

REVERSING FALLS SANCTUARY
818 Bagaduce Rd.
Brooksville, ME 04617

Mailing Address:
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VISION

The Reversing Falls Sanctuary is an emerging spiritual community of welcome and inclusion that responds to the local and global needs of our times. We strive to be deep listeners of all the stories in our midst and to honor the stories where the past, present and future are interconnected in fruitful ways. We aspire to be a community that welcomes all, that encourages the identification of individual gifts, and that enables people to use those gifts for the common good.

HISTORY

RFS takes its name from the reversing falls of the Bagaduce River. The initial founding members considered water as a symbol of Life Spirit and they often talked about that in the early days of RFS.

A river changes course, and that is a quality that they wanted for the community of RFS - flexibility, attention to what is happening around us and how we are being called to respond and change. Staying in a dry river bed because it is familiar is not the way they wanted to live. The Reversing Falls of the Bagaduce River offers powerful movements of tide and those beautiful, though brief, moments of stillness before the tide turns and the water starts its powerful journey in or out. They spent a lot of time discussing and reflecting on what the north Brooksville newly emerging church community would be called, and the River gave them the answer.

The Reversing Falls Sanctuary has roots that go deep into the history of Brooksville. Previously known as the North Brooksville United Methodist Church, it was built in 1900 by local craftsmen on land donated by Alonzo Snow. Snow, Dow, Babson, Orcutt, Poole are some names of local families that participated in the life of the church as sextons, Sunday school leaders, trustees, and church supper cooks. It was used continuously as a Methodist Church with weekly meetings for worship until the congregation merged with that of the Methodist Church in south Brooksville in 2000, after which the sanctuary in North Brooksville was used for weekly services one month of each year for several years and was available for an emerging ministry focused on community needs with alternative services and events.

Over the past 17 years much has been accomplished. Numerous volunteers have worked to preserve, maintain, and improve the structure so that it can continue to serve the community. The early families who built this church and gave it life, week after week for over 100 years, will be honored and remembered as this building maintains its long history of community service.

Structural repairs and improvements since 2000 include:

- Foundation repair of south side
- Roofing
- Sill and foundation post of steeple
- Interior floor renovation by rug removal and painting

Mold remediation
Cellar moisture barrier and insulation installed
Bulkhead
New staircase at entry
Handicap access ramp
French drain east side foundation
Interior painting of sanctuary room
Labyrinth painted on floor
Lighting system and hanging system installed for use as gallery
Heat pump installed
Rain barrel installed for seasonal water
Interior plaster repaired
Access walking path on north side improved with gravel
Entry walkway and garden
Parking area graveled and graded
Window dresser insulated panels installed in vestry and partial sanctuary
Renai heater installed
Raised interior platform rebuilt

Sanctuary means safe haven, and that is what this place is for people of varying traditions and beliefs. It is a place of welcome. Our celebrations, services, and programs are the result of neighbors sharing their gifts, their passions, and their concerns for the local community and for our Earth. Many events have found a home here at Reversing Falls Sanctuary:

Advent spiral
Solstice and equinox celebrations
Cookie walk
Six week Lenten series
Meditation practice
Yoga classes
Children's summer art camps
Women's circle
Non-violent communications training
Twelfth night
Open mic night
Concerts
Movies and lectures
A theater for full-length plays
Practice hall for local theater groups and music lessons
Retreat on spirituality and ecology
Art exhibits in "The Gallery Within"
Conceptual art performances
Knitting circle
Marriage, birthday, and memorial celebrations
Potlucks
Jewish Seder celebration
Singing circle
Circle dance

Reversing Falls Sanctuary has also been the lead and/or co-sponsor on such programs as:

The Greenhouse Project to encourage year-round growing at schools and individual homes.

The Window Dressers project to offer low-cost insulated window inserts that lower energy cost and reduce our carbon footprint.

Robin Wall Kimmerer lecture and book signing.

Water is Life demonstration/march

Community SELF-Reliance Workshop (Shelter, Energy, Livelihood, Food) in collaboration with The Good Life Center

National Campaign for Non-Violence (with local actions in Bangor)

RFS has successfully applied for and implemented projects that were funded in part with grants from the Maine Community Foundation. In 2014 upgrades to a track lighting and hanging system to support The Gallery Within, the name given to the sanctuary when it transforms into a space for art shows, were installed. In 2016 RFS completed the first part of the Maine Steeples Fund/Steeple Assessment. RFS now has a detailed Building Assessment completed by Ames Associates Architects & Engineers that can guide building maintenance, repairs, and remodeling decisions.

The Brooksville United Methodist Church had the initial vision of using the sanctuary building as a community center, answering the needs of the neighborhood and towns of the peninsula for a place to gather, to explore current issues of concern, to enjoy fellowship, music, food, theater, and the seasons.

Since its inception, RFS has been an organization of volunteers. There has never been a paid staff position. The functioning organizational system has developed over the past 17 years. At its beginning, before the team concept was put in place, RFS had a leadership (listening) circle which included Gary Vencil, Bec Poole, Ralph Chapman, David Vandiver, Tony and Anne Ferrara and eventually, Pat Wheeler. They met monthly, more often when needed. Their love for this community, their commitment to personal growth, and the awe they felt for this beautiful sacred space fueled and inspired them to work, plan, organize and share life stories for the common good of the peninsula and all the Earth.

As the community grew and the programs offered multiplied, the decision was made to invite folks to serve on the following teams: Program, Finance, Building and Grounds. There was wonderful response which buoyed all in the community. The teams met as needed to organize and implement the diverse programs, manage income, disbursements, and annual financial reports, and take care of maintenance and improvements to the physical building and grounds.

However, after a couple of years, this organizational model proved unwieldy, and the decision was taken to invite 3 members from each team to form a leadership circle which would be responsible for the important decisions needed to be made.

The Leadership Team, made up of representatives of the working Teams, has been meeting quarterly to consider more overarching issues of management.

This past winter of 2016-2017, RFS was granted 501(c)(3) non-profit status by the IRS and is working to refine aspects of this new identity. Meeting monthly, the new board's current tasks include developing a larger board beyond what was initially needed to begin as a non-profit,

drafting by-laws, and updating and refining the mission statement, planning for the future of RFS, and assuring its continued strong collaborative community presence and financial stability.

RFS conducts most events using a circle format. Everyone seated in the circle has the opportunity to offer thoughts and opinions, share personal stories or to be quietly engaged. As the circle is traveled one can sense close and active listening at work. The structure of circle engagement is something that will continue even as RFS moves to implement its new identity as a 501(c)(3). The following words taken from the website of Seeds For Change may help to define this Consensus Circle form of organization.

“Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. This ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. Through listening closely to each other, the group aims to come up with proposals that work for everyone. Consensus is neither compromise nor unanimity – it aims to go further by weaving together everyone’s best ideas and key concerns - a process that often results in surprising and creative solutions, inspiring both the individual and the group as a whole.”