



The Reconciler

A Journal. January, 2024

From the Pastor

Reflecting on 2023 is a big task.

2023 is the hottest year on record. Meanwhile, agreements were reached by 200 countries at the United Nations Climate Change Conference to transition away from fossil fuels... albeit with loopholes.

October 6, 2023 will now be a day stained on the memories of Israelis and Jews worldwide for generations. The subsequent, systematic demolition of Gaza and the loss of innocent lives by the tens of thousands is an unspeakable horror and has also galvanized generations of hostility.

The Speaker of the House was ousted for the first time in the history of the Republic.

A former president was indicted for the first time in the history of the Republic and then was indicted three more times.

Labor unions claimed major victories for auto workers as well as actors and writers in Hollywood, while *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* dominated theaters.

The thing that makes the Church valuable in societies is that it embeds within hearts and minds an ethic of hope and a responsibility to love so that justice, mercy and peace prevail. In the face of such enormous forces in the world, these seem like embarrassingly weak, nebulous and small tools for change. Nonetheless, as scripture repeatedly shows, small seeds grow into enormous, world-altering changes, just as the mustard seed grows into a great bush which shelters life.

(continued on next page...)

Inside...

Adult Education.....	2
Joyful Noise Handbells.....	2
Rec Events for All	3
Coffee Helpers Needed.....	4
Wednesday Dinners at the Rec	4
New Members at the Rec.....	4
Mid-Winter Sabbath w/ Nancy Carter	5
Cole Arthur Riley coming to Durham! ...	6
Reproductive Justice Group.....	7
January Responsibility Schedule	8
January Calendar	9
Financial Update & Ways to Give.....	10

And More!



Church of Reconciliation Presbyterian Church, USA

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In 2024, we pray that people of faith called to the responsibility to love will find ways to be the prevailing voices in a tempest of outrage and greed. We pray that as people of faith the responsibilities to love so that justice, mercy, and peace prevail will take root in our own hearts and actions - at home, at school, at work, at the statehouse, in the streets. Each day is an opportunity to set an agenda in the heart that aligns with Christ's Spirit. Each day is an opportunity to look for ways to work from that alignment to do what is good and right and to follow the Spirit's lead into zones of tension, conflict, and power with faith, hope, and love.

Here is to a new year that promises to be full of its own challenges, disasters, and dismay. Here is to a new year that is an opportunity to trust in a God, who started the redemption of the world in a backwater provincial town, in a barn, through a teenage girl, whose heart aligned with God's will. Only such a God has the resolve and the capacity to redeem and transform the powers that threaten peace. We have the freedom to pray, "...let it be with me as you say..." (Lk 1:38).

Yours faithfully,
Allen Brimer



ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES

9:30 AM on Sunday mornings

January 7, 14, 21, and 28 – Adult Education will meet on Sunday mornings in the Parish House Chapel at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings. Pastor Allen will use the scripture passage being used in worship that day as a springboard for deeper study, dialog, and personal reflection. The reflections will lead into small group conversations with a particular theme or question that keeps our attention.

Sunday Worship Service

If you missed a worship service
or want to see something again,
visit our YouTube channel, [click here](#).

JOYFUL NOISE HANDBELLS

Interested in ringing handbells?

We'd like to talk with you! We ring in services 6-8 times a year and generally rehearse every 2 weeks. Contact Courtney Chávez (cwchavez7@yahoo.com) to find out more!



JANUARY

FOR ALL OF US!



Friday with Friends

5:30 ON THE 1ST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH AT THE CASUAL PINT

Join women from The Rec for a social time. Share what you're reading, what you're watching, what your kids are up to, how work is going, whatever! It is a social time to unwind together. Come share life with us!



YOUTH GROUP MOVIE

Let's watch "Napoleon Dynamite" together! We will have movie snacks and watch the movie everyone loves to hate except Karen!

January 7 | after worship
Youth room!



Star Words

Join us for Epiphany Sunday, January 7th, to receive your star word for 2024 or pick one up in the Narthex after.

CURRENTLY WORKING ON THE JANUARY CALENDAR FOR YOUTH AND WILL BE SENT OUT ASAP!

FOR ALL OF US!

COFFEE HELPERS NEEDED

The Deacons and Pastor Allen would like to provide coffee and tea on Sundays, both for those attending Sunday School and to encourage all members of the congregation to linger and talk before and after the Sunday service.



Could you help from time to time? (The new piped-in brewing system is easy to use.)

Sign up via [SignUpGenius](#) or get in touch with Patricia Sawin pesawin@gmail.com. Thanks!

NEW MEMBERS AT THE REC

We welcome new members at The Rec:

Phyllis Badesch

Colleen Boatright

Victoria Chall

Pearl Highducheck

Marcia Freeman

Lynda Pletcher

Stella Waugh

Barbie Wilson

WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Dinners at The Rec

5:30 DOORS OPEN
6 DINNER
6:45 CLASS

SOMEBODY COOKS, SOMEBODY CLEANS,
YOU ENJOY GOOD FOOD AND GOOD COMPANY.

DINNER | ADULT DISCUSSION

*CHILDCARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST: [KAREN@CHURCHREC.ORG](mailto:karen@churchrec.org)



**Our Wednesday Dinners at the Rec resume on
Wednesday, January 10! Join us!**



A TIME OF SABBATH IN MID-WINTER



New Hope Camp and Conference Center
27 January 2024
8:45am-12pm
Led by Nancy Corson Carter



"Like a path through the forest, Sabbath creates a marker ... so, if we are lost, we can find our way back to our center. 'Remember the Sabbath' means 'Remember that everything you have received is a blessing,'... and it honors the necessary wisdom of dormancy ... a spiritual and biological necessity."

These words from *Wayne Muller's* book **SABBATH; Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives** sing out and confirm the rightness of celebrating a Sabbath in the winter woods. In Oak Lodge at New Hope Camp and Conference Center, we will be surrounded by the blessings of Creation in a "dormant" time leading from Christmas and New Year toward the new birthing of Candlemas in early February.

The phrase "necessary wisdom of dormancy" invites us to use our space and time to nurture interpenetrations of body mind spirit within ourselves and with all Earth beings. What practices—such as meditations, prayers, Psalms, walking the labyrinth, songs, journaling, and perhaps a simple dance may move us from restlessness and anxiety to rest from our "commodity society"? Honoring Sabbath offers us the re-centering and even healing of "an arena in which we recognize that we live by gift and not possession" (Walter Brueggemann in **SABBATH AS RESISTANCE**). We will feel our holy wholeness.

Please join in a Sabbath time on January 27th. Tilden Edwards, in **SABBATH TIME**, provides ideas from his own family's practice that you might consider in preparation. They range from baths to remind us of the cleansing and renewing power of God through water, wearing special clothes to express the simple beauty of the sabbath, lighting a candle or lamp at a meal before with a blessing of God the giver of light, especially the light of Christ, and a blessing of your family and friends. We borrow from a rich trove of sabbath practices!

Bring journals and drawing utensils if you choose. Wear warm clothes for January!

\$35 tuition

Limit: 20 persons

Oak Lodge, New Hope Camp and Conference Center (just north of Chapel Hill)

To register: Rev. J. Mark Davidson soulriverspiritualcenter@gmail.com

COLE ARTHUR RILEY

DIGNITY, JUSTICE, AND JOY

Holding on to Our Humanity in Challenging Times

Friday, February 16, 2024, 2–3:30 pm

North Carolina Central University
Miller Morgan Building Auditorium
500 Nelson St, Durham, NC

peacehillavila.org/event/dignity-justice-and-joy-holding-on-to-our-dignity-in-challenging-times/

Friday, February 16, 2024, 7–8:30 pm

Mt Level Missionary Baptist Church
316 Hebron Road, Durham, NC

Book signing to follow presentation

peacehillavila.org/event/dignity-justice-and-joy-holding-on-to-our-dignity-in-challenging-times-2/

A Peace Hill at Avila event



Cole Arthur Riley is a writer and poet. She is the author of the NYT bestseller, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories that Make Us*. Her writing has been featured in *The Atlantic*, *Guernica*, and *The Washington Post*. Cole is also the creator and writer of *Black Liturgies*, a project that integrates spiritual practice with Black emotion, Black literature, and the Black body.



Cole Arthur Riley is coming to Durham! Her book, *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories that Make Us*, and her daily Instagram posts, *Black Liturgies* (soon to become a book as well) are rich resources for meditation and reflection. Peace Hill at Avila, to which several Rec members belong, is sponsoring her visit and there are two public events on Friday, February 16th.

Human Rights/Reproductive Justice Group

Reconciler January 2024

January 22nd, 2024 marks 577 days since the Dobbs decision was handed down by the Supreme Court. The day of that decision left many of us in disbelief and feelings of anger, grief, and fear. That decision stripped a fundamental right from women ... that of the freedom to make choices about our bodies.

A few days after that decision, 15 women from the Rec gathered in the Fellowship Hall to process our feelings together. As you might expect with the women of the Rec, our grief and anger quickly turned to questions about what we could do in protest. Our first step was to organize ourselves into a special Interest Group dedicated to Reproductive Justice. The group was opened to the entire congregation and our work officially began.

Below is a summary of our work during 2023:

January 2023

- Reverend Dr. Toddie Peters gave the sermon at the Rec which was followed by a 2nd hour of lunch and discussion. Four other local congregations were represented that Sunday.
- With the assist from Paster Allen, began working on a Passion Ministry Grant proposal to New Hope Presbytery.

February 2023

- Session approved the grant proposal and it was submitted at the end of February.

April 2023

- The committee sponsored and held a day long training led by SACReD, a national organization working to change church culture around sex, abortion, etc. We hosted 75 people from 11 different local congregations.
- The Rec in collaboration with the UU Community Church formed the Triangle Interfaith Reproductive Justice Coalition. Our goal was and remains to bring people of faith together who support a woman's choice, to educate, activate, and work against abortion bans. We currently have 10 congregational members, a brand new website (<https://bit.ly/48eY1ih>), and actively engaging more congregations to join the Coalition in 2024.

May 2023

- Received a \$5,000 Passion Ministry Grant from New Hope Presbytery
- Began planning a day and a half symposium at the Rec entitled "How We Got Here and How We Move Forward."

November 2023

- On November 4th and 5th, a number of national, local speakers as well as diverse panel inspired and invigorated almost 80 attendees of all ages, gender, and faiths.

December 2023

- Our Interfaith Coalition has rented a bus and will be taking any and all interested parties to Raleigh on January 22nd to be part of a press conference for Faith leaders and to register our opposition to bans on our bodies. [Click Here for details!](#)

JANUARY RESPONSIBILITY SCHEDULE:

Worship at 11:00 AM on Sunday mornings in Sanctuary and via Zoom

If you have a conflict with this schedule – please call others on the list and make a swap. Then inform the church office of these changes at 919-929-2127 or churchrec@churchrec.org. THANKS!

ELDER-ON-CALL

7th Kate Scott
14th Carolyn Ikenberry
21st Jo Anne Peterson
28th Dale Herman

LITURGISTS

7th Cindy Covington
14th Gene Johnson
21st Meri-Li Douglas
28th TBD

CAREGIVERS

7th Jo Anne Peterson,
Sarah Stitsinger
14th Howard and Nancy Carter
21st Bill and Charron Andrews
28th Kristin Bowers,
Colleen Boatright

MUSICIANS

7th Jeanetta Powell
14th Jeanetta Powell
21st Dale Herman
28th Dan Mason

FLOWERS

7th Sandra Burt
14th Chris Lutes
21st Colleen Boatright
28th Robbie Blue

OFFERING COUNTERS

7th Jim Spaeth, Jeannie Goguen
and Dennis Uhlir
21st David Robinson, Sue Regier
28th Alex Gordon, Sandra Burt

LOCK-UP

7th Chris Lutes
14th Charron Andrews
21st Marty Propst
28th Alex and Ann Gordon

GREETERS

7th Ellen Davis, Sandra Burt
14th Cindy Covington & Ed Caldwell
21st Colleen and Janessia Boatright
28th Robbie Blue, Sharon Mujica

CHANCEL SET-UP

7th Meri-Li Douglas, Courtney Chávez
14th Howard Carter
21st Sandra Burt
28th Courtney Chávez

REC TECH TEAM

7th Anne Lutes
14th Jess Bowers
21st Allison Scott
28th Michael Jokich



**Drop by the office or contact staff by email
or phone. See our schedule below:**

Allen's Rec Office Hours:

Mon-Thur, 9 AM – 12 Noon, and by appointment
(allen@churchrec.org ; 919-929-2127; 919-972-9506)

Karen's Office Hours:

Rec Office: Tues/Wed/Thurs 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
(karen@churchrec.org; 309-369-8368)

JoAnn's Office Hours:

Rec Office: Mon - Fri, 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM
(churchrec@churchrec.org; 919-929-2127)

LET'S DO THE NUMBERS..."

Each month, Session will report key financial data about our church's budget.

November 2023 revenue = \$43,797

November 2023 expenses = \$40,413

January – November 2023 revenue = \$426,635

January – November 2023 expenses = \$424,635



If you have questions, please be in touch with Kurt Elia, Session Liaison to Finance Committee, or Finance Committee Chair Michael Jokich.

**ON-LINE GIVING AT THE REC**

You can now give securely online to the Church of Reconciliation via the Tithe.ly app (or scan the QR code). Simply navigate to <https://get.tithe.ly/download-tithely-app> on your smartphone to download the app. We also have a button on the church's website, as well. Once you download the app, simply search for "Church of Reconciliation PCUSA." Note you can currently direct your gift either to "General Offering and Pledges" or to "Blue Jar Mission." The app collects a small fee from the church from each transaction so please also note you have the option of covering the fee, which will increase your donation by approximately 3%. You can watch a short information video on Tithe.ly at this website: <https://vimeo.com/195985593>.

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 110 North Elliott Road
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Web Page: www.churchrec.org

Please join us on Sunday mornings for

Worship in the Sanctuary or on Zoom Live Stream at 11:00 AM!

Website: www.churchrec.org FaceBook: facebook.com/ChurchRec

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Staff E-mails: allen@churchrec.org (Pastor Allen)

karen@churchrec.org (Karen); churchrec@churchrec.org (JoAnn)