

*Ebb and Flow*

*Reversing Falls  
Sanctuary  
Newsletter*

*July 2020*

# REVERSING FALLS SANCTUARY



This seems an especially important moment to repeat our welcome. I notice that in our intention to welcome all persons, we've not previously mentioned race.

## Welcome

Whoever you are, you are welcome here.

Wherever you come from, you are welcome here.

If you were born here, you are welcome here.

Black or brown, red or white or yellow, you are welcome here

Protestant or Catholic, you are welcome here.

Buddhist, Jew or Muslim, you are welcome here.

And if you come from no religious tradition at all, you are welcome here.

If you are a believer, you are welcome here.

If you are not a believer, you are welcome here.

Whatever your sexual orientation or gender expression, you are welcome here.

Whatever your age or ability, you are welcome here.

If you come here often, you are welcome here.

If you have not been here for a long time, you are welcome here.

If you have never been here before, you are welcome here.

We open our hearts to you, and ask only that you  
open your hearts to each other.

## Anti-Racism Ad Update

Many in the Reversing Falls Sanctuary community were among those who responded to a call to sign an ad in the paper written in response to the noose on the causeway and the defacing of portraits and signs. That initial statement has been on quite a journey. In response to suggestions and criticism it was revised more than once. Finally the authors, in consultation with some RFS folks and some folks from the larger community, decided it was best not to place an ad at all, lest it prove divisive in an atmosphere already marked by division and distrust.

However, more than 200 people had signed and about \$4,000 contributed toward the ad. Contributors have been notified and given opportunity to receive their money back. The board of Reversing Falls Sanctuary offered to receive contributions and to then disburse the monies for the ad. Now the board and the program team are working together to find local organizations working against racism to which the monies can be given. As soon as decisions are reached, contributors will receive notification.

All involved have been social justice advocates all their adult lives. And yet we have learned just how difficult and how complex this conversation about racism has become. We are still learning. Fortunately, this moment, for all its uncertainty, provides unprecedented resources for the learning required of white people serious about participating in a necessary transformation of our society and culture. A [Peninsula and Island Read of \*My Grandmother's Hands\*](#) will begin with zoom discussions Sat. 8/1 from 2-4 p.m. and continue Wed. 8/12 from 6-8 p.m. and Thu. 8/27 from 6-8 p.m. This Thursday, 7/16, features a [“How to Show up in This Moment”](#) zoom discussion from 6 to 8 p.m. Resources include [Finding Your Role in Movement Work](#) and a collection of articles for white people thinking about how to show up in this moment.

\* \* \* \* \*

The poem that follows reflects ways in which the Jacob stories from the Hebrew Bible speak to the death of George Floyd, to BLM, to COVID-19. The four stories I reference are found between Genesis 25 and Genesis 33.



They are (1) Jacob's birth during which he wrestles with his twin, Esau;  
(2) Deceiving his blind father Isaac to steal the blessing which should have been Esau's;  
(3) Wrestling all night with the Angel of the Lord at the River Jabbok;  
And (4) his meeting with Esau the next day when he had every reason to think Esau would kill him and his family. Jacob stole the blessing, yet God confirmed his possession of it. And Jacob was blessed — but, at every turn in his life he was reminded of the terrible thing he had done. Like Jacob, however blessed we are as individuals or as a nation, we cannot escape the

consequences of the taking of this land, of the genocide, of slavery and of Jim Crow.

“And are we yet alive . . .” are the very first words from the Charles Wesley hymn. They have been sung at the memorial service for the year’s dead at every Methodist conference for 240 years. They were especially poignant in the early years of the American Republic when Methodist clergy were circuit riders on the frontier. On average they died before they were 29. Thanks to COVID-19, when we meet again at Reversing Falls Sanctuary or with extended family or with any group of friends or colleagues, especially if we can meet without masks, we may well look around and ask, “And are we yet alive, and see each other’s face?”

## *Is This What I Prayed For*

*Is this what I prayed for?\**  
*So prayed Rebekah*  
*as two wrestled*  
*in her womb.*

*There are two,*  
*today,*  
*wrestling in the womb*  
*of this republic.*  
*Wrestling not with each other.*  
*but with us,*  
*with all of us.*

*They are striving,*  
*one striving to breathe,*  
*the other striving*  
*to take our breath*  
*away.*

*The angel of death,*  
*the father of one.*  
*The other has many fathers:*  
*Malcolm and Martin and Medgar*  
*and so many,*  
*so many more.*

*Treyvon and Michael and Eric and George  
and so many,  
oh, ever so many  
more.  
All dying,  
everyone,  
"like a motherless child."*

*We are blind,  
like old Isaac,  
we are blind.  
We do not know where  
this is going.  
We do not know where  
we are going.*

*As we took this land,  
so, Jacob took,  
took from his brother,  
the blessing,  
and all that his father  
possessed.*

*Is there a more plaintive,  
a more rending plea  
in all the Hebrew scriptures,  
than the cry of Esau:  
"Bless me,  
even me also,  
oh my father."*

*In the streets.  
the children cry for justice.  
Rachel weeps for her children,  
wails, for they are no more.*

*Fathers call out  
with nothing,  
nothing left of their hopes  
but the bad taste  
of broken dreams  
in their mouths:  
“Bless me,  
even me also,  
oh my father.”*

*Is it possible,  
in this time,  
now,  
this time,  
for old, blind Isaac  
to say,  
now:  
Yes!  
Yes, my son,  
there is for you also,  
a blessing.*

*Limping we leave the Jabbok.  
singing with Charles Wesley  
as we leave the Jabbok,  
“And are we yet alive  
and see each other’s face?”*

*Masked we go forth  
hoping to meet,  
to truly meet our brother,  
to see in his eyes a smile,  
to smile with our eyes.*

*How hard it is to see,  
to see each other,  
to see  
over the masks  
of hatred and of fear,  
over the long dark history  
of the lash and the noose  
we have so carefully,  
ever so carefully,  
masked.*

*Yet we go forth  
hoping  
that as Jacob saw,  
we will see  
in our brother's face.  
in the other's face,  
this time,  
see,  
now,  
at last,  
see  
the face  
of God.*

Gary Vencill  
July 2, 2020

\*Translation by David Rosenberg in *The Book of J* by Harold Bloom



Masks can conceal and masks can reveal. Claire Mortimer at Day of Mourning, June 1 and photo of Susan Barrett Merrill mask at art show in April, 2019.



# Treasurer's Report

June 1 to July 2, 2020

Starting Balance		\$25,881.91
Total deposits		\$1,044.25
Donation	\$1,000.00	
P.O. Box rental refund	38.00	
Interest	4.68	
Misc.	1.57	
Total withdrawals		\$1,569.97
Painting	\$785.00	
*BUMC	600.00	
Cleaning	150.00	
Electricity	34.87	
Misc.	.10	
Ending Balance		\$25,356.19

\*BUMC is Brooksville United Methodist Church. RFS pays BUMC \$1200/year to cover the insurance the church pays on our behalf.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Annual Brooksville Memorial Gathering

Sunday July 19<sup>th</sup> 3pm – 4pm

Town Landing at Dodges' Point

Come honor our neighbors who died in 2019 with music, readings and memories

Refreshments to follow  
Cancelled if rain  
Further information Joan at 326-0916



## Community Events

Brooksville Free Library's annual summer art show is online. Art can be viewed at the library's website, [www.brooksvillelibrary.org](http://www.brooksvillelibrary.org). Artists include friends of RFS - Polly Bishop, Julie Cleveland, and Rebecca Poole.

***My Grandmother's Hands Peninsula and Community Read*** zoom discussions on  
Sat. August 1 from 2 to 4 p.m.  
Wed. August 12 from 6 to 8 p.m.  
Th. August 27 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Books are available for purchase at Blue Hill Books or to borrow at the Blue Hill Public Library. To join the Community Read contact Kate Mrozicki at [k.mrozicki@gmail.com](mailto:k.mrozicki@gmail.com)

Photo credits: Anne Ferrara, Dick Kane, Pat Wheeler

Send contributions and communications to:

**Reversing Falls Sanctuary**  
**P.O. Box 265**  
**Blue Hill, ME 04614**

Information or contribute online: [www.reversingfalls.org](http://www.reversingfalls.org)