

The Spire

From Your Pastor

October 2023

Holy Envy

Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others is the name of the book by Barbara Brown Taylor that is the focus of our Adult Christian Education and Spirituality (ACES) offering this fall. The phrase “holy envy” is borrowed from Krister Stendahl who proposed three guidelines for interfaith understanding:

1. When trying to understand another religion you should ask the adherents of that religion and not its enemies.
2. Don’t compare your best to their worst.
3. Leave room for holy envy.

Barbara Brown Taylor interprets that final point as letting oneself see, enjoy and appreciate the beauty and gifts of other faith traditions, while still valuing (and maybe lovingly critiquing) your own. I would guess we have all had experiences of holy envy. I know I certainly have. I envy Quakers their understanding and practice of the holiness of silence. I envy the Native American’s earth-based spirituality and concept of a Great Spirit who inhabits this world and is found in balance and harmony. I envy the pagans of the world their embodied spirituality finding holiness in trees, hills and waters. I deeply envy Buddhists practice of meditation and the insistence on “being here now.” I envy Roman Catholics’ liturgical richness, especially the Easter Vigil and their deeply sacramental piety. I envy Evangelicals’ rootedness in scripture and making a “personal choice” for faith. I envy Jewish festivals that bring holy days to the dinner table and don’t separate faith and family life. I envy the “peace churches” (Amish, Brethren/Mennonite, Quaker) their bravery in preaching and proclaiming pacificism. I envy “Black churches” their conversational worship style (no sitting on your hands or biting your tongue), “Amen!” and “Preach!” and “Don’t you know it!” punctuating the sermon from the pews. I envy Pentecostals embrace of the freedom and power of the Spirit, taking Jesus’ promises of the Spirit’s presence and inspiration to heart. And, sometimes, I even envy my agnostic neighbors who don’t feel stalked by God and have no qualms sleeping in on a Sunday. I remember reading Rabindranath Tagore’s prayers, and Abraham Heschel’s theology, and Martin Buber’s philosophy, and Jalal Adin Rumi’s poetry and knowing I was reading holy text.

There is so much more to the world and to God than we could possibly possess by ourselves. We need each other and we need our neighbors to help us see and worship the fullness of God. The greatest gift that these other traditions and teachers offer us is a deeper, less jealous and defensive, more open-hearted embrace of our own enviable faith tradition. I wouldn’t trade being a follower of Jesus for anything. It is his inclusive, wholehearted, full-bodied love of God and life that allows me to find God in the faith of others, and love my own the more.

Grace&Peace, Rev. Jan

Upcoming Sunday Worship Themes:

Sunday, October 1: Matthew 21:28-32. The parable of the Two Sons, one says “yes,” but doesn’t do what his father asks. One says, “no,” but does. Jesus seems to care more about what we do than what we say. Looking and sounding faithful are no match for living faithfully. Jesus tells this parable to the Pharisees—and to us.

Sunday, October 8: *Guest Preacher/Worship Leader: Rev. Cheryl Boyd von Ehrenkrook*

Sunday, October 15: Matthew 22:1-14. *Dress Codes.* Continuing with the Jesus’ parables in the chronology of Matthew’s gospel, these next few weeks entail some of the harder ones. Jesus tells these stories with the Temple authorities looking on. He’s in Jerusalem now. His words and themes are pointed and thorny. Can we listen for the grace even among the words of judgment? Can we accept that God loves us unconditionally AND has expectations for how we live?

Sunday, October 22: Matthew 22:15-22. *The Things That Are God’s.* The Pharisees want to put Jesus in an untenable spot, so they ask, “Should we pay taxes to Caesar [the hated pagan overlord]?” “Yes” or “No” both come with problems. Jesus responds with a completely unexpected answer.

Sunday, October 29: Matthew 22:34-40. *What It’s All About.* Jesus reduces the entire catalog of commandments and canon down to two verses: Love God, Love Your Neighbor (as yourself). Is love a feeling? An action? An attitude/principle? Love God, Love Your Neighbor makes for a good bumper sticker but calls for a lot of hard decisions!

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

October’s Deacon of the Month is Evan Preisser. (preisser@uri.edu)

Soup Sunday

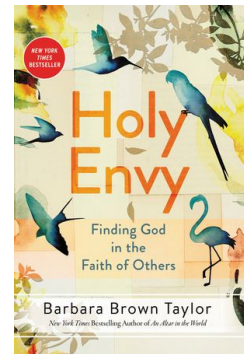
The Board of Fellowship is hosting a Soup Sunday and we hope everyone can join us after worship on **October 15, 2023**, in the Fellowship Hall. Desserts are appreciated. If you have any questions, you may contact Andrea Richardson at 932-1597 or arichardson120@yahoo.com.

Blanket Sunday

Blanket as defined in Webster's, A large usually oblong piece of woolen or other similar material used as a bed covering or other covering for warmth. Used in a sentence; "I slept on the ground covered by my blanket". With all the disasters, war, fire, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes in our world, there are many of our fellow humans who are "sleeping" on the ground, some with blankets and some without. Your Board of Missions and Social Justice will hold our annual collection for the Church World Service Blankets of Love appeal on **October 22nd**. Envelopes will be available in the church or you can donate through PayPal. Through your generosity we can bring comfort to many more who may be "sleeping on the ground". Thank you!

Adult Christian Education and Spirituality: ACES

This fall ACES will use the book Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor, best-selling author/Episcopal priest/college professor. In Holy Envy, Taylor shares relatable stories from her World Religions class at Piedmont College, delving into personal perspectives and humorous anecdotes as she helps her students (and herself) to appreciate—and even envy—the beauty of religions that aren't their own. You can order a used copy [here](#) or at your favorite bookseller. ACES will meet after church on Sundays beginning Sept. 24th and continue for six more Sundays through Nov. 5th. This ACES group will be offered as a 'hybrid' group, providing Zoom access for those who can't be at church in person.



Reading Schedule:

Sept. 24: introduction and Chapter 1

October 1: Chapters 2 and 3

October 8: Chapter 4 and 5

October 15: Chapters 6 and 7

October 22: Chapters 8 and 9

October 29: Chapters 10 and 11

Nov. 5: Chapter 12 and Epilogue

Zoom link:

Meeting ID: **946 883 3427**

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/9468833427>

password: **kingcong**



KCC Welcomes **BOBBY JO VALENTINE** Wednesday, October 25 at 7pm

Kingston Congregational Church is proud to welcome singer/songwriter **Bobby Jo Valentine** for an evening of soul-satisfying music. Valentine will perform in the KCC Fellowship Hall, Wednesday, October 25 at 7pm. The KCC Choir will join Valentine for one of his original songs. Suggested donation of \$20 for general admission, suggested donation \$10 for seniors

and students. Tickets are available after services at KCC, at the door, and online through Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/710654475667?aff=oddtcreator>

Growing up and emerging out of a Baptist Church of strict lines and sharp edges, **Bobby Jo Valentine** has emerged into a larger, kinder, more welcoming faith...one that is excited to learn, open to growth, and focused on love. Bobby Jo Valentine's music exists outside the lines of any genre, but the music's thoughtful, spirit focused lyrics and catchy melodies reach listeners across all walks of life.

Kingston Congregational Church is a Christian Church that supports each person's spiritual journey through the communal pursuit of worship, learning, and service. Founded in 1695, "KingCong" has always been a welcoming space of worship, prayer, and community located directly across from the University of Rhode Island.

Along with theatres, house concerts, and many other kinds of stages, Bobby is often invited to offer his stories and songs at faith communities around the nation. Among others, he has been invited to perform for The Wild Goose Festival, the international Emerge Conference, and the 2017 General Synod of the United Church of Christ. His music has won Song of the Year twice at West Coast Songwriter's Association, and his work has appeared on radio, TV, and feature films. He has performed artist residencies, hosted songwriting workshops, and been involved in helping communities of all types use their spaces and voice in more creative and powerful ways.

Bobby currently hails from Northern California, and is ecstatic any time he can discuss the big questions, challenge the easy answers, and inspire people to move closer to love.

You can hear music, watch performances, and get information on catching a show at www.bobbyjovalentine.com.



The first Circle group is organizing now! Join 8-10 other KCC friends/members for a monthly gathering to share life and faith. Additional Circles will launch as interest grows. If you are interested in joining a Circle or learning more, please [email Rev. Jan](#). If you have an interest in a Circle with a particular focus let us know.

KCC Circles will meet in members home for a time of sharing and deepening, gently facilitated by a trained volunteer. The goal of KCC Circles is to provide a community within a community where new and old friends can deepen their connections to one another and to God. Half of the monthly Circle time will be a chance to check in, update one another on your lives and deepen your acquaintance. The second half of the Circle is facilitated faith sharing around a topic, theme or activity the Circle members have chosen. Circles will convene for 6 months (6 monthly meetings), after which members have the choice to continue or not. Circles will provide those who are new with quick and ready connections with other KCC members/friends, as well as offer existing members and friends a way to deepen and grow current connections.

Join us at Kingston Congregational Church

Sunday, 6:00 p.m.

October 24th November 19th* December 17th*

**Note: Normally the last Sunday of each month,
our last two in 2023 are earlier, due to the holidays.*



We look forward to offering warm hospitality to anyone in the community that would enjoy a free, fresh-cooked meal. Hope to see you there!

Questions, call the church office: 401-783-5330

Welcome, Jillian Seibold, our new Communications Coordinator:

Unfortunately, Tori Hunt, who was with us for only one week, had to resign due to an unexpected and abrupt change to her plans. But fortunately, we found Jillian! Jillian Seibold is a University of Rhode Island junior studying Communications and Public Relations. In her free time, she enjoys exercising, singing, and spending time with friends and family. She is so excited and grateful to join KCC in the position of Communications Coordinator. She is also really looking forward to meeting all of the members of the church and doing her part for the community.



Jillian began her work with KCC on September 24th and will work through the end of May. Say “hi” to her at the Tech Table on Sundays! Contact her at Communications@kingconchurch.org.

Wonderful Alchemy

By Michelle Girasole

It wasn't so long ago that our Fellowship Hall sat empty and quiet during the pandemic. On the church staff at the time, I would walk through the hall on my way from the office to the church school classrooms, and feel myself longing for the days of lively coffee hours or potlucks, surrounded by the smiles and friendly chatter of KCC friends. It was a very lonely feeling to be in that huge room with only memories of our beloved community that could no longer gather. I missed everyone, and dreamed of "Someday", when the Hall would be filled with people again.

Fast forward to our Community Dinners this summer. Light and laughter filled the Hall. The sound of piano music wafted up to the rafters as the delicious smells of huge pans of food came out of the kitchen, carried by smiling friends, eager to serve and enjoy our fresh culinary creations with the people starting to arrive at the door. That "Someday" had arrived and it was wonderful!

In 2021, our Funding Forward team had planned a series of quarterly fundraiser chef dinners that would fund a series of monthly community dinners. We designed the event series to be our church's contribution to fighting food insecurity in our community. We chose this mission to demonstrate "the love and justice of Jesus" by using the talents and resources we already had at our disposal (a brand-new kitchen, willing volunteers, contacts with chefs and food rescue organizations) to make a difference in the world around us. It was meant to be self-funded, outward-facing, and joyful. And, it is!

Six months into this new experiment, we are seeing it all come to life. Our Beneficent Banquets are very popular (2 sold out, and a 3rd planned for November), with local chefs teaching cooking skills and helping us raise money that mostly goes to the food rescue We Share Hope in Rumford, RI. As we purchase food at a discount, the money we pay helps support their mission - to provide food and other necessities for those who need it most in our community. They also reduce food waste by accepting food that cannot be sold at retail or used by the restaurants. Our purchases give us the food items we need to serve a fresh, hot meal at our free dinners, as well as helping fund their staff, facilities, utilities, delivery trucks, etc.. Such a delicious WIN WIN WIN!

(By the way, anyone can shop at their Hope Market, if interested in supporting this mission with your personal food shopping as well. See their website www.WeShareHope.org for their Hope Market hours and details.)

The feedback from all involved has been absolutely wonderful - there is something magical about sharing food that bonds us with each other, and the tireless efforts of our team captains and volunteers has been so appreciated! We could not do this without you! Every carrot chopped, every table set, every dish cleaned and put away is one step towards fulfilling our mission to feed God's people. We like to say, 'everyone needs to eat' and how rewarding it has been to make new friends, and see familiar faces from month-to-month, coming in from the neighborhood to prepare, serve, and/or enjoy another meal with the KCC church family.

From the Director of Christian Education:



HAPPENINGS



MEETS EVERY SUNDAY
(birth-12th grade)



OCTOBER 15TH 4-6PM

STAY TUNED FOR THE THEME

Remember this is a great opportunity to reach out to the community and learn more about this event if you have not already participated.

WE ALWAYS HAVE A GREAT TIME!



SPOOKY SLEEPOVER FOR GRADES 6TH- 12TH
DATE AND TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED



COME ONE COME ALL
 SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE at ALL CHURCH HALLOWEEN FUN!
 TRUNK OR TREATING

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29TH at 5 pm

EVERYONE is invited to participate in our Halloween Celebration- bring your friends and neighbors... everyone is invited.

ADULTS- Bring your car and decorate your trunk in a festive way with pumpkins, streamers or whatever you desire and then hand out treats to the children.

If you do not feel creative but still want to help, feel free to donate treats.

CHILDREN- go from trunk to trunk to gather treats.

Afterwards we will gather in the Fellowship Hall for a COMMUNITY DINNER and of course dessert!

So, wear your costumes and enjoy the fun with your friends and King Cong family.

There will be 4 sign-up sheets on the Harvest Table:

- 1) Attendance 2) Decorating your trunk

Remember to invite friends and neighbors - and get your trunks opened!!!

More information Ms. Cindy dirce@kingconchurch.org

THE SPIRE

October 2023

**Kingston Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
2610 Kingstown Road
Kingston, RI 02881**

Return Service Requested

Dated Material – Please Deliver Promptly

Mission Statement of the Kingston Congregational Church

**“We are a Christian Church that supports each person's spiritual journey
through the communal pursuit of worship, learning, and service.”**

(Voted on and approved by the Congregation on April 27, 2008)

Worship and Church School

9:30 am

Ministers

All members

Senior Pastor The Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier

Interim Music Director

Eden Casteel

Church School Director

Cindy Dowgiallo

Communications Coordinator

Jillian Seibold

Office Administrator

Shirley M. Schock

Sexton

Andy Cournoyer



Donate

**Don't forget to bring your
canned goods
on October 1st,
Communion Sunday.**

Telephone: (401) 783-5330

Email: office@kingconchurch.org

Web address: www.kingconchurch.org

Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/kingconchurch

**Deadline for November *Spire*
Articles is October 15th.**

**Office Hours: 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Monday - Thursday**