

The Spire

From Your Pastor

May 2023

Join the Circle

One of the greatest human needs shared by all people is for a sense of belonging to a group larger than oneself. It can also be one of the greatest gifts of religious life. Studies have shown that even in this era of declining church attendance, there is a palpable thirst for “community” throughout our culture. Yet simply attending or joining a church are not enough to meet it. We want to know others and be known at a deeper level. We want to matter to others. We want to feel we are part of something bigger than ourselves and are making a difference in the world.

“Circles,” or small faith groups, in the church offer that kind of community and strengthen individuals for the everyday challenges of life. Circles bring together groups of 8 to 12 people with the goal of building and sustaining relationships with each other and with God, offering participants real connection and a sense of belonging.

With these thoughts in mind, a few of us are exploring the creation of a Circles ministry, offering current and new members/attenders the chance to connect with others on a regular basis for a sustained period of time.

Our Circles template includes:

- Groups of 8-12 individuals meeting monthly for 2-hour gatherings, splitting the time equally between Fellowship and Focus (more below).
- Commitment to meet once a month for six months; recommit or move on after six months.
- A gathering site, such as a member’s home.
- A host (may or may not be above homeowner) to welcome and facilitate agenda (resources and support provided).
- Half the gathering spent as facilitated Fellowship (relationship building); half for a mutually agreed upon Focus, such as, but limited to:
 - o Reading a book together or Bible study
 - o Engaging and learning spiritual practices (prayer, meditation, spiritual direction, etc.)
 - o Shared life experience (parenting, aging, caregivers, retirees, etc.)
 - o Activism on a topic (racial justice, creation care, etc.)

Focus themes for Circles could be preselected (and advertised as such, e.g. “Read through the gospel of Luke”) or decided upon once the group begins meeting.

Circles would bring both current and new friends together enabling existing friendships to deepen and new friendships to grow. Circles would be especially important for new members/attenders at KCC to have a way to begin creating meaningful relationships quickly after connecting with our congregation.

Circles would be overseen and supported by Rev. Jan and a Circles ministry team who would communicate opportunities to join a Circle, develop and support hosts, recruit participants and shepherd Circles as they grow, change, renew/end.

Our fervent hope and expectation are that Circles would demonstrably deepen a sense of belonging among current and new members that would spill over into all areas of ministry and congregational life. It could also offer life-changing support to many people who don't have a place of belonging and are searching for connection in their lives.

Next steps: We are circulating this ministry proposal for prayer, discernment, comment and shared dreaming. We welcome your input in this faithful exploration.

Grace&Peace,
Rev Jan, along with Carol MacKenzie

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

May's Deacon of the Month is Karen Johnson. (mysunnyone@gmail.com)

Emig Lecture April 30, 2023: Systemic Racism in America

The Board of Missions invites you to our annual Emig Lecture in memory of Rev. Don Emig, a past member of KCC, who worked tirelessly for social justice.

Using the scripture from the Gospel of John (John 10:1-18) as a frame, Rev. Marilyn Baugh Kendrix will deliver the sermon addressing systemic racism in America, providing both a definition and a few examples to help congregants who are not targets of this racism better understand what it is and how it impacts people of color, especially Black Americans.

In addition, Rev. Kendrix will spend some time unpacking the controversy over critical race theory and how erasing African Americans from the history of our nation negatively impacts us all.

Rev. Kendrix will also be available in the Fireplace Room after coffee hour for Q&A.

**The Congregational Meeting
of
The Kingston Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**

Will be Held in the Sanctuary & via Zoom
Following the Worship Service

Sunday, May 21, 2023

10:45 a.m.

Frank Lenox, Secretary

Tentative Agenda

1. Call to Order Joyce Stevos, Moderator
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes of Annual Meeting of January 22, 2023
4. Report of the President Sharon Davis
5. Report of the Treasurer Doug Kraus- 2023-2024 Budget
6. Reports of Boards and Committees
7. Old Business
8. New Business
 - *Nominating Task Force Report
 - *CE Board Resolution
9. Pastor's Comments & Closing Prayer Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier
10. Adjourn

Congregational Meeting
Kingston Congregational Church, UCC
Sunday, January 22, 2023

1. Call to Order by Moderator, Joyce Stevos (10:50 am)
 - a. 4 handouts: Agenda with Minutes from Oct 23, 2022; Balance Sheet/Treasurer's Report; Investment Committee Report; Rental Income Estimate report and spreadsheet.
 - b. Quorum declared by Moderator (in-person)
2. Adoption of Agenda (handout #1)
 - a. **Motion** to adopt the agenda, **M/S/P**
3. Approval of Minutes of October 23, 2022 Congregational Meeting,
 - a. Approved as distributed.
4. Report of the President, Sharon Davis
 - Reflected on our Advent and Christmas services
 - Leadership Retreat, Jan 28
5. Report of the Treasurer, Doug Kraus (handout #2)
 - a. Income is on track
 - b. \$18k deficit is because the Endowment distribution has not been drawn yet.
6. Reports of Boards and Committees
 - a. Deacons – Frank Lenox
 - Advent materials (from A Sanctified Art)
 - b. Music Board
 - Eden Casteel was hired as the interim
 - piano in the choir loft has been tuned and repositioned
 - c. CE - Rem
 - Messy Church event is coming up
 - *Climate Church, Climate World* book group will be starting end of January
 - d. Trustees - Wayne Lee
 - Ron Charpentier is the interim Sexton while Andy is away.
 - Roof has been leaking and a contractor has given a quote to fix the leaks and repair the damage. (\$5,200)
 - A donation of \$30k has been received from Jim McCauley for AC in the church sanctuary

- e. Missions - Lisa Bowe
 - Coat Exchange, gift-card donation
 - Witness Stones Project (of Funding Forward)
 - Looking into ways to support affordable housing in 2023
 - f. Fellowship - Ann Lenox
 - 3 events in Nov/Dec (Advent workshop, Potluck dinner, Kingston Fair luncheon)
 - Chili Soup Sunday, Stewardship lunch, Progressive Dinner are upcoming events for 2023
 - g. Investment Comm - Dick Geisler (handout #3)
 - value - \$1.64Mil
 - comment: 3 ways to grow the Endowment
 1. stock market growth
 2. increase contributions
 3. decrease withdrawals
 - Spire Fund: opportunities are available to make contributions
7. New Business
- a. Strategic Planning and Leadership Retreat
 - Sat, 1/28, to discuss vision of the church's mission
 - Last retreat was in 2009: focus was on membership growth, church governance, stewardship
 - b. Building Rental Update - Cheryl Wilga
 - Rental Income Estimates per month (handout #4)
 - Congregation consented to moving forward in this area.
9. Pastor's Comments, Closing Prayer - Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier
- Witness Stones Project - Sat, 3/4
 - Researching the lives of enslaved people in RI (Silvie, Cuffie Tory)
 - Speaker will lead the event
 - Merciful Conversations on Race - 5 sessions on Monday nights (Zoom)
 - Messy Church Ministry
 - Community Meal: Team and Leaders (4 teams, 6 people each)
 - Quarterly Beneficent Banquet (income)
 - Monthly Community Meals as outreach to the community

10. Meeting Adjourned: 11:58 am

Respectfully submitted,
Francis Lenox, Secretary

Sunday Worship in May

In May, “Eastertide,” the Great Fifty Days of the Easter Season, culminates on the Feast of Pentecost, May 28. Our Revised Common Lectionary Year A features selections from Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse” in the gospel of John. Jesus is preparing his disciples to become the Church, living into a post-Easter world.

Sunday, May 7: Fifth Sunday of Easter. John 14:1-14. *The Way, Truth and Life*. Thomas, ever the pragmatist, says, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” That’s how life feels sometimes. How do we follow Jesus when we’re not even sure where he is going? Jesus assures his friends, “I AM the way, the truth, the life.” Katie Howe’s last Sunday with us.

Sunday, May 14: Sixth Sunday of Easter. John 14:15-21. *You in Me and I in You*. So often we look for God “up there,” or “out there,” when really the Divine is “in here.” How does our faith and practice change when we don’t think of God as above or beyond, but rather within? Mother’s Day.

Sunday, May 21: Seventh Sunday of Easter. John 17:1-13. Acts 1:1-11. *On the Move*. In John, Jesus prays for his followers as he anticipates his departure. Acts 1 narrates the day of Ascension. As Dorothy says in *The Wizard of Oz*, “People come and go so quickly around here!” Why do we try to nail down God when God has been on the move from Day One?

Sunday, May 28: The Feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:1-21. *Spirit Born*. We call it “the birthday of the Church.” It’s the story of how a huddled, frightened collection of disciples became a living, growing, vibrant community. It’s all about the Spirit!

Witness Stones Project: Kingston, RI

Please see the flyer included in this newsletter inviting you to be a part of a Learning Community that will be coming together in May to learn, interpret and tell the story of Cuffe Torrey, a man enslaved by the first minister of our church, Rev. Dr. Joseph Torrey. A Witness Stone for Cuffe Torrey and for his wife, Sylvie Torrey, will be placed outside our church at an installation ceremony on Monday, June 5th, 1:30 pm. To prepare to “restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved individuals who helped build our community” (Witness Stones Project, Inc.) we will work with primary documents related to Cuffe’s life and together tell his story to one another and to the public. Mondays, May 8, 15, and 22, 7-9 pm, at KCC, Fellowship Hall.

Kingston Village Fair: Saturday, May 13th

Once again, KCC will be sharing our love with the community at the Kingston Village Spring Fair. We will have the Women's Fellowship Bake Sale starting at 10am - 1pm. We are looking for donations of cakes, pies, muffins, cookies, brownies or your favorite baked goods for people to purchase and take home for Mother's Day. Please let Michelle Girasole or Helen Rowe-Drake know what you are making, and plan to bring it over that morning.

At 11am-1pm the Fellowship Board will serve a delicious luncheon. They have chosen a selection of chowders, salad, and lemonade/water for \$5. If it is sunny, we'll have outdoor tables to eat at, otherwise it will be in our Hall. If you can help set up tables at 9am, or help with cleanup at 1pm, we would appreciate extra helping hands!

Elizabeth McNab will continue her tradition of offering a historical tour of the sanctuary as well. The village will be buzzing with activity, including art, books, music, crafts, plants and fun, so check out the goings-on at KingstonVillageFair.org!

Our Beneficent Banquet was a Delicious Success!



We would like to thank Chef TJ Casem, our guests and our volunteers for spending a wonderful evening of learning, laughing, cooking and sharing together on Sunday, April 16th. The menu was healthy - filled with tons of fresh vegetables and nutritious recipes with a Mediterranean theme. There was lots of teamwork as guests were paired up to prepare different dishes together, with Chef TJ (from Shelter Harbor Golf Club) leading the way. Smiles were abundant, as friends gathered together and spent time "Cooking Fresh, Eating Well, Doing Good." (Kurt, Tia, Rem, Tracy and Michelle are happy to report the dishwasher was put through its paces during the cleanup and performed wonderfully!)

We appreciate everyone's help in supporting our mission of feeding our community. Our first Community Dinner will be served on April 30th, at 6pm in the Fellowship Hall. Please spread the word! (Fun photo of Tia and Sue)

Stewardship

Thank you to everyone who has pledged to date.

So far, we have received **72** pledges, just over **87%**, of those who pledged this current year for a total of just over **90%** of pledge income for this current year.

To facilitate recording donations, we encourage **members NOT to use the website's donate button for pledges and any recurring donations.** The donate button **incurs fees** since those donations come to the church via Paypal.

Rather than using this service for recurring giving, **donors are encouraged to use their own bank's bill pay** (as many givers already do) **which does not incur a fee.** This is a very simple process that can be set up through your bank's website.

To access the pledge form online, use the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeweanW9QJO6rwBleMotOeoJ1LylxJMe5rHO4O-pjagnOvqjQ/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0>

Please contact the church office if you would like to order offering envelopes for the upcoming fiscal year.

Spire Mailing

The next issue of the *Spire* will be the Summer issue and then printing will be suspended for July and August, resuming for the September issue. The deadline for September *Spire* articles is August 15th.

The *Spire* will be emailed to all who are on the church email list, as it is now. The *Spire* is also posted on the church's website: www.kingconchurch.org.

Beginning with the September issue, the print version of the *Spire* will be mailed only to those who request it. Please contact the church office if you would like to continue receiving the print version of the *Spire*.

Pastoral Intern Update

By Katie Howe

Winnie-the-Pooh sums it up perfectly “How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard” – *A.A. Milne*

I can't believe my time at KCC will be finishing on May 7th! As most of you know, I am currently working on an online Master of Divinity degree through Chicago Theological Seminary, and one of the requirements is a pastoral internship at a local church. A little over a year ago I had a conversation with Rev. Jan about the potential of doing my pastoral internship at Kingston Congregational Church. When we discussed what my internship was going to involve, we realized that KCC didn't have a defined role for the pastoral internship, and I created my own goals and objectives. I had the opportunity to meet with some of the leaders at KCC and I worked hard to put together a learning covenant so that I would be able to learn and grow within the church setting. I remember Rev. Jan said at the very beginning that I would have the opportunity to become “fully immersed in church life”. This couldn't have been a truer statement throughout my time at KCC.

This idea of full immersion has been evidenced through the variety of tasks that I have done within the church. Including everything from helping to organize the Sunday School room, ushering, assisting with communion and a baptism, leading worship, preparing a freezing cold Easter Sunrise Service, Messy Church, and even the opportunity to share a meal with many of you within the congregation.

To me, this was a particularly amazing time to be a part of the KCC community. Between the new faces including Tony, Eden, and Cindy, and the new initiatives including Messy Church, Witness Stones, Beneficent Banquets, and so much more! I feel that the church is finding its place in this post-COVID, and it was an amazing opportunity to have been a part of it. I want to take this opportunity to say *Thank you!* as all of you have made this a positive experience for me.

As for what I'm planning to do next, I'm continuing to work at the health department as I finish seminary. I am in the process of finalizing details for another internship that I hope to start in the fall, and then I will finish up my coursework through CTS. Given the part-time nature of my studies I am hoping to graduate in 2025 which feels far away, but given how quickly these eight months flew by, I realize it will be here before I know it!

I have really appreciated this opportunity to get to know all of you at KCC and I've truly learned and grown in ministry. I appreciate your hospitality and I hope that KCC will be able to continue to grow in God's love for many years to come. I hope that I will get a chance to celebrate this experience, and say goodbye to all of you on Sunday, May 7th!

SURVEY OF INTERESTS IN ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION/SPIRITUAL FORMATION
Board of Christian Education, KCC, 2022-23

Please help the BCE plan for meaningful adult spiritual life offerings by filling out the survey below (and return printed form to the office) or an online version here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dUaLeNvfPw1-kNWm69lxugAwh7CrQcmuFdJHQ0iUQsY/edit>

Instructions: please check the number that best represents your interest in the following potential offerings at KCC, where **1 indicates very little interest and 5 indicates great interest.**

TOPIC	1	2	3	4	5
Spiritually-related book discussions					
Practicing one's faith, i.e. prayer, forgiveness, compassion					
Lectionary readings, Scripture for Sundays					
Seasonal series, i.e. Advent and Lent					
Biblical Understanding, i.e. Old/ New Testaments, in depth study of one book of the Bible					
Spiritually-related films					
Social Justice issues, i.e. racial, economic, and gender equality; environment/climate; food security					
Community Life, i.e. communication, leadership, conflict resolution, discernment, hospitality					
Your suggestions:					

What would be the best time for you to participate in the above offerings?

_____ Sundays, 11:00-12:00 p.m. in the Fireplace Room

_____ Mondays via Zoom, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

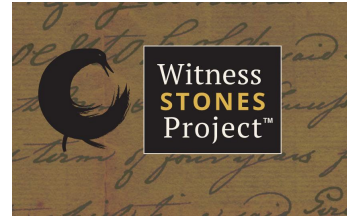
_____ Other times that are best for you: _____

Please feel free to suggest additional ways that would help you in your spiritual formation.

Thank you!

Participate in RI's 1st

Witness Stones Project



You're invited to be part of a
Three-Part Learning Community
Mondays, May 8, 15, 22, 7-9 pm
at Kingston Congregational Church

"To restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved individuals who helped build our communities."

- May 8:** Learning the Lenses (through which to view the history of slavery)
- May 15:** Piecing Together the Story of Cuffe Torrey (from primary sources)
- May 22:** Retelling and Responding to the Story (in preparation for June ceremony)



Join Kingston Congregational Church, the Compass School in Kingston, and community members in learning about the lives of two historic, formerly enslaved individuals from our local community through hands-on engagement with historical documents and guided discussion. Be part of helping to create a narrative presentation to accompany the installation of Witness Stones in their honor (Installation Ceremony: Monday, June 5, 1:30 PM, Kingston Congregational Church).

Witness Stones Project: Kingston, RI is made possible in part through funding support from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities, an independent state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council seeds, supports, and strengthens public history, cultural heritage, civic education, and community engagement by and for all Rhode Islanders.



RHODE ISLAND
COUNCIL for the HUMANITIES

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