

# Oak Leaves

Vol. LXIV, Number 9

May 2022



## *How Easter Opens*

*by Pastor John*

Easter is about openings. Jesus' tomb was no longer closed but was opened on Easter. After the Risen Jesus appeared to his followers, they no longer stayed behind closed doors but opened themselves to public lives of witness and service. Some even opened themselves to the persecution and rejection of others. They witnessed to resurrection with their lives.

Easter assures us that fear is an illusion, a failure to see reality clearly. Easter puts us in touch with an undying life and a level of love which casts out fear. Imagine being able to so live into the Easter reality that we could live totally in love and without fear! This is our invitation to live fully enough into the Easter reality that we become a new creation in Christ.

I mentioned back in November when my plans for retirement first became public that I did not want for my final year to be one long farewell tour. I said that I wanted my focus to be on the liturgical calendar. As Christians the sacred story should always be our primary focus, for in it lies the seeds for what we truly need and want—new life.

I will continue to relish and lift up the church calendar in the seasons of Easter and Pentecost, but I will also begin to acknowledge the looming reality of my retirement and the change that it portends. Change is synonymous with life. Without change, life ceases to be. And change (and life too) also brings uncertainty and challenge. Part of going through change well means opening ourselves to the impact that change has upon us.

I am looking forward to a new chapter in my life with Rosanne and I am also anxious about how leaving a pattern of life which I have known for nearly forty years will impact me. Two opposite things can be true at the same time. I have a picture of what lies ahead, but it is also true that the journey will be filled with unknowns. The same is true for the church. There may be losses and there may be gains. What we can count on is that God is in it all working for our good.

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Have courage to be open to what is going on in you in this time of change. And know that Christ is present in it all, bringing us to greater depths of life and love. Easter opens us to accept whatever deaths come to us with promises that greater life lies on the other side. See you in church!

## *Worshipping Together in May*



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

### **Communion Sunday, May 1, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Nothing Is Wasted" by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **John 21:1-19**

In his third resurrection appearance, Jesus restores Peter's inner woundedness. Nothing is wasted in the spiritual life, even our failures.

### **Sunday, May 8, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Jesus' Mantle" by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Acts 9:36-43; John 10:22-30**

Peter begins to take on the mantle of Jesus, to perform the same kind of miracles that Jesus performed. Jesus' work is being passed on. In us too?

### **Sunday, May 15, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "The Renewal of Earth" by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35**

God is making all things new, including the human heart. A new era is dawning, awaiting new human consciousness to enable it to take root.

### **Sunday, May 22, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Our Far Aim" by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; John 14:23-29**

These passages give us a glimpse of where our evolutionary journey is headed, ultimately. Our job is to keep this ultimate aim in mind as we try to live into this aim more fully.

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**Sunday, May 29, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "**Invincible**" by **Andy Kirkpatrick**

Scripture: **Matthew 20:25-28; Philippians 2:2-8**

What is something that we directly control that keeps us from living the Word of God?? Grudges. All of us have either been a victim or a perpetrator of their destructive power throughout our lives, and yet we continue to practice this behavior. What purpose do grudges actually serve? Join us as we look at the unintended consequences of this very human phenomenon through the teachings of Jesus.

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

## *Church School*



How is May already upon us?! First, I want to THANK everyone who attended the Spring Social and Egg Hunt on Palm Sunday. It was truly special to have the sound of children back in the church. So much fun (giggling) was had by all... mostly me!

As I sit here writing on "Earth Day", I would like to propose a beach or park clean-up. If anyone is interested please reach out and I would be happy to set something up. We will also be collecting unwanted (unstained) t-shirts to repurpose and make dog toys for Animal Rescue Groups. If you have done some 'Spring Cleaning' please consider donating to our cause. There will be a collection box in Wilson Hall.

Please feel free to contact me with any issues or requests at [churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org](mailto:churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org) or (732) 768-9913.

Thank You!

Sandi Van Cleve, Director of Christian Education

# Music Program



Thank you to everyone who participated in the creation of music for Holy week and Easter Sunday, including special soloists, our adult choir, and special guests. We appreciate you sharing in your gifts!

As always, we are looking for soloists to join in leading some of the hymns or sharing in an offertory or prelude. If this speaks to you, please reach out!

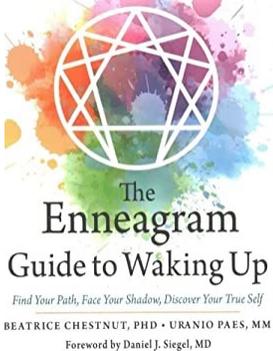
Blessings to you and your family,

Andrea Fegan, Music Director

# Adult Nurture



a outstanding book that offers precise steps to take to make up to the self-limiting habits of your personality or soul of your own way, and you yourself the official stepping stone of your higher-most authentic self."  
-IAN MORGAN CROX, 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*



It is hard to believe that a third of this year has gone by! The Mission Commission update this month will be shorter than prior months as our discussions were primarily focused on two well-known and now collaborating enterprises, Family Promise and Lunch Break. The Lunch Break mission statement is to provide life's basic necessities of food, clothing, life skills and fellowship to the financially insecure individuals and families in Monmouth County and beyond. Family Promise is an organization committed to advocating for innovative solutions to end family homelessness. Together these organizations are coordinating resources to assist local communities to address root causes of homelessness through prevention services before families reach crisis, shelter and case management should they become homeless, and stabilization programs once they have secured housing. In addition to continued support and funding for meals that our church 'angels' provide on a rotating basis, Mission approved donations to both Family Promise and Lunch Break to support their important work in our community.

We also approved a donation to a specific mission, "The Furniture Bank", operating within the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of Manasquan. Our Mission member Jodi Sacket has just started to engage with this group that connects donors and households in need in the area and facilitates free retrieval and delivery services for essential furniture.

Finally, Mission is making an additional donation this year to Clean Water Action to celebrate Sue Smith and her service to the Presbytery of the Coastlands as she steps away from her ministry. Sue has been working for decades with organizations committed to advancing environmental justice and this group has strong and impactful programs in our state and nationally. We are proud, thankful and blessed to have Sue in our congregation.

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

# Other Church News



## Easter Lilies



**The Easter Lilies in the Sanctuary  
were given to the glory of God...**

### Given By

*The Buchanan-Waters Family  
Rosanne & John Monroe  
Daughters Lysbeth & Dorothy  
Ken & Deborah Siebelist*

### In Loving Memory of

*Our Loved Ones  
All Our Relations  
Gladys & Arthur Pauels  
In Memory of Family and Dear Friends*

## 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

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.

## *Presbytery of the Coastlands News*



**The Presbytery of the Coastlands**

**April 25, 2022**

### **Celebrating Rev. Sue Smith**

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

Blessings on this Easter season! We know that for us, the demands of church during the last days of Lent, Holy Week and Easter were heavy. We can only imagine it was for you all as well! We hope that this request to help our presbytery recognize and celebrate Rev. Sue Smith falls afresh on you all.

The Rev. Sue Smith will be closing the Book of Order (at least on the presbytery's behalf!) and stepping away from her ministry among us as the Acting Stated Clerk of Coastlands Presbytery on May 31, 2022.



Sue's steady and faithful hand, along with her amazing eye for detail, has been foundational to our work as we've transitioned from 3 separate bodies into the Presbytery of the Coastlands. Many in former Elizabeth and New Brunswick presbyteries may not know that prior to being stated clerk in our new entity, she served as Stated Clerk and Acting Head of

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staff in legacy Monmouth Presbytery.

We plan to celebrate Sue's service at a special called Presbytery meeting on May 10 and her retirement from ministry in June.

We invite you to join us in affirming and celebrating all that Sue has given to us by giving back to her. Please consider participating as an individual or as a congregation by making a financial gift. Funds raised will be divided and used to make a donation to Clean Water Action, an environmental action group near and dear to Sue's heart, and a gift card for Sue herself.

To donate.....

Please send a check to Coastland Presbytery,  
617 Hope Chapel Road, Lakewood NJ 08701

Or to donate online, go to  
<https://coastlandpresbytery.org/donate>

Blessings,

Wendi Werner & Rory Chambers  
your moderator & vice moderator

## *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



## **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.

## **Eco Poetry: Bringing Attention to Plants, Animals, and Bodies of Water** **Sat., May 7** from **2:00 PM - 3:45 PM**

This is a generative workshop where we will be concentrating on a living thing(s) you love (plant, animal or body of water). Through writing exercises, research and observation, you will create poems or small pieces that the writer, if she wishes, can expand on after our gathering. Work with like-minded people who wish to praise the beauty of the natural world all around us by writing about it. No experience in poetry or writing necessary. Bring a notebook and pen and your curiosity. We will be working outside in a landscape with waterbirds, a tidal creek, and ancient Oak trees.

## **Waterspirit Book Club** **Mon., May 23** from **6:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

Join our Book Club! Our Book Club will meet next online at 6:00 PM on Monday, May 23rd to discuss the book: Saving Us, A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World by Katharine Hayhoe. We will send an email to Book Club members with a link to join us in an online meeting. Happy Reading!

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**

## INVESTING IN A GREEN FUTURE: A VISION FOR A RENEWED CREATION

By Rev. Sue Smith

From *The Power to Speak Truth to Power* (1981) to *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* (1990) to *The Power to Save* (2008), the PCUSA has a long history of environmental policy providing us with guidance in caring for all of God's creation. The 223rd General Assembly (2018) directed the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to develop a policy to respond to the increasing impacts of climate change. Building on our existing policies, *Investing in a Green Future: A Vision for a Renewed Creation* lifts up the intersection of environmental, economic and racial justice, to ensure that actions address how a warming planet affects all creation.

This paper was recommended to the 224th General Assembly (2020). In 2020 we were celebrating the 30th anniversary of *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* and designed a poster celebrating over 50 years of environmental advocacy in the PCUSA. In an in-person Assembly, we would have celebrated in style. But it was not an in-person Assembly and the paper was referred to this year's 225th General Assembly.

*Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice* called for the 1990's to be the turnaround decade for ecological restoration. We did not respond to the cry of creation then – we need to recommit to a turnaround decade now. It is not enough to be the turnaround decade outlined in 1990. Today we need to be intentional about addressing the intersection of environmental, economic and racial justice, aligning with the Church's focus on Matthew 25 and dismantling systemic racism.

Overtures to General Assembly tend to recognize that we need to keep the needs of "the least of these" as a focus in our work and then go on to promote market solutions that favor those that profit from capitalism. We know that BIPOC folx (black, Indigenous and people of color) and women are most vulnerable to cli-



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mate change and the least likely to profit from capitalism. How might the Church address these needs? Here are some of the recommendations:

- Support policies and regulations that rigorously reduce air pollution, not only carbon pollution, but also particulate matter and other carcinogenic air pollutants that disproportionately affect low-income, vulnerable communities of color living near regulated facilities and power plants. (8B)
- Ensure that communities affected by environmental racism are included at the table and have the opportunity to provide leadership in the movement to find solutions to the current ecological crisis. (8Ca)
- Affirm those who suffer most have the strongest moral claim in shaping restorative policy and practice. (8Cc)
- Reiterate that the goal of a “green economy” cannot be limited strictly to ecological concerns or environmental policy, but must address concerns of racial and economic justice in the marketplace, including a living wage; access to safe, affordable housing, health care, and food; rigorous regulation of high-polluting sectors and industries; programs to replace and retrofit aging buildings and infrastructure; access to jobs and job training in sustainable industries; and workforce development programs for workers who will transition from the fossil fuel industry to sectors with renewable and sustainable practices. Recognize that economic justice is important especially for women, who bear the brunt of many climate impacts. (8F)

Will the recommendations made be easy? No. One of the final recommendations: Recognize that transitioning to a more just, restored, and sustainable world will be difficult, but possible. While it is hard for us to imagine a low-carbon / zero-carbon economy without fossil fuels, where environmental care comes before profit, in which racism and poverty are functionally eliminated, we must do all of these things. Instead of focusing on the difficulties or expense, we must lift up our vision and actions to create a revived environment, better health outcomes, employment opportunities that provide a living wage, clean air and water, wilderness preserved for its own sake, universal access to healthy food, and the reconciliation of broken relationships. (9)

May it be so.

*Sue Smith put her MBA to work in the global financial services industry for 30 years. She is an ordained minister and Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Coastlands (NJ). She is the co-chair of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. She serves on the boards of Clean Water Action (NJ) and Waterspirit and was a former steering committee member of Presbyterians for Earth Care.*

# *A Meditation*



Center for  
Action and  
Contemplation

## **A Sacramental Reality : Real Presence**

by [Richard Rohr, OFM](#)

**April 25, 2022**

*In his book *The Universal Christ*, Father Richard shares that he wrote this teaching on the Eucharist on Easter Sunday 2017 with “great joy”:*

When Jesus spoke the words “This is my Body,” I believe he was speaking not just about the bread right in front of him, but about the whole universe, about every thing that is physical, material, and yet also spirit-filled.

*Seeing the Eucharist as a miracle is not really the message at all. I can see why we celebrate it so often. This message is such a shock to the psyche, such a challenge to our pride and individualism, that it takes a lifetime of practice and much vulnerability for it to sink in—as the pattern of every thing, and not just this thing.*

The bread and the wine together are stand-ins for *the very elements of the universe*, which also enjoy and communicate the incarnate presence. Why did we resist this message so much? Authentically eucharistic churches should have been the first to recognize the corporate, universal, and physical nature of the “Christification” of matter. While Catholics rightly affirm the Real Presence of Jesus in these physical elements of the earth, most do not realize the implications of what they have affirmed. The bread and wine are largely understood as *an exclusive presence*, when in fact their full function is to communicate a truly inclusive—and always shocking—presence.

A true believer is eating what he or she is afraid to see and afraid to accept: *The universe is the Body of God, both in its essence and in its suffering.*

The Eucharist is an encounter of the heart when we recognize Presence through our own offered presence. In the Eucharist, we move beyond mere words or rational thought and go to that place where we don’t talk about the Mystery anymore; we begin to chew on it. Jesus did not say, “Think about this” or “Stare at this” or even “Worship this.” Instead he said, “Eat this!”

We must move our knowing to the bodily, cellular, participative, and thus unitive level. We must keep eating and drinking the Mystery, until one day it dawns on us, in an undefended moment, “My God, I really am what I eat! I also am the Body of Christ.” Then we can henceforth trust and allow what has been true since the first moment of our existence. The Eucha-

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rist should operate like a stun gun, not just a pretty ceremony. We have dignity and power flowing through us in our bare and naked existence—and everybody else does too, even though most do not know it. A body awareness of this sort is enough to steer and empower our entire faith life.

This is why I must hold to the orthodox belief that there is Real Presence in the bread and wine. For me, *if we sacrifice Reality in the basic and universal elements, we end up sacrificing the same Reality in ourselves.*

**Reference:**

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe* (New York: Convergent, 2019), 131–132, 134, 136, 137.

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

### **The Crucified King (Apr. 6)**

This Sunday, April 10, is Palm/Passion Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. The Scripture readings are Luke 19: 28 – 40 and Philippians 2: 5 – 11. The sermon title is "Stones' Concert" and the hymns for Sunday are "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" and "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love."

On Palm Sunday, the church celebrates Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem before the Passover and how he was greeted by the crowd as a Savior King. On this holy day, the church affirms that Jesus is king and savior. It's a festive day which also points to the beginning of the end for Jesus. By week's end, he will be crucified. The leaders and the crowds will have turned on Jesus and participate in his death. What does it mean for the church to proclaim that Jesus is king?

As he, himself, said to Pilate, he had no earthly kingdom. His kingship resided in his complete mastery of himself—a very rare accomplishment indeed. He had achieved a unified I in himself which could rule over all of the competing energies and drives which dictate so much of human behavior. The parts of him that must have wanted revenge against his enemies, that wanted safety and security, that wanted to avoid the suffering which was before him—he ruled over them all. He was king. Not his animal nature and instincts. Who of us can say the same?

What reigned in Jesus was love which could forgive and even accept suffering and death. The picture of his struggle and equanimity in his final days is haunting for all of us. We wonder how anyone could do what he did and be what and who he was. Jesus truly is the hope of the world, for he proved by his life that human beings are capable of such incredible

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beauty and strength. We humans largely have sought external forms of power and governance—earthly rulers and governments—to bring us safety and peace. But we have failed spectacularly.

Our founders knew that our government would only be as strong and secure as the people who elected our leaders. The failure of our government is a reflection of our failure to achieve any meaningful degree of self-governance. As long as we are ruled by our animal nature and the aggression, fears, and mistrust which come with it, there is little hope of our government functioning at a high level.

The Jesus story brings us back to our primary work and source of hope. It is to take the journey with Jesus to a new humanity, one which is able to achieve self-governance and demonstrate love and forbearance. That's why the church continues to point to Jesus and pledge ourselves to follow him, to give ourselves to the transforming work of his Spirit. As we do, we continue to incarnate his bodily presence in a world which needs this presence so much. May this holy week renew us for the holy work which is our calling. Blessings all!

## **A New World (Apr. 13)**

I write this email blast on Wednesday of Holy Week. We will enter into this liminal time with a Maundy Thursday service in Wilson Hall at 7:30 PM. We will have a service on Good Friday in the sanctuary at Noon. On Easter, we will have one service at 9:45. All services, except Maundy Thursday, will have both in-person and virtual options. Maundy Thursday will be in-person only.

Holy Week invites us to suspend our disbelief, much as we are invited to do when we go to the theater or watch a movie. We are invited into a new world of possibilities and dreams. Only in Holy Week, we are invited to make this leap not just with our imaginations, but also with our very lives.

The Passion of Jesus peels away the thin veneer of human civilization and reveals our rejection of God, love, and justice. Save for a few women, almost everyone in the Gospel accounts participates to some degree in Jesus' death. The fickle crowds which cheered him on Palm Sunday call for his crucifixion on Good Friday. Pilate doesn't really want to kill Jesus but gives into pressure from religious leaders and the crowds. Even Jesus' disciples abandon him and Peter, despite his protests to the contrary, does deny him. Almost no one can journey with Jesus to the cross. Why would we think that we would perform differently?

Jesus' passion also reveals the reality of God's love incarnated in a human being. Jesus manifested and made real the selfless love of God in our world. His demonstration of love may be the road less travelled, but it has been travelled not only by Jesus, but by many others, bringing light into our dark world.

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Finally, Jesus is raised from the dead, initiating the ultimate victory of Love in a creation which is marred with violence and deceit. As we celebrate Easter, what we are really affirming is that a new world has been set in motion through Jesus' resurrection. Our invitation is to let go of our attachments to a world dominated by fear and self-interest and affirm our belief that God is creating a new reality which is aligned with the life and teachings of Jesus. At Easter, stop letting our fears dominate us and listen to the presence of the Risen Christ speaking to us in every moment. We participate in the new world of resurrection, by becoming resurrection people ourselves. This is our calling, and it rightly fills our souls with joy. Finally, we can die to our old, compromised selves and be raised with Christ into the selves that God made us to be. May God's new world begin in us, now!

## **The Season of Resurrection (Apr. 20)**

This Sunday, April 24, the Scripture readings are Revelation 1: 4 – 8 and John 20: 19 – 31. The sermon title is "Getting Used to Resurrection" and we will continue with Easter hymns, singing "The Strife Is O'er" and "The Day of Resurrection."

Last Sunday, of course, was Easter and it was good to see more people in the sanctuary. Easter, however, is not over, but just beginning. We have entered into the season of Easter which runs to Pentecost which arrives on the first Sunday of June. Why do we have a season of Easter? A short answer is that Easter is not just about Jesus, but also about us. As Paul writes over and over, we are to be raised with Christ. We, too, are to take the same path as Jesus and become transformed, by dying to the level of humanity we now possess and then moving into a new humanity.

We are so identified with the level of humanity we now possess, that we cannot even imagine that there is another way of being human. The majority of people attain habits of living and understanding by early adulthood and continue to live by them as if they were eternal and true. But this is not a biblical stance at all. 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us that we are being transformed into one degree of glory to another. 1 John 3:2 tells us that we will become like Christ. From our earthly experience it seems impossible for us to become like Christ. If we have ever seriously tried to be like Christ, we know how impossible this seems.

Why does the Bible insist on this point? Because Christ reveals and makes possible for us our true humanity. What we are now is not our true nature or destiny. This is why there is a season of Easter. It invites us to practice letting go of who we currently are and think that we always will be and to allow the Risen Christ in us to become our new center of selfhood. The resurrection is not about Jesus extending our current selfhood into a never-ending existence. That self will and must die. In resurrection, we become a new self in Christ. Only a new and higher self will be able to cross the threshold of death into a new dimension.

The modern era in its hubris and self-congratulation, believes that it stands at the zenith of

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human self-hood. It has arrogantly supposed that all other human achievements of the past pale in comparison. There is more to human self-hood than we can imagine. We are more than our ideas and beliefs and worldviews. Our invitation is to discover this more and to open ourselves to dimensions of humanity incarnated by Jesus. This is our true nature. A blessed Easter, all!

## **How Do We Know? (Apr. 28)**

This Sunday, May 1, is the third Sunday of Easter and Communion Sunday. The Scripture reading is John 21: 1 – 19 and the sermon title is “Nothing is Wasted.” The hymns will be “In the Bulb There Is a Flower” and “The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want.”

As we continue to meditate upon the resurrection of Jesus in this season of Easter, I want to explore the biblical hints about how the resurrection becomes real to some and not to others. I remember a preaching professor once wondering why the risen Jesus did not appear to his enemies, those responsible for his death, and engage in some kind of victory dance before them. He confessed that this is how he would have constructed the resurrection if it were his to construct. Revenge. Gloating. Proof. Isn’t this how we think about faith, in all-too human terms?

The Gospels portray a very different story. Jesus appears only to those who loved him. At times, even they don’t recognize him. Mary Magdalene, at first, thought that Jesus was a gardener. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus had a lengthy conversation with Jesus but did not recognize him until he broke bread in their presence. After they recognized him, he disappeared from their sight. In the passage for this Sunday, Jesus instructs them to cast their nets again after a night of failed fishing and the catch nearly overwhelms them. Curiously the text says, “Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord.” How did they know? How do we know? Why are the appearance stories so strange and perception of Jesus so mysterious and fleeting?

Spiritual perception is of a different order than physical perception. Physical perception requires physical eyes. Spiritual perception requires spiritual eyes. What are spiritual eyes? Let us acknowledge that they are different than physical eyes. This is where we children of the Enlightenment get confused. We value only what the physical senses can perceive and what the rational mind can measure and understand. The meaning of Jesus and the resurrection do not fall within these limitations.

How did the disciples know that Jesus was of God and should be followed, leaving all other things behind? Would we have known had we been alive then? How do we know now? Faith is not unreasonable, but it is not a knowing of the mind. Our own inner spiritual powers of perception must be developed enough to be able to see and know what is of God and what

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is not. All spiritual practice is about developing our spiritual ability to perceive what appears to us from spiritual realms—like Jesus' identity and his risen presence.

The stories of Jesus are true, but they will not be perceived by our minds alone, but by our own inner, spiritual development and capacity. If our spiritual nature is not nourished daily, then the spiritual truths of Jesus will remain hidden from our sight. Resurrection will be seen as a symbol for spring or in some other fashion that will not mean very much to us. In order for us to really see resurrection, we must be ready to see it. My prayer for us is that we will be able to see and to know. Easter blessings.



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**Nonprofit Organization**

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**DATED MATERIAL ENCLOSED**

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

| <b>MAY 2022</b> |     |                               |          | <b>JUNE 2022</b> |     |                                   |          |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|----------|
| May 3           | Tue | Meditation for Earth*         | 12:15 PM | Jun 1            | Wed | Wisdom Group                      | 7:00 PM  |
| May 4           | Wed | Wisdom Group                  | 7:00 PM  | Jun 5            | Thu | <b>Day of Pentacost</b>           |          |
| May 5           | Thu | <b>National Day of Prayer</b> |          | Jun 7            | Tue | Meditation for Earth*             | 12:15PM  |
| May 8           | Sun | <b>Mother's Day</b>           |          | Jun 8            | Wed | Wisdom Group                      | 7:00 PM  |
| May 9           | Mon | Rumson Seniors                | 11:00AM  | Jun 12           | Sun | <b>Trinity Sunday</b>             |          |
| May 10          | Tue | Meditation for Earth*         | 12:15PM  | Jun 14           | Tue | <b>Flag Day</b>                   |          |
| May 11          | Wed | Wisdom Group                  | 7:00 PM  | Jun 14           | Tue | Meditation for Earth*             | 12:15 PM |
| May 17          | Tue | Meditation for Earth*         | 12:15 PM | Jun 19           | Sun | <b>Father's Day</b>               |          |
| May 17          | Tue | Session                       | 7:00 PM  |                  |     | <b>Summer worship hours begin</b> | 9:15 AM  |
| May 18          | Wed | Wisdom Group                  | 7:00 PM  | Jun 21           | Tue | <b>Summer Begins</b>              |          |
| May 23          | Mon | Rumson Seniors                | 11:00AM  | Jun 21           | Tue | Meditation for Earth*             | 12:15PM  |
| May 23          | Mon | Mission Commission            | 7:30 PM  | Jun 21           | Tue | Session                           | 7:00 PM  |
| May 24          | Tue | Meditation for Earth*         | 12:15PM  | Jun 27           | Mon | Mission Commission                | 7:30 PM  |
| May 25          | Wed | Wisdom Group                  | 7:00 PM  | Jun 28           | Tue | Meditation for Earth*             | 12:15PM  |
| 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.*



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