

# The Spire

*A publication of the Original Congregational Church*

**February 2023**



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## WELCOME JUSTIN

Here at the top of the year we are thrilled to formally announce that Justin H. Kisch has been named the new settled Music Director and Organist of the OCC. The organ bench of the historic Original Congregational Church has been open since our previous MDO announced a California relocation to assume the happy duties of being grandfather to the next generation! Justin was first called by Pastor Ken as he appeared on the Rhode Island American Guild of Organists substitute listings.

That first phone call proved fruitful for Justin as a musician and music director, and for the OCC in our search to fill our position. Justin began his duties with us on Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, and quickly filled our need to hire an Interim Organist while we organized ourselves for the permanent search. We want to thank all our musical volunteers who assisted in welcoming Justin, and preparing our most recent musical search which the last time we did was back in 2017.

Coming on board in the fall, Justin joyfully and intently carried us through the Holidays and we were able to rejoice in the starting up of the Chancel Choir, interacting with the children for song, and coordinating with Martha Goodman for our very special advent music Sunday in December. Justin has played for our Senior Lunch, and looks forward to assisting us in our monthly services to Maples and Pond Home. We love to hear the organ so lovingly played and our voices singing in sweet mystic harmonies of the Holy Spirit!

Welcome!

Please see the interview “Just Justin” on pages 3-5 of this Spire for a personal look at Justin.





**The Ladies Breakfast Club**, is meeting on the 2nd & 4th Thursday of the month, and 5th when there is. We meet at 9:30am at the Village Griddle in Plainville. Contact Emmie Foster or Sue Schwarm if you plan to attend.

**The Kitchen Elves**, meet the first Wednesday of each month to prepare and deliver meals to members in need. Preparers and drivers are always welcome.

Rehearsal for choir are Thursday evenings at 7:15pm with Justin Kisch.

*Join Pastor Ken and friends for Bible Study in person and by Zoom, Tuesday mornings at 10am in our beautiful parlor.*

**Lunch Bunch** meets at noon in Fellowship Hall the 3rd Wednesday of each month for a light lunch of soup, sandwich, desserts and beverages. There's always an element of fun with friends.

Rehearsals for Bells are now Thursday evenings at 6:00pm with Martha Goodman

### Highlight Dates

All are welcome! **The SPIRE is available on our website!!**  
Go to the OCC page at [www.occhurch.net](http://www.occhurch.net).

- |             |                                 |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| February 1  | Kitchen Elves                   |
| February 5  | Name Tag Sunday                 |
| February 15 | Lunch Bunch                     |
| February 22 | Ash Wednesday Service<br>7:30pm |

### **“Today’s flower’s are dedicated ....”**

Any given Sunday you can dedicate the altar flowers to anyone in your life. Notify the office of your chosen day and you can make a donation to the Flower Fund, or bring in an arrangement yourself. For further information contact Donna in the office.

### **NEWCOMERS WELCOME**

If you would like to become a member of our church, which affirms your regular participation in our worship life and support of our work and service to the wider community, please be sure to contact Pastor Ken or Donna in the office at anytime. We have a few families and individuals who are interested in being a part of our next service of Reception of New Members. See details at the worship hour and in the worship bulletin. We look forward to growing along with you in your spirit journey!



If you need to contact the office to submit anything for the bulletin or Spire, please e-mail the office at [office@occhurch.net](mailto:office@occhurch.net) or call

the office at 508-384-3110. Every effort is made to accommodate your needs.

Facebook is used for information purposes. Messages are checked randomly and it is not a recommended way to connect for anything important.

Thank you for your cooperation.

**Just Justin**  
**An Interview with Our New Music Director, Justin Kisch**  
**By Barbara Ligon**

**Where did you grow up?**

I lived in White Plains, NY, from birth to age 5 and then in Boston and Milton for most of my school years. My family moved to Rhode Island just before I started college and I have been based there ever since. I currently live in East Providence.

**How did you first get involved in music?**

My parents were always involved in music when I was growing up. My dad was a church organist when I was young. Both my parents play piano, and my mom also plays a little flute and cello. I have lots of memories of singing songs around the piano. My parents were also active in church choirs. I started piano lessons in 2nd grade and started singing in a children's choir at New England Conservatory in 3rd grade. I later sang with the Boston Boy Choir. My little brother plays decent piano, guitar, drums, clarinet, and organ. He is also a paid singer at Grace Episcopal Church in Providence. (For his day job, he is a research assistant for the Sociology Department at Brown.)

**What is your educational background?**

I attended St. Paul's, an Episcopal boarding school in Concord, NH, where I was active in Chorus and Madrigals Singers. For my undergrad, I attended McGill University in Montreal, where I majored in Humanistic Studies and Music. I also began my study of organ and sang with Chamber Singers, University Chorus, and a student-run a cappella group. Several years later, I earned a Master of Music at URI, where I studied Music Education and Piano Performance and sang with several choirs.

**How did you get involved in church music?**

Baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal church, I have sung with church choirs on and off, since I was young. My real introduction to organ (before I started lessons) came from helping my dad when he substituted for our organist: turning pages, pulling out stops, etc. After college, I was hired as music director at the First Congregational Church of Middleboro, MA, in 2005. Since then, I have played at several churches in Rhode Island, including St. Patrick National Catholic Church in Cranston, Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Cumberland, and St. Sebastian Catholic Church in Providence, where I still play on Saturday evenings.

**What other instruments do you play (besides, organ, piano, and voice)?**

I dabble in guitar, ukulele, and recorder. I have a toy accordion, which I have occasionally used for Christmas caroling. In my basement, I have a dulcimer which was given to me by a former choir member. But I'm not ready for prime time on any of those instruments! I had to attempt several other instruments for my music ed degree but decided keyboard and voice are enough!

**What do you do outside of church?**

I teach about 25 piano students, both through the Rhode Island Philharmonic Music School and privately. For the past 6 or 7 years, I have directed music for the spring musical at Seekonk High School. This year it's *Mean Girls*. I'm an honorary member of the Breakwater Blues Band, based in Richmond, RI - I play keyboards with them for a few shows each year. Aside from musical endeavors, I enjoy listening to podcasts, watching movies, going to the beach, and bicycling.

*Continued on the next page*

**What are some highlights of your musical life?**

Singing in the children's chorus for Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus* at Symphony Hall when I was in 5th grade; singing at Boston's Trinity Church with St. Paul's Madrigals Singers; singing the Mozart and Verdi *Requiems* at McGill; recording a 5-song CD with my old rock band, the Flashing Reds; touring Spain with the URI Concert Choir; singing Charpentier's *Midnight Mass* with URI at the La Salette Shrine in Attleboro; concerts with Providence Singers including *Messiah*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem*; directing the music for *The Addams Family* and *Into the Woods* at Seekonk High School.

**What do you remember about your early music teacher(s)?**

Lots. For example, one of my first piano teachers was Geoff Burlison at the Brookline Music School. He encouraged me to compose music and introduced me to everything from Bach to Bartók. I re-connected with him about 10 years ago when he gave a recital at Providence College. Jean Meltaus was my first choir director at the New England Conservatory Children's Chorus. I remember most of the pieces I sang under her tutelage and I still use some of her vocal warm-ups.

**At age 16, what music did you listen to?**

Haha, similar to nowadays: Nirvana, the Beatles, Dave Matthews Band, Phish, Billy Joel, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Les Misérables*, Bach, Dvořák, Beethoven. I managed to incorporate music into several different essays in high school. (I think I tried to compare and contrast Dvořák with Mark Twain in one essay, if you can believe it!)

**If you had NOT made a career of music, what might you have done?**

Not sure. Possibly a high school choir director (so still music-related) or else a writer. Definitely not a doctor like my psychiatrist parents. My brothers and I got much too sick of hearing about their patients around the dinner table!

**What was a favorite book/author when you were a child? Recently enjoyed reads?**

Hard to name just one favorite book from my childhood. "Hansel and Gretel," *Winnie the Pooh*, Roald Dahl, Lewis Carroll were some favorites. I think the most recent book that I read was Michael Lewis's *The Premonition*, about the early stages of the COVID epidemic and how the California Department of Health and the CDC mishandled a lot of the early information. Some of my favorite novelists include John Irving, Kurt Vonnegut, Jonathan Franzen, and John Grisham.

**What high school class did you hate/love? College class hate/love?**

I had a love/hate relationship with most of my high school classes. I liked English and History, but I had trouble keeping up with the workload. In contrast, I didn't love math, but I could usually manage to earn B's, aside from Calculus (my least favorite class). In college, I really enjoyed music history and music theory (most music students prefer their lessons, and they hate the theoretical classes, so I guess I'm just weird). In grad school, to be honest I found a lot of my educational theory classes to be pretty pointless. The more useful classes were the instrumental methods. Even though I didn't build much proficiency on my secondary instruments, I was able to use a lot of what I learned in my later musical career.

**What/Whom do you listen to and how? Spotify? CDs?**

Lately, mostly on Spotify. I still have well over 1000 CDs, and I do listen to them from time to time, but now that I have a paid subscription to Spotify, I only need CDs if I want to listen to Neil Young (who pulled his music from Spotify) or to something really obscure. Nowadays I listen to news and comedy podcasts more than I listen to music, since I have a lot of music in my head already! (A lot of musicians don't listen to that much music purely for pleasure.) When I do listen to music, I go on musical tangents, but my default tends to be grunge rock from the 90s.

**Are you happy in the kitchen? Signature dish? Favorite ethnic food? The perfect meal?**

I'm not a great cook, but I do like to make sort of an omelet or frittata. If I'm feeling fancy, I sometimes make chicken fajitas. I like most ethnic foods: Chinese, Indian, Thai, Middle Eastern, Polish, basically everything.

**What musical are you most apt to be humming?**

Currently *Mean Girls*, since we are in rehearsals for that now. Pastor Ken's sermon today made me think of the song "Where Do You Belong," a swing-style song (ending with a Rockettes-style kick line) about the different cliques in high school.

**What's a great vacation memory? What new destination would you love to visit?**

Another tough one. A great recent memory was viewing the Giant's Causeway (some crazy rock formations on the coast of Northern Ireland) while on vacation with my brother. I enjoy renting bikes for sightseeing, so I've had some great times bicycling with my family in a whole bunch of cities: Chicago, D.C., New York, London, even Kyoto. Someday I'd like to go to Australia.

**What musician is over-rated/under-rated? Why?**

Many musicians are poorly understood. Pachelbel wrote a lot of music besides the Canon in D, but you hardly ever hear it; I play a few of his organ fugues from time to time. And even the Canon was probably not meant to be as schmaltzy as it's usually played nowadays.

Some of Franz Liszt's more introspective piano pieces are pretty underrated: "Nuages gris" and *Consolations*, for example. Certain one-hit wonder rock bands like Hum and Semisonic are underrated. Mendelssohn's organ music is overrated among organists. He wrote a few short organ pieces which I quite like, but I find his longer pieces to be sleep-inducing. A lot of Top 40 Radio is overrated, but some of it can grow on you if you give it a chance. I was skeptical of Dua Lipa's reimagining of Elton John's "Rocket Man" for example, but now I enjoy it if I hear it in the supermarket.

**Biggest surprise about the OCC?**

A few things. I'm still amazed by the size of our complex of buildings. I'm constantly amazed when I discover more choral music, hidden away in various corners of the choir room and the robing room. And I'm pleasantly surprised with the warm welcome I continue to receive from the congregation, choir, and staff.





### THANK YOU TO JOYCE LONG

On Sunday, January 29th, at our Annual Meeting, we give thanks for Joyce Long, who is completing nearly 20 years of service to the church as our Collector. Joyce's has displayed dedication, commitment and care for our offerings, gifts and record keeping over these years, which include 1000 Sundays and processing nearly \$5,000,000 (give or take) in funds.

We are so grateful for both Joyce and Jerry Long as they give of their faith to the OCC Family.

May God Bless you on your new journeys..

Sue and I had lunch with Marge and Sharon Kellner today. Marge is very busy playing organ at a small Episcopal church in Clearwater, directs a singing choir of five ladies and one man (the youngest is 74), and a small bell choir. She plays flute in a community band and enjoys attending the local symphony orchestra.

Sharon is doing well after surgery and looking forward to getting back to work.

They both send their love and greetings to the OCC family.



### The OCC SPRING YARD SALE – SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023

The Original Congregational Church of Wrentham Spring Yard Sale will be held on May 13, 2023 from 8 am to 12 noon.

**MANY DONATIONS ARE NEEDED** to fill up our Attic Treasures area! We are accepting donations from both members and the community so tell your friends. Items may be dropped off in the Vestry or on the bench outside the office starting February 1. Office hours are Tuesday – Friday 9 -3.

**We do not accept clothes, books that are not in pristine condition, TVs, computers, large stereos, large furniture, baby furniture, car seats or strollers**



Submitted by Barbara Ligon..

Who Is That (Masked or Unmasked) Person?

No, it's definitely not the Lone Ranger.

Very few people today even remember the Lone Ranger, his horse Silver, and his sidekick Tonto. But it is not unusual for people in the OCC congregation to not know or to forget the names of other churchgoers. And for people new to our church, people who bravely attend a church service in our beautiful sanctuary, we provide no clues to our identities. Even if or when we DO introduce ourselves to newcomers, how is a visitor to remember the names of eight friendly people?

Thus, February 5<sup>th</sup> will be The Return of the Name Tag Sunday. On the ten Sundays from February 5 until and including Easter Sunday, April 9, churchgoers will pick up a disposable sticker name tag from a basket on a small table by the front stairs to the sanctuary. Using pens provided, they will write their names on these stickers AND answer a silly "About me" question, a question which shall change each of these ten Sundays. Example:

Q: *name and favorite ice cream flavor?*

A: ETHEL SNODGRASS/ BUTTER PECAN

The silly questions might be conversation starters. Ushers can gently remind people to fill out these name tags, but no one will be ostracized or excommunicated for not doing so.

On April 16, printed name tags for church members will be available on Felt Board #1 near the sanctuary stairs. Felt Board #2 will be in Fellowship Hall; printed name tags can be replaced there after coffee hour. If church attendees do not attend coffee hour, they can replace their name tags on Felt Board #1. (During the week name tags from FB#2 will miraculously move to FB#1.)

Printed name tags will slip into plastic holders. Three styles of holders will be available on April 16: pins, clips, or "necklaces."

And what about the newcomers? Ushers will encourage visitors to fill out sticker name tags from a basket near the front sanctuary stairs. There will also be a "sign me up for a printed name tag" sheet near this basket.

Names are important. They establish identity. They proclaim individuality. We at the OCC consider ourselves welcoming. Name tags will be palpable proof of the importance of welcoming and knowing those in our midst. When someone calls you by name, you are recognized. You are someone. You are significant. Even without masks, no one at the OCC should feel like a lone ranger.



### **GROW THE OCC!**

Since the beginning of the pandemic shutdowns, we all have been worried about not just the OCC, but really about every institution that is in our lives, and businesses and worthwhile organizations too. It's hard to find a work force these days. Sociologists call it "The Big Resignation." But for the church, maybe we think of this in positive, not negative terms. If more and more folks have left full time employment?. Perhaps they are just waiting to receive an invitation? The OCC Council

added to our constant comments in church life: "Grow the Church." How then shall we grow? True a seed has a genetic disposition to be what it has been made to be—a pumpkin seed generally bears pumpkins for example. But a garden can be sown with different seeds in different seasons for maximum yield with less effort. Don't try to grow a tomato in mid-winter without expensive heat, light, or greenhouses. Maybe, just maybe, we contain the seeds inside us that has what it takes to grow a beautiful garden. It could be humble. It could be sweet. It could be productive. It could be a place to rest and enjoy all God's gifts of the Spirit. Take a moment to reflect on what resources you have to grow the church. Take stock of your schedule. Is there room to grow a little garden that has not yet seen the light of Spring and Summer? Be on the look out for invitations to join the conversation. And remember, the most vital resource we have is a living God who in covenant, in a loving relationship with us and creation, will provide the growth, we just need to provide the time.

With the Spirit to guide us, let us plant the seeds of growth all Spring long and see what happens!

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO REV. CAROL**

At the end of the year, the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ has named our own Rev. Carol Steinbrecher to serve as the Area Conference Minister for the North Central Region.

Area ministers are hired by the local associations to serve the churches and pastors in that region with support, inspiration, and guidance in all ecclesiastical matters. Since 1692 when the local association of the Church of Christ in the New England Way of congregationalism authorized our church in Wrentham, we have been full supporters, volunteers, and participants in the wider work of the church in our denomination, now, nation wide. It is a distinction for us to have Rev. Carol, a faithful leader and servant of the OCC, now be called to serve the wider association in area staff ministry. Our iconic oil portrait of Rev. Elisha Fiske located in the parlor, reminds us of a previous time, in which he faithfully served what was then called "The Mendon Association" (think locations reachable by horse and carriage) and specialized in education, not just religious education, but public education for all students. We look forward to the occasion we might reconnect with Rev. Carol as she assumes her duties to serve the hundred+ churches that make up the current North Central Region. To view the full article look up Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ "Two New Associate Conference Ministers Named" November 29, 2022.



THE ORIGINAL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH

1 East Street  
P.O. Box 657  
Wrentham, MA  
02093

Live  
Sunday Mornings  
at 10:00am

We're on the web  
www.  
occhurch.net



Dear Friends in Faith!

A new year is well underway, and we are in it!

In conversation with colleagues in other churches, all of us, I assure you, are feeling the post-pandemic blues. Church life is harder than it was in 2019. Really! And, as you may often hear me at meetings, bible studies and from the pulpit, I don't like to use the negative group think that "everything is going down the tubes." Show me a time in world history when there was an absence of war, violence, famine, disease and darkness. This is the stuff of the human condition into which we are born, and that our faith calls us to go out and serve.

At the time of our Annual Meeting **January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023**, I like to review the passage in Matthew 9:35 where it says, "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers in the harvest.'"

We point out that the disciples were counted as 12 in number. That is a small group to cover an area the size of New Jersey. How could they possibly even begin to undertake such a great task? Jesus says, "Pray." "Pray that the Lord of the Harvest send out the Laborers." That's me, you, us, everybody. Martin Luther King, Jr. encouraged the people downtrodden by the immensity of the work for Civil Rights, "everyone can serve." We don't need to be experts. We don't need to know it all. We don't need to be exceptionally talented. We don't even need to be "Holier Than Thou" and best that we are not!

We all can serve.

We all can be God's Labor Force.

This year, 2023 is the year of activating the great gift we have at the OCC: love. We love this place. We love each other. We love God. And love that comes from God sends us out to do amazing things. So, it begins with prayer Jesus shows us. God listens to those who ask for compassion. Compassion is given. In worship this year, we shall add a line under our Commissioning and Connecting to ask God to Send Out the Laborers.

We have been given a great gift to be a part of the OCC, the Church of Christ in this place, and the harvest is plentiful. Let us proclaim with praise, and serve with joy!

***Lord of the Harvest, send us out in courage to care and resiliency to serve in 2023! May the seeds you sow in our souls bring out the blossoms of a new garden not yet realized!!!!***

Love,  
Pastor Ken



## **THE SEASON OF LENT BEGINS**

**Ash Wednesday, February 22nd at 7:30pm.**

A special service with the distribution of Ashes,  
Holy Communion and prayers as we invite one another to observe the Season of Lent.

7:30pm

All are welcome.

