

SEPTEMBER 2023

# ON THE COMMON

Newsletter of Slatersville Congregational Church

## A Few Thoughts...

BY REV. KORTE

I'd like to share a few quotes and a few notes from a book I read a while back that I found pretty illuminating called "Managing Transitions." It rang true at the time and only seems to make more sense as time goes on. I wish most of the wisdom in this article was my own.

Bridges writes, "It isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions."

They sound like the same thing, but they're not. Change is situational; a different location or time for worship service, a different worship style, a new minister or a new series of programs. These are largely logistical moves.

But when a dramatic shift is necessary, more than a technical solution is required. When drastic change is needed because something simply doesn't work anymore, change for its own sake isn't going to be enough or likely have the right intention behind it. Technical fixes (adding a Bible study or meditation group, advertisements, activities) might make sense and aren't bad ideas, but transition isn't about technical solutions, it is psychological in nature. The technical fixes without a "Psychic change"- a change in the way we think, act and react to life, primarily through receiving and responding to the Holy spirit- aren't going to stick. "When change happens without transition it's just a rearranging of the chairs."

Ugh...Bridges sounds like me, minus my usual Titanic reference. Getting people through a transition is pivotal if the changes are to have any lasting effect. Worse yet, if you begin a transition and abort it, you find yourself needing to go begin the process again.

According to William Bridges, there are three phases of transition.

1. Letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. The first piece of this is an ending. This is a time when people need help to deal with (sometimes very significant) their sense of loss.
2. Going through a period of liminal space. The old is gone but the new has not yet come into full focus. Kind of like the Kingdom of God, it is both "now" and "not yet". This is a sort of "neutral zone". Critical psychological realignments take place in this phase.

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## A Few Thoughts... (Cont.)

BY REV. KORTE

3. Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. The church develops a new identity, experiences a new energy, and discovers a new sense of purpose as they begin to make the change worthwhile.

This is not a linear process, with crisp breaks in between each phase of transition. Often parts of 2 or even 3 phases may be taking place at once. With a change, you are generally focused on an outcome. You are taking specific actions and you have expectations that those actions will yield certain results. Transition is different, primarily because “the starting point for transition is an ending.”

Situational change and technical solutions hinge on a new thing working, “but psychological transitions (and spiritual transformation) depend on letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place.” Even in good changes, “There are transitions that begin with endings, where you have to let go of something.”

As soon as you understand that transition begins with letting go of something, you are well on your way to a meaningful change. The psychological shift required doesn't happen overnight and we may find ourselves struggling for a time in a state that is not the old or the new but rather a kind of “emotional wilderness.”

Endings are hard but being in the no man's land of “the neutral zone”, as Bridges puts it, can sometimes feel worse. It feels like nothing is happening when you believe it should feel like something is happening. Bridges believes it's important to prepare people and let them know that the neutral zone is a natural part of transition. It is not unusual to feel like something is wrong or that you're not doing everything correctly, but this is part of the transition.

You might be tempted to abort the transition, to change course or abandon the situation, but to do this is to jeopardize the chance of genuine change. If you escape early, you will lose an opportunity to move through a transition period.

Bridges assures us that while the neutral zone is dangerous, it is also full of opportunities. It is the core of the transition process. It is the time when old habits are replaced with new ones that are better adapted to the world

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## A Few Thoughts... (Cont.)

in which the church is trying to “move and live and have its being.”

The last of the three phases is the new beginning. Letting go, repatterning, and making a new beginning work together to make authentic change possible. Together “these three phases reorient people when things are changing all around them.”

“Without them, there may be dust and noise, but when things quiet down and the dust settles, nothing is really different. Most organizations do not thoroughly work through all three phases, they don't pay attention to endings, don't acknowledge the neutral zone or they try to avoid it and don't help people make a fresh beginning. Then they wonder why people have so much difficulty with change.”

Perhaps the most important part of phase one, the ending, is loss. People need to feel able to express their sense of loss and sadness. Whether they've lost a career, a location they loved, or in the case of a church, perhaps the “good old days” when the church celebrated its legacy years and had a vibrant children's ministry, wealth or a packed sanctuary every Sunday.

I remember visiting a church that wanted to “get back” to the “height” of its glory years. Some of the members told me more than once about how delightful it was to be part of the church in that earlier time and place. I was absolutely astonished when I found out that this period of “glory” lasted about 15 years and had ended 35 years before.

3 1/2 decades had passed, almost all of the hundreds of members the church had in that day and age were long gone, yet they had never taken time to grieve and experience the ending of that period of the church's history, thus they were never able to truly move

forward and create new and exciting history. It's important to acknowledge those who came before us, those who created and perpetuated a lovely congregation, but to live in the past is to turn our churches into museums. The past needs to be acknowledged as important and meaningful, but we must not get stuck in the past. We need to let go of it and turn our sights forward.

Another church was proud of its mission work. As I got to know a number of the members, I learned that many of them were involved personally in a wide variety of causes. They were an inspiring bunch that cared about others and lived out the Gospel in their lives.

When I asked for meaningful mission experiences they had with their church, what always came up was a time when they came together as a group and traveled together to assist people devastated by a natural disaster. The only problem was that the event had occurred more than a decade prior. They were involved in caring, meaningful projects, just not together. As I looked more closely at this with increasing confusion, I became aware that there was simply no time for large or committed mission projects. Almost all the energy people put into the church itself was to “keep it going.”

There was a good deal of concern about keeping the doors open, reputation and “legacy.” They worked plenty hard, but most of that work was aimed at keeping the church around into the future. There were few new members (perhaps because people not already part of a church for decades aren't all that interested in perpetuating legacies that have little to do with them) and the members who did find time for service to others (and there was a lot of them) found it easier to do with organizations other than their church. Every church hopes people will join them, and every church hopes to exist long into the future, but I'm not sure every church knows or even thinks about why it is important to God or to the world that they continue to exist as a church.

Pray about that “why”, it's going to make all the difference in the world.



## Join Us For Community Missions Saturday

Giving back to our community is one of the most special attributes of Slatersville Congregational Church. Come join us on Saturday, September 30th for a morning of giving.

Breakfast - First, we will gather at 8:30 AM in Globe Hall for a simple breakfast of coffee and pastries.

Blessing Bags - Then we will work as a team to put together 75 Blessing Bags (see article entitled "Blessing Bags are Back" for more details). This is a great opportunity for students to earn community service hours and interested community members of all ages to give back to those in need.

Annual ShelterWalk in Woonsocket - Once the Blessing Bags are made, we will depart as a group for the ShelterWalk - "Walk a Mile in Their Shoes", which will begin at 800 Clinton Street in Woonsocket. Sign-In is at 10:00 AM and the walk begins at 10:30 AM. Hosted by Community Care Alliance, the walk is just 1 mile this year, so come one, come all and help us support the homeless in our community! The Missions Committee is donating \$500 on behalf of our church, but your personal donations are also welcome.

There will be a sign-up sheet in Globe Hall for Community Missions Saturday. Please sign up for any and all of these special events in the life of our church!

## Blessing Bags are Back!

Our Blessing Bag Ministry will return again on Saturday, September 30th and we need your help! If you're new to our church, a Blessing Bag is a one-gallon plastic bag filled with travel-sized toiletries and non-perishable food items that can be given out to the homeless or to those in shelters to meet their immediate needs.

From now until Wednesday, September 27th, we will be collecting your donated supplies for the Blessing Bags. Then on September 30th, we will gather on Community Missions Saturday and assemble the bags along with an encouragement card, which will then be donated or passed out in the community.

What can you do to help? Between now and September 27th, you can shop for INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED FOOD ITEMS and TRAVEL-SIZED TOILETRIES. Once you have purchased your supplies, you can drop them off at the church. There will be a trunk labeled BLESSING BAGS in Globe Hall. We hope to collect enough supplies to create 75 Blessing Bags. Our congregation is always so generous, and we are looking forward to helping our congregation act in a spirit of giving and kindness through this service project. Thank you so much!

Here are some suggestions for your shopping:

### TRAVEL-SIZED TOILETRIES

Toothbrushes  
Toothpaste/Mouthwash  
Deodorant  
Small Bars of Soap  
Kleenex Packages  
Shampoo/Conditioner  
Combs  
Band-Aids  
Chapstick  
Dental Floss

### INDIVIDUALLY-WRAPPED FOOD ITEMS

Box of Granola bars  
Box of Energy bars  
Box of Trail mix bags  
Tuna/chicken pouches  
Beef jerky  
Raisins  
Fruit cups  
Hard candy  
Plastic forks/spoons



## Spotlight: Prayer at SCC

BY RUTH MILLS

We are often called the church that prays. Strangers used to stop our former pastor as she walked her dog, asking if she was the pastor of that church that prays. Then they would give her a personal request so we could all pray for them.

We're still at it. Every Sunday during our morning worship service we have a time called Joys and Concerns. People share requests, answers to prayer, and moments of joy in their lives. To keep it a time of prayer, we collectively say "Oh Lord, hear us we pray," after each request or joy is made known. You may not be aware, but there is usually someone in the church taking notes so that these requests can be posted on the Prayer Chain. Please be sure to speak clearly and loudly so the note taker can hear you.

The Prayer Chain is an email with a blind copy list that is sent out whenever requests come in. As noted above, the requests made during our services are included. During the week, if a need arises, people can email their requests to [prayer@slatersvillechurch.org](mailto:prayer@slatersvillechurch.org) and it will be forwarded to everyone on that copy list. If you would like to be added to the copy list so that you can receive these emails, please send your email address to [prayer@slatersvillechurch.org](mailto:prayer@slatersvillechurch.org). When you receive a prayer request from the Prayer Chain, please take a moment or many moments to pray for the person making the request.

Note: the blind copy list consists of over a 100 friends and members of our church. It does not go out to the general public. Still, if you are making a request for a friend, please make sure they are okay with it.

We also have a Prayer Shawl Ministry. Our Needles and Pins group knits and crochets blankets. You can see them at the front of the church near the door to Globe Hall.

## Missions Moment

BY ALISON PEIRCE

As we gear back up for the fall, Missions wants to once again support the Annual ShelterWalk in Woonsocket. Hosted by Community Care Alliance, our \$500 donation will help augment the Client Emergency Fund to benefit housing-related crises. The ShelterWalk – Walk a Mile in Their Shoes- will take place on September 30th and will kick off at 10:30 from 800 Clinton Street. Sign in is at 10:00 AM (see article entitled "Community Missions Saturday" for more information). We would love to get a team together from the church to walk this mile together. Look for the sign up in Globe Hall and join us to support those in need in our community.

The heartbreaking devastation from the wildfires in Lahaina prompted us to add an additional donation of \$500 to help with the immediate needs and recovery there. Our donation to Hawaii Community Foundation will support those affected communities through their Maui Strong Fund, providing resources and disaster response and recovery.



## Fundraising News

The North Smithfield Annual Great Pumpkin Festival, the town-wide fundraiser for all civic groups held at the North Smithfield High School field, is fast-approaching on [Saturday, September 16th](#). We need people to help work at our booths on that day any time between 11 AM and 5 PM, and most importantly, people to help make our famous apple dumplings on [Friday, September 15th](#), at the Church.

Sign-up sheets will be available in Globe Hall or speak to Bob Meo (769-9617). We will once again be selling pizza slices as well as our famous apple dumplings and ice cream sundaes!

Opportunities to help:

Great Pumpkin Festival, Saturday, September 16th (anytime between 11 AM- 5 PM)

Apple Dumpling Gang, Friday, September 15th (10 AM – NOONish)

Looking forward to: Trivia Night #3. Coming soon! Watch for date and details!

Thanks to all for your continuing support! Your involvement contributes to the success of our fundraising efforts!

Remember, there is FUN in Fundraising!! Help Make It Happen!!

## Spotlight: Prayer at SCC (Cont.)

BY RUTH MILLS

If you know of someone who would be comforted knowing that we are praying for them, consider giving them a prayer shawl to remind them. Select the one you like best, log it in the notebook there, and have our pastor and fellow congregants pray over it. Then deliver it to the person needing it.

One more thing: we have a Zoom Prayer Group that meets every Wednesday at 8:30 AM. It was started during the Covid shutdown as a way to stay connected to each other and God. While it is a small group, we are quite devoted to this weekly meeting. Part of the beauty of it is that people who have moved away join us too. If you would like to be part of this, please contact the church office with your email address. We will send you the link. Hope to hear from you.

Remember, God listens and God cares. Whisper your prayers in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, and join the church that prays.

## NS Food Pantry for September

The dates for September's pantry are:

Tuesday the 19th @ 5:30pm,  
Saturday the 23rd @ 10am,  
Tuesday the 26th @ 5:30pm and  
Saturday the 30th @ 10am.

We are asking for soup, beans and Tuna





## OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS



...are with Mary Stelle's cousin, Peter and his family as he enters Hospice care.

...are with Kleo's daughter-in-law's mother as she recovers from surgery

...are with Catherine Haley, her doctors and caregivers.

...are with people around the world dealing with disasters, including Hawaii, California, Ukraine, Canada, Washington and the south coast.

...are with for Sharon's sister Linda as she recovers from back surgery.

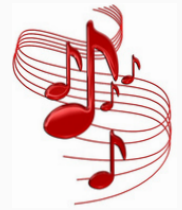
...are with Ruth's nephew, Brian and his wife, Kristen, as the baby they are expecting in November has severe complications.

...are with joy for George and Marilyn Briggs as they recently celebrated 35 years of marriage

...are with Carolyn's friends, John and Jen, as Jen recovers from surgery. They sent a thank you note for the prayer shawl we sent.

...are with the family of Shaun, Carol Fontaine's nephew, as they are still struggling with his loss.

## Music Notes...



### The Choirs Are Back!

Our Bell Choir and Senior Choir are back in September with Rehearsals resuming on Thursday, September 7th.

Both Choirs meets every Thursday for rehearsals (...and fun!) The Bell Choir practice begins at 6:30pm and the Senior Choir meets at 7:30pm.

New members are ALWAYS WELCOME. Just swing by and check things out!

And GUYS ... the Senior Choir could really use some additional male voices this season, so bring your Vocal Chords - and we'll see you on Thursdays!

### Check Out Some Upcoming Concerts!

Sept 10th - "Father Pat" - 3:30pm - St. Joseph Church 1200 Mendon Rd, Woonsocket. \$12.00 at the Door in benefit of St. Joseph's Food Pantry and New Beginnings Soup Kitchen.

Sept 16th - "A Night of Stories and Music with Jonas and Becky Woods." Christ Community Church of Blackstone. Free Will Offering.

Sept 17th - "East Blackstone Quaker Meeting House Service" with Special Music provided by our own Joan Bissonnette - 2pm - 197 Elm ST, Blackstone, MA.

Oct 5th - "Zach Williams: A Hundred Highways Tour", Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Providence