

Oak Leaves

Vol. LXV, Number 2

October 2022



Seeking God within the Earthly

by Pastor John

With the arrival of October, I enter into my final month of ministry. I was ordained in June of 1984 and have served three congregations in Ridgewood, New Jersey, Glendale, Arizona, and Rumson. A sense of being called, however, began in childhood. I would sense something more in worship, in nature, in solitude, and in relationships which pointed me to an ultimate loving mystery which we call God. I knew that this was true home and true direction. A deep experience of God in October of my senior year of high school set in motion the direction of my life. College and seminary were years of examination, struggle, and preparation for this direction.

In church life, there is a horizontal and vertical dimension. The horizontal includes our human relationships and work together. There is also the vertical dimension which is beyond our understanding or control. At our best, the horizontal is in service of the vertical. I think that this is why funerals have become so meaningful for me. It is there that our usual way of perceiving our world is disrupted, and we find ourselves standing humbly before a reality which is beyond us. Our sense of self is broken, and if we are fortunate, broken open into an experience of the vertical. Yes, we are undone, and yet, we also feel held by something much, much greater. We experience sorrow and support simultaneously.

This is one moment in which we draw near to the vertical, or better, when the vertical draws near to us. What Jesus told us in so many ways was that when we die to our horizontal selves or empty ourselves of this self, the vertical is able to rush in and fill us. But most of the time, we are tempted to hold onto this horizontal self, because the vertical seems so far removed. Of course, this dimension is not far away. We are blocked from perceiving it, because we are holding on and it can only fill us when we let go.

Both you and I are involved in a process of letting go. We have agreed to dissolve our rela-

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tionship as pastor and church. Yes, there is the horizontal dimension of this reality. If we do this work well, however, there is also the potential for us to experience the vertical dimension of this parting. The heart must be involved. Rosanne and I are so grateful for both dimensions. We have loved our life in Rumson, and we have loved how we have experienced God in our time here. We are humbled by it all and dedicate ourselves to an ever-growing search for God as we let go into our new life. Thanks for your friendship and openness to God. We will miss you and pray for you. In these final weeks, we look forward to seeing you in church!

Worshipping Together in September



Communion Sunday, October 2, 2022 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: **"In Service of Life"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **Psalm 137; Luke 17:5-10**

Jesus' teaching does not land well on our privileged ears. Yet he knew that we only find life when we see ourselves as servants of life.

Sunday, October 9, 2022 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: **"Knowing God"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19**

The human journey is so troubled if we seek to make ourselves our own god. A true knowledge of God changes everything.

Sunday, October 16, 2022 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: **"Fierce Faith"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **Genesis 32:22-31; Luke 18:1-8**

Don't give up on life of the soul. Get in there and fight for it. The fight will bear fruit.

Sunday, October 23, 2022 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: **"When Down Becomes Up"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **Joel 2:23-32; Luke 18:9-14**

In biblical logic, exile is followed by restoration, humiliation by exaltation. Take heart!

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Sunday, October 30, 2022 @ 9:45 AM

Sermon: **"Have Faith"** by Rev. John W. Monroe III

Scripture: **Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4; Luke 19:1-10**

Yes, much is not right with the world, but if we learn to live by faith, joy will break through.

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

Church School



The Fall season is upon us. I would like to remind everyone that Church School is still in session and the nursery is staffed and ready for your childcare needs every Sunday during Worship. I look forward to strengthening your child's Christian Education in a fun and meaningful way. Please contact me with any issues or requests. Please join us Sunday, October 9th for a Fall ice cream social "coffee hour" requested by our own Thomas Kiningham... the Birthday boy!

Thank You!

Sandi Van Cleve, Director of Christian Education

As always, looking for "volunteers" for the Nursery. Please reach out to me at 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.

Music Program



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Happy October, everyone!

Choir: This year, we are rehearsing on the first Thursday of the month, 7:30 pm start time, and we cover the music for the upcoming month. Sundays we usually meet around 9:00 am in preparation for the 9:45 am service. We are also now beginning to work on Cantata season as well. If you are interested in joining us, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. The Cantata is scheduled for Sunday, December 11th.

Youth choir: We continue to hold youth choir rehearsals at the end of the church service, around 10:45 am. Rehearsals are short, but we do cover beautiful material we can then offer in church worship. I love working with the kids and coming up with song ideas together, and we love creating music together. I'm open to any child joining in the fun, young or old, and we can tailor the music to fit their interests. If your child is interested, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. If they would prefer to play an instrument instead, we'd be very open to that also.

Upcoming Christmas story/pageant: Our annual pageant is scheduled for this December, however this past year we had a "Christmas Memories and Carols" instead. This is often simpler than a pageant since the kids usually know the carols and I always pick the ones that are most known. Please let me know if you can join us! For now, the Christmas Memories services is scheduled for December 18th.

Adult Readers Needed: On that note, I'm also interested in finding adults who could share their Christmas memories to be read at the service.. This can be simply 1 or 2 paragraphs, nothing lengthy, and a joyful way to think back to our youth. Please let me know if you'd like to contribute your story.

Thanks very much, and blessings to you and your families,
Andreea Fegan, Music Director

Other Church News



2022 Crop Hunger Walk

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Rumson Presbyterian Church has registered! Walk. Give. Change the world.

We're participating in the 2022 CROP Hunger Walk to support CWS and help families who are struggling with hunger. We're asking you to join us - with your steps and your donations - to provide more meals for the growing number of people in our community who need them, and greater food security in communities around the world.

Please visit <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2022/team/rumson-presbyterian-church-2>

to join our team on October 16th, or if you can't join us, to support us by making a donation today! Thank you!

Giving

GIVEPLUS⁺

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.



Save the Date

for a

Dinner Celebration

HONORING

Pastor John and Rosanne Monroe

FRIDAY | October 7, 2022

Wilson Hall

Rumson Presbyterian Church



Presbyterian Church (USA) News



PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION



**WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY
CELEBRATES OUR
ONENESS IN CHRIST
WITH ALL OUR
BROTHERS AND SISTERS
AROUND THE WORLD.**

On World Communion Sunday, we celebrate that Christ's peace extends throughout all creation. We celebrate that we are all together at the table, in God's house.

Peace is active, not passive. Peace is doing, not waiting. We celebrate that we are offered what we need to continue the work of building the household of God with active peacemakers here at home and around the world.

As a shared offering, your gifts on World Communion Sunday to the Peace & Global Witness Offering support peacemaking in your own community, your own region and places around the world. Thank you for your generosity; for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

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/#
For information about A.A. visit 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 is approximately 30 minutes.

Stormwater Management and Environmental Justice Webinar Wed., Oct. 19 from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Join us for the third installment in this four-part series. This webinar will be an opportunity for municipalities, decision makers, NGOs and funders to connect and have dialogue with the goal of municipalities taking the first step towards exploratory analyses of stormwater

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infrastructure or a utility. Register to join us for this virtual mid day meeting.

Advocacy Community Meeting Thu., Oct. 27 from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Join us for our bi-monthly advocacy community meeting! Learn about an environmental issue impacting New Jersey, then take action with a supportive and engaged community of friends! This month we'll talk about the importance of passing same-day voter registration in New Jersey. This meeting will be online.

Climate Pastoral Care Course Launch Fri., Oct. 28 from 8:00 PM - 9:30 PM

Please join us for this informative webinar on climate pastoral care, held to mark the launch of a new course on the topic. Learn from experts in the field including Sally Gillespie, Talitha Amadea Aho, and Douglas Kaufman. Deepen your understanding of the emotional states that the climate crisis can provoke (including eco-anxiety, climate grief, and more), and how to help your church communities navigate those feelings sensitively and effectively. Please note: this webinar will take place on Zoom.

All are welcome. Please visit their website (waterspirit.org)

Caring for God's Earth



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

Environmental Policies approved by the 2022 General Assembly

The 225th General Assembly, which was held in June/July of this year, approved a number of environmental policies. Last month we shared about divestment from fossil fuel companies and *Investing in a Green Future: a Vision for a Renewed Creation*. There were other overtures that the Environmental Committee considered and the General Assembly approved.

On Creating the Presbyterian Tree Fund. A fund was created to receive carbon offset donations and to grant tree-planting and other greenhouse gas sequestration projects. This overture calls for the Presbyterian Mission Agency staff to limit travel where able and to budget for contributions to this fund to offset travel. It also asks that any events sponsored by the

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PCUSA provide the ability for participants to choose to offset carbon through the fund. If you would like to contribute to this fund, you can find it here: Presbyterian Mission Agency Give to Restoring Creation For Ecology & Justice Fund | E865715 | Presbyterian Mission Agency (<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/donate/e865715/>)

On Reducing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Carbon Imprint. This overture calls on the PCUSA to reduce its carbon imprint 25% in the next 4 years. It also asks congregations and individuals to assess their carbon imprint.

On Protecting the Diversity of Creation. This overture asks the PCUSA to endorse the international and US goals of protecting 30% of lands and waters by 2030 (30x30). Members and congregations are encouraged to learn where the lands and waters in their region are under threat.

On Actions in Support of an Energy Transition. This overture was amended by the committee to answer a number of other overtures. It begins with this statement: “The Presbyterian Church (USA) affirms its historic work of confronting the current climate crisis. The PC(USA) also repents of our participation and growing complicity in the processes that have brought our planetary ecosystem to the tipping point of unsustainability for humans, most significantly marginalized people, and mass extinction of other species. We must continue towards a way of life divested from fossil fuels both monetarily and in our daily living.” The overture has a number of items for the church to address. It ends with this: “We acknowledge that these measures are inadequate to the urgency and level of crisis before us and we therefore urge our congregations and members to become the needed, faithful change we seek by being carbon neutral, net-zero, or even climate positive by 2030; encourage congregations with historic or landmark buildings to retrofit their structures to the furthest extent possible; implore all PC(USA)-related educational institutions (secondary schools, colleges, universities, seminaries) and individual members to do the same with their homes and facilities and continuing at a faster pace towards a world divested from fossil fuels.”

If you want to read any of these overtures in greater detail, please go to PC-Biz (<https://www.pc-biz.org/>), click on Committees and select Environmental Justice.

A Meditation



Center for
Action and
Contemplation

Ripening : A Windfall of Delight

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by [Richard Rohr, OFM](#)

September 22, 2022

CAC faculty member James Finley shares his thoughts on spiritual maturity as a form of ripening:

We ripen in holiness and spiritual fulfillment as we learn to sit in the sun of God's mysterious, sustaining presence that energizes and guides our efforts, bringing us to realms of grace that are beyond, way beyond, anything we can achieve by our own efforts alone. . . .

The lifelong process of ripening brings about a corresponding ripening of our ability to understand the fundamentals in a wiser, peace-giving manner. . . . As a person ripens in unsayable intimacies in God, they ripen in a paradoxical wisdom. They come to understand God as a presence that protects us from nothing, even as God unexplainably sustains us in all things. This is the Mystery of the Cross that reveals whatever it means that God watches over us; it does not mean that God prevents the tragic thing, the cruel thing, the unfair thing, from happening. Rather, it means that God is intimately hidden as a kind of profound, tender sweetness that flows and carries us along in the intimate depths of the tragic thing itself—and will continue to do so in every moment of our lives up to and through death, and beyond.

As fruit ripens, it fulfills itself in reaching its full potential to nurture us and give us pleasure. We might say that, as fruit ripens, it fulfills itself in giving itself to us. In a similar way, we do not undergo the transformative process of ripening for ourselves alone, but rather that our transformed presence might be a source of nurture to others.

Then too, there is the fruit that, in remaining unharvested, falls onto the ground and dies. The lesson here is in Jesus' words, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it brings forth fruit a hundred fold, a thousand fold" (John 12:24).

And so it is with us. As we grow old we realize that, in all we have been through, Love has been using us for its own purposes. And for this we feel immensely grateful. We know, too, that our inevitable passing away, in which we fall into the ground and die, is not the end of our ripened and transformed life. It is rather our passage into an infinite and deathless fulfillment. Saint John of the Cross [1542–1591] talks about a windfall of delight. [1] When fruit becomes very ripe, the slightest wind can cause it to fall to the ground. This is also true of us, and not just in the sense in which we learn to be undone and fulfilled in all the unexpected little blessings that come to us throughout the day. The windfall of delight pertains as well to our last breath, which we know and trust will send us falling forever into the deathless depths of God.

References:

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[1] John of the Cross, "The Dark Night," in *The Poems of St. John of the Cross*, trans. John Frederick Nims (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 19. Note: "Windfall of delight" is Nims's translation of John's line "*¡o dichosa ventura!*"

James Finley, "Ripening," *Oneing* 1, no. 2, *Ripening* (Fall 2013): 37–38. Available as PDF download.

Pastor John's Weekly E-Mail "Blasts"

New Eyes (Sept. 7)

Having passed Labor Day, everything begins to change. Schools are reopening. Vacation mindsets are giving way to work mindsets and planning for all that fall, and winter bring. For churches it is a time of getting back to increased activity and a planning for the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas.

For me, this year, and for our church, it brings a deepening awareness of my coming departure. It gets more real for me with each passing day. Throughout this past year, I have been slowly getting rid of things with an eye to these final weeks. My intention has been to be well prepared for departure so that I will not be so consumed by demands at the end that I will not be able to be fully present to the moment. I find myself soaking in these final days. Small things, like being in the sanctuary alone or putting up the sermon title on the board. There is a sense of wanting to honor the path I have been on for so many years.

There is also the beginning of getting my head and my heart around the newness which awaits. Retirement! Who will I be without work and its demands? There will be a process of letting go of an old identity and finding a new sense of self. There will also be the getting used to being an older adult. It can feel disorienting, all this change and newness. I can imagine that it will be like this for the church as well, as you move into a period of new leadership and vision.

Our Christian contemplative tradition says that there is great potential and gift in transitional periods like this one. It tells us that we hold onto our identifications too tightly anyway, that our true identity is beyond any human descriptors or understandings. There is a part of us which stands in eternity, and we are called to foreground this part of ourselves more and more as we age. As we move into the abyss of the unknown, what we are really doing is moving ever closer to God. There is a shedding of these identities which have given us meaning, and a welcoming of that in us which is so incredibly deep and mysterious. All these years in ministry, I think, have prepared me for such a journey as this. I am soaking it in. Blessings all!

Beneath the Ground of Self (Sept. 14)

As I was waking up with my cup of coffee this morning and listening to a bit of news, I heard that there is a shortage of 911 call processors across the country. People are calling 911 to seek help for emergencies, and no one is there to answer. It's just another sign of how our systems are stressed and breaking. What I appreciated about this story is that there was no jumping to easy blame or fixes. Across the board, our systems which have served us well for so long are telling us something that we don't want to hear. They are telling us that we are going through an era of fundamental change and that new paradigms, structures, and understandings are required for us to move forward together into a future that will work. In other words, our past ways of seeing and being are not adequate for the future which is moving toward us.

As we all know, the problem is much bigger than any isolated structure such as our 911 system. The same stresses and strains are being experienced everywhere we look—government, politics, education, commerce, religion. Living amidst the stress, of course, creates stress for everyone. Predictably, people don't want to go through dramatic change. Denial is rampant. Blame and a desire for easy fixes draws the energy of many. What is harder to do is to be fully present to the uncertainty and loss and remain present and hopeful.

What I believe is that we humans are being asked, rather impolitely by the pressure of events, to take another leap of being and consciousness. If the ancient and medieval worlds were dominated by spiritual sensitivities and the modern world by science and technology, the emerging post-modern world, I believe, will bring forth an integration of the ancient, medieval, and modern into a way of seeing and being that we cannot quite yet envision. I believe that the new era will be spiritual in more whole and mature ways. Egoic reactivity and rational arrogance will be softened, and the wisdom of the heart and body will be honored and received. But to get there, will require a letting go of the ground of self on which we now stand. What we are assured, is that underneath this ground there is another ground which will hold us even as we fall. There is death and there is resurrection. Blessings all!

Farewell Discourse (Sept. 21)

After our Congregational Meeting Sunday when we voted to dissolve our pastoral relationship effective November 1, I sensed the growing realization that our time together is drawing to a close. There is some sadness and uncertainty. For Rosanne and me, there is the challenge of all the details involved in moving. For my last six email blasts, I have decided to give some reflections on our ministry for the past twenty-four years. It is important to remember, honor, and reflect on what God has been up to with us as our time together comes to an end.

This week's memory begins at the beginning. On June 30, 1998, my family and I arrived at

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the manse around noon. I was to begin working the next day. As we walked into the kitchen, a worker was finishing laying the linoleum floor. He said to me, "Pastor, forgive me, but we are under some pressure here to finish." I remember saying, "I can appreciate that. I'll see your pressure and raise it." He understood.

He and his crew were done soon, and I began the process of moving furniture and unpacking. Our moving truck had arrived a couple of weeks earlier, but furniture had been stacked in a couple of rooms so that work on floors and the installation of carpeting could be finished. As dinner time neared, I drove to get some food for the family. A quick storm moved through with lots of wind. When I got back to the manse, I saw that a tree had fallen on one of our cars. It was pancaked.

Of course, the news spread. A picture showed up in the Two River Times. New pastor comes to Rumson and his car is destroyed in a storm. Was it an omen? If so, what was the message? It's safe to say that my ministry here began with a bang! If we are inclined to look for messages in the events of our lives, perhaps the message of my rocky beginning was that I should not expect everything to go smoothly or as planned. There have been other storms which have visited in these past twenty-four years. Storms are to be expected. 9/11, Sandy, COVID, and church conflict have all been a part of my time here. Storms for sure. Yet each storm brings learning and gifts. How have our storms impacted our relationship with God? What have you learned from your own storms? Blessings all!

Farewell Discourse II (Sept. 28)

As I mentioned last week, my final email blasts will focus on various aspects of our ministry together these past twenty-four years. This week I will focus on our mission as a church. Soon, you will have an interim pastor who will help to lead you in a mission study to set future priorities for the church. This happened twenty-five years ago after Skip retired, and Roger Rice was our interim pastor. When I arrived, priorities had been set. Local mission and membership care were the two primary priorities.

These priorities led to much fruitful work. Our church had developed a relationship with Elmer Jackson before I came. He was beginning a new school, called Westside Christian Academy. We decided to nest this school in its first two years by providing space for it to meet in the education wing and by purchasing a school bus for its use. Also, the ministry now known as Family Promise was at that time looking to begin a chapter in Monmouth County. For ten years, we hosted homeless families by providing overnight shelter, meals, and companionship to homeless families. Both of these ministries required great effort by our church and made a huge impact in our community. Mission has remained a hallmark of our church and continues today.

Membership care was addressed in several ways. I made it a priority to visit members per-

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sonally and trained other members to reach out to members as well. We started a vigorous small group ministry which provided members with opportunities to experience meaningful community as they engaged together in activities of study and service. Congregational Life also played an important role in promoting connections. Coffee hours grew to become the best brunch in town and church dinners were a thing of beauty not to be missed.

As we move into pastoral transition, this will once again be a time of dreaming and communicating and discerning the will of God for the church. You will be invited to participate in this holy work. I hope that you will be a part of this. I am grateful for the work that was done before I came and pray for the work which will come after I retire. God has blessed many in and through this church and will continue to do so as we listen for God's leading. Blessings all!



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

Nonprofit Organization

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL ENCLOSED

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

OCTOBER 2022

Oct 2	Sun	World Communion Sunday	
Oct 3	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30PM
Oct 4	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Oct 7	Fri	Celebration Dinner for John & Rosanne	6:00PM
Oct 10	Mon	Columbus Day (Observed)	
Oct 10	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Oct 11	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Oct 16	Sun	Red Bank Crop Hunger Walk	
Oct 18	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Oct 18	Tue	Session	7:00PM
Oct 10	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Oct 24	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30PM
Oct 25	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Oct 30	Sun	Reformation Sunday	

NOVEMBER 2022

Nov 1	Tue	All Saints Day	
Nov 1	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Nov 6	Sun	Daylight Saving Time ends	
Nov 8	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Nov 11	Fri	Veterans Day	
Nov 14	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Nov 15	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Nov 15	Tue	Session	7:00PM
Nov 20	Sun	Christ the King Sunday	
Nov 22	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Nov 24	Thu	Thanksgiving Day	
Nov 27	Sun	First Sunday of Advent	
Nov 28	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Nov 28	Mon	Mission Commission	7:30PM
Nov 29	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM

**Waterspirit sponsored event. All are welcome.*

Please visit their website (waterspirit.org) for more information about their events.



www.rumsonprebyterian.org