

# Oak Leaves

Vol. LXIV, Number 11

July/August 2022



## *Ora et Labora*

*by Pastor John*

Now that we have entered into the season of summer, my retirement and imminent departure are becoming ever more a present reality. I am becoming present to the reality that all of these disciplines of preaching, writing newsletter articles, moderating Session meetings, and the like are coming rapidly to an end. Most everything that I do in ministry will be one of the last times I will do it. This recognition creates greater awareness about the ordinary, which is where the extraordinary always shows up, if we are awake enough to perceive it.

People have asked Rosanne and me, “What will you do upstate, in the country?” Knowing Rosanne, you should know that the answer is, “A lot!” The model that I have in mind for our coming life is taken directly from Benedictine spiritual practice—*ora et labora*. Prayer and work. The Benedictine tradition has found for over 1500 years that a pattern of life which centers around simplicity, conscious work, and a rhythm of daily prayer is conducive to spiritual growth. That’s what we hope to create and discover—a daily rhythm conducive to spiritual growth. Preparing meals, keeping house, organizing our garage and machines, stewarding our property, enjoying nature, and bringing our awareness constantly to God.

The ideal is to create a balance between *ora et labora*, prayer and work. My expectation is that we will have to work hard at making sure that *ora* gets its due and is not overwhelmed by *labora*. *Ora* or prayer includes meditative stillness, reading and holy conversation, contemplative moments in nature, and a constant remembering of our spiritual nature. It means impartial self-observation amid the moments of the day. Having been shaped by the Protestant work ethic, most of us know what *labora* or work is. The real practice is to make sure that our work is conscious and not dominated by egoic energies. In monasteries, when the bell is rung for worship, one immediately stops what one is doing, whether the job is finished or not. The real end is not the work itself, but what the work is doing in us.

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I am trying to practice ora et labora now, before retirement begins. Can I be prayerful in work? Can I be rigorous in prayer? Can I be present to God in each moment? It's humbling work this road to greater presence and awareness. It is God's work for us all. For a few more times, see you in church!

## *Worshipping Together in July & August*



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

### **Communion Sunday, July 3, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"Where is God's Peace?"** by **Rev. David Bowman**

Scripture: **Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20**

Looking at Jesus' charge as he sent out the 70 disciples, "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.'", we'll reflect on what peace means. What comes to mind when you think of peace? What does it look like? What shape does it take? Peace does not begin with our behaviors toward each other but with our way of being toward each other, our seeing each other as human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

### **Sunday, July 10, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

**Rev. Sue Smith**

### **Sunday, July 17, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"Learning What Is Ours to Do"** by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: Colossians 1:15-28; Luke 10:38-42

Our vision is limited to our immediate responsibilities, and we miss the spiritual dimension, which is central, foundational, and majestic. If we can begin to see the spiritual, not only may we become less frantic, but also more clear about what is truly our to do.

### **Sunday, July 24, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"Persistent Seekers"** by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Colossians 2:6-15; Luke 11:1-13**

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There is much more to our lives than meets the eye. Hints of the eternal echo within. Jesus encourages us to become persistent seekers for this unnamable reality.

**Sunday, July 31, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"True Treasure"** by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21**

We are seduced by low-hanging fruit, material wealth. The pursuit of such produces some rotten fruit. Looking for treasure leads to a new self.

**Communion Sunday, August 7, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"Inner Wealth"** by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Luke 12:32-40**

How valuable would it be to discover an inner capacity enabling one to experience connection to Source in each moment? How much effort would one exert for such a treasure?

**Sunday, August 14, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"Inner Flame"** by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Jeremiah 23:23-29; Luke 12:49-56**

Jeremiah makes a distinction between those who prophesy the deceit of their own hearts and those who speak God's word. God's word is like a fire, burning away the attachment to narrative self, so that something of God may come through.

**Sunday, August 21, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

Sermon: **"Removing the Weight of Self"** by **Rev. John W. Monroe III**

Scripture: **Isaiah 58:9b-14; Luke 13:10-17**

The weight of self-preoccupation keeps us from experiencing the richness of true life which is available to us. In the insight of Meister Eckhart we can experience addition by subtraction – the subtraction of self-obsession.

**Sunday, August 28, 2022 @ 9:15 AM**

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

Scripture: **Proverbs 25:6-7; Luke 14:1, 7-14**

Wisdom is paradoxical. It knows that as one lets go of self, something much more valuable will be discovered.

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

## *Church School*



I can't believe it is SUMMER!!! We made it! I hope everyone has a safe and healthy summer surrounded by family and friends. I will continue to have Church School for anyone interested in sending their children, the Nursery will also be available. Please contact me with any issues or requests at [churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org](mailto:churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org) or (732) 768-9913.

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.

Thank You!

Sandi Van Cleve, Director of Christian Education

## *Music Program*



I hope you are all enjoying a beautiful summer!

As per usual, I'd like to invite any of you to reach out to me if you enjoy making music, both vocally and instrumentally. I'm always looking for soloists or small groups to get together to offer music in worship. Please email me if you would like to participate. Thank you.

Blessings to you and your family,

Andrea Fegan, Music Director

# Other Church News



*Save the Date*

*for a*

## **Dinner Celebration**

HONORING

**Pastor John and Rosanne Monroe**

FRIDAY | October 7, 2022

Wilson Hall

Rumson Presbyterian Church

Detailed Invitation to Follow



 Greetings  
ISLAND

## 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.

## *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.njaa.org/#](http://www.njaa.org/#)  
For information about A.A. visit [www.njaa.org](http://www.njaa.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 is approximately 30 minutes. There are two ways to meditate with us: (1) In-person in the Sanctuary at Rumson Presbyterian Church (2) Online on our YouTube channel. No matter where you are in the world, you can join us as we meditate for our Earth!

### **Eco Poetry: Bringing Attention to Plants, Animals, and Bodies of Water** **Thu., July 7** from **4:00 PM - 5:45 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, weather permitting.

### **Beach Cleanup** **Wed., July 20** from **7:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

Save the date for this after-work beach cleanup at Sandy Hook park with our friends at Save Coastal Wildlife!

### **Waterspirit Book Club** **Mon., August 29** from **6:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

Join our Book Club! This summer each book club member is choosing a children's book to read. After our meeting we will be donating our books to a local organization that supports and encourages children's reading!

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

## *Caring for God's Earth*



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

## **21 Ways Faith Groups Are Combating Global Warming**

Faith groups across the country are taking action to reduce the effects of global warming and reduce their own emissions.

Religious communities across the country are celebrating Earth Day every day this year by taking long-term, sustainable steps to help reduce global warming. Faith communities are greening their houses of worship and advocating for policies and lifestyles that protect the planet and its most vulnerable inhabitants, joining scientists, policymakers and environmental advocates as good stewards of God's creation. Here are 21 things these communities are doing to combat global warming.

### **Moral principles**

Providing a moral voice to the climate change crisis. Virtually every holy text has a mandate to protect creation and help those in need. These moral imperatives call for strong action to address the climate change crisis as the globe continues to warm and more than 1 billion impoverished people in the United States and around the world become increasingly vulnerable to harsher climates.

Pointing to religious teachers and spiritual figures for guidance. Guidelines for conscientious lifestyles come from spiritual thinkers as diverse as St. Augustine, Saint Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, C. S. Lewis, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Dalai Lama; as well as spiritual concepts such as Judaic Kosher practices, Native American shamanism, and Buddhist reincarnation.

### **Worship day practices**

Building sustainable sanctuaries. Congregations are saving thousands of dollars and preventing tons of CO2 emissions from entering into the atmosphere by developing energy-efficient church buildings. Regional Interfaith Power and Light offices provide audit evaluations and recommendations to churches to green their buildings, from changing their light bulbs to installing solar photovoltaic generators.

Making pulpit pledges. On Sunday, tens of thousands of American clergy linked their worship texts to creation care, many using the materials provided by the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group, "Celebrating and Caring for God's Creation." Thousands committed to the year-round Earth Day Network "Global Warming in the Pulpit Pledge" to preach and teach on global climate change as a moral issue.

Gathering for eco-friendly holy dinners. Muslims from Washington, D.C. to Chicago gather for potlucks that encourage eco-conscious ways of living as an integral part of faith and a holistic world-view. They've created eco-halal and hosted green Iftar meals during Ramadan.

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Observing lo-watt Shabbat. Jewish families and communities find ways to conserve energy during the weekly Shabbat—a time to slow down and remember that everyone is part of God’s creation.

Going green for Lent. Some Christians committed to helping reduce global warming by taking on a “carbon fast” and making other sacrifices to live more environmentally friendly as part of this year’s Lent observation.

Casting SUVs aside. Church goers are biking to church, building more bike trails, and replacing the “baddest” SUVs with the “greenest” hybrids in annual car shows.

Using e-bulletins and eco-cups. Faith communities are conserving resources and reducing garbage when gathering for worship and fellowship – from putting out e-bulletins in place of paper ones to bringing ceramic coffee cups to church, using recycled and recyclable kitchenware, collecting for recycling materials, and composting as a community.

#### Local community services

Greening low-income housing in Harlem. The Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement – a coalition of over 90 congregations – is constructing an 85-unit development that features a Green Grid Roofing system.

Using green thumbs to grow greener foods. Congregations around the country are planting community gardens and gardens for correctional facilities, developing community-supported agriculture programs, and supporting local urban farming organizations for healthy, fresh, sustainable food sources.

Making a home for all God’s creatures. Churches from California to Idaho to North Carolina are restoring prairie lands and other wilderness areas, reintroducing a home for native wildlife on the church and community grounds. Earth Keepers, a coalition of 10 faiths and over 150 congregations across Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, have joined together to protect the regional environment there.

#### National partnerships and advocacy

Joining together across faith traditions. Religious leaders have joined together to create national, interfaith partnerships to advance creation care (care for the earth and conscientious energy practices) and climate justice (assistance to communities move vulnerable to the effects of climate change).

Joining with scientists to devise concrete actions. Faith groups attended the National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment as key partners in educating the public on the facts of climate change.

Creating a youth movement. The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities Renewal Network mobilizes youth leaders to develop greener lifestyles and campaign for sustainable

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agriculture, environmental justice, and smart solutions to the climate change crisis.

Demanding comprehensive and conscientious climate care legislation. United Church of Christ Director of Economic Justice and Environmental Justice John Hill testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Subcommittee last month that, “the faith community supports strong and quick action to address the dangers of climate change while ensuring that solutions mitigate rather than compound economic injustices.”

Petitioning the president and Congress for bold federal action. The national Interfaith Power and Light Action Center has generated thousands of letters petitioning for energy efficiency standards, fuel economy standards, green stimulus funding, and clean energy tax incentives.

Committing to tread lightly and act boldly. Catholics are committing to the Catholic Climate Covenant, reducing their carbon emissions and aiding the poor who will feel the impact of climate change the most.

Working to build the green collar economy. Faith-based advocacy partners in Michigan have joined with business, labor, and environmental organizations for the Green Today, Jobs Tomorrow conference put on by the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth.

Global services

Advocating for the world’s marginalized groups – the forests, animals, and ecosystems. Restoring Eden is a grassroots church and campus ministry that advocates for “the least of these” in the modern political arena and facilitates practical service projects that benefit creation and the indigenous peoples that rely on health natural resources.

Planting trees with purpose. Floresta is an international NGO that helps people in desperate environments find development opportunities that protect the land, sustain local economies, and build faith. They have planted over 4 million trees and made over 6,000 small business loans worldwide, helping more than 100,000 people in 234 villages lift themselves out of poverty.

The Center for American Progress—April 22, 2009

## *A Meditation*



Center for  
Action and  
Contemplation

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## Emotional Sobriety : Freedom from Our Passions

by [Richard Rohr, OFM](#)

June 22, 2022

*Blessed are the pure of heart; for they shall see God.* —Matthew 5:8

*Episcopal priest and CAC teacher emerita Cynthia Bourgeault writes of the difference between our modern understanding of emotions and the teachings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers:*

In the psychological climate of our own times, our emotions are almost always considered to be virtually identical with our personal authenticity, and the more freely they flow, the more we are seen to be honest and “in touch.” A person who gravitates to a mental mode of operation is criticized for being “in his head”; when feeling dominates, we proclaim with approval that such a person is “in his heart.”

In the Wisdom tradition, this would be a serious misuse of the term *heart*. Far from revealing the heart, Wisdom teaches that the emotions are in fact the primary culprits that obscure and confuse it. The real mark of personal authenticity is not how intensely we can express our feelings but how honestly we can look at where they’re coming from and spot the elements of clinging, manipulation, and personal agendas that make up so much of what we experience as our emotional life today. . . .

In the teachings of the Christian Desert Fathers and Mothers, these intense feelings arising out of personal issues were known as the “passions,” and most of the Desert spiritual training had to do with learning to spot these land mines and get free of them before they did serious psychic damage. In contrast to our contemporary usage, which tends to see passion as a good thing, indicating that one is fully alive and engaged, the Desert tradition saw passion as a *diminishment* of being. It meant falling into passivity, into a state of being acted upon (which is what the Latin *passio* actually means), rather than clear and conscious engagement. Instead of enlivening the heart, according to one Desert Father, the real damage inflicted by the passions is that “they divide our heart into two.” . . .

The heart, in the ancient sacred traditions, has a very specific and perhaps surprising meaning. It is not the seat of our personal affective life—or even, ultimately, of our personal identity—but an organ for the perception of divine purpose and beauty. . . .

Finding the way to where our true heart lies is the great journey of spiritual life. . . . [1]

*Bourgeault describes contemplation and letting go as the pathway back to the heart’s wholeness:*

The core practice for cleansing the heart, for restoring the heart to its organ of spiritual seeing, becomes supremely, in Christianity, the path of kenosis, of letting go. The seeing will

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come, and it's a part we still have to work on in Christianity, but the real heart of emotion is the willingness to let go, to sacrifice . . . your personal drama, the letting go at that level, so that you can begin to see. [2]

**References:**

[1] Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 32–34.

[2] *An Introductory Wisdom School with Cynthia Bourgeault: Course Transcript and Companion Guide* (Wisdom Way of Knowing: 2017), 124. Now available through the online course *Introductory Wisdom School* (Albuquerque, NM: Center for Action and Contemplation, 2019).

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

### **The Present Moment (June 16)**

This Sunday, June 19, we will ordain and install new members to Session—Carrie Eustace and Andy Bowe. The Scripture readings are Galatians 3: 23 – 27 and Luke 8: 26 – 39. The sermon title is "Defined by Love", and the hymns are "God of the Sparrow" and "Both Sides Now." Remember, we are now worshipping at 9:15.

As a new Session is formed each June, we always do a review of Presbyterian polity and reflect on what is the job of an elder and the job of a church. These questions take on a new significance in light of my coming retirement. The church will embark on a season of change, which also can become a time of renewal.

Our church has been marked by pastoral stability. Skip Wilson pastored for twenty-five years, and I have been pastor for twenty-four. Since 1970, we have had two installed pastors. Not many churches have this legacy.

Think about how much the world has changed since 1970. It is hard to imagine, isn't it? The instability of change may very well prove to be a gift for our church. It may move the church to reflect deeply on how times have changed and what the job of a church might be amidst the change.

I have concluded that our times are not unlike the period when the Roman Empire collapsed, and monastic communities emerged in Europe to sow seeds of light and renewal. The Spirit of Christ shown in them and brought hope to many.

My conclusion may or may not be on target, but it seems that in times of great unrest and uncertainty, spiritual movements rise to the surface to water the cultural grounds for new life. If our church, or any church, draws deeply into the movements of the Spirit of Christ,

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then it will be doing very important work. And one of the keys to spiritual work is to be present to the moment. Focus on the past or future, draws us into our patterns of thinking and reacting and draws us away from present moment contact with God. It's why Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount to avoid worry. He knew that God was present. If we can be present too, we will be met by God.

Let this be a practice in the weeks and months ahead. May we learn what God is up to in our own transformation. Blessings!

## **Presbyterian Foundations (June 22)**

This Sunday, June 26, the Scripture readings are Galatians 5: 1, 13 – 25 and Luke 9: 51 – 62. The sermon title is "Jesus' Definition of Freedom", and the hymns will be "For the Beauty of the Earth" and "(I've Been) Searching So Long."

Last night, the Session met, welcoming our newest members, Carrie Eustace and Andy Bowe. At the June Session meeting, we always do some training and review of Presbyterian polity. Over the years, I have referred to it as our Vince Lombardi meeting. The story is told of a team meeting after a bad game, when Lombardi decided to go back and focus on the basics. "Gentlemen," he said, holding up a football, "this is a football!" Then he proceeded to have them practice the basics of blocking, tackling, throwing, and catching.

If professional athletes could benefit from a review of the basics of their jobs, how much more can churches benefit from reviewing the basics of our faith and church tradition. In our meeting, we focused on the opening section in our Book of Order which is called The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity. It's my favorite part of our Book of Order.

It reminds us that the church is called into existence by Christ, that Christ is the head of the church, and that the church is to reflect the reconciling work of God in the world. This opening section reminds us that our job is to participate in God's work of bringing about a new creation and a new humanity.

What can any church do to participate in such lofty work? We likely will not be able to solve all of the world's problems or end all of its abuses, but we can seek to draw ourselves back to Christ in each moment and to seek that in us which is in the world, but not of it. Reading this part of our Book of Order, carries a power of bringing us back to our spiritual center, which is our true home and purpose.

I would recommend reading this as a part of one's devotional practice. We all forget what our lives are about, and we get diverted by the urgency of the immediate, or by our own worries and fears. Jesus constantly told his followers to avoid worry and fear. These Christian practices are not easy, but they are life-giving, and in a time of transition can make a big difference for ours or any church. Let's pray for our leaders and for one another. Blessings!

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

**Nonprofit Organization**

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**DATED MATERIAL ENCLOSED**

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

**JULY 2022**

Jul 4	Mon	<b>Independence Day</b>	
Jul 5	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Jul 7	Thu	Eco Poetry Workshop*	4:00 PM
Jul 12	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Jul 19	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Jul 20	Wed	Beach Cleanup*	7:00 PM
Jul 25	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30 PM
Jul 26	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM

**AUGUST 2022**

Aug 2	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Aug 7	Sun	<b>Purple Heart Day</b>	
Aug 9	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Aug 16	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Aug 16	Tue	Session	7:00 PM
Aug 22	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30 PM
Aug 23	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15 PM
Aug 29	Mon	Waterspirit Book Club*	6:00 PM
Aug 30	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)