

# Oak Leaves

Vol. LXV, Number 3

November 2022



## *Riding the Wave* by Pastor John

I thought that the October Oakleaves would be my last, but since November Oakleaves is put together late in October, I will give one last communication here.

As I have said, Rosanne and I are filled up by your celebrations and thoughtful and sensitive communications in our final weeks with you. It has been a powerful month for us. Thank you!

I have moved a lot in my life. My twenty-four years here are far and away the most that I have ever spent in one place. My first emotional move came when I was in the sixth grade. It was February and we were moving from Memphis, Tennessee to Colonial Heights, Virginia. During school, the movers had finished packing our house. Mom picked us up from school and drove to a friend's house for a brief visit before we headed off to a hotel, from which we would proceed to Virginia in the morning. As we finally got into the car and drove away, my friends got on their bikes and rode behind us for awhile until we disappeared from sight—all of us waving as we went.

Good-byes are hard and awkward. Leaving a social gathering can take almost as long as the gathering itself. You have made this good-bye more graceful than I could have imagined. Again, thank you!

I imagine there will be tears my last Sunday. I was getting teary just reading through the bulletin for my last Sunday and seeing the music which will be shared. I will not emerge unscathed.

But the openness of the heart is essential to any spiritual work. I am not embarrassed by tears. They reveal the heart's depths. They put us in touch with the reality of God's love, which is our true home, from which we never depart no matter where and how often we move or not.

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I promise to pray for you in my retirement, even as I embrace the necessary boundaries of a dissolved pastoral relationship. A new pastor and a new sense of calling will come to you, and together you will discern the future for the church. So, let's ride the waves of our good-byes, and know that God is offering us tremendous gifts as we move into the unknown. The best is yet to be! Blessings, friends!

## *Worshipping Together in November*



### **Communion Sunday, November 6, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Asking Better Questions" by Rev. Linda Goeddel

Scripture: Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21; Luke 20:27-38

Sometimes we need to ask different questions to learn what God wants us to know.

### **Sunday, November 13, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Endings and Beginnings" by Rev. Linda Goeddel

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 21:5-19

The world is always ending, but God is always building it back up and remains steadfast in the midst of the changes.

### **Christ the King Sunday, November 20, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Priest, Prophet and King" by Rev. Sue Smith

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 1:68-79

### **First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2022 @ 9:45 AM**

Sermon: "Jesus, the Practical Realist" by Andy Kirkpatrick

Scripture: James 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:25-32

In his teachings, Jesus says that God is a peacemaker, and since we are God's sons and daughters, we are peacemakers too, not warmakers. He says that God practices universal nonviolent love, and since we are the sons and daughters of the God of universal nonviolent love, we practice universal nonviolent love, too. There are no exceptions, no justifications for warfare, and no "just war theory."

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

# *Church School*



The Fall season is upon us. I hope November's Oak Leaves finds you all healthy and well. Thank you to everyone who came out for our October Ice Cream Social and Birthday party for Thomas. We had a great time. November gives us a chance to reflect on what we are THANKFUL for. I am thankful to be a small part of this wonderful community. I look forward to strengthening your child's Christian Education in a fun and meaningful way. Please email me directly at [churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org](mailto:churchschool@rumsonpresbyterian.org) and let me know how I can support your family in any way.

Thank You!

Sandi Van Cleve, Director of Christian Education

Please contact me with any issues or requests.

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.

# *Music Program*



Happy November, everyone!

**Choir:** We've had a lot of fun practicing with the choir since September, and will be continuing into the winter. If you'd like to join in the fun, we'd love to have more members. Please email me at [andreeafegan@gmail.com](mailto:andreeafegan@gmail.com) to inquire!

**Youth choir:** For any youth that is interested, we are holding rehearsals after Sunday worship

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in the choir room. We meet at around 10:45 am. 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 service 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** Walk. Give. Change the world. Donations are still being accepted!

Once again, we participated in the 2022 CROP Hunger Walk to support CWS (Church World Service) and help families who are struggling with hunger. This year the Red Bank Crop Hunger Walk raised over \$72,000, of which our church raised over \$1800! There is still time to join us with 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 our team page (<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2022/team/rumson-presbyterian-church-2>) to support us by making a donation today! Thank you!

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.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 is approximately 30 minutes.

## **Waterspirit's Book Club** Mon., Nov. 21 from 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Join us! The book we are currently reading is *An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* by Ed Yong (2022). Our bookclub meets online quarterly to share and discuss books exploring spirituality, nature and action!

## **Birding on the Bay with Waterspirit** Fri., Nov. 25 from 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM

#optoutside with Waterspirit as we spend the morning watching the birds in the bay. What are you doing the day after Thanksgiving? We plan to pack up our car with our binoculars, spotting scope, bird books...and head to Sandy Hook. Yes, while everyone else is heading to the mall, we invite you to head to the beach. To the bay to be precise. We are going bird-watching. Not the type of birdwatching where you count as many species as possible, that's for another day. This is a relaxing morning on a boardwalk where we can enjoy each other's company and appreciate the beauty of nature. So grab your thermos of coffee, bundle up in your warm clothes, bring binoculars if you have them and join the Waterspirit staff for a morning of birding on the bay. Park in either Lot D or E and cross the street to the boardwalk which overlooks Spermaceti Cove.

## **Gratitude Walk with Waterspirit** Fri., Nov. 25 from 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

#optoutside on the day after Thanksgiving. Join Waterspirit for a guided gratitude walk. What are you grateful for today? Join Waterspirit for a guided Gratitude Walk. What are you grateful for today? Let's remind ourselves of the blessings around us as we are guided through nature. This year, on the day after Thanksgiving, we are taking our walk to the Jersey Shore. We will be enjoying and exploring the 300 year old American Holly Maritime Forest at Sandy Hook. Our new program manager and experienced naturalist, Anne Price, will highlight some of the amazing natural features of this unique habitat. During the gratitude walk, participants will be prompted to reflect on what they are grateful for as we enjoy an hour long relaxed pace walk through mostly level trails with occasionally sandy soil. We hope you enjoy recognizing the abundance in your life. We will meet in Parking area F near Fishing Beach at Sandy Hook National Recreation Area.

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

# *A Meditation*



Center for  
Action and  
Contemplation

## **Nonviolence : A Nonviolent Love**

by [Richard Rohr, OFM](#)

**October 23, 2022**

*Richard Rohr reflects on the spiritual foundations of nonviolence embodied and taught by Martin Luther King Jr.*

Part of the genius of Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), inspired by the teachings of Jesus and Gandhi, was that he was able to show people that violence was not only immoral but also impractical and, finally, futile. In the long run, violence does not achieve its own stated purposes, because it only deepens the bitterness on both sides. It leaves both sides in an endless and impossible cycle that cannot be stopped by itself. Instead, some neutralizing force must be inserted from outside to stop the cycle of violence and point us in a new direction.

King would insist that true nonviolent practice is founded on spiritual seeing. . . . He took it as axiomatic that the attitudes of nonviolence were finally impossible without an infusion of agape love from God and our reliance upon that infusion. He defined agape love as willingness to serve without the desire for reciprocation, willingness to suffer without the desire for retaliation, and willingness to reconcile without the desire for domination. This is clearly a Divine love that the small self cannot achieve by itself.

We must live in and through Another to be truly nonviolent. [1]

*At a 1960 lunch counter sit-in protesting segregation in Arlington, Virginia, Quaker peace activist David Hartsough discovered God's power in the power of nonviolence:*

*"Love your enemies . . . do good to those who hate you."*

I was meditating on those words when I heard a voice behind me say, "Get out of this store in two seconds, or I'm going to stab this through your heart." I glanced behind me at a man with the most terrible look of hatred I had ever seen. His eyes blazed, his jaw quivered, and his shaking hand held a switchblade—about half an inch from my heart. . . .

I turned around and tried my best to smile. Looking him in the eye, I said to him, "Friend, do what you believe is right, and I will still try to love you." Both his jaw and his hand dropped. Miraculously, he turned away and walked out of the store.

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That was the most powerful experience of my twenty years of life. It confirmed my belief in the power of love, the power of goodness, the power of God working through us to overcome hatred and violence. I had a profound sense that nonviolence really works. At that moment, nonviolence became much more than a philosophical idea or a tactic that had once made a difference in Gandhi's India. It became the way I wanted to relate to other human beings, a way of life, a way of working for change.

My response had touched something in my accuser. He had seen me as an enemy. But through my response, I believe I became a human being to him. The humanity in each of us touched. [2]

References:

[1] Richard Rohr, "Martin Luther King Jr.'s Principles of Nonviolence," *Oneing* 10, no. 2, Nonviolence (Fall 2022): 47, 48. Forthcoming at CAC Bookstore.

[2] David Hartsough with Joyce Hollyday, *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2014), 19, 20.

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

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### **Farewell Discourse III (Oct. 5)**

When you do ministry in one place for twenty-four years, there are bound to be significant local and global events which help to shape that ministry. At the beginning of my ministry here, there was 9/11. In the middle, we went through Sandy. And at the end, of course, there has been COVID. A significant trinity indeed!

September 11 shook us and delivered a message that we are not safe from acts of violence on our shores. It drew us together powerfully in the short term, but in the long term, it has led to a pervasive fear and to a preoccupation with safety. In this way, it continues to live among us. When fear is alive, the heart tends to shut down. I would suggest that the ongoing work of the church be helping people address fear with the remedy of love. As Christians, we know that our security lies not in counter-violence, but in the love of God in Christ.

Sandy gave us a first-hand taste of the destructive power of nature. Many lost their homes. Everyone lost power for a long time. As in the case of 9/11, people drew together in compelling ways. Acts of kindness and support abounded as the hardest hit began to rebuild their lives. Many saw in Sandy a correlation with climate change. Others did not. Our congregation has had a significant number who have made creation care a priority before and after Sandy.

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COVID has had the most dramatic, direct impact on the church. For months, worship was entirely virtual. More recently, we have worshipped in three modalities—in-person, Zoom, and livestream. Like everything in our culture, COVID has been interpreted along ideological lines. As a church, we were drawn together even as we kept our distance from each other. Giving to the church increased in that first year and our mission efforts exploded with support of local front-line ministries. We provided lap top computers to over 100 disadvantaged youth in our area. Even as we seek to return to a more “normal” life, it is clear that our lives have been changed forever.

As a pastor, what I remember most about these events are the ways in which people’s lives were impacted. There was heartbreak in each instance. The power of the church on such occasions is palpable. The love received and shared changes lives, more than we know. Faith, often, becomes more real as we undergo suffering. Whatever challenges lie ahead for the church, the worship, fellowship, and mission of the church serve very significant purposes for healing and hope. Blessings all!

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## **Farewell Discourse IV (Oct. 12)**

I must begin with an expression of thanks for our farewell dinner Friday night. It was truly memorable, and Rosanne and I were overwhelmed by all the expressions of love and your gifts to us. The naming of the longue as Monroe Longue is a wonderful surprise which I cherish. Thank you!

The longue has been a place of many meetings for Session and many other commissions of the church. Discernment and direction have been set here. It has also been a host to much of our spiritual learning and growth. Classes on creation spirituality, science and religion, the enneagram, and gatherings for spiritual discussions and practice have been a part of the work which has taken place in the longue.

As I mentioned Friday night, so much of the work of a minister is hard to measure. How do you measure spiritual growth? In listening to people who spoke publicly and to us individually, I was struck by so much evidence of the spiritual work which we have been about as pastor and congregation. To me, a sure signal of growth in the Spirit is openness, gentleness, and vulnerability. These were in evidence in spades Friday night.

In one of my favorite passages in the Bible, Galatians 5: 22, 23, Paul writes: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” As my favorite spiritual teacher, Cynthia Bourgeault, says, “These fruit are not mere adjectives. They are actual substances which redeem the planetary atmosphere, which heal and renew the earth.”

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I agree with Cynthia. Such communal substances which we experience in church life may not seem like much in the face of all that haunts us in these troubling times. But these substances change us and can also have redeeming influences through all our contacts. I count this as some of the most important work of any church. Whatever we can do to soften and open hearts is in service to the planet on a much larger scale than we know. Thanks, and blessings all!

## **Farewell Discourse V (Oct. 19)**

I have named these last communications with you, farewell discourses, inspired by the care that Jesus took to prepare his disciples for his departure. This is shown in each of the Gospels and especially in John, where Jesus spends four chapters teaching the disciples in what scholars call Jesus' farewell discourses—John 14:1 – 17:26. The first thing that Jesus says is “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” In what follows he talks about the importance of love and of maintaining a mystical connection with himself. He told his followers that he was the vine, and they were the branches, witnessing to the life which flows toward them and us from Jesus after his death and resurrection.

There is an important difference between Christ and any pastor. The pastor represents Christ to the congregation, but is not Christ, is not the true vine. In fact, each one in the church is to represent Christ to one another and to the world. When November arrives, our relationship as pastor and congregation ends. Contacts of friendship may continue, but any pastoral role or advice or comment is forbidden, except by invitation from the current pastor or moderator of Session. This is why saying good-bye and ending well is important. The honoring and bringing to completion the pastoral relationship prepares pastor and people for a full embrace of what lies ahead.

Your celebration and communications with me and Rosanne have been beautiful and meaningful. Thank you. My desire is to let you know as well how much I appreciate you and my years here. Our years together have formed me in significant ways and prepared me for the life ahead, which I intend to be devoted to an ever-deepening search for alignment with God. We have sought to be faithful to our call as Christ's church and have loved and served well.

As I prepare to leave, I find Jesus' words to be so filled with wisdom. “Don't let your hearts be troubled. Love one another. I am the vine; you are the branches.” He worked to prepare us all for life's transitions and for our continual renewal. Blessings all! !

## **Final Farewell Discourse (Oct. 26)**

I have two final opportunities to say thank you and to encourage you in the journey ahead—

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this email blast and a final Oakleaves article. What I have been most struck by in these final weeks of ministry are the sincere, vulnerable, and warm comments from so many of you. For me, ministry is about opening the heart to God and the world. Your open hearts have mirrored back to me my assumptions about and intentions for ministry, and this has been more affirming than I can express. In the Offertory Anthem Sunday, I lost it as the choir sang so powerfully the ending refrain of well done. I guess I needed to hear that, and my reaction witnessed to me how much I have wanted to be a faithful servant to Christ and Christ's church.

Your hearing and seeing and your own inner work, invisibly practiced, are evident to me as I leave, and nothing could make me feel more validated than that. I am grateful and feel ready, now, for my work in Christ to go forward in a new way during retirement. My hope and prayer are that you too are ready for your work in Christ to go forward in a new way.

We will end ministry together this Sunday with a Litany of Closure. Good and clear endings make way for good and clear beginnings—for you and for Rosanne and me. Good-byes are hard, but they put us in touch with our depths. And if we are to create meaningful futures, then we will need to be in touch with our depths, where God meets us, heart-to-heart.

I think that you are ready for the next chapter in the life of Rumson Presbyterian. I think that Rosanne and I are ready for our new journey as well. Our time together has made us ready. So, take the best of what we have done and learned together. Listen from your depths. Immerse yourselves in the Spirit of Christ. And trust, even in the uncertainty. God loves you. God loves us. And there is much to do and to learn as we go forward. Many, many thanks and many blessings!

PS: John and Rosanne's new mailing address is **355 Prentice Gorge Rd., Mt. Upton, NY 13809**, and John's new (non-church) email address is **jwmrcm3@gmail.com**.

**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~

**NOVEMBER 2022**

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

**DECEMBER 2022**

Dec 4	Sun	<b>2nd Sunday of Advent</b>	
Dec 6	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Dec 11	Sun	<b>3rd Sunday of Advent &amp; Cantata</b>	
Dec 12	Mon	Rumson Seniors	11:00AM
Dec 13	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Dec 18	Sun	<b>4th Sunday of Advent &amp; Christmas Memories</b>	
Dec 20	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM
Dec 20	Tue	Session	7:00PM
Dec 24	Thu	<b>Christmas Eve</b>	5:00PM
Dec 25	Sat	<b>Christmas Day</b>	
Dec 27	Tue	Meditation for Earth*	12:15PM

*\*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)