



Crossroads

*News from South Congregational Church
United Church of Christ*

*45 Maple Street, Springfield, MA 01105
(413) 732-0117 www.sococh.org*

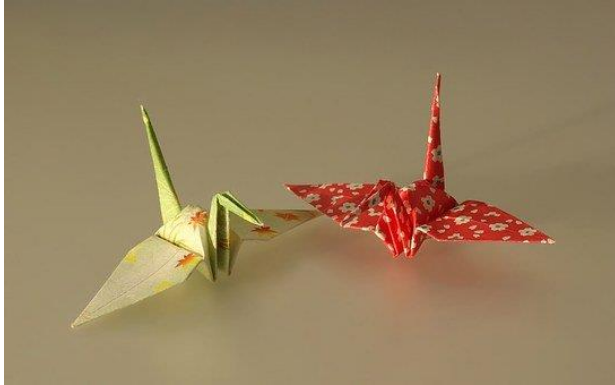
*We are an inclusive community of faith; courageously following Christ;
serving our neighbors in love.*

July 2020



From the Bridge Pastor

The following is a transcription of the sermon delivered by Rev. Lindsey entitled "Hurt and Healing." The underlying scripture lesson was Genesis 21:8-21.



Kim had promised to make a paper crane installation if the pledging numbers reached any number greater than last year. The pledges did not reach this. The disappointment is a real feeling. She wondered whether to just toss the paper cranes she had been folding, near to 500 now I believe... I emailed her quickly back - wait, do not burn the cranes! I wonder if we can figure out a way to transform this message of the low pledging and its disappointments.

South Church pledge numbers are very low relative to the total church budget. You will see this in the budget, if you have not already, which Nick will talk about after worship for those who are interested, and many of you already have a sense of this truth. Kim was promising paper cranes - symbols of healing and hope - as a way to motivate some action in a new direction. With the pledging numbers so low relative to the total church budget it is really quite blunt the fact of how much we at South are living off the labors of our ancestors. We are at a point where and when the financial contribution of the ancestors is sustaining the church **as it has been**, but, the financial giving of the living South congregation is sustaining the church **as it is** - meaning the numbers that we see in pledging would lead South into being a different church, would have to, will have to, when the money from the ancestors is spent.

Maybe this breaking is ok. Maybe this breaking is of the Spirit. Maybe there *is* hope and healing in the hard-to-take in pledge numbers. How so? In their honesty, if we listen. Honest: some of you are unable to give. You are out of cash. You are giving in all dimensions of your life, you are barely getting by paycheck to paycheck or you're on a tight fixed income and you just can't. Okay. Some of you may not give or give much because, while South is a part of your life, it is sort of passive part, not so central. Okay. Honest: some of you choose not to give to South financially. You could, but you opt not to - because, well, because you have reservations about South, because you are not sure you want to put your hard-earned money into *this* pot, because you distrust something in South. You sort of also feel, well they don't really need it.

I would like South to have the courage of Spirit - which brings the willingness to confront ourselves honestly - in reading itself. The budget is one of those places where you can see yourself described. The cranes emerged in Japan as a symbol of healing and hope. Kim was going to make an installation of paper cranes hanging from the great South sanctuary ceiling (somehow). The pledges didn't come in. But I urged Kim not to throw the cranes away. South needs healing and hope. And maybe the budget is one place where we can honestly see that. We have to first accept where we are, even appreciate where we are, in order to be given

into transformation. Root-level change is on the horizon for South - as it is for our country - and these pledge and budget numbers speak in some basic way to that fact. The church as it has been is not working. What if we release the cranes into that fact? The church as it has been is no longer working. What if we release the cranes into that? Fold our honesty into them, fold our gratitude into them, fold our intention into the cranes, symbol of hope and healing fold ourselves into the cranes as we do in our faith, folding our lives into Christ's, acknowledging our need of healing, acknowledging our hope for hope, acknowledging our willingness to go in to the hard of transformation.



This is a time of significance for you, South, as it is for our country. This is a transition, a threshold, a liminal space - a long uncertain territory that both calls us and frightens us with transformation, re-formation, stories of new creation. I want you to be ready and willing to go where God is leading. That is my prayer for you, as it is for me. And readiness starts with some truth telling. There is hurt here within South. There is worry and wear. There is exhaustion and resignation. All of these are in our country, too. And, as there is in our country, there can be calls within the hurt to a root-level healing, which is the great possibility of all thresholds. Faith can hold the hurt; faith can expand us to be healed, to be willing to engage in our healing. And so to have a role in the world as it is now. We have to write each other in, instead of daring each other out, instead of passively living out our days. God has given us life. Life is to be lived, friends.

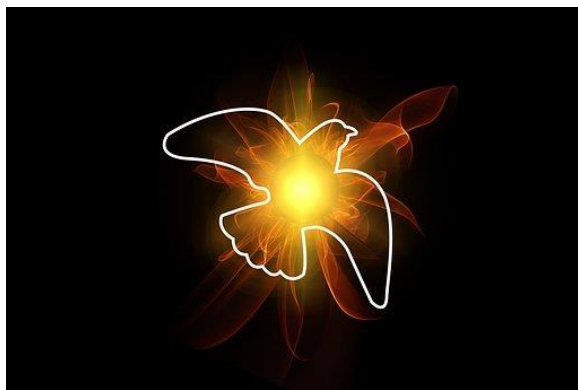
I have questions that I carry in this time of bridge ministry, this time of discernment ministry with you, and they get louder as time goes on, and the arrival of your new minister gets nearer - even while that process remains in process. The questions are these: - Do you have the desire and the capacity to acknowledge the hurt that is here among you? Do you have the desire and the capacity to grieve the loss (all kinds of loss)? Do you have the desire and the capacity to create new ways of being church, informed by the hope of God's resurrection way? Do you have the desire and the capacity to hold one another in a fierce humility that says *we do not know the way but we will figure it out by going, one with another, in trust and in faith?* Your response needs to be honest.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe the Spirit makes ways where we've given up a way being possible. I believe the Spirit has the capacity to rewrite us, to re-being us, individually and collectively - I believe the Spirit is already at work doing this with South. I am overwhelmed by this time in history of which we are all a part - the history happening in the country *and* I am viscerally aware of the calling Spirit in it, calling us to a deeply nourishing new birth. The Spirit is nudging me, she is asking me to find honest words and say them and that is where this sermon comes from. These next few months, years will not be easy. It will be a long labor - if you desire to participate in the birth - for South and for the South that must become/re-become in the new world that is also being born. Death is also near, it is a part of the laboring

always. *Gonna lay down my sword and shield down by the riverside, down by the riverside...* There are things that need to be laid down, that are your swords and shields.

I have heard the narrative - I have said it myself - the dysfunction at South, the “all about the money” / the can’t stick with it / the outside consultants as a bad thing / the issues with authority / the siloed people doing their own things and so on. At some point, this fulfills itself. It becomes the place. Grooved. Magnetized. Stop it. That’s what I really want to say. Stop it. Take a look at yourself with the honesty of the Spirit. Pause. Ask God to help you see yourself with Sacred Humility. None of us knows the way. Not one of us; but South, with Spirit, could make a way by walking it. To do so, South needs to give itself to a new story, or stories. Threshold, liminal spaces, are not about *mere ordinary change* they are for re-formation - as in the taking apart of pieces to re-construct, re-create.

It sounds painful, and well, it is. But we were given life to be alive in. And living takes labor and death and resurrection... there is hurt here. And I’ve been thinking about what to do with that hurt. Imagine if we acknowledge the hurt that walks into these doors and make it part of the being of this church, to recognize the human - fragile, vulnerable, hurt by the world in some way - who comes to us with hope of a healing presence. Imagine if South made it central to its being to be part of that healing presence - a work of soul and body (not budgets). Imagine if we acknowledge the hurt we do to one another, out of our own aches, unvoiced, un-embodied...how it erupts in a Resource Committee meeting or Leadership meeting or Any committee meeting because it doesn’t really want a committee but it wants sacred water, redemption. Imagine if we acknowledged the wounds we have created from not holding one another accountable for our healing, instead letting it play out, act out, in the systems of church, so worn out, so that body called Church itself has lost sense of its agency. Our call is deeper than we imagine and we have not been well prepared to live into it.



But the Spirit makes possible the unfamiliar. Imagine if we start to touch the ground, letting the honesty of where we are teach us, and encode a whole new awareness into our sense of why we exist at all - this church called South - centered not on maintenance but on healing, on truth-bearing, on Spirit listening, on encouraging and on that ongoing labor and freedom that gets written into the DNA of South’s stories and on that ongoing labor and freedom that gets practiced as the culture of

South. It is ok that it feels or will feel immensely hard. As my workout video instructor says, if you are feeling it you’re doing it right, if you are tired you’re doing it right, if you are willing to keep at it, you’re doing it right, it should feel hard. But may it be the hard of labor, not of resignation; the hard of vulnerability not of possession; the hard of giving over to the Spirit, not the hard of gripping so tight to the power you have known. You are God’s and so each end is a beginning.

Sarah and Hagar could have a reunion. Sarah could share about her jealousy and Hagar could fold her arms listening skeptically (as like a black woman to a white woman who says *I'm sorry*) but be willing to be there and to listen and Sarah could continue to show that she is sorry for it all and they could yell at one another and about the whole patriarchy of it and they could cry a whole lot at the hurt of it, the ache of it, and they could yell some more and Hagar could tell how hard it has been but how she has made a way and God has blessed her way. And they could come together - women getting along. They could write a new testament for our Sacred Scriptures... and so could South.

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

All Sundays in July: Zoom worship at 10 a.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson. *Save the date: the worship service on July 26 will include a sermon by our pastoral candidate.*

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.

Wednesday check-in meetings at 11:30 a.m.: The access code is **289 850 5499**. Same phone number as above. No password is needed.

Friday Night Facebook Live: Song and prayer every Friday night at 5:30 p.m. with Rev. Lindsey Peterson on the South Congregational Church Facebook page.

Please pray for: Jo Smith, Merle Olson, Ginny Robbins, Julia and Don Russell, Karen Buske, Gordon Dodge, Winfield Moore, Marjorie Munroe, 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, Jean Steup, 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, Roland Fenton, Bert Montagna, Dan Myers, Irene Rappa, Stella Boulware, Shirley McCready, Beryl Kress, Carter Pharo (Jackie's nephew), and John Burriss. Pray also for the Farming Community, Healthcare Workers, Essential Workers, First Responders, Police and Fire Departments, and all those suffering with Covid-19.

A Condensed July Calendar

- Sundays at 10 a.m. – Zoom worship (see above)
- **Sunday, July 26 at 10 a.m. – Sermon by our Pastoral Candidate**
- Fridays at 5:30 p.m. – Facebook Live services with Rev. Lindsey
- July 10 & 28 at 10:30 a.m. – South Church Cooks
- Every day except Wednesday – Loaves & Fishes at noon and 5 p.m.



We are truly a beacon in the city. This photo by Gordon Dodge shows the recently-installed lighting of the vertical stained-glass windows at the front of the church.

Happy July Birthday!



2 Mark Welch
8 Gordon Dodge
9 Rick Drummond
16 Peggy Caplette
16 Deborah Price
19 Bob Dowd
21 Nicholas Lentino
25 Shirley McCready
26 Emily Bourdeau

Need to contact someone at the church?

Church Office at Jackie's House:

If you need to get in touch with the church office, please note that Jackie continues to work from home during this time. The voicemail is checked on the office phone, but please feel free to call Jackie on her cell phone or text her. Her number is: **413-654-8086** or you can always email her at: secretary@sococh.org

Contact information for Rev. Lindsey:

Rev. Lindsey's email is revlindseypeterson@gmail.com, or you can reach her on her cell phone: **978-430-7531**.

Contact information for Larry:

Larry's email is lpicard@sococh.org, or you can reach him on his cell phone: **413-348-3729**.

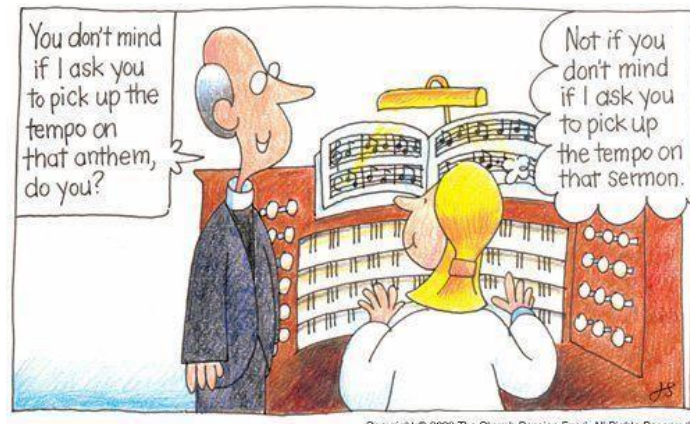


Lani Bortfeld, the director of the STEP Suzuki String program that meets here at South Church, invites you to listen to "String Music to Soothe the Soul," found on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/CongregationalChurchOfSomersville/videos/2301865126787846/?v=2301865126787846>

Director of Music

I think we all need to take a little break to laugh. - Larry



Bulletin Bloopers (musical and otherwise);

- The outreach committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church
- Ushers will eat latecomers
- The third verse of Blessed Assurance will be sung without musical accomplishment
- The Rev. Merriwether spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience
- The pastor will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing, "Break Forth into Joy."
- During the absence of our pastor, we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when J.F. Stubbs supplied our pulpit
- A song fest was held at the Methodist church Wednesday
- Stewardship Offertory: "Jesus Paid It All"
- The music for today's service was all composed by George Friedrich Handel in celebration of the 300th anniversary of his birth
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.
- The concert held in Fellowship Hall was a great success. Special thanks are due to the minister's daughter, who labored all evening at the piano, which as usual fell upon her.
- 22 were present at the church meeting held at the home of Mrs. Marsha Crutchfield last evening. Mrs. Crutchfield and Mrs. Rankin sang a duet, The Lord Knows Why.
- Today's Sermon: HOW MUCH CAN A MAN DRINK? with hymns from a full choir
- Potluck supper: Prayer and medication to follow
- Pastor is on vacation. Massages can be given to church secretary
- Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones
- The choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir

**SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
45 MAPLE STREET
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01105**

Rev. Lindsey Peterson	Bridge Pastor
Larry Picard	Director of Music Ministries
Jacqueline Fredenburgh	Office Manager
Cynthia Lage	Bookkeeper
Jared Spencer	Custodian
Polly Southworth	Sunday School Superintendent

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*