

# The Spire

**F**rom Your Pastor

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September 2020

## From the Interim Pastor – “Passing Through This Liminal Space”

Dear KCC members and friends, congratulations on the election of the Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier as your next settled pastor! Please extend your thanks to the members of the Pastoral Search Committee for a job well done! In the meantime, get ready for a new season!

Beyond the liminal space between settled pastors, congregations also travel through the liminal space between what was and what’s coming. For the etymologists among us, the word “liminal” comes from the Latin root *limen*, which means “threshold.” Liminal space is the threshold between the familiar of the present and the unfamiliar ahead of us. (Thank you, Wikipedia!)

Liminal space is a time of ambiguity, anxiety, disorientation and uncertainty, such as the time between our pre-pandemic life and our post-pandemic life. For now, we wander and worry with inconsistent leadership and a fragmented citizenry; blaming others for our woes and shaming those who disagree with us. We wonder when our “new normal” will come.

Across my career, I have watched congregations decline, even the well-led and well-endowed ones. Congregations are increasingly concerned about balancing budgets and “attracting new members”, whatever that means. Interim ministry now involves shepherding congregations between cultural paradigms, much more than caregiving and placeholding between pastors.

In the liminal season between the old, post-World War II American paradigm, when “everyone” went to church, and the emergent cultural paradigm of recent decades, when church is one of a thousand options, tradition-bound congregations struggle to find their way forward, to clarify who they are and what they are all about. There are more questions than answers.

When leading his first retreat with faculty, a new seminary president announced that the goal of their retreat was to answer one question: “What unique and compelling proposition do you bring to the world?” All weekend they struggled to answer the question. They weren’t the only religion scholars and state of the art practitioners. Who would miss them if they weren’t there?

I ask you the same question as you prepare to partner with a new settled pastor: what unique and compelling proposition do you bring to the world? What’s your vision? What are you here to do? Who do you serve? Are you here to balance budgets or build the Beloved Community? Will November 1<sup>st</sup> be business as usual or the beginning of a journey towards a “new normal”?

May God grant you wisdom and courage for the living of these liminal days!

+ *Blessings, Bruce Greer.*

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

*September's Deacon of the Month is Carolyn Eldridge. (grauntiec@yahoo.com)*

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### **From the Pulpit in September – Rev. Greer's Sermon Topics and Readings**

**September 6<sup>th</sup>** – **“Conflict’s Constant Companion.”** When Jesus said “...where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them”, he was not talking about church coffee hours and pot luck dinners. To prepare, please read Romans 13:8-14 and Matthew 18:15-20.

**September 13<sup>th</sup>** – **“A Painful Challenge for Prayerful People.”** Few things are more challenging than forgiveness. As we observe the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 and endure the most toxic political season since the Civil War, it's time to revisit the topic. To prepare, please read Genesis 50:15-21 and Matthew 18:21-35.

**September 20<sup>th</sup>** – **“A Whale of a Tale.”** Jonah's story is one for the ages, juxtaposing God's grace and love with Jonah's bitterness and hatred. The themes of conflict and forgiveness just won't go away! To prepare, please read Jonah 3:10—4:11 and Matthew 20:1-16.

**September 27<sup>th</sup>** – **“It's Not About Us.”** A colleague of mine used to say that some churches “have a distinguished history of having a distinguished history.” More often than not, such congregations “rust on their laurels.” Philippians 2:1-13 and Matthew 21:23-32 remind us that when it comes to church, it's not about us! Why are we here? Inquiring minds want to know!

## **From the Board of Deacons...**

We are profoundly grateful to all who have worked to keep our beloved community together during challenging times. The Covid-19 global pandemic, with the need for social distancing to prevent the spread, has made clear that the beloved community, not the building, even our cherished 200-year-old building, is the church.

We last worshipped together in our sanctuary on Sunday, March 8, 2020. The following Sunday, thanks to Michelle and to Rev. Sharon, we began livestreaming our Sunday worship services. We have not missed a single Sunday service since. We were together remotely for all the services of Holy Week.

As Rev. Sharon was coming to the end of her time with us, the deacons began a search for a new interim bridge pastor. The Rev. Bruce Greer is the answer to our prayers. He was able to work remotely with the deacons and with the Council. Bruce, who likes us to call him Bruce, became our interim on July 20, 2020, with the agreement to work half time for the remainder of the summer, becoming full time in September. Two days later, at the Council meeting of July 22, the Pastoral Search Committee announced that, after 15 months of prayerful, diligent work, that they had a candidate. The next day, Bruce and the deacons began revising plans for his suddenly brief interim time with us.

Bruce led his first service, livestreamed from our sanctuary, on July 26th. He gave the first of his exquisite sermons, making a seamless transition into our pulpit. We are profoundly grateful to him and look forward to our time with him.

The Rev. Dr. Jan Christine Gregory Charpentier, our chosen candidate, led our livestreamed service on August 16, 2020. Immediately after the service, at a congregational meeting on Zoom, we voted (online and by phone) to confirm her Call.

None of our continuing community worship would have been possible without Michelle Girasole's and Dave Bergeron's unflagging efforts to work with our technology.

## **Board of Trustees**

Painting has been completed on the sanctuary and now the building looks beautiful. And with our dedicated team of volunteers working on the grounds, our church could not look better. Although KCC is closed now, I hope you stop by and see for yourself how nice the building and gardens look.

Tracy Heffron

## **KCC Pastoral Search Committee Welcomes New Pastor at a Luncheon on Candidate Sunday**

By Joyce L. Stevos, Chair of Pastoral Search Committee



Left to Right: Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier, Ron Charpentier, Dick Shaw, Frank Lenox, Cindy Buxton

Sunday, August 16, 2020, was an exciting day as members of the Kingston Congregational Church gathered on Facebook Live and Zoom to see and hear the candidate selected by the Pastoral Search Committee as pastor. About 300 people joined the service online! That does not account for the number that may have had two people on one computer terminal. The weather was very comfortable and as welcoming as the chalk drawing on the pavement outside the church with the welcoming messages from the church school children. Reverend Jan Gregory-Charpentier and her husband Ron Charpentier delighted in those images and captured them as a memory with her cell phone.

After an energizing sermon about Jesus and the “Canaanite woman,” the congregation met formally on Zoom in a meeting moderated by Mary Daly to vote on both the Call Agreement and to accept Rev. Jan Gregory-Charpentier as the full-time pastor of Kingston Congregational Church, UCC. The congregation approved both motions. The Call Agreement was then signed formally by the pastor, the Moderator, the Secretary and the Treasurer. Rev. Jan’s first Sunday service will be on November 1, 2020.

While the congregation deliberated, Andy Cournoyer, our sexton, gave Rev. Jan and Ron a tour of our 3 building facility. A wonderful outcome of this meeting was that Ron and Andy found they had a number of acquaintances in common because Ron is a native of Manville, Rhode Island.

After the meeting, the Pastoral Search Committee hosted a luncheon for Rev. Jan and her husband Ron at the home of Connie Fizzle. For the first time, we met one another in the flesh! This was an anomaly during these pandemic times since all of our prior interactions had been on Zoom or by telephone. Our intention had been to enjoy the luncheon on the patio surrounded by Connie's beautiful garden. Because of rain, we had to enjoy the view with the French doors open.

Rev. Jan and Ron are a couple who are very easy to talk to. Ron enjoyed meandering through the garden as that is one of his joys. They look forward to relocating to a property in the area near the church where they can raise farm animals and have an extensive garden. We will help as needed in the relocation process.

We look forward to our next pandemic challenge, another first! The Installation Service scheduled by the Association and the church. A covenant will be signed with the Association, our new pastor and the church. The installation service celebrates the conclusion of the search process, gives thanks for new pastoral leadership, and welcomes the new pastor to the community, the Association, and the Conference.

## 200 Years Ago!!!

### An Important Time in the Life of Our Church

#### Part 8: It's Happening!

Elizabeth McNab

If you were living in the village of Little Rest 200 years ago (1820) and standing in front of the Court House (now the Kingston Library), you would have seen the walls of the new church go up in July and then on September 23, 1820 been able to watch the steeple being raised – what excitement!

In the spring the building committee had recommended a meeting house of 34 by 48 feet in size with 19 footposts – can you imagine today a building of this size going up so rapidly? 17 men working a total of 849 ½ days of work performed this feat. (See “KCC 200 Years Ago” at <http://www.kingcongchurch.org/about-us/history>)

An 1819 gazetteer described Little Rest as “a small but pleasant village occupying a prospective and interesting site near the center of town, with about 25 dwellings, the courthouse, and a bank.” At least a dozen new buildings were built in the next two decades, including a new academy. Besides our church at least two other buildings that we still know were constructed in 1820. Timothy Peckham, Jr. built a new building in front of his father's tavern to the east of the Courthouse. This became a store and dwelling, the existing Peckham/Robinson house.

In 1819 George Fayerweather II purchased land from James Helme, Jr. and moved his blacksmith shop to the north side of Mooresfield Road in the eastern part of the village. In 1820 he built his new home in the front of the lot (Fayerweather Craft Center is celebrating 200 years of this building). George II and Nancy Rodman Fayerweather's son Solomon was born on December 25, 1820 – a holiday present for his family. In the family tradition for many years, Solomon with brothers George III and William carried on their blacksmith trade in the village.

Solomon, along with other family members became a KCC member (PSPP then) owning his own pew and voting. He became custodian in 1873 and was well known in the community for his longtime service as sexton of the church, which involved in part ringing the church bell that was heard daily in the village. He is buried in KCC's Old Fernwood Cemetery along with about 20 family members.

1820 – a very good year – many good things happened.

Solomon Fayerweather, Blacksmith and Sexton!

“By some sleight-of-hand he occasionally sent the tongue sliding around the bell, causing it to give out a prolonged singing note, not unlike an unusually sweet chime whistle.”

### **When Solomon Rings the Bell** by Anonymous

On the by-gone times in Kingston  
Our memory loves to dwell;  
Those Sabbaths in the days of old,  
When Solomon rang the bell.

A summer visitor once remarked,  
Old Timers like to tell,  
“It was a call to worship,  
When Solomon rang the bell.”

The young men and the maidens,  
The older folk as well,  
Prepared to go to the meetin'  
When Solomon rang the bell.

The weary wayfarer stopped to quench  
His thirst at the village well,  
Perhaps to himself he said a prayer,  
When Solomon rang the bell.

Let us hope when all've finished the journey  
Whose end no man can tell,  
We folk of Old Kingston may gather  
When Solomon rings the bell.