

The Spire

From Your Pastor

November 2022

Let's Get Messy!

It's clear that church and church school, the way they have been organized and offered by most mainline Christian churches for the last 200 years, are not, in general, attracting enough new members and participants to keep them sustainable. No longer do churches just need to offer a clean, attractive space, decent preaching and quality programs to keep members coming and strangers visiting. There's been a shift in our culture and it is not a shift in our favor. WE know that church community offers us something deeply meaningful and valuable: connection, purpose, friendship, growth, support, an outlet to make a difference in the world. WE know that being part of a church family shapes and grows our hearts and lives. WE know that worship—placing ourselves with others in a space/time that invokes the presence of God—grounds us in hope and strengthens our faith. But most people don't. The “Nones” (those who check “None of the above” on religious preference forms) are becoming a larger demographic, year over year. We can't count on new young families and transplants to refill our pews as inevitable losses empty them. We have to rethink both how we grow and how we serve in this new era.

Such rethinking is taking place in several areas in our church. In funding, mission and social justice, faith formation, we are trying to think “outside of the box”. Our participation in the Funding Forward initiative pushed us to think of new ways (other than pledges and endowments which are in historical decline) to fund mission and ministry. Out of that effort we are experimenting with Beneficent Banquets and a monthly Community Meal, as well as exploring whether we have options for deploying our underused spaces for community benefit and social entrepreneurship, namely rental to agencies or individuals whose work we want to support. Our Mission and Social Justice Board is pushing us out of the box [read: building], too: helping us engage with hands-on efforts to feed and house our neighbors and practice anti-racism in concrete ways. Finally, our Board of Christian Education, our new CE Director, Cindy Dowgiallo, and I, along with others, are returning to an idea that was sidelined during pandemic: Messy Church. Messy Church is an approach to offering intergenerational worship and faith formation aimed at those who don't currently attend on Sunday mornings and may be looking for something a little more hands-on, family friendly, and accessible than traditional church tends to be. “Messy,” in this instance, means well-planned but loosely structured; multisensory and active; intergenerational and inclusive of multiple learning styles. In other words, not mostly sitting, mostly listening, mostly still and quiet. We hope families and individuals both currently and not currently attending on Sunday will join in.

All of these ideas and explorations are intended to help our congregation carry its essential mission into the future in new and sustainable ways. God is calling us, the Christian church, to evolve and adapt. Evolution is the preservation of DNA through needed adjustments to new challenges and opportunities that allow a species to survive into the future. We're in a time of new challenges and opportunities. We're trying new things and making adjustments. It's not a neat, clear and clean process. It's a bit messy. We'll make some mistakes. But the goal is clear: to be KCC, thriving and vital in new ways, into the future, for many generations to come. Trial and error, love and learning will take us there. God bless this mess!

Grace&Peace, Rev. Jan

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

November's Deacon of the Month is Michelle Davis. (michelle.l.davis817@gmail.com)

Worship in the Month Ahead:

Sunday, October 30: All Saints Day (observed). Ephesians 1:15-23; Revelation 7:7-17. *For All the Saints.* November 1st is celebrated in many Christian traditions as "All Saints Day," a day to remember the faithful people who've come before us, whose lives inspire and encourage us. This Sunday we'll recall the stories of our "saints," and our call to be saints, those who love and serve God.

Sunday, November 6: Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost. Luke 20:27-38. *Divine Debating.*

In the midst of his final week Jesus is confronted by theological opponents on all sides. Today it's the Sadducees who want to debate him. We're well acquainted with theological questions and controversies. Some of our most heated cultural and political debates stem from how we see God and interpret scripture. Do we enter the fray, stay above it, or, like Jesus so often did, turn it on its head? Holy Communion is celebrated today.

Sunday, November 13: Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost. Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 21:5-11. *Spoiler Alert.* Here at the close of the Christian year (Advent 1—our New Year's Day—is only two weeks away with Thanksgiving in between), our lectionary turns toward the discussion of "last things." Isaiah's vision is of a restored Jerusalem; Jesus' vision is of a toppled Temple. Spoiler alert: they both were right! How do we live with the end in mind?

Sunday, November 20: Thanksgiving Sunday. Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Philippians 4:4-9. *In Everything...with Thanksgiving.* Gratitude is as much a way of living as a practice or an attitude. It's about seeing ourselves as blessed recipients, beloved inheritors. That means what we have and what we pass on isn't really ours. Now, that's a countercultural perspective! How can we make Thanksgiving something we observe every day, "in everything?"

Sunday, November 27: First Advent. Isaiah 2:1-5. Matthew 1:1-17. *Beginnings.* Katie Howe, preaching.

We start the new Christian calendar and the season of Advent off at the very beginning of the New Testament: Matthew 1:1. Names from the past precede this emerging gospel moment. A larger story holds this new chapter. All around us is the invitation to value the past while we embrace the future. Tradition and change. Ancestors and open doors. Our faith helps us to live in the paradox of present that includes both.

Advent Workshop November 27, 2022

The Fellowship and Membership Boards are bringing back KCC's Advent Workshop taking place after the worship service in Fellowship Hall. Come make an advent wreath for your dining table, Christmas ornaments for your tree, and pick up a wreath or greenery to decorate your home. There will be crafts and treats for all. Some fees apply. Join us as we prepare for the coming of the Christ child.

Experience A Friendsgiving Messy Church

@Kingston Congregational Church

Come and
join us for:



Friday
November 18th
6-8pm

FOOD FAITH FUN
FOR ALL AGES
“No matter where you are on life’s
journey”

What is “Messy Church” Anyway?
It is a global Christ-centered
movement.

It is for people of all ages.
It is an interactive, engaging
form of church.

Messy Church experiences are
informal gatherings where you
will explore biblical themes
through hands on creative
activities, a short worship
celebration of story, song and
prayer, and then share a meal.



on

Fall Update from Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship gathered 15 women together on October 18th in Fellowship Hall for a delectable buffet potluck. Helen Rowe Drake began the meeting with only one agenda item, to put the vote out for electing Michelle Girasole as their new President. Michelle had served in this role previously, but had to step down to serve on the KCC staff. She was unanimously voted in, and the group made plans to gather for social meals together on a quarterly basis, as well as continuing the bake sales during the Kingston Village Fairs for charity. Pamela Lyons offered her fabric bags, steering wheel covers and other items, as another fundraiser for the charities Women's Fellowship donates to.

Helen read from the letters received from various charities we donated to in 2022, including South County Habitat for Humanity, Domestic Violence Center, Camp Ruggles, RI Volunteers, and Kinney Azalea Gardens, among others. Treasurer Karen Tucker noted there was a balance of over \$325 remaining from various donations, and said the bake sales normally brought in significant funding, as well as the annual funding campaign. We thanked Helen for her dedication in keeping Women's Fellowship's support of local charities going strong, despite the challenges of the pandemic. We all noted how lovely it was to be together at table once again.

What to watch for next: Michelle will be coordinating bakers and volunteers for the upcoming WF Bake Sale at KCC on December 3rd. Watch the KCC Weekly email and harvest table for sign-up sheets!

THANK YOU!!
Michelle

By Poet Edward E. Hale:

I am the only one
But still. I am ONE.
I cannot do EVERYTHING.
But still, I can do SOMETHING.
And because I cannot do EVERYTHING,
I will not refuse to do SOMETHING I can do.

What kind of church could we be if we all supported our church like this?

Submitted by
Audrey Hallberg
Board of Trustees

Justice Summit 2022

By Katie Howe

Pastoral Intern

On Saturday, September 24, I gathered with approximately 100 people from the Southern New England Conference UCC (SNEUCC) to be in community at a Justice Summit. People who participated represented ministers, lay leaders, SNEUCC Conference Staff, as well as some local seminarians including myself.

The day started with the classic UCC saying of “Whoever you are and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here”. As the day continued, we started to unpack that phrase a little bit and determine what we truly mean by that. Surely, if someone walks through the door of the church, we show them hospitality regardless of who they are. However, how does the way we worship and the way we build community also embody that phrase?

We began our workshop with a verse from *Leviticus 19:34* “The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the native-born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” Who are the aliens among us, and why are they considered *aliens*? And how do we as a church treat the aliens among us? Do we embrace this scripture from *Leviticus 19:34* wholeheartedly?

I learned that the worshipping experience starts the moment someone sees your building. We live in New England where many of our church buildings were constructed in a similar style including the Kingston Congregational Church building that was constructed over 200 years ago. What does the type of building that we have say to someone when they see it? I would hope that the rainbow chairs outside signify that Kingston Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming Church. Even if someone is unfamiliar with the term *Open and Affirming*, the rainbow chairs are a universal sign of a setting that is affirming people for their gender and sexual orientation. For some people they have bad memories associated with a church, as it was a place of hurt, invalidation, or a place where they went to grieve loved ones. We want to ensure that the church building, and the people inside are demonstrating hospitality. There are many ways to do this including a simple hello, signage of which door to enter the worshipping space, where the bathrooms are, how the prayers of the people work, these little things that most people take for granted when a church has been their home for a long time.

We must understand that as we continue to grow our congregations with people who may be different than us, whether that is age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or people living with disabilities we must be ready as a church to commit to creating lasting changes where all people feel valued. Many churches have tried various efforts over time to recruit specific populations, but then asked these individuals to conform to the way things were always done. Change may seem scary as a church or a community as it may be *how it has always been*, but one of my favorite quotes from the day “if you wait until you’re unafraid, you will die waiting”, Jesus took risks, and is now calling on us to follow.

We can start by finding common ground with people who are different. Opening yourself up for conversation, and building community is what allows people to feel valued. We often underestimate the time that it may take to get to know someone, as this doesn’t often happen in the 30-minute fellowship hour after church. We are called to get to know each other and be in community with one another. God is working within each and every one of us, and it’s time to understand the good work that God is doing in our churches.

Sometimes we are forced to change: for example, COVID-19 brought on several changes. It forced some of the programming to move fully online, and some of that has continued. It has allowed for people who may not be feeling well on a given Sunday to watch the live stream of worship, it has allowed for those who may be living at a distance, or have no transportation to continue to be a part of this worshipping community. Selfishly, I'm glad that this hybrid approach has continued, as I may not have been able to commit to field placement at KCC if it were fully in person given the distance from Providence.

As a community we can still find ways to do the things that matter most, build community, worship God and Live the Love and Justice of Jesus. We must open our hearts and our minds that the way we engage in some of these activities may change. Are we ready to change? When we say, "Whoever you are and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here" we want to fully embrace this through the life of our church. I believe that KCC will continue to be committed to the hard work of the Love and Justice of Jesus and will continue to grow as a community.

“Water is Life”

Silvermoon Larose

Assistant Director of the Tomaquag Museum

November 10, 2022 at 7 pm

St. Augustine's Church

15 Lower College Road, Kingston, RI

In this presentation, we will explore the cultural significance of water and the Indigenous led movement to protect it.



Hope for the Holidays

Serving 500 local children

Suggested donations

Gift cards

Amazon, Walmart, VISA, Wakefield Mall retailers

*Purchase gift cards through Scrip
to benefit KCC and Jonnycake for
a WIN-WIN!*



*Donations will be collected in the
Fellowship Hall after church on
November 27, December 4 and
December 11.*

*Thank you on behalf of your Board
of Missions and Social Justice!*