

# The Spire

**F**rom Your Pastor

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January 2021

A blessed and happy New Year to all! 2020 has been quite the year. 2021 promises to bring welcome change on many fronts, not least of which is a COVID19 vaccine and a gradual return to normalcy. But is a return to “normal” what we really need? Yes, we long for a return to familiar and cherished practices and routines: hugging our extended family, shaking hands with friends and neighbors, exchanging (visible) smiles with strangers on the street. But a “return to normal” is only welcome when you’ve been relatively comfortable, connected and have a sense of control over the forces that affect your life. 2020 pulled back the curtain on a few aspects of our “normal” that we do not necessarily want to return to or continue: health care inequities, systemic racism and toxically partisan politics. I believe God is always inviting us to “return.” But rather than a “return to normal,” might we think and pray for a “return to our roots,” a recommitment to what is deepest and best in us, in our world, in the gospel, in our life together?

John the Baptist, whom we encountered early in Advent, returns on the second Sunday of January, the Sunday that Christians remember the baptism of Jesus, and thereby our own. John the Baptist called his people to return, not to normal, but to the root of their faith—their naked reliance on God and lives lived with radical love. “Radical” comes from the Latin “radix,” which means “root, origin, wellspring, fount” (Oxford Dictionary). John the Baptist invited his people, and invites us again on Sunday, January 10, to return to our roots and be reclaimed by the Source of our life and being. Jesus stepped into that water of life, heard the blessing of God over him (“You are my beloved Child with whom I am well pleased”), and emerged ready for ministry. Each time we baptize an infant or a believer, we reclaim that blessing for each other and for ourselves: “You/we are cherished, chosen and called.” That is our radix, our root, the source of the radical love and grace that John—and maybe the fiery immersion of 2020—call us to return to. Not a “return to normal,” but a “return to the real, the radix, the root.” Real love, real justice, real joy.

To help us inaugurate a new year and return to our roots, we’ll be celebrating the baptism of Jesus (along with millions of Christians all around the world) on the second Sunday January, hearing the story of his baptism and renewing our own. To that end, we are giving the congregation **a homework assignment**: we are going to create a video montage of the KCC family renewing its baptism, reclaiming the radical blessing of God: “We are cherished, chosen, and called.”

*So, grab your cell phones and send us a short video of yourself/your family with some water that is meaningful to you—whether it's outside at the beach, by the bird bath, or inside, at your kitchen sink, or near your fish tank. Reflect on how this water reminds you of God's great Spirit, or, tell us how Christ has helped you navigate the waters of your own life. These video clips should be short: 15-30 seconds. We ask that you include the baptismal words of grace: “I am cherished, chosen and called.” Then before midnight on Friday, January 8, go to: <https://share.vidday.com/o-ffffb2s> to submit your video clip. The site will walk you through an easy upload process. Anyone who wants to participate but needs help with the recording, please let myself or Michelle know.*



The KCC Baptismal Font,  
Candle and Cross

Here’s to a new year. Here’s to returning to our roots and reclaiming the radical love of God!

Grace&Peace, Rev. Jan

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

*January's Deacon of the Month is Susan Berman. (susanb99@yahoo.com)*

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## **Sundays in January:**

Epiphany means “revealing” and the season after Epiphany is full of stories of the good news taking root and spreading, sometimes in unexpected ways. We read not only about the beginning of Jesus’ ministry but the call of the first disciples. These weeks before Lent begins invite us to explore our own sense of identity and call to ministry.

Sunday, January 3, 2021—Epiphany Observed: Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12. “Kings shall come to your light...” The Light of Christ draws strangers, foreigners and the wrath of potentates. We’ll close out the Christmas season and the stories of Christ’s nativity with Matthew’s story of the Magi. The Feast of Epiphany celebrates the Light that shines for all the world to see: some seek it, some fear it. *Those who dream persevere.* Holy Communion shared.

Sunday, January 10—The Baptism of Christ: Psalm 29; Genesis 1:1-5; Mark 1:4-11. Water stories. The waters of creation and birth, the waters of flood and storm, the water of baptism. Water is the source of life and identity. We remember the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and his baptism today, and we remember our own, reclaiming that original blessing: “You are my beloved child with who I am well pleased.” Cherished, Chosen and Called.

Sunday, January 17—1 Samuel 3:1-10; John 1:43-51. Origin stories. Samuel is called by God. Philip is called by Jesus. Amazing ministries begin. How is God calling us to listen and follow in this new year? Eli Jesus, the first disciples are unexpected choices. Do we discount our gifts because they’re not what we think is expected? Martin Luther King, Jr Day weekend.

Sunday, January 24—Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20. Fish stories. God calls the most reluctant prophet of all time, Jonah, to speak truth to the Ninevites. Jesus calls Andrew and Peter, James and John to follow him. Their responses couldn’t be more different. What’s the nature of our response to God’s call?

Sunday, January 31—Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Mark 1:21-28. Authorized stories. Who gets to speak for God? God speaks in new ways and through new people. In the UCC, we say, “God is still speaking,” meaning what we know might not be the end of the story. What does it mean to speak a new word to our time and place and yet be faithful to the timeless Word of God?

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

Will be Held in the Fireplace Room & via Zoom  
Following the Worship Service

**Sunday, January 24, 2021**

10:45 a.m.

Frank Lenox, Secretary

**Tentative Agenda**

1. Call to Order Mary Daly, Moderator
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes of Congregational Meeting of October 18, 2020
4. Report of the President Louise Pearson
5. Report of the Treasurer Sharon Davis
6. Reports of Board and Committees
7. Old Business
8. New Business
9. Pastor's Comments & Closing Prayer Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier
10. Adjournment

**October Congregational Meeting  
Kingston Congregational Church, UCC  
Sunday, October 18, 2020**

1. Call to Order by Moderator, Mary Daly (10:45 am)
  - a. 2 handouts: Today's Agenda w/ Minutes from June 14 and Aug 16, 2020; Balance Sheets
  - b. Quorum declared by Moderator (27 people online)
2. Adoption of Agenda
  - a. **Motion** to accept the agenda, **M/S/P**
3. Approval of Minutes of June 14, 2020 Congregational Meeting,
  - a. **Motion** to accept the minutes, with edits **M/S/P**Approval of Minutes of August 16, 2020 Special Meeting,
  - b. **Motion** to accept the minutes, with edits **M/S/P**
4. Report of the President, Louise Pearson

After giving thanks, recognized Rev. Bruce Greer for his work as Interim. Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier moved into her office this week. Several members attended a webinar on how to prepare for a new pastor (What a new pastor needs on Day 1). Hopefully Boards can meet with Jan in small groups to provide relevant information to the minister. 'Card Shower' - send cards to Jan through the church. (well received by the congregation)
5. Report of the Treasurer, Sharon Davis
  - a. Income is off by about \$20k, should be about \$75k. Deposits for Oct have not been deposited (~\$13k)
  - b. Oct 15, applied for 'PPP forgiveness' for the loan received with Shirley
  - c. We have paid our Conference dues this year (RI Assoc. and SNEC)
  - d. **Motion** to accept the report, **M/S/P**
6. Reports of Boards and Committees
  - a. Trustees - Tracy Heffron
    - i. New sign out front, constructed by Doug Kraus, improvements to the Library; parking lot will be seal-coated; boiler/furnace will be serviced this fall; re-opening team will pause until Rev. Jan can provide input
  - b. Re-Opening Team - Bruce Greer,
    - i. Team is in agreement to hear from Rev. Jan before moving forward with Re-opening plans
  - c. Missions - Jim Findlay

- i. Giving to RI Foundation to assist with impact of pandemic; RIF is supporting agencies across RI for this purpose; also contributed to the church sign for BLM movement; Blanket Sunday will be Nov 15, 2020; event at Narragansett sea-wall 'women's movement' (11 - 1pm)
  - d. Deacons – Susan Berman
    - i. Thanks for the Tech group that has live-streamed since our closure; read a letter from Deacons to Rev. Bruce for his energy and experience as interim minister.
  - e. Women's Fellowship – Helen Rowe Drake
    - i. Zoom meeting Monday, join in; no gingerbread houses this year.
  - f. Christian Education – Jean Miller for Rem
    - i. Michelle has been working extensively at her job; thanks to Bruce for the Thursday lectionary group; Adult Ed Book Group - Tired of Apologizing for a Church I Don't Belong To, Lilian Daniels
- 7. Old Business
  - a. none
- 8. New Business
  - a. none
- 9. Pastor's Comments, Rev. Bruce Greer
  - He and Sharon Hope are only a phone call away for any questions that may arise.
  - Closing Prayer - Rev. Bruce Greer

Meeting Adjournment: 11:26 am

**Motion** to adjourn, **M/S/P**

Respectfully submitted,  
Francis Lenox, Secretary

## **Pastoral Relations Committee**

The Pastoral Relations Committee supports and maintains an open relationship between the ordained minister (and sometimes other staff) and members of the congregation. It helps the pastor and members of the church share ideas, hopes, dreams and interpretations of mission. It lets the pastor know what people in the church are thinking. It gives a framework for dealing with conflict creatively.

If you have a comment or concern, consider sharing it with a member of the Committee: Bill Bartels, Sue Davis, Frank Lenox, and Ernie Torres.

## **Board of Trustees**

Andy and the Trustees would like to wish all a very safe and healthy holiday season. KCC is ready for winter with a new snow plow company, gutters cleaned and drains unclogged. Richard Armstrong will be on hand starting in January, so we will be in good hands.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Tracy Heffron  
Chair, Board of Trustees

## **Christian Education - Fire and Water**

by Michelle Girasole

*"Star Light, Star Bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have the wish I wish tonight."* During our recent church school lesson on "the Star of Christmas", one of the kids shared this poem. Later that night, I took my kids, Jessie and Nick, to Beavertail Park in Jamestown to see the meteor shower, and recited it again. What is it about stars that allow us to feel so tiny, yet dream so big?

We laid on the ground in sleeping bags and winter hats, staring up at God's sky, brightly lit by tiny points of light. Every few minutes, we'd see a fireball shoot through the dark and rejoice to witness. We found ourselves getting lost in the magnitude of the scene. From time to time, the sound of the waves washing up against the rocks below reminded us that we were still, in fact, here on earth. We tried to find the North Star, and imagined the three kings eagerly following the Christmas star to meet their new king, a child born in a manger. Stars have always helped sailors find their way across the ocean to their earthly destinations.

This month, we turn our attention from the bright lights of Christmas to Epiphany's star and to the waters that baptized Jesus. We invite each of you to revisit the waters of your own baptism. Parents can tell children the story of how water from a baptismal font washes over us as an infant, or perhaps as an adult, renewing our spirit in Christ. During each baptism in our church, we all renew our own faith, and also pledge to be Christian witnesses for this child, who will grow their own faith, in our midst.

This January, since we cannot be together (yet!) we'd like to invite you to share the meaning of your baptism in a video, so we can create a church-wide video montage. Grab your cell phones and send us a short 15-30 second video of yourself with some water that is meaningful to you - whether it's outside at the beach, by the bird bath, or inside at your kitchen sink. As Rev. Jan wrote, reflect on how this water reminds you that you are "Cherished, Chosen and Called" by God. Or, perhaps how Jesus has helped you navigate the waters of your own life. (For those who need help, we offer to record your message during a Sunday morning coffee Zoom. Please contact us to make arrangements to do so.)

This month, let's all revisit the meaning of our baptism with the same vigor that we celebrate Christmas, and keep the fire of our faith burning bright!

## Our Sealed Time Capsule at KCC

In December 1995, during our 300th anniversary celebration, we prepared a "Time Capsule" to be opened in 100 years. It is located in our basement, under the stairwell between the Sanctuary and the Sunday School Rooms. It is in a cemented tower about 3' high, so any potential flooding in our basement will not destroy the contents. A plaque is secured on the top, addressed to 2095 KCC members, inviting them to open the Capsule in that December. We thought you'd like to know what surprises are in store for them!

Dr. Bill Metz crafted a wooden box to hold the contents, which was tightly fiberglassed closed, then painted with a marine paint. Inside this box, a tight plastic wrap holds the following:

- A. Many candid photographs of our church members, including buildings and grounds
- B. Grocery store flyers showing prices and items available. (Remember Almacs?)
- C. Copies of the Narragansett Times and the Providence Journal
- D. A hymnal we were using at that time
- E. Tapes of sermons (we wonder if these can be heard?) as well as written copies of several sermons
- F. Many newspaper articles of front page issues from 1995 (OJ Simpson trial; Cal Ripkin's trophy; Assassination of Rabin, for ex.)
- G. Hand-stitched quilt details, as the quilt in the library was a birthday gift to KCC that year
- H. Our 1995 pictorial directory
- I. Dr. Metz's book on the history of KCC
- J. A few Sunday morning bulletins
- K. A copy of our 1995 budget in the amount of \$167,352 (which was balanced)
- L. A copy of our annual reports
- M. Two tapes of Sunday services including choirs, organ music, and a baptism
- N. A copy of our tri-centennial cook book which Women's Fellowship compiled and sold
- O. Papers showing historical happenings at our church from early years
- P. Pictures of clothing styles, and automobile styles of 1995, including prices
- Q. New 1995 coins: one penny, nickel, dime, quarter, plus a new dollar bill
- R. Pictures and prices of homes for sale, and mortgage rates
- S. A map of the world and one of the USA
- T. Miscellaneous ditties.

14 babies were baptized in 1995, and we are hoping some or all of them would be around for the opening of the capsule. Their names are: Abbie Allenson, Emily Koolman, Dylan Mairs, Robert Kermes, Marissa McMahon, Nelsie Vincze, Sarah Rand, Alaina Coffey, Kelly Cobden, Melissa Eberly, David Kehoe, Stephanie Wendelschaefer, Rachael Moyer and Douglas Medeiros.

As many things as possible were laminated for better preservation, thanks to Margaret Metz Munroe. Someone at URI suggested putting a small open jar of instant coffee inside the capsule to absorb any moisture that could occur. We hope it works, because we did it.

Respectfully submitted,  
Audrey Hallberg

**200 Years Ago!!!!**  
**An Important Time in the Life of Our Church**  
**Part 11 – January 1821 – the Official Dedication**

1820 – And what a year it was – designing and building the new church, raising funds by selling the pews, working with village residents and those who had been part of the Tower Hill church, hiring a new minister, living in a very active village, and so much more. I end this exciting 200 years ago with a quote from my father William D. Metz' book [The History of the Kingston Congregational Church](#).

On January 17, 1821, the church was formally organized by the public signing of the articles of faith and covenant by the seven who had declared their intent in October 1820. (Rev. Oliver Brown and his wife Hannah, Jeremiah Niles, Hilliard M. Towle, Catherine Helme, Hannah Potter and her daughter Maria Wells) The meeting house itself was dedicated to the worship of God. By these acts, the Presbyterian Church in Little Rest (now the Kingston Congregational Church) became a complete expression of the faith and polity of its members. The ministers from other communities that took part in the exercises were Rev. Daniel Waldo, Rev. Luther Wright, and Rev. Calvin Park, D.D. Rev. Waldo, of course, was well known to the people of the village because of his frequent preaching and administration of communion in the interval after Rev. Kendall left and before Rev. Oliver Brown obtained his ordination. Rev. Waldo had been a chaplain in the Revolution. He served more than seventy years as a minister in the Congregational church, 9 of those in Rhode Island. In December 1856 at age 94, as reported by Rev. Bartlett in 1880, he was elected Chaplain of Congress as the last survivor of the war.

Thank you for participating in this incredible year in the life of our church by reading my monthly history.

Elizabeth McNab