



**UNITED  
REFORMED  
CHURCH**

# InTouch

Volume No. 46, Issue No. 7

July 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”**

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**#urcsomerville**

**Sunday Worship**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Rev. Paul G. Janssen**



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



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

Beginning on July 7, and through to September 1, our congregation will celebrate the Lord’s Supper weekly rather than only three times over the summer. The Elders have approved this temporary practice.

From the time of Jesus onward, the vast majority of the church have celebrated the Lord’s Supper whenever we gathered. You can see that in the Bible’s classic chapter on the Lord’s Supper, which is I Corinthians 11. You can also find warrant for devoting ourselves to the apostle’s teaching, to prayer, and to eating together in Acts 2: 46-47. And the earliest documents from historians reporting on the life of the church tell the same story. When the church gathers, it shares the supper, in obedience to its Lord and Savior.

It is the churches in the reformed and anabaptist traditions that have stepped away from this practice, for reasons that more or less came down to “We’re not Roman Catholic.” That’s true; we’re not. (Neither are the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Episcopalians, etc., who celebrate weekly.) But we don’t define ourselves by who we aren’t. We follow Jesus, who was made known to his followers in the breaking of the bread, and who said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Sharing Communion weekly won’t make it any more mundane than hearing that you are loved. Besides, we won’t be using the exact same order every week. We will use the “usual” order on the first Sundays of July, August, and September, but beyond that we will use (mostly) orders that have been approved by the General Synod for use in the local churches.

At the end of the summer, we’ll take time to chat about how it’s felt to celebrate weekly rather than monthly. Some may find it meaningful; others may long to go back to our usual practice. (We have NO plans to make this permanent.) But let’s take this summer of 2024 – the 325<sup>th</sup> year of our church’s life – to experiment with what the bulk of the Church has been doing for the last 2000 years.



**The church office will be closed on  
Thursday, July 4th  
in observance of Independence Day.  
Have a wonderful day of celebration!**

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# As ones who serve . . .

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## Parish the Thought

Lately I've been thinking.....why is there anything? If we believe that God was before anything came into being, why did God even bother? Was God lonely, as a famous poet (James Weldon Johnson) wrote? Was God's love so overflowing that it needed an object to love? I'll grant you that I think rather strange thoughts from time to time, but this has been a mystery to me for a long time, and it's a mystery shared by theologians throughout the church's entire history.

The Bible doesn't say why. What it does say is that from the moment God turned outside the intense magnetism of the Trinitarian communion (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) God was creating. "Let there be light!" "Let the waters above the earth be separated from the waters beneath the earth!" And God created the sun, the moon, the stars, the land, the seas, the walking and flying and swimming beasts, the two-legged mammals with disproportionately huge brains.

The first contact between God and this blue marble of a planet was the contact of, say, a sculptor with clay, or a composer with a page of empty staves, a painter with a canvas, a designer with an empty home, an architect with an unoccupied space, a writer with a blank screen. God would create "ex nihilo" (from nothing) the ancient doctrine says.

We sing this belief often. "For the Beauty of the Earth." "All Creatures of Our God and King." "All Things Bright and Beautiful." "Earth and All Stars!" "I Sing the Mighty Power of God." "Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty!" The list goes on and on.

And here is another way we praise God the creator: by doing what God did. In other words, by entering the creative process and bringing something into being that moments before wasn't there at all.

That's kind of hard to do as a congregation, but we can certainly encourage and support creators, not just because it's a good thing to do, but because it's a form of responding joyfully to God the creator.

On Sunday June 30 we're going to sing a song whose lyrics were first written well over 2000 years ago, but has been re-set and given new music by one of our own members, the Rev. Sandi K Sheppard. As a fellow song-writer, I can assure you that it is moment of great encouragement when someone picks up a song I've written and introduces it to their heart. Hopefully the InTouch will get to you in time for you to enjoy this signal event.

On Sunday July 7 the trio of friends with whom Justine has brought much joy into the world will favor us with a pop-up concert after worship. The group "Parcae" – Sarah Stine, Marija Bosnar, and Justine – will present just a few songs for us, while we are still in Fellowship Hall, simply as a way to share their creative gifts. In that way, our time of worship will continue: less formally, but just as surely. This tiny-crowd concert will likely focus on music from spirituals and other music by African American composers/ artists/creators.

Do you have a creative "edge" that you'd like to share with us? Do you occasionally write poetry? Or paint paintings? Dance? Play an instrument? Sculpt things? Grow and arrange flowers? Knit? Crochet? How can we encourage the gift God has entrusted to you? We'd love to behold the gift that God has given you! Just let me (or Justine) know, and let's see how together we can make a joyful noise. Or a fascinating sculpture. Or a scintillating poem. Or a heart-moving solo. Or . . . .

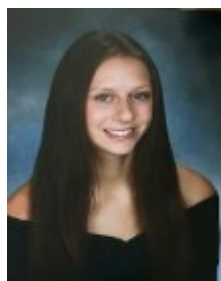




# 2022 Graduation Announcements



Congratulations to each and every student who came to a tuning point in their education. We have a lot of different types of graduations this year, so please take some time to read through each person's brief. Thanks to all who sent in their information—if we've somehow missed you, please send in your information and we'll be sure to include your grad in the August issue.



**Julie Ferrante**, granddaughter of Maryann Ferrante, graduated from Bridgewater-Raritan High School. She'll be attending Raritan Valley Community College (where she began her studies while still in High School!) in

September and pursue a degree in Exercise Science. Julie is looking forward to continuing her academic success .

**Thomas Hayes**, son of Patrick & Linda Hayes, graduated with Highest Honors from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering. He has been hired by Bohler Engineering in Warren, NJ .

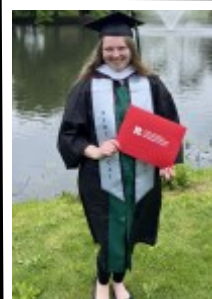
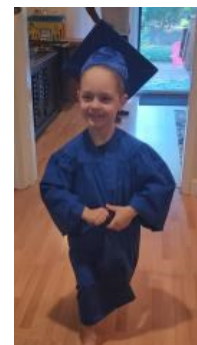


**James Barry**, son of Carol & Jim Barry, graduated from Somerville High School. He will attend Raritan Valley Community College in September where he'll pursue a degree in HVAC.

**Shea Wagner**, granddaughter of Howard & Cindy Wagner, graduated 8th grade from Veterans Memorial High School. Shea was a member of the Junior National Honor Society and the Ocean County Middle School Championship 4x100 relay team in track. She received straight A's in all 3 years of Middle School (except for 1 B in wood shop). She will be a freshman at Brick Memorial High School in September.



**Logan Kammerer**, son of Jessica & Stephen, brother to Malcolm, and grandson of Sue & Edward Elgard, graduated from the Pre-K Owl's Class. Logan learned a lot this year including how to write; count by 1's, 2's, 5's, and 10's; speak and sing in Spanish; learned sign language, and how to build anything out of blocks/recyclables/toys using his imagination. Logan will be moving to a new school when he starts Kindergarten in the Fall.



**Jaclyn Barry**, daughter of Carol & Jim Barry, graduated from Rutgers University, with a Bachelor of Science degree.



**Daniel Wagner**, grandson of Howard & Cindy Wagner, graduated 5th Grade from Lanes Mill Elementary School. He'll join the incoming 6th grade class at Veterans Memorial Middle School.



**Haley Patricia Buchanan**, daughter of Scott & Stacey, and granddaughter of Diny Buchanan graduated from 8th grade at Great Meadows Middle School where she was on the High Honor Roll. Haley will be join the Freshman class at Hackettstown High School in September.



**Congratulations**   
to all!

## URC serves

“use whatever gift you have received to serve others”

### Summer Outreach Project

During the months of July and August we will be partnering with *Moms Helping Moms* and collecting items that will be distributed to families in need throughout NJ via their network of partner agencies.

Listed below are the items being collected:

- ◆ Diapers—All Sizes (open packs are OK)
- ◆ Wipes (unopened)
- ◆ Baby Hygiene Items (unopened)
- ◆ Pacifiers (new only)
- ◆ Sippy Cups (new only)

All donations can be dropped off in Fellowship Hall after worship on Sunday, or brought to the office during the week. Thanks in advance for your generosity.



**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 days clients. If anyone is interested in helping out please call the office at (908) 725-4545, or see Jane Huck after service.

On Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> URC volunteers staffed a table outside the ShopRite in Hillsborough from 9-12 a.m.



Together with a group from St. Joseph's, that took the shift after us, a total of 1,070 pounds of personal items for Feeding Hands.

As always, thank you to our volunteers and the great work they do for others less fortunate.



### Items of the Month

During the month of July we'll be collecting the following items:

- ◆ Canned Tuna
- ◆ Canned Chicken

Please leave your donations in the bin in Fellowship Hall after Sunday worship. You can also drop them off at the church office during the week between 9 am—1 pm.



We know it's early, but mark your calendar now! The annual Crop Hunger Walk is scheduled for Sunday, October 20th. More info to follow towards the end of summer....



# URC cares

“love one another as I have loved you”

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### Birthdays

July 2	Carlos Lopez
July 3	Douglas Holcombe
July 9	Caitlin Barry
July 10	Craig Stires
July 18	Chris Burke
July 19	John A. North
July 20	Justine Langman
July 21	Nicholas Stires
July 22	Paul Dickey
July 24	Art Goldsworthy
July 25	Paul Janssen
July 27	Mary Ann Ferrante Alice Gunzelman Sandy Yohn
July 28	Nigel Lane, Jayden Scott
July 29	Sue Elgard
July 30	Aija Banks
July 31	Maeve Prudente



### Anniversaries

July 13	Cliff & Diane Nagle
July 28	Jim & Kathy Phillips

**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!**



## Book Club on Main

The next meeting of our **Book Club on Main** will take place on **Thursday, August 1st, in the URC Lounge at 7:00 pm.** We'll be discussing *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* by Jon Krakauer.

We'll decide on the next book and meeting date at that meeting.

**P.S.** Bring some ideas of movies made from books a for a future meeting. In the past we've done *Rebecca* and *Death on the Nile*...stay tuned and happy reading!



## Announcement From the Music Department: Coffee Hour Concerts

I am so lucky to have friends who are as passionate about music and as inspired by collaboration as I am. While my friends and I are always so thrilled to play during worship, there remains a strong desire among us to share secular music in a casual setting. I realized that coffee hour after Sunday worship might be the perfect way for us to share some music that we otherwise wouldn't have a chance to play during services.

So this summer, on July 7 and August 4, after worship has ended, grab a cup of coffee, grab some treats, stretch your legs for 10 minutes or so, and then we'll all enjoy a short program (~45 minutes) with our artists in Fellowship Hall in a conversational and laid-back musical gathering. A free will donation is deeply appreciated but not necessary.

-Justine

**July 7th:** Parcae (Sarah Stine, Marija Bosnar, and Justine Langman) will share moving arrangements of well-loved spirituals as well as lesser-known secular works by Black American composers.

**August 4th:** Dr. Sarah Bish, cellist, and Justine are close collaborators and friends, and they are excited to share their favorite cello-piano duos by Debussy and Beethoven.

As many of you know, our dear friend John Colligas has moved down South to be near family. If you'd like to drop John a line, here is his new address:

John M. Colligas  
3343 Fourth Avenue East  
Bradenton, FL 34203

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# URC speaks

“you shall be my witnesses”

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## General Synod 2024 News Summary

(taken from the RCA website)



As a church assembly, General Synod is organized around the Reformed understanding that God's will is revealed in community, and that together, the delegation seeks to discern the mind of Christ. Ministry leaders from across the U.S. and Canada, as well as two from Chile, gathered for a week of discernment, decision making, worship, and fellowship. Synod was held at the Westin La Paloma in Tucson, Arizona, from June 13-18, 2024.

General Synod acknowledged its presence on indigenous ancestral lands and territories; in particular, Tucson is home to the Tohono, O'odham, and the Yaqui.

### Restructuring team's work celebrated for guiding the denomination forward

The 2024 General Synod centered largely around the work of the restructuring team. After two years of discerning a denominational structure that would best serve the RCA, the restructuring team brought ten recommendations forward. Each was geared toward sustaining spiritual and organizational health, now and in the future.

On Friday evening, delegates affirmed the work of the restructuring team by passing five recommendations with overwhelming majorities, including condensing classes and regional synods to middle assemblies, moving toward holding General Synod in-person every three years, and resizing the delegation to General Synod. Recommendations with changes to the *Book of Church Order* will still require two-thirds approval by RCA classes, and ratification by General Synod 2025.

The spirit of change continued on Saturday morning as several more restructuring recommendations were presented, with the majority being approved. From exploring equitable ordination and reception processes to gifted elders being permitted to serve as church supervisors, General Synod expressed a high level of unity over many of the decisions made.

General Synod expressed great appreciation and support for the hard work of the restructuring team, closing out their report with enthusiastic applause and a standing ovation from the delegation.

### Restructuring Decisions at General Synod 2024

#### Approved

- Condense regional synods and classes into a single assembly\*
- Update the name of the merged assembly: middle assembly\*
- Ensure equity in the new judicial bodies
- Hold General Synod in-person every 3 years
- Resize the delegation of General Synod
- Adjust the approval process for changes to the *Book of Church Order*
- Pursue an equitable and just ordination and reception process (amended)
- Adjust the commissions' sizes and requirements (amended)
- Allow gifted elders to serve as church supervisors\* (amended)

#### Rejected

- Deacons will not serve as voting delegates to middle assemblies
- No 2 percent cap on General Synod covenant shares

*\* denotes a constitutional change, which now needs approval by two-thirds of classes, then ratification by General Synod 2025. The other approved recommendations were assigned to various commissions or boards, who will bring suggested changes to General Synod 2025 and 2026.*

#### General Synod also:

- Celebrated 27 churches that officially organized or joined the RCA in the last year
- Concluded a year of celebrations commemorating five decades of women's ordination as elders, deacons, and ministers in the RCA
- Honored retired ministers and missionaries
- Set a 2.5 percent rate for covenant shares, and approved a retained Global Mission Partner - in - Mission share rate of \$6,900

(To read more go to:

[www.rca.org/general-synod-2024/news/summary](http://www.rca.org/general-synod-2024/news/summary))

# URC worships

“worship the Lord with gladness!”



## Lay Readers Calendar (and invitation)

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

- July 7 - Michelle Davis
- July 14 - Jocelyn Eckardt
- July 21- Kitty Sanders
- July 28 - Todd Hay

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!

## URC Welcomes Charles Nicholls

On Sunday, June 9th, we had the joyous opportunity to celebrate the baptism of Charles Nicholls. Charlis is the son of Shannon & Chad Nicholls, grandson of Beth & Brian Cassidy, and great grandson of Carol & Charlie Lane. Please join us in welcoming Charlie to our family at URC!



## Save the Date!



Our annual Hawaiian Shirt Sunday is scheduled for Sunday, August 11th. All are welcome and encouraged to wear your favorite Hawaiian-print or tropical themed clothing to church. Feel free to wear your flip-flops and your beach hat too. Following worship, we will enjoy a Hawaiian-themed Fellowship Hour, courtesy of our Worship and Parish Life Committee

## Father's Day Recap

Our 1st Father's Day Tie Swap was a huge success...everyone who participated went home with a new tie to sport! Also, the Youth Group distributed candy bars to all gentlemen who attended service.

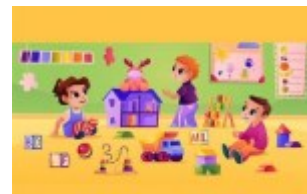


## Christmas in July for the Nursery

The Christian Ed committee will be holding a **Christmas in July** event. Our nursery is in desperate need of new toys and items, so beginning July 7th, there will be a giving tree outside the office with tags of items needed for the nursery. You'll be able to select a tag (or 2), purchase the item(s), then attach the tag to the item(s).

Please bring your donations to church on Sunday, August 4th, or they can be dropped off at the office anytime before August 4th.

This event will run from July 7th to August 4th.



## Sundae Sunday

Join us after worship on July 7th for Sundae Sunday! We'll have some yummy ice cream and toppings to start your day off right!



thank  
you!



I would like to thank my church family for awarding me the Williamson Scholarship. The money will help towards my HVAC degree at RVCC. It has been a pleasure serving the community through various church activities. I hope to continue to help if time allows.

Thank you, Jimmy Barry

### Third Reformed Church of Raritan

#### Scholarship Recipient

This year's recipient is

*Sania Sawale*

Sania plans to attend the University of Pennsylvania

This scholarship, in remembrance of the Third Reformed Church of Raritan's long and distinguished service to the community, is awarded to a graduating Bridgewater-Raritan High School student who has participated in local events designed to strengthen the community while assisting those in need.



On Sunday, June 2nd, we formally received Todd Hay into our congregation. Many of you have met him already since he's been a lay reader on several Sundays.

Welcome Todd!

Welcome  
Glad you're here!



### SAVE THE DATE...



...MORE INFO TO FOLLOW

**SUMMER**



**WORSHIP**

Sundays at 10 am  
Fellowship Hall  
Air Conditioning  
All Are Welcome!

[www.urcomerville.org](http://www.urcomerville.org) | 908-725-4545

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**