

The Spire

From Your Pastor

December 2021

Hope

We live in a state whose motto is one simple word: *Hope*. As I understand it, the state seal, an anchor with the word “Hope” atop it, was adopted by the General Assembly in 1664. While there is no explanation, it is believed to be a reference to Hebrews 6:19, “We have this hope a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul...” Hope is, indeed, a powerful thing! You’ve probably heard me or another preacher quote Jim Wallis on hope: “Hope is believing despite the evidence and then watching the evidence change.” Hope is like that. It is active and catalytic. It makes things happen. Our faith tradition and biblical witness establish hope as a core spiritual practice. Hope is the ability to imagine a possible or alternative ending. Therefore, hope is something our faith gives us and something we can practice. It is all too easy, especially in times of turmoil, to give into despair, and its sly cousin, cynicism. Don’t do that! Choose hope! Let the God who spoke creation into being, and called forth generations from old Abraham and Sarah, and let loose a Holy Spirit such that frightened disciples became bold apostles, open your mind and heart to hope. Be hopeful for your loved ones—and watch them flourish. Be hopeful for yourself—and find new strength and resilience. Be hopeful for our church— and a light will shine on our great giftedness, drawing others to its brilliance. Be hopeful for our world—and solutions to our toughest problems will emerge.

Advent is the Church’s short but powerful season of hope. In Advent we listen to prophets and angels who spoke words of hope to weary and war-torn peoples. We wait in hope, knowing that how we wait is almost as important as what we wait for. Waiting in hope, peace, joy and love gives birth to the Word Made Flesh—again and again. Our worship and Christian education theme for Advent is, you guessed it, hope. It’s the next *practice* that we are exploring in our “Follow Me” curriculum. So, let’s practice hope together. Let’s learn the words and ways of hope. Let’s exercise our hope muscles and let hope take our imaginations for a spin! Hope is a gift of the Spirit, but like all gifts of the Spirit we can use it or not, practice it or let it go idle. For what do you most hope? Believe it is possible and watch yourself and the world around you change!

“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.” Eph. 3:20-21

Grace&Peace, Rev. Jan

Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

December's Deacon of the Month is Frank Lenox (fmlexox@gmail.com)

Worship in December:

In December we continue with our yearlong "Follow Me" worship and education program that focuses on the practices that Jesus taught and modeled. Beginning in September, we spent four weeks introducing the call to be followers of Jesus. In October we took up the Christian practice of "Welcoming All." In November we explored the spiritual practice of "Living in Community" and the first Sunday of Advent invites to reengage in the practice of "Hope." Our Advent Sundays will all center on the practice of Hope:

Sunday, November 28: **Hear Hope** (1st week of our "Hope" unit/practice). Isaiah 9:2-7.

This First Sunday of Advent we hear the prophet Isaiah proclaiming words of hope, for an ancient people in crisis, for us and for the world. Hope is both an attitude and a practice. Hope changes us and therefore how we live. Today we lit the candle named "Hope," and begin again our attending to hope and where it points us.

Sunday, December 5 - **See Hope** (2nd week of our "Hope" unit/practice). Genesis 1:1-5, John 1:1-5

This second Sunday of Advent we are people who have seen a great light, the light of God shining in creation and the light of Christ that shines in our darkness. The metaphor of light helps us remember how hope is a beacon that guides us. Night is not our enemy, neither is darkness. But the fear that uncertainty and vulnerability engender can shut us off from each other and our best selves. Today we light a candle called "Peace," remembering there is a security that holds us in shadow and light.

Sunday, December 12 – **Share Hope** (3rd week of our "Hope" unit/practice). Luke 1:39–49

Mary shared the amazing news of her pregnancy with Elizabeth and then shared her joy with the world in her song, the Magnificat. We share her hope and joy as her example inspires us to give and receive hope with one another. Today we light a candle called "Joy," remembering the gift of friendship and support these two women demonstrate.

December 19 - **Proclaim Hope** (4th week of our "Hope" unit/practice). Luke 1:67-79; Luke 3:1-6

The birth of John the Baptist and his role in "preparing the way" for Jesus remind us that proclaiming hope is transformative business. We join Zechariah in singing of blessing and peace. We remember John's call to a higher love as we wait for the coming of Christ. Today we light a candle called "Love," remembering the love of God that is birthed in Christ.

Friday, December 24- **Hope Fulfilled— Christmas Eve Service – 7:30 PM**

Joy to the world the Lord is come! Come sing the carols, hear the sacred story of manger and miracle! Pass the Light of Christ from one to another. This is what we've been waiting for: the Word becomes flesh again for us!

December 26 – **Christmas Sunday**

A continuation of Christmas joy as we sing as many carols as we can and continue to revel in the best news ever: unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given!

Funding Forward and “Beneficent Banquets”

Our congregation’s year-long participation in Luther Seminary’s “Funding Forward” program culminated in a two-part Funding Forward “experiment” in November. Our experimental project was comprised of a ticketed dining experience (the “banquet”) in which twelve guests joined with a local chef for hands-on instruction in the preparation of a special menu and then enjoyed sharing the meal together. Our “celebrity chef” was our own Christina Ross, Johnson and Wales trained chef, chef/owner of three restaurants in Indonesia where Christina is from. The evening was amazing! Christina and her good friend/chef, Katherine, prepped, prepared and demonstrated a festival meal from Indonesia, while Brook Ross shared historical and cultural context for the special dishes being prepared. Guests took part in the preparations and were treated to the feast they helped to create.

Proceeds from the tickets for the Beneficent Banquet are being directed toward food insecurity in our region by supporting the Jonnycake Center’s food programs and a free community meal, a “Friendsgiving,” here at KCC, that was open to all, and resourced by local farms and food rescue agencies, such as “We Share Hope” (www.wesharehope.org), and donations from several local businesses and community groups. Chef Jeff Cook and Michelle Girasole, as well as many KCC volunteers, prepped, prepared and cleaned up. Close to a hundred people enjoyed fresh food and warm welcome! The truly collaborative effort of faith community, non-profit, individual and business contributors was an inspiration and a joy!

Minute for Missions

Christmas Offering

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas with all of the shopping, baking, decorating, and wrapping, we encourage you to take a step back, and include on your list those who need our help. The KCC Board of Missions has chosen three organizations to divide our Christmas offering among.

Locally, we will be supporting an initiative to build a playground for children in Fournier Estates, a South Kingstown public housing complex. Their current playground is in dangerous condition. The effort to rebuild the playground is supported by 10 local congregations and will provide a safe place for children to play.

Nationally, we will support the UCC Christmas Fund which helps retired church employees without adequate pension funds. <https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/our-churchs-wider-mission/christmas-fund/>

Our international recipient will be Doctors Without Borders which provides needed medical attention to underserved people around the world. The growing number of refugees coupled with the pandemic are stretching the limits of this organization. <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>

Please consider adding these neighbors to your Christmas list this year by supporting the Christmas Offering which will be received December 19th through December 26th.

Jonnycake Christmas

This year we will be supporting the Jonnycake Center by collecting gift cards at the SCRIP table. Gift cards give families the opportunity to shop for the specific items their children need or want for Christmas. Help parents put a smile on their children’s faces Christmas morning AND support our church through the purchase of SCRIP cards.

Thank you!

Many thanks for your generosity! You raised \$1770 for Church World Service’s Afghan refugee settlement work through your Blanket Sunday offerings this fall.

Merry Christmas!

Respectfully,

Your Board of Missions: Lisa Bowe, Sue Davis, Karen Johnson, Judi Parman, Ron Stevens and Cindy Buxton

The Kingston Village Fair Returns!

Saturday, December 4th

Come have lunch, visit around the village and then come back to KCC for a music concert at 2pm! Watch for more details at <https://www.kingstonvillagefair.org>

Kingston Fair Luncheon

The KCC Board of Fellowship is hosting a luncheon at the Kingston Village Fair on Saturday, December 4th, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Soup, salad, beverages and a dessert will be available in the Fellowship Hall for \$5.00.

Women's Fellowship is coordinating donations of individual baked goods (cupcakes, cookies, brownies) to be served at the luncheon. All are welcome to bake--please label what it is and if nuts or gluten free. Helen will be available in KCC Kitchen for drop off of dessert items on **Friday 3-5 pm**. Or, Saturday morning, after 10:30 am. Volunteers to help serve and clean up are welcome.

Classic Guitar Concert with Dennis Costa

The Music Board at Kingston Congregational Church is happy to announce a Classic Guitar Concert with Dennis Costa, including a selection of Christmas songs.

FREE ADMISSION - We invite you to join us on Saturday, December 4th from 2:00-3:00pm at Kingston Congregational Church, Fellowship Hall

Light refreshments and coffee will be served. Masks must be worn during the concert.

Dennis Costa returns to KCC, having performed after our 2019 Christmas Tree Decorating Party, to rave reviews. We hope you will come and enjoy his glorious music once more! He is a recognized local jazz and classical guitarist, who has been featured as a performer nationally and served on the faculties of CCRI and Salve Regina University. In addition to performing and teaching, Dennis has been the owner and manager at Wakefield Music Co. in South Kingstown, Rhode Island since 1991. He released his recording "Echoes of a Century" in 2021 with saxophonist Bruce Abbott.

From the Music Board: Come Join the Caroling Fun!!!

Old-Fashioned Christmas Caroling

Monday, December 13th from 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

Outside, in front of the sanctuary, weather permitting.

ALL ages welcome, music booklets will be provided.

Bring your loudest voice and wear a Christmas sweater or hat.

Most likely, masks will be worn for this event, so bring a mask.

Cocoa and goodies will be served following the singing.

Please email Susan Snow at risnows@gmail.com or call/text Sue at 401-255-6950 to let us know you will be attending. This info is important if we have to cancel for any reason.

So, come smile, sing, and send the students and faculty home with a smile.*

Called to Care: a New Caring/Visiting Ministry

The Board of Membership is reconstituting its Caring and Visiting Committees under a new name: *Called to Care*. *Called to Care* is a program initiated by the United Church of Christ in which local churches train and send out *Called to Care* visitors under the direction of a coordinator and/or pastor (<http://uccfiles.com/pdf/CTC-Resource-Description.pdf>). Janice Trottier and Rev. Jan are organizing the launching of a *Called to Care* team for KCC.

Who:

Visitors:

Do you feel a call to companion and support people, especially older persons, who need a friendly face and a kind, listening ear? Would you like to learn some basic companioning and caregiving skills (that you can use anywhere)? Do you have 1-2 hours a month you could give to visiting a senior or member in need of support in their residence? Are you ready to enjoy and receive the gift of wonderful people's company? You may be a perfect fit for *Called to Care*!

Visitees:

Our congregation includes members/friends who have limited ability to attend church or who have a desire for more contact with church members to foster caring relationships. Visitees are individuals who could use another friendly face and caring person to offer supportive presence.

What:

Called to Care visitors will be asked to make a minimum of one visit/month, requiring approximately an hour (along with travel time). You will need to have your own transportation. You will be assigned a visitee (who has asked to be visited by a *Called to Care* visitor) and make contact with them to arrange a day/time for your visit. You'll travel to their residence and spend about an hour (more or less) visiting, with a focus on friendship and support.

Called to Care is meant to supplement the pastoral ministry of the church, not replace it. The Pastor will still be visiting congregants with a focus on those in urgent need and crisis, such as hospitalization, bereavement, life crises. *Called to Care* visitors will focus on congregants who need/want non-urgent care and companionship.

When:

Rev. Jan will lead three-session training for *Called to Care* visitors in January 2022, on Sundays after church: January 9, 16, 23. Attend these three, 1-hour meetings to get oriented to the *Called to Care* program, (re)learn some basic companioning and caregiving skills (like active listening, positive regard, clear boundaries), and get ready to make your first visits.

How:

To participate in *Called to Care* you need to call or email Rev. Jan: revjan@kingconchurch.org; commit for one year to one visit per month; attend the January training meetings; have your own transportation and be able to visit members in their residences.

Goal:

To extend the pastoral caregiving of our congregation and maintain active and caring connection with all members, especially those who might need emotional and spiritual support.

A Word about Scrip

As the Christmas season is here, please consider purchasing a Scrip Gift Card to use for your online shopping, or as a stocking stuffer, or to give to a teacher, mailman, Amazon delivery person, etc. Please order early as it takes a couple of weeks to receive the gift cards that are not purchased regularly by the KCC Scrip Team.

For your shopping convenience, we carry Amazon, Dunkin' Donuts, Starbuck's, Walmart and Marshalls gift cards every week. We can order gift cards such as Target, LLBean & Land's End to name a few.

Thank you,
KCC Scrip Team

Helping Hands Ministry

The Helping Hands ministry is well underway. So far we have 9 volunteers offering support in the areas of meal preparation, grocery shopping or driving persons to needed destinations. If you are aware of a need in our community that has not been met, please contact Erin Trodson (474-7695) or Carol MacKenzie (862-2962).

If you are interested in volunteering, please fill out the HH form on our website or on the table in Fellowship Hall. Thank you to all who contribute to this special ministry of our church.

Church School Parents - please respond!

It's the most wonderful time of the year... and we know it gets hectic. Please save these dates and reply to Michelle on the following:

11/28 - tree decorating, ornament making after church

12/12 - Christmas "pageant" video debuts in worship. Note - if your kids would like to appear in the video "12 Symbols of Christmas", filming begins this week (11/29-12/8). There will be a special song for the kids to sing with the choir in worship, so please try to attend this Sunday.

12/24 - 7:30pm Christmas Eve worship, the children are invited to participate in a live, costumed Nativity Scene during the service. How it works - each child who wants to participate can choose a costume before service, wear it during church and come up to the altar as their "part" is read by the narrator. No rehearsals, just fun!

The Kingston Congregational Church

Anyone who would like to give a Christmas Poinsettia in memory of a loved one is requested to complete this form.

Please return this form with your payment to the church office or place in the collection plate by December 12th.

The cost per Poinsettia is \$15.00.

I would like to purchase _____ poinsettias at \$15.00 each for a total amount of \$_____.

Given by _____ Date_____

Please choose one sentiment per poinsettia:

"In memory of _____

_____"

or

"In thanksgiving of _____

_____"

or

"In celebration of _____

_____"

Please check one:

I would like to take my poinsettia following the service on Christmas Eve.

*I would like to take my poinsettia following the service on Sunday,
December 26th.*