	<b>Earth Day</b>	
Apr 25	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Apr 25	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30 PM
Apr 26	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Apr 27	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM

**MAY 2022**

May 3	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
May 4	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
May 5	Thu	<b>National Day of Prayer</b>	
May 8	Sun	<b>Mother's Day</b>	
May 9	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
May 10	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
May 11	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
May 17	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
May 17	Tue	Session	7:00 PM
May 18	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
May 23	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
May 23	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30 PM
May 24	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
May 25	Wed	Wisdom Group	7:00 PM
May 26	Thu	<b>Ascension Day</b>	
May 29	Mon	<b>Memorial Day</b>	
May 31	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM

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

*Please visit their website ([waterspirit.org](http://waterspirit.org)) for more information about their events.*



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