



**UNITED  
REFORMED  
CHURCH**

# InTouch

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March, 2024

*United Reformed Church  
accepts and welcomes,  
without condemnation,  
all people of God  
into its fellowship  
regardless of  
race,  
gender,  
national origin,  
disabilities,  
health issues,  
sexual orientation  
or immigration status.*

*We do so out of love for God  
and  
our brothers and sisters  
in Christ.*

## **United Reformed Church "The Church on Main Street"**

100 W. Main Street  
Somerville, NJ 08876  
Tel. (908) 725-4545  
Fax: (908) 725-1950

Email: [info@urcsomerville.org](mailto:info@urcsomerville.org)  
[www.urcsomerville.org](http://www.urcsomerville.org)

**#urcsomerville**

## **Sunday Worship**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Rev. Paul G. Janssen**



[facebook.com/  
unitedsomerville](https://facebook.com/unitedsomerville)



[@urcsomerville](https://www.instagram.com/urcsomerville)

## **HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE**



### **Palm Sunday**

**3/24 - 10:00 am**

On Palm Sunday we begin our celebration in Fellowship Hall and process outside to the front doors of the sanctuary as we hail Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The service ends with commemoration of Jesus' passion as we turn our minds and souls to the tragic events of Good Friday.

### **Maundy Thursday Supper & Communion**

**3/28 - 6:00 pm**

We'll gather in Fellowship Hall for a pasta dinner hosted by our Parish Life Committee. We will then reenact the Lord's Supper as Jesus and the disciples ate and drank together on the night he was betrayed. Please bring a special cup from home for communion. Please RSVP to the Church office (908-725-4545) by 3/26 so we may set a place at the table for you.

### **Good Friday Tenebrae Service**

**3/29 - 7:30 pm**

The church gathers for a solemn service at the foot of the cross, remembering the depth of God's love for us in scripture, song and prayer. Candles will be extinguished until we are in darkness at the end of the service.

### **Easter Sunday**

**3/31 - 10:00 am**

Come celebrate the resurrection of Christ with us. The sanctuary will be decorated with beautiful Easter lilies and hydrangeas. The service will include special music, Easter brass, and a message guaranteed to lift your spirits in praise to God for a new life!

## **SPRING FORWARD**



Don't forget to **"spring forward"** before going to bed on Saturday, March 9th and set your clocks one hour ahead. You don't want to be late to church on Sunday morning !



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# As ones who serve . . .

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## Parish the Thought

We were sitting together in the living room, watching the Super Bowl: the game, the halftime, and the ads. Annette wakened me out of my football haze with a “Did you see that?” And this was during the ads! Knowing that we’d see the commercial again soon, she said, “Just wait. You’ll see it next time.” She told me what to look for. This is what it was: Can you see it? It’s a bit faint, but on the pip on the die on the right, the Hard Rock Seminole Casino has engraved the words “Love All Serve All.”

Well.



I looked it up at the US Patent and Trade Office website, and, sure enough, there it was: registered on June 29, 2023. Long after we’d begun using it as our motto. (Nobody asked us.) I doubt that anyone will confuse what the Hard Rock does with what United Reformed Church does, but it called to mind the story of the Easter chicken, told by the preacher Will Campbell:

*“You know, Preacher Will, that Church of yours and Mr. Jesus is like an Easter chicken my little Karen got one time. Man, it was a pretty thing. Dyed a deep purple. Bought it at the grocery store. And it served a real useful purpose. Karen loved it. It made her happy. And that made me and her Mamma happy. But pretty soon that baby chicken started feathering out. And you know what? The new feathers weren’t purple. That chicken wasn’t really purple at all. It was a Rhode Island Red. And when the little red feathers started growing out from under that purple it was an awful sight. All of a sudden Karen couldn’t stand that chicken any more. So we took that half-purple and half-red thing and threw it in the yard with all the other chickens. It was still different, you understand. And the other chickens knew it was different. And they resisted it like hell. Pecked it, chased it all over the yard.*

*Wouldn’t have anything to do with it. And that little chicken knew it was different too. It didn’t bother any of the others. Wouldn’t fight back or anything. Just stayed by itself. And little by little, day by day, that chicken came around. Pretty soon, even before all the purple grew off it, while it was still just a little bit different, that thing was behaving just about like the rest of them chickens. It would fight back, peck on littler chicks, knock them down to catch a bug if it got to it in time. The chicken world turned that Easter chicken around. And now you can’t tell one chicken from another. They’re all just alike. The Easter chicken is just one more chicken.”*

Will answered: “Well, the Easter chicken is still useful. It lays eggs, doesn’t it?”

*“Yea, Preacher Will. It lays eggs. But they all lay eggs. Who needs an Easter chicken for that? And the Rotary Club serves coffee. And the 4-H Club says prayers. The Red Cross takes up offerings for hurricane victims. Mental Health does counseling, and the Boy Scouts have youth programs.”*

As we begin our mission study in preparation for pastoral transition, one of the key questions we need to ask is “What is our why.” If our “why” is ONLY to “love all and serve all,” then we’re sort of on a par with the Hard Rock Casino, except without the excitement and entertainment.

So what IS our why? What other do we have to offer that differentiates us from a glitzy dive with slots? Well, we start with this: “In the name of Jesus Christ.” Our motive, our driving force, is that we’ve been loved by Jesus Christ, who came, not to be served, but to serve. How clearly do we communicate that Jesus is behind our love and service? How public are we willing to be about serving our Lord? How different do we dare to be?



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## URC teaches

“teach and admonish one another in all wisdom”

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### Sunday School & Youth Group News



Sunday School and Youth Group are in full swing with the kids engaged in Biblical lessons and community service!



### Williamson Scholarship Candidates

Spring is around the corner, so it is that time of year to invite any qualified high school senior to apply for the Williamson Scholarship. This scholarship is given out each year to all high school students who are URC members and have been accepted to an institution of higher learning. To be eligible, students must faithfully attend church and actively participate in at least 4 church activities each year during high school. Please email Amy at [amystires@optonline.net](mailto:amystires@optonline.net) if you need a scholarship form. Completed forms must be received by May 1st for committee review.



### Welcome Todd Hay!

Please join us in welcoming our new member Todd Hay. Todd has resided in Somerville since 2021, and has been a resident of Somerset County since 1995. He is a professional civil engineer who is based in Newark and travels extensively between Philadelphia and Boston. He enjoys cooking, playing pickleball, attending concerts, paddle boarding and bicycling. Todd had been involved in his local church and is seeking to do the same here at URC. As a matter of fact, he's already on the schedule to be a reader! Please be sure to introduce yourself to our newest member and extend a warm welcome.

On Saturday, February 24, we were pleased to be host to a discussion sponsored by the Downtown Somerville Alliance regarding the development of a memorial to Paul Robeson in Somerville. Robeson graduated from Somerville High School in 1914 as valedictorian, an honor he was also granted when he graduated from Rutgers University in 1919. Robeson went on to great heights in athletics, the arts, law, politics, and international advocacy. The design and site of a sculpture of Robeson are yet to be determined. We are privileged to have had a small part in the project.



### Messiah University Concert Choir

As part of Three Bridges Reformed Church's continuing celebration of its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, they are excited to announce that they will be hosting The Messiah University Concert Choir for a free concert on the evening of Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup> as part of their spring break concert tour! The tour program is called 'I Love To Tell the Story' and consists of all songs that tell stories of faith, from the Renaissance to the present day, including portions of Bach's St. John's Passion, Weelkes, Schutz, Barnum, Hagen, spirituals, jazz, hymns and more. Mark your calendars now!

In addition, the choir consists of approximately 48 students. If you are interested and able to host at least two students overnight on March 14<sup>th</sup>, please reach out to Pastor Ryan Nace at [ryannace@3brc.org](mailto:ryannace@3brc.org) or call 732-853-3231.



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## URC serves

“use whatever gift you have received to serve others”

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### March Outreach

During the month of March we will be collecting the following items:



- ◇ Dry Pasta
- ◇ Cooking Oil

All donations will be delivered to the Feeding Hands Pantry in Hillsborough. They, in turn, will distribute the products to our neighbors in need. Thanks in advance for your generosity, and to all those who have donated over the year. It means so much!

←————→  
Here are the tallies of our Outreach food collection for the past several months:

#### **December:**

- (10) bags of dishwasher pods
- (6) containers of dish soap
- (2) jugs of dish detergent

#### **January:**

- (33) cans of food (soup, veggie, canned meats)
- (4) jars of spaghetti sauce
- (3) bags of coffee
- (5) boxes of pasta

Thanks to all for your generous donations!

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### Souper Bowl Post-Game Report

It was a “super” close game, but in the end the “W” went to the Kansas City Chiefs. The final score on the field was 25-22, and our Souper Bowl score was a tie at 35-35! Thanks to everyone who played and donated to this great cause. All of the cans were delivered to the Feeding Hands Pantry in Hillsborough. They are always so thankful for all donations. See you next year!



### March is Women’s History Month

Women’s History Month is a celebration of women’s contributions to history, culture and society and has been observed annually in the month of March in the United States since 1987. The National Women's History Alliance designates a yearly theme for Women's History Month. The 2024 theme celebrates “Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.” This theme recognizes women who understand the need to eliminate bias and discrimination from individuals' lives and institutions.



Sunday mornings at most churches have a lot of moving parts; we're no different. We're so happy that for many months (years, even) Gary Spratt and John Colligas have served us as ushers. But everyone needs a break from time to time, right? So would you be willing to step up and take a turn? We won't expect you to "ush" for us EVERY week. But occasionally....it would be a good and fair thing to pass the work around. Ushering involves greeting people warmly, handing them a bulletin, answering any questions they may have (like, "where are the restrooms?") and collecting the weekly offering. What do you say? Can you help us some week? Call the office at 908-725-4545, and we'll get the word around to the right folks to get you signed up and ready to go.



### SHIP Outreach

(Samaritan Homeless Interim Program)

The URC SHIP’s Galley crew meets on the 4th Friday of each month. Volunteers make several different kinds of sandwiches in our kitchen then pack up bagged lunches that contain a sandwich, beverage, piece of fruit, a snack pack, a dessert, utensils and napkins. The bagged lunches are then delivered to SHIP for the staff to distribute to that day's clients. If anyone is interested in helping out please call the office at (908) 725-4545, or see Jane Huck after service.

# URC cares

“love one another as I have loved you”

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Birthdays

March 2	Patrick Hayes Lyn Van Gorder
March 5	LeRoy Gunzelman
March 9	Eileen Davall
March 18	Joe Schwarz
March 27	Jaclyn Barry
March 30	Hillary Stires



### Anniversaries

March 23	Chad & Shannon Nicholls
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Are you on our birthday/anniversary list?  
If we missed your special occasion, please let us  
know and we will be happy to add you!

## Dinner Club



Have you been to Tommy's Tavern in Bridgewater? When checking out the menu we were really impressed. Pizza, burgers, flatbreads, calzones and Sushi! Take a look at the menu for yourself and then come and join us as the dinner club once again gathers for food and fellowship.

Date: March 20, 2024  
Time: 6:00 pm  
Location: 600 Corporate Blvd. Bridgewater

Everyone will be responsible for his or her own meal, tax and gratuity. Please call (908-725-4545) or email (admin@urcsomerville.org) the church by Monday March 18th, so we can call ahead to reserve a table.

## SOMERVILLE ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE SUNDAY, MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>, 1:30 PM



Would you like to stay after worship and share a pizza or some other take-out food before the parade? Sign up on the sheet in Fellowship Hall (or call the church office at 908-725-4545). If we get 10+ participants we'll all chip in and do something fun!

## Book Club on Main



At our meeting on February 22nd we welcomed new member, Yvonne Harris, who found us on the internet. She jumped right in and became part of our group...welcome Yvonne!

The next meeting of our **Book Club on Main** will take place on **Thursday, April 11th in the URC Lounge at 7:00 pm**. We'll be discussing *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Refreshments will be served.

The book following will be *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford...the date of that meeting is TBD...stay tuned and happy reading!



## Plant & Sip

The Spotted Leaf Plant Company was named America's Favorite Mom & Pop's Shop and this little store is right here in Somerville. Nestled between the Salted Lime and Turf Surf & Earth, The Spotted Leaf Plant Company makes you feel more relaxed just stepping in the door. I was introduced to the Spotted Leaf when a group of work friends planned an event there and we all had a blast. I would like to bring this fun to United and have planned an evening at the Spotted Leaf. We will have a private 90 minute event to create an enclosed terrarium. To create this small slice of the jungle in a jar, the Spotted Leaf's class provides all the materials and instruction. You can add up to 4 plants to your terrarium ranging from beautiful calatheas, lush & green ficus & pileas. Top it all off with fresh live moss, manzanita wood, and delicately placed rocks. You can enjoy the beauty of healthy and growing plants without any of the work! Please feel free to bring your own beverage and we will prepare a charcuterie board to enjoy.

**Place:** Spotted Leaf Plant Company  
**Location:** 40 East Main St. Somerville  
**Date:** March 13, 2024  
**Time:** 6:30 pm  
**Cost:** \$50.00 per person (pay at the store)  
**RSVP:** By Mon. 3/11 (908-725-4545)

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## URC speaks

“you shall be my witnesses”

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Since March is Women’s History month, let’s take a brief look at important events in Reformed Church in America’s women’s history.

The history of the RCA goes back to the founding of its first church, the “Church in the Fort” in lower Manhattan, in 1628. Women were, of course, present, but the era was not a time when much would have been recorded of their particular contributions to the life of the church. The first such mention arises in 1799, when Sarah Van Doren, of First Reformed Church in New Brunswick organized a Sunday School class. She started something very powerful: the Sunday School at First Reformed is the oldest in the USA with a continuous history. Not long after, Sarah dePeyster became the first person to leave a legacy to the Reformed Church in America.

It is fair to say that women have been at the leading edge of missionary work in the RCA. In 1810 Sally Thomas bequeathed her entire savings to the RCA’s American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Not long after, Harriet Scudder went to India to serve alongside her husband. She was the first RCA woman to serve overseas.

Over time, as often as women pushed for greater mission activity, the men in control of the boards who controlled such activity pushed back, claiming that women belong in the home, and not going to meetings. There was likely an equal (or greater) fear that, if women should get a taste of agency and initiative, they would want to exercise it at home.

Nevertheless, RCA women persisted. Women at First New Brunswick and Bedminster Reformed Church organized to support missions in 1825.

Between 1844 and 1925, 245 women served as missionaries for the Reformed Church, and not always as companions to their husbands. Their efforts were largely, but by no means exclusively, focused on education.

Medical missions were for many years not only controlled by men, but its missionaries (and patients) were also all men. But women were coming face to face with “women’s health issues” – like death in childbirth – on the mission field. So, the women kept pushing for women to become doctors and serve the needy; hence Dr. Ida Scudder entered the mission field as the first woman physician to be appointed as a medical missionary.

Women were so successful at foreign missions that the church asked them to form a Women’s Board of Domestic Missions. When they tried to start their work, their pleas for help were mostly ignored by the male clergy who received their letters. So the women decided to write to other women, and in less than a year sixty-six supporting groups were founded.

Curiously, when the issue of suffrage arose in full in the US, the denominational newspaper supported votes for women, because its editors believed that women’s votes would strengthen movements for temperance and peace.

When over the next decades women advocated for the offices of Elder and Deacon to be opened to women, the battle was on. Although their work came within a hair of success several times, but it wasn’t until 1958 that the offices in the RCA were open to both men and women. (Sadly, in some parts of the RCA, only men are allowed to serve *to this day!*) After two more decades of consistent work, the pathway to women’s ordination as Ministers of Word and Sacrament was finally opened in 1979. (It took one of those weird court fights where the word “person” had to be interpreted to include both males and females.)

As in the histories of many movements, the story is long and complex, and not completely resolved. We can only hope that we are responsive to the word that “in Christ there is neither . . . male nor female.” (Gal. 3:29)





# URC worships

“worship the Lord with gladness!”



## Lenten Discipleship

Have you jumped aboard the 2024 Disciple Ship yet? This year's Lenten activity is provided by the Reformed Church in America. We've been sending out daily e-mails, as well as daily Facebook posts, that suggests an activity for each of the 40 days in Lent. Many of the suggestions are resourced at the website called "faithward." We will provide links for access each week as the season of Lent progresses. If Lent has been kind of a "blah" or "whatever" season for you in the past, remember that you get out of it what you put into it. So let's all participate as fully as we can.

## Holy Week Musicians



Let's have a super Holy Week in the Sanctuary! Our Director of Music, Justine Langman is looking to raise our spirits beyond the ceiling during Holy Week with extra musicians and singers. You've seen what she can do with a crew of musicians under her direction - so let's supply an extra boost to celebrate the resurrection of Christ!

We'd love to hire several instrumentalists and extra singers for the week, so we've set a budget of \$3200. Justine hopes to bring in a string quartet, percussion, some woodwinds and brass, and maybe even a banjo! Let's try to add as much as possible to the \$1800 that's already budgeted for musicians, and raise another \$1400 for a grand musical celebration of our new life in Christ. You can participate by mailing in a check to the office, designating a gift on a Sunday morning (i.e., offering plate), or by giving through the church's "Donate" tab on our website [urcsomerville.org](http://urcsomerville.org) (please designate your gift). If we raise over \$1400, the excess will be used to support the music program.



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**3/15/24**

During this solemn season of Lent, Parcae and friends invite all to gather in Fellowship Hall to reflect, heal, and seek peace through music. Presented as a unique immersion of music, poetry and visuals, the evening will feature both sacred and secular works spanning from the Baroque era to premieres of new music, as well as music from multiple regions of the world. Journey with us as performer and audience alike explore the universal human struggle and desire for peace.

## Lay Readers Calendar (and invitation)

Our lay readers for the month of March are as follows:



March 3 - Michelle Davis  
March 10 - John M. Colligas  
March 17 - Jocelyn Eckardt  
March 24 - Todd Hay  
March 31 - Steve Rus

If you'd like to be a reader, please let Nancy Maggio know some Sunday morning. We're always happy to have more, and if you're nervous and would like some training, we're happy to help you with that!

## Easter Flowers



On Easter Sunday our sanctuary will once again be decorated with beautiful Easter lilies and hydrangeas. If you would like to sponsor one of the plants in memorial or celebration of a loved one, please fill out the envelope that will be in the coming week's bulletin, or enclosed with this issue of InTouch if you receive it via USPS, with a check (in any amount) made out to *United Reformed Church*. You can also call the office at (908) 725-4545 to reserve one. Deadline to reserve is March 21st.



On Friday, February 23 Bunko returned to URC. It is a big fan favorite as 28 people, URC members and friends, gathered in Fellowship Hall to enjoy this game of chance. Bunko entails taking turns rolling dice for 6 games, each game targeting a number on the dice. Four people sit at each table, making up two teams. The team that wins moves to the next table while the team that loses switches seats but stays at the same table. Since players switch teams after every subgame, they are constantly socializing with a new group of people. By the end of the evening, you feel like you have met and enjoyed conversations with almost everyone in the room. During each game the room is filled with cheers, celebratory shouts of “Bunko” or “mini-bunko” (both which are awarded a larger number of points), and social chit chat. The refreshments and fabulous prizes that you can win throughout and at the end of the evening are just the icing on the cake. Check out our website ([urcsomerville.org](http://urcsomerville.org)), Instagram (@urcsomerville), and Intouch for other upcoming social events so don’t miss out on the fun!

## 2024 Directory

We are in the process of updating our Church Directory. Please email us at [admin@urcsomerville.org](mailto:admin@urcsomerville.org) and let us know (1) if you’d like to be included in the directory (new listings), and (2) if there are any changes to your information from the last 2022 directory (current listings). Here is the information we need:

Your Name (First, Last): \_\_\_\_\_

Family Members Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday/Anniversary: \_\_\_\_\_

(day and month only)

**PLEASE EMAIL ALL INFORMATION ASAP (NO LATER THAN MARCH 15TH)**

*United Reformed Church declares that it will accept and welcome, without condemnation, all people of God into its fellowship regardless of race, gender, national origin, disabilities, health issues, sexual orientation or immigration status.*

*We do so out of love for God and our brothers and sisters in Christ.*

***Love All - Serve All***