

JULY 2023

ON THE COMMON

Newsletter of Slatersville Congregational Church



A Few Thoughts...

BY REV. KORTE

Hello again Slatersville!

Sunday June 25th was an entirely lay-led service. There will be increased lay participation on Sundays throughout the summer, and all are welcome to participate. I was so pleased that about 30 of you stayed after church last week to discuss this, and what that might look like.

We had a productive council meeting last week, during which we decided to introduce a few new things to our Sunday service. One Part of that will be to introduce a spiritual practice, and sometimes, try it out.

We will also be adding a short and powerful segment to our Sunday service this summer called "Sharing our Faith". Each week a different congregant will share for 2-3 minutes on how SCC has helped strengthen their faith. If you would like to share, please let me know!

On July 9th, we will create the message for our service together! I will meet with those interested at church between 9-9:45am We will experiment with the beautiful practice of Lectio Divina (Holy Reading) together and will draw from your participation the morning's contemplative practice on scripture to create the message for our service from God's flow through the group.

In another article in this newsletter, you will find a description of Lectio Divina and one overview of how it is done (there are many interpretations of how to do it.) It's going to be cool, I promise.

My hope is that this (or another spiritual practice we learn) becomes something you each adopt and do on your own and in groups, especially if you don't already have a regular practice or would like to try something new to get that Spirit flowing.

See you on Sunday!

This Issue:

A Few Thoughts
PAGE 01

What's the Difference?
PAGES 02-03

Missions Moments
PAGES 04

Spotlight: SCC Bellchoir
PAGES 05-06

VBS Update
PAGE 07

Lectio Divina
PAGES 08-09



2023 OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

Jenni Hull, Moderator
Ruth Mills, Clerk
Jean Meo, Financial Clerk
Margaret Hanoian, Treasurer

CHURCH STAFF

Korte Yeo, Bridge Minister
John Staples, Director of Music
Jill Boday, Handbell Choir
Donna Myers, Office Administrator
Hope Paul, Nursery Attendant
Romeo Mendes, Sexton

2023 COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Ruth Mills, Caring
Michell Eskeli, Diaconate
Alma Morin, Hospitality
Bob Meo, Stewardship
Martha Hunt, Music
Rick Stelle, Property
Gretchen Westhoven, Missions
George Briggs, Christian Ed
Bob Meo, Fundraising
Bob Meo, Projects

DIACONATE

Michell Eskeli, Chairperson
Christine Bonas
Marilyn Briggs
Marsha Brodeur
Richard Brodeur
Sandy Gamache
Martha Hunt
Darlene Magaw
April McAllister
Stephen Wowk

What's the Difference?

Bridge, Interim, Designated and Settled Pastors...

BY REV. KORTE

Last month, the search team invited me to extend my time with you from the originally planned 6 weeks to the maximum suggested for UCC bridge ministers, which is six months. I happily accepted and look forward to the extra time with SCC.

Some of you have asked the search team to consider me as a candidate to be your settled pastor. I want to let you know that SCC has been thoughtful, generous and fair to me. I also want you to know that this is not an option for the search team. It warms my heart that this has even been mentioned, but it also makes me think I ought to briefly explain the differences between types of ministers and their roles.

Interim- Serves for a specific, agreed-upon period of time, usually 1-2 years, depending on the seriousness of the issues the congregation is facing. Interims receive training that focuses on guiding congregations through a wide variety of transitions.

A designated minister might serve as long as three years, often because the congregation feels it needs more time to work through issues. Another distinction between designated and interim ministers is that a designated minister can be called as a settled pastor should both the congregation and minister agree. This possibility is discussed before the initial contract is signed.

A bridge minister serves any number of roles on a temporary basis. They might come in to cover sabbaticals, catch up on pastoral care concerns, cover for an illness or a gap in coverage between a departing minister and the newly called minister. (Continued...)





What's the Difference? (Cont.)

All three shorter term roles share the goal of preparing a congregation for their next settled pastor. Interims and Designated pastors also help congregations deal with a wide range of specific issues that need to be resolved before calling a minister in order to give the congregation the best chance possible of forming a healthy, productive relationship with their new leader.

A part of what enables interims and designateds to succeed is the congregation's knowledge that they have specific goals and are there for a finite period of time.

This is obviously a very brief summary, but hopefully that helps.

Korte

You're invited...

The Senior Choir and the Handbell Choir are taking a well deserved break for the summer. That means we need YOU! If you'd like to provide Special Music during our morning Worship Services during the summer, please contact John Staples or Martha Hunt. If you play an instrument or sing why not make a joyful noise unto the Lord? Consider sharing your talents with your church family.





Missions Moment

BY ALISON PEIRCE

One of the joys of being a part of the Missions Committee is being able to help so many worthwhile causes. This month was no exception. We were approached by the church choirs for a matching donation of \$100 to buy food supplies for the making of sandwiches to feed the homeless in Providence. The choirs got together and made over 120 sandwiches. John Staples brought them to Mathewson Street Church, where fruit, granola bars, and other lunch items were added to provide a bag lunch that was then given to the those in need at Kennedy Plaza. We thank John Staples and the choirs for their community spirit and selflessness.



The Missions Committee also voted to continue to help fund the Minister’s Discretionary Fund up to \$500 during 2023. This fund is used to assist members and friends of the congregation and members of the larger community in meeting basic needs and to help those facing emergency situations. The minister has discretionary and confidential use of these funds.

Lastly, in honor of Pride Month, the Missions Committee donated \$500 to Harbor Camps. Located in New Hampshire and founded in 2009 as a nonprofit organization, the Harbor Camps mission is to build confidence, resilience, and community for transgender and non-binary youth and their families through camp experience. The camp hopes to have 140 campers and 20 CITs per session this year with campers from 42 states and 6 countries. In a given summer, Harbor Camps gives out over \$210,000 in assistance from donors like our church so that no one is turned away for financial reasons.





Spotlight: The SCC HandBell Choir

BY JILL BODAY, HANDBELL DIRECTOR

The Slatersville Congregational Handbell Choir has had a busy musical year! In its second full season post-covid, we have been very active in the church's ministry. Our group has a full complement of players, filling out 3 octaves of bells (and occasionally hand chimes!). About half of our players are new to the art of bell ringing, but they have come to the tables ready to give it a try, demonstrating an enthusiasm and motivation to learn, improving every week!

Our goal was to perform monthly during service which we have done, including extra music during holidays. We have collaborated with the Senior Choir, violinist Jessica Calarese, and Rev. Yeo, and we played our first "gig" at Milford High School's Spring Concert in May!



Handbell musicians belong to a national organization called "Handbell Musicians of America." (<https://handbellmusicians.org/>) Its motto is: "Uniting people through a musical art," and includes over 5,000 member ensembles and individuals, including both religious and community-based ensembles. The organization is divided into 12 "areas" throughout the United States. We are in "Area 1" because American handbells started in New England! Margaret (Nichols) Shurcliff is considered to be the "Mother of American Handbell Ringing." Hailing from Boston, MA, "Margaret was passionate about quite a few things: tennis, teaching inner city children, women's suffrage, and bell ringing."

(<https://www.handbellworld.com/articles/phbshurcliff>) In the early 1900s, after returning from a trip to England, where handbell ringing originated, she started the Beacon Hill Ringers in Boston. Handbell ringing became more and more popular throughout New England and eventually the country. In 1937, she began the New England Guild of Handbell Ringers, followed by the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers in 1954, which is now known as Handbell Musicians of America today. Margaret's family home is now the Nichols House Museum, which one can visit in Boston!
<https://www.nicholshousemuseum.org/visit/>

During the last weekend of June, Sally, Martha, Margaret, April and myself ventured to Worcester State University to participate in the Handbell Musicians of America, Area 1 Festival Conference from June 23-25th. This was an opportunity to take workshops and classes to learn specific ringing techniques, music theory concepts, and history of handbells, to name a few. The conference was filled with showcase concerts, rehearsals, roundtable discussions, and social time. We rehearsed handbell pieces with hundreds of other ringers from around New England all in one place!

(Continued...)



Spotlight: The SCC HandBell Choir (Cont.)

Our handbell choir rang with a group called “Tins” which is geared toward choirs that are at the beginning stages of their ringing careers. The other two tiers were “Coppers” (medium level ringers) and “Bronze” (experienced ringers). We also rang with the entire group of 300 or so participants in the “Massed Ringing.” The conference culminated in a final concert on Sunday, June 25, that was open to the public. April said about the conference: “I am just so glad that I was able to go. Even though at the beginning of the conference I felt overwhelmed, I walked away with a sense of wanting to just be better at ringing bells.” We felt that the weekend was educational, challenging, tiring, rewarding, and motivational, all at the same time! Our members said they had a great time and will return to the next one. Martha said, “As we started ringing at the first practice I thought ‘I’m in way over my head.’ But by the final concert I felt like I could hold my own on at least some of the pieces we played. That was a huge accomplishment.” And Sally stated, “The biggest thing I learned this weekend is there’s so much more to learn!” We plan to attend more workshops and conferences in the future and hope more of our members will join us.

Motivated by this conference and our enthusiastic ringers, I am so excited for the future of our handbell choir! We have some great ideas and music planned for the year ahead. We are going to continue to improve our skills, confidence, and musicianship. As Margaret said, “The conference inspired me to take my bell-ringing to the next level.” I’m so proud to direct this group and feel fortunate to have been given this opportunity. I look forward to expanding our handbell choir and hope YOU may consider joining us in the near future!

SCC HandBell Choir Members:

*Joan Bissonnette
Denise Brandenburg
Marilyn Briggs
Teri DeBoise
Sharon Emerick
Jan Goodrich
Margaret Hanoian
Martha Hunt
April McAlister
Alma Morin
Pat Renaud
John Staples
Sally Staples*





OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

...are with Leslie's neighbor, Peggy, who was treated last year for lung cancer. It has returned and only experimental treatments are available at this time.

...are with those dealing with depression and a fear of living.

...are with Alma's son as he is moving, that he will stay healthy and not be too stressed. Also, Alma's cousin is in the hospital in Westerly with broken ribs and her friend John is dealing with health issues.

...are with Skip and Diane Priestley as they mourn the loss of Skip's mother. Prayers also for the whole family that they will experience peace, patience and compassion as they plan her memorial.

...are with Mary's cousin Pete whose cancer has spread. Special prayers are needed for his wife as she is having a difficult time dealing with it.

...are with gratitude that Ruth's great niece had her baby this week via c-section. The baby and his mom are doing fine.

...are with thanksgiving for Tamara's friend in Arizona as they have been approved to adopt their fifth child.

VBS - is ready to roll with a Games Theme this year: "Twists & Turns!"

Please contact Michell Eskeli or the Church office to Register your children or volunteer to help!

Slatersville Congregational Church

Vacation Bible School

It's Back! Save the Date!

July 10-14, 2023
9:00am - 12:00pm
FREE for all participants!!

Scan for our "Interest Form"

KIDS WILL ENJOY A FREE WEEK OF ACTIVITIES, GAMES, AND MUSIC TO LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE IN A NON-DENOMINATIONAL SETTING.

ALSO LOOKING FOR TEEN AND ADULT VOLUNTEERS!

For more information:
www.slatersvillechurch.org
slatersvillechurch@gmail.com

NS Food Pantry for July

The dates for July's pantry are:

Tuesday the 18th @ 5:30pm,
Saturday the 22nd @ 10am,
Tuesday the 25th @ 5:30pm and
Saturday the 29th @ 10am.

We are asking for soup, beans and cereal.



Lectio Divina, also known as “spiritual”, “divine” or “Holy” reading, is an ancient Christian practice, dating back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 3rd century, and while the techniques vary, the focus is the same- engaging scripture not as a text to be learned or studied, but as the Living Word of Christ. You can use any text you like. The New Testament, and parables in particular, are excellent passages.

We will be using Luke 13: 18-19 on July 9th together. Feel free to use that text with the below instructions:

The Four Steps of Lectio Divina

Lectio

(3-6 mins, depending on length and content of reading)

1) Choose a passage. Don't just skim through the passage if you already know the story, but read through and linger on each sentence. Read it a few times and try to notice different words or phrases as they jump out to you. This is the first step, called 'Lectio.'

Meditatio

(Take your time with this section, a good 15 minutes or more. Don't be afraid to let your senses, emotions take you on a journey. Try to not overthink questions or get stuck in thoughts. Try to experience the passage. Try to feel it.)

2) Next, slowly read the scripture again, and take a few minutes to sit and be in that moment. Imagine you are in the story. What does the scene look like? Who are you in the story? What are your senses?

What can you smell or taste? Can you hear anything?

How are the people in the scene feeling?

How do you feel when people speak or act?

Pray through what you experience and let God speak to you. It's a lot more about listening than about talking, and about seeing what God wants to show you.

What is it like to experience Jesus' presence, words, or actions? How do you react? What goes on in your heart? Is there a particular prayer on your heart?

As we place ourselves in this moment, we are in the second step called 'Meditatio.'

Oratio

3) Read through the scripture again, slowly lingering on each verse. Now – that prayer that’s on your heart? It’s time to pray it, to turn it towards God. The emotions and thoughts that have come out of meditation move us into authentic prayer – conversation with God. Your prayer doesn’t have to look any particular way. Share with God whatever is on your heart. If you’re struggling to pray, tell God and ask for help. This is ‘Oratio.’

Contemplatio

4) Finally, reading the scripture one last time, it’s time to contemplate... a heavy word that really just means to sit and listen. Take a few closing minutes to sit with God. What did God show you? What did you say to God?

You might want to have a little notebook handy to jot a thought or two down, as once you get back to the busy-ness of life, thoughts and/or inspirations tend to get lost.

If you like to journal, this would be the ideal time for you.

‘Contemplatio’ is the last step.