

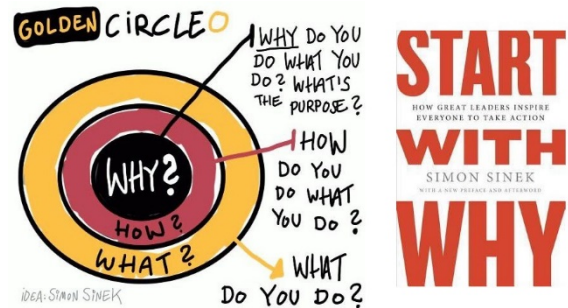
The Spire

From Your Pastor

February 2023

Who Are We? What is our purpose? Who is God calling us to be and serve?

These are the types of questions that are sometimes called “Why” questions, as distinct from “What” and “How” questions. All three are part of what the author Simon Sinek calls “the Golden Circle”. At the center of any organization or project is the Why: the purpose, why we do what we do. Next comes the How: the practices, mechanisms and behaviors that enable us to live out our Why. And finally, on the outer level is the What, the activity, product or outcome we’re after. In his wildly popular TEDTalk, Simon Sinek talks about how organizations usually communicate from the outside in: we make widgets (WHAT), this is how our widgets are made (HOW), widgets are important for _____ (WHY). But Simon Sinek, as the title of his book suggests, encourages all organizations to start with Why. “Why” is the reason we exist, our goal, our vision, our calling. In church we spend much of our energy talking about (arguing about?) on “What” and “How.” Example: We offer Sunday worship services (What). They take place in our sanctuary, with music and sermon expanding on a reading from the Bible (How). But what’s our Why? Why do we offer Sunday worship services? To glorify God? To feed our spirits? To knit ourselves into a community? To realize the Kingdom of God? All of a sudden, when we get to the level of Why, we have to start asking purpose and vision questions, which are more intangible and subjective, but also more powerful and motivating. Simon Sinek says when we start with Why, we tap into our real energy and inspiration. We have a vision to share with the world that invites engagement.



The KCC Council and leadership are inviting our congregation to ask, “What is our Why?” as a way of looking to the future and discerning God’s invitation for us. In January the Council invited leaders to come together for a ½ day retreat and begin to think about who we are, how we are and where we’re going. [At this writing, that retreat hasn’t happened yet but will have happened as you read this]. We expect to take these questions to the wider congregation in the weeks and months to come. We hope to take a deeper look at our Why, so that as we make future decisions about How and What we’ll be grounded in our purpose, our vision, our reason for being.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to gather around our Why! As Congregationalists we believe we hear the Holy Spirit best when we listen to each other.

Grace&Peace, Rev. Jan

Worship in February

Sunday, February 5: Matthew 5:13-20. *Let Your Light Shine.* Our lectionary gospel reading continues with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, inviting us to live into our identity as salt the earth and light of the world. Jesus invites us to not just follow God's commandments and live in covenant with God but to let that relationship get into us (like salt) and pour out of us (like light). Communion Sunday.

Sunday, February 12: Matthew 5:21-27. *Rethinking What We Know.* This portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is called "the Antitheses," because of the repeated phrase, "...you have heard it said...but I say to you..." Jesus was no literalist. He reinterpreted scripture to reveal new meanings and create new understandings. That's our call, too: to listen for the eternal truth sung in ever-changing harmonies.

Sunday, February 19. Matthew 17:1-9. *Transfiguration Sunday.* Katie Howe, leading. On the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, the Gospel reading is always the story of Jesus' Transfiguration. Before we head toward Jerusalem and the cross, we spend a few mystical, glory-filled moments on the mountaintop.

Sunday, February 26: First Sunday of Lent. Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Matthew 4:1-11. *Who Will You Listen To?* The first Sunday of Lent lands us in the wilderness with Jesus where he is fasting and facing down the temptations of the Adversary. Today we launch our Lenten journey and our focus on holy questions of faith with the question, "Who will you listen to?" Whose voice resounds most loudly in your heart and head? How can we listen for God in the midst of tempting distractions?"

Lent 2023

The season of Lent is a 40-day spiritual season set aside for deeper reflection and spiritual growth as we walk with Jesus toward Holy Week. Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on Feb. 22**. There are six Sundays *in (not of)* Lent (Sundays are not counted toward the 40 days, as Sundays are always a celebration of the Resurrection, are never penitential). But historically, Lent has been understood as a "penitential" season, a time for introspection, fasting and prayer. Lenten practices have included spending more time in prayer, fasting from certain foods or activities, taking on a new/different devotional practice or attending special worship services. This year at KCC we have many ways to enter and honor the Season of Lent, including worship, small groups and devotional practices.

Ash Wednesday, February 22:

- Ashes at the Curb: Rev. Jan will again offer "drive-through" ashes for commuters and congregants early Wednesday morning. Drive or walk through the KCC parking lot to receive ashes and a blessing, 7-9 AM.
- Ash Wednesday Worship Service: 7 pm in the sanctuary. We begin Lent together in a candlelit service that includes the music of Taizé, Communion and the offering of ashes.

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

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

In Sympathy

The congregation expresses deepest condolences to:

Tracy Heffron on the death of her daughter, Christine Zeppieri of New London, CT, who died on December 19th. A service was held in CT.

Elizabeth McNab and family on the death of her husband, David McNab, who died on December 21st. A memorial service will be held at Providence Friends Meeting in March.

Norma Hagist and family on the death of her husband, Warren Hagist, who died on December 27th. A memorial service was held in the sanctuary on January 21st.

Super Bowl Chili Sunday

Super Bowl + Chili = Winning combination! Come enjoy some warm chili and good conversation on Super Bowl Sunday, February 12. Join us right after church for lunch and discuss who you think will win the big game that night! Lunch is provided by the Board of Fellowship.



Sunday, February 12nd 4pm-6pm

Messy Church is an experience for individuals and families who may or may not otherwise attend church to come together with creativity, celebration and hospitality. Our February theme will be Valentines. We will be discussing LOVE through crafts, activities and stories. We hope you join us on this faith journey and invite family, friends and neighbors too.

Worship in Lent:

- Sundays in Lent: we will again be using the creative worship resources from A Sanctified Art that include word, song, prayer and art for worship. The theme for our Sundays is “Seeking: Honest Questions for Deeper Faith.” Each Sunday we’ll engage with the gospel readings and other scriptures, letting Jesus lead us into questions and queries to help us go deeper. The Seeking resource comes with a daily devotional for at home individual devotional time, too.
- Lenten Vespers: Rev. Jan and Eden Casteel aim to provide a small, intimate evening worship experience several times over the course of Lent. This service will involve new and familiar music and worship elements: Thursdays, March 9th and 30th at 6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall.



Lenten Adult Program: Merciful Conversations on Race

This year to expand on the work our congregation will be doing with the Witness Stones Project, we are focusing our Adult Christian Education and Spirituality group on anti-racism, being led by trained leaders from the Rhode Island Council of Churches through their **Merciful Conversations on Race** program, five 2-hour Zoom sessions exploring and understanding our ideas and feelings around race.

THE COURSE: Overview

Presented in five 2-hour sessions by trained facilitators. Presentations include video clips, interactive activities and small breakout room sessions. Participants are expected to commit to all sessions and complete simple homework assignments.

Session 1: The Big Picture

We explore the course structure and objectives, establish an atmosphere of safety so that participants can feel free to reflect on their own awareness of racism.

Session 2: Writing an Autobiography Through the Lens of Race

Participants are encouraged to articulate their own journey, using the lens of race to look at when they were first aware of skin color, how they processed that, and where they are in their journey of awareness.

Session 3: Whiteness as the Norm

We explore how Whiteness and Blackness are valued in our society, and begin to discuss privilege based on racial identity on an institutional level.

Session 4: The Impact of White Privilege

We examine how, in the United States, our systems work for the benefit of white people relative to people of color. We explore Economics, Education, Housing, Health Care and the Prison System.

Session 5: Becoming an Ally

Participants focus on the practical aspects what White people can do regarding their own privilege, and learn ways to be an effective ally for Black people.

Based on a UCC curriculum, this series of five conversations will be presented by trained facilitators from the Rhode Island State Council of Churches. The course challenges basic assumptions about race and privilege that often go unnoticed, even by well-intentioned people who advocate for justice. Merciful Conversations on Race explores how White privilege functions in society and mainline churches and the ways it negatively impacts People of Color. It aims to create a positive, trusting space to explore why conversations about race can be such a struggle, and to provide help overcoming this challenge. We'll learn how to foster racial reconciliation on a personal and a systemic level.

To participate in our **Merciful Conversations on Race** plan to commit to:

- Attend all five sessions and to complete the between-session “simple homework assignments.”
- Access Zoom (on a tablet or desktop device preferred; phone doesn’t work as well)
- Contribute \$50/pp for 5 sessions (financial aid available for any who need it; don’t let money stand in the way of participation).
- Stay open and willing to listen and participate in this “brave conversation.”

Attendance is limited to 25. Register at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/MercifulConversations> **OR** the form at the Harvest Table in Fellowship Hall.

KCC Witness Stones Project

Our KCC Witness Stones Project will launch on Saturday, March 4, 10-Noon, in Fellowship Hall, with a public forum on the history of slavery in Rhode Island. Our keynote speaker will be Professor Christy Clark-Pujara, author of Dark Work: the Business of Slavery in Rhode Island



Dr. Christy Clark-Pujara

and Professor of History and the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of African American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who will be joining us via Zoom. Dennis Culliton, Executive Director of the Witness Stones Project, Inc., will place our project within the larger history that Dr. Clark-Pujara will be sharing with us. Public welcome! As we prepare to research and memorialize two specific enslaved residents connected to our church, let’s learn about and understand the often underrepresented and misunderstood history of slavery right here in Rhode Island.



Proposal To Form Ecumenical Social Justice Group

The Mission Board at Peace Dale Congregational Church (PDCC) has asked me to explore the possibility of establishing a broad ecumenical group to work on social justice issues. In recent years, PDCC has had a small group active with several social justice issues but the consensus is that we might be more effective by broadening the group to include other churches and members at large from the broader community. Our PDCC group initially emphasized issues of racism, ways to encourage increased affordable housing, and innumerable problems related to climate change. Clearly there are many additional issues of social justice that are worthy of discussion. Our thinking is that many of these issues can be more effectively addressed by strength from a larger more ecumenical group. Consequently, we ask your group to consider joining us to explore if such an endeavor is worthwhile. We could also identify several important social justice issues to emphasize, and how we might approach the problem. It is not our intent to own this organization, but to simply be a member. We could rotate meeting places, and share in any successes that we might achieve. Share these ideas and your own with others to encourage a broad base of interest.

I propose to hold a joint meeting on Sunday, February 26 at 5:00 PM at Peace Dale Congregational Church (261 Columbia St, Peace Dale) for initial discussions to set a pioneering direction. Please attend and encourage others to join in.

Respectfully,
O. Don Hermes
Peace Dale Congregational Church

A Note from Canna

January 16, 2023

Dear KCC Friends:

Thank you so much for your Christmas Greetings. It was such fun to think of you and tell my son Bruce about you as he read your names and greetings to me (my eyesight is not up to much reading or writing these days, so Bruce assists). Since I moved here to New Hampshire to be with my family almost two years ago I think of you often and fondly.

I am doing well and enjoying my new life here. Meredith Bay Colony Club, my assisted living residence, is filled with wonderful and helpful people and friends.

I attend church almost every Sunday at the Meredith Congregational Church, where I am now a member. Bruce accompanies me to church, we attend the fellowship hour afterwards, and then we go back to Bruce's house for afternoon scrabble and a family dinner with my daughter in law Nancy, my grandchildren Anna and Dan and Dan's wife CiCi.

A highlight of the last year was a trip to Washington state for Dan and Cici's wedding, which took place in a forest grove of towering cedars and Douglas fir trees to which I was carried over the uneven path in a sedan chair Dan created for the occasion – see the enclosed photos. Another highlight was my 90th birthday celebration this summer attended by family members from as far away as Alaska.

Looking forward, we are excited that CiCi is pregnant and due to give birth in a month! She and Dan are so happy and so are we.

I hope you are all well and happy in your lives and church activities. If you have time to drop me a note, I would love to hear from you. I miss seeing all of you at church but have such happy memories of the many years that Cliff and I were active members of KCC.

Love, Canna

My mailing address:

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