



Crossroads

*News from South Congregational Church
United Church of Christ*

*45 Maple Street, Springfield, MA 01105
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*We are an inclusive community of faith; courageously following Christ;
serving our neighbors in love.*

May 2020



The Season of Easter culminates this year on May 31 with the Day of Pentecost, when the followers of Christ were filled with the Holy Spirit. It has also been referred to as the birthday of the church.

From the Bridge Pastor

Dear South,

It's May! Hard to believe. As you know, we are going to be continuing to worship and "gather" through Zoom and Facebook, phone calls and letter writing, for the foreseeable future. Governor Baker has extended the stay home advisory to May 18th. Beyond that, we will continue to pay attention to what medical professionals are advising about when and how it will be considered safe to gather in person again.

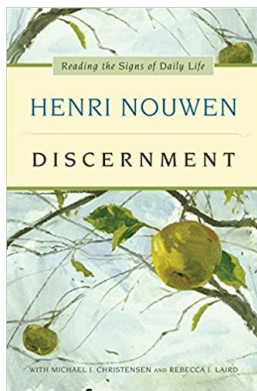
Meanwhile, there has been some surprising blessing in this time of worshipping differently. As one South Church member reflected during Zoom worship last week, there is a way in which we are actually getting to know one another better through Zoom worship. It is amazing to realize how viscerally soothing and joyful is the sound of hearing one another's voice. It is also delightful - for those of us able to use the video technology on Zoom - to see one another in our "natural habitats" of kitchens, living rooms, porches etc.

As you know, my title is "Bridge Pastor". You are in the search process for a Designated Term Minister. My job is to be with you in this in between time, a *bridge* time. This continues to be my job, even with all of the changes that this pandemic brings. Your Search Team (Trea, Betty, Adam, Jill, & Jeanne) continue to prayerfully engage the search and call process on behalf of South.

At the same time, however, the pandemic has changed the quality of our life together in this in between time. As it has already been over a month of physical distancing, and it looks like it will be at least that much longer in this way, I am recognizing my need for some re-framing of how I think about my time with you.

The word that has come up for me is *discernment*.

I am re-framing how I think about the nature of my ministry with you from *bridge ministry* to *discernment ministry*. Thinking of my ministry with you as a discernment ministry helps me - and hopefully us together - to deepen into this who-knows-how-long time.



Henri Nouwen is my go-to teacher on discernment. In *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*, he writes:

Divine guidance can be found in the books we read, the nature we enjoy, the people we meet, and the events we experience. Through the practice of discernment, we can test our calling and find vocation. We can open our hearts to the divine presence. We can discover who we really are. And we can ascertain when to act, when to wait, and when to be led. Spiritual discernment is an ancient Christian practice with many wells of wisdom from which to drink.

There are opportunities in this time, many wells of wisdom. In large part because things are different, we have the opportunity to deepen into discerning what is the heart and breath of God through South. You have been immensely adaptive. Let's continue in this way, to reflect together so that when we move back into shared physical space at some point, we will not be the same as when we left - we will be more spiritually prepared for the risk and adventure of life to come for South.

Grateful for the ways we are connected, gathered in the Spirit, seeking to live out the love and justice of Jesus.

Rev. Lindsey

MAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE (See instructions below for joining Zoom worship services)

All Sundays in May: Zoom worship at 10 a.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson.

To access Sunday Zoom worship: from your phone, dial **1-929-205-6099**. At the prompt, enter access code 975 811 240 followed by the # key. Then enter the password: 041663 and the # key again. From your computer, tablet or smart phone, log on to **zoom.us**. Click on "join a meeting" and enter the access code and password.

There will be a Wednesday Check-in meeting on May 6. Larry will be on vacation for two weeks after that. The access code is **289 850 5499**. Same phone number as above. No password is needed.

Please Pray For

All Health Care Workers, All Essential Workers, First Responders, Police and Fire, the family of Bruce MacRae, Leila Cohen, Timmy Miller, Priscilla Price, Deborah Price, Silvia Walker, Julius Dixon, Jan McDonald, Dick White, Tim Scussel, MaryAnn Scussel, Mike Wright, Rev. Louis Mitchell, Kelleen Weed's friend Jean, Bob Dowd, Jeff Johnson, Jane Closson, Rubin Reyes, Bob Stack, Beverly Lynch, Silvio Vasquez and his family in Venezuela, Peter Nelson, Renee Silva, Pastor Clemmons, Anthony Wysocki, Karen Buske, Don Russell, Roland Fenton, Bert Montagna, Dan Myers, Irene Rappa, Stella Boulware, Shirley McCready, Beryl Kress, Carter Pharo, Ginny Robbins, and John Burris.

A Note from the Editor: You may have received a hard copy of Crossroads in the past but this month you find it came to you by email. During this time of self-isolation, I am able to minimize the time I spend at the church printing, collating, folding and mailing by sending as many copies as possible electronically. Two other advantages: going forward, the hard copies of Crossroads will be printed in black and white, but the electronic versions are still in **color**. This also saves the church money on printer clicks, ink, paper and postage. All of that said, if you prefer your copy the traditional way, email me at lpicard@sococh.org and I'll put you back on the list. - **Larry**

Sharing Our Stories – John Burris

Rebuild, Regrow, Regain: John's Story

The circumstances that lead to amputation are different for each person. For John, the journey was not a gradual one that afforded time to prepare and adjust to the idea.

"I didn't know what I had, I woke up to it," he says, outlining a series of events that nearly took his life and required amputation of his lower legs and both hands.

In [March?]2014, John contracted a virus that spiraled into a life-threatening situation. Hospitalized for pneumonia and bronchitis, sepsis took hold and went haywire. When a person becomes septic, the body is fighting a severe infection. Circulation can be impacted, especially to the extremities. When John awoke from a coma, the tissue in his hands and feet had begun to die and was showing signs of gangrene. Amputation was a necessity.

How does a person begin to process this and move forward?

"You gotta face it, turn around, and be positive again. You have to fight. You have to make it a challenge not a barrier, get out there and get over the speed bumps. You can become the person who used to be strong again. Rebuild, regrow, regain," says John.



Before his amputations, John was a professional dancer and dance teacher. Always on the go, his career depended on physical fitness and he was part of an active community that shared his passion. Anyone who spends just a few minutes talking with him will see that a positive attitude, hunger for exercise, and desire to motivate others fed his soul before and continues to do so today.

"I'm not done yet!" John proclaims.

The Road to Recovery

John's feet were amputated in April of 2014, and his hands a month later. In April of 2015, he had to return to have his legs further amputated at the knee. [Chris Rogers, CP](#), at Prosthetic & Orthotic Solutions, LLC, made John his first pair of prosthetic legs in July of 2015 and they have been working together since then.

Having gone 15 months without the ability to walk, John will always remember the day Chris gave him his first prostheses.

"It was a gift to be on them," he says, and he hasn't stopped putting in the hard work.

Always one to push the limits, he has also realized the importance of setting realistic goals.

"You get injured when you fly too fast," he says with a wink.

The relationship he has with Chris keeps him focused on achieving his goals and then setting new ones. "It's like a journey that never stops. Chris is here because he cares about people. He listens to me and I listen to him. He will do exactly what I need to have happen for me and make it safe for me to go out in this mad world! I think I put gray hair on his head because I'm always asking, 'When is it time for something new?'"

Chris says, "With his prosthetic legs, he has been able to reconnect with the dance world that he loves so much. He is coaching and critiquing students and traveling to competitions. On a recent visit to our office, he had just come from teaching a bride and her father, and the bride and her groom, the dances they will perform at her wedding."

Whenever something needs adjusting, he can count on Chris and the team at Prosthetic & Orthotic Solutions, LLC, to take care of him so his downtime is minimized.

"I just call and they get me in there as soon as possible," he says.

Chris says, "This is hugely important when issues arise that cause discomfort. Skin irritations can happen from time to time, and treating them promptly is essential to limit complications. John experienced this first hand when he developed water blisters on his right leg. Chris and orthotist/prosthetist [Brittany Rhodes](#), our newest team member, redesigned his socket to allow his wound to heal."

Mentoring

John's experience as a coach and openness about his life make him a natural mentor. Not one to shy away from motivating others, he connects with amputees in support groups, both in person and online. He remembers a conversation with a woman in a rehabilitation center who wanted to go back to her choir group but didn't want to be seen with her leg missing.

"I told her, 'People are waiting for you, they are looking for you. You are going to be put back together. Your new leg is going to feel odd at first, but it's also going to be the best thing you've ever done.'"

John also seizes opportunities to educate others who are unfamiliar with amputation and conditions, like sepsis, that can lead to amputation. On a train ride into Boston to see a Red Sox game, he noticed a 4-year-old boy eyeballing him. He could see the wheels turning in the boy's head. Anticipating the questions the boys' father would be asked on the way home, John initiated a conversation with them. By reaching out, John helped put them at ease and likely impacted how that little boy will approach others in the future.

Laughing, John recalls, "The boy said, 'You're really cool! Are you like a robot?' and I joked, 'No, but I do get charged up!'"

Setting Goals

There is a quote that says, "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain." John could not be a more perfect example of this approach to life, having faced a storm few of us will weather.

"There is adaptable equipment to make yourself advance. It can sit there or you can commit yourself to the challenge, achieve, and then do more," he says.

What is John aiming for next? Well, for starters he is researching feet that will help him tap dance again. He wants to ride a bike that has foot brakes, horseback ride, ice skate, and if that's not enough, in a few years he hopes to celebrate his 60th birthday by skydiving!

Benevolence Update



Unfortunately, the Benevolence Team was not able to host the Benevolence Fair this year. Many of the agencies we support have been working to do their best to help members of our community during these difficult times. We know they will appreciate the grants they will receive to continue to improve the lives of many.

Action Centered Tutoring (ACTS)
Baystate Health Foundation
Big Brothers, Big Sisters
The Children's Study Home
Community Music School
Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation
Gardening the Community

The Gray House
Open Pantry
Springfield Boys & Girls Club
Suzuki Talent Education Partnership (STEP)
Valley Eye Radio
Youth Social Educational Training (YSET)

A Message from Loaves and Fishes:

We're all doing okay! We give a BIG THANK YOU to Glen Rossi for volunteering at the kitchen on a daily basis helping us with our take-out meals, Jeanne O'Brien for making many home-made masks, Jared for checking in with us to be sure that we're all okay and Jackie for always responding quickly to our emails. We are so grateful for their assistance during these trying times!



We are so fortunate to be at South Church serving our guests! The take-out meals are working out nicely and we're making sure that the people use the trash cans for the disposal of the take out boxes, etc. Social distancing is a problem in the parking lot. Our little community likes to talk to one another....!

Stay well and safe!

Darleen

Happy May Birthday!



11 Ted Lyman
20 Shawn Ferrari
21 Allen Jack
22 Larry King
22 Marisa Brown-Ludwig
22 Virginia Robbins
30 Roland Fenton

A Condensed May Calendar

- Sundays at 10 a.m. – Zoom worship (see worship schedule on page 3)
- Wednesday, May 6 at 11:30 a.m. – Zoom check-in (see worship schedule)
- Fridays at 5:30 p.m. – Facebook Live services with Rev. Lindsey
- May 8 & 26 at 10:30 a.m. – South Church Cooks
- May 13 – Resource Committee Zoom meeting
- Beginning May 6 – Construction work on the back entryway
- Every day except Wednesday – Loaves & Fishes at noon and 5 p.m.

Director of Music

It may come as no surprise to you that I am new to presenting and performing music on line. I have always kept busy enough with live worship and performances that it was never something I chanced to learn about. So it is that in the past few months I have been strongly encouraged to do some research guided and prodded along by our choir member and sound production expert Meg Pash, who sometimes has to give me a gentle kick, reluctant as I am to enter this new realm.

It turns out that this is uncharted territory for just about everybody, and I saw that in a big way when I watched the Metropolitan Opera “at-home” Gala this past weekend. The normal format for this huge fund-raiser would have been for singers from all over the world to gather at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City to sing popular operatic works with the amazing orchestra in residence there. Well, as you can imagine, that is not what happened this year. Instead, Peter Gelb, the Met general manager, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the music director, hosted the gala from their respective living rooms, introducing singers from around the world who sang their biggest arias from *their* own living rooms and music studios. Some of them had a friend or relative to accompany them on the piano, some sang without accompaniment, and some had a recording of an accompaniment sent to them by the Met for the occasion. After singing, each singer would introduce the next one who might be in a different country or continent. The Met Orchestra and Chorus also performed together using a technique that is growing very popular, with each musician having pre-recorded their own part to be assembled by the music director into a video montage.



The interesting thing was that there were no guarantees that the sound quality would be consistent, or even good, as we were warned in advance by Mr. Gelb. Each performer was at the mercy of the wi-fi capabilities of their particular part of the world, and the sound recording equipment that was available to them. In some cases that was just a smart phone. That said, it was fascinating to watch and listen to.

All of this comes around to how we are presenting music for worship as we all gather at our computers and phones on Sunday mornings. It is a work in progress, and every Sunday we are trying new ways to present music and the spoken word that comes across to you, the listeners, in a clear, consistent manner. It looks like we may be “meeting” this way for some months to come, and my hope is that more choices will become available to us that will help us enhance the look and sound of our worship on line. Until then, I’m thrilled that so many of you are willing to participate in worship every Sunday from your homes. May God continue to grant you good health and safety.

- *Larry*

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Crossroads is the newsletter of South Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Springfield, Massachusetts. Stories and items of Church interest are welcome and are due by the 20th of the month for the next month's issue. Submissions should be sent to Larry Picard at lpicard@sococh.org or by post to his attention at the church address.

South Congregational Church UCC www.sococh.org

A Jesus-centered, Open & Affirming Community