The Spire

From Your Pastor

December 2007

ADVENT: Standing on Holy Ground

I attended a lecture titled *"Sacred Sites: An American Indian Perspective."* The speaker was the consultant to PBS and to Hollywood on Native Americans, and also a recipient of awards like the Cheyenne Indian of the Year and National American Indian Woman of the Year. She spoke about how there are sacred places to Indian tribes. These are places with a special history to the tribe, a spiritual history.

The most sacred of places are where Indians believe they were created or where they received a special message or insight. The greatest joy for the Indian is to dance at a sacred place. A tribal member explained to me that each time the Indian dances, with each step of each foot he first touches the earth very gently… just taps it… to signify a recognition that the earth is sacred. Then he puts his whole foot down. Each step begins with a touch. Tap. Step. Tap. Step. And so on.

At the lecture, I asked the Native American scholar *What makes a place sacred?* She answered that a place, thing, or time becomes sacred because someone has made it so. Something becomes holy because it was treated as holy by another or by a group of others or by God.

I invite you to make holy the season of Advent, which begins December 2 as it leads up to the celebration of Christ's birth on Christmas. Stop worrying that others make Christmas commercial or dripping in sentimentality. You can't do anything about that, but in your own personal life, you can choose to treat Advent as sacred, make it a holy time and nobody can take that away from you. Our choir sings a beautiful anthem titled *"Standing on Holy Ground."* Every morning of Advent, start your day with a tap and a step. Tell yourself that by your prayerful attitude, you are standing on holy ground. Make Advent holy.

John Zehring

Welcome *to new visitors and to old friends.* ***Welcome*** *to grandparents, to mothers, fathers, single people and children.* ***Welcome*** *to people of all colors, cultures, abilities, and sexual orientation, to young and old, to believers and questioners, and welcome to questioning believers.* ***Welcome*** *to all who have no church home, need strength, want to follow Christ, have doubts, or do not believe. We joyfully and unconditionally welcome you. We hope you find peace and inspiration in our service.* ***YOU are welcome here!***

(Voted on and approved by the congregation January 28, 2007)

Baptism:

Timothy John Menard Parents: William and Rebecca Menard November 4, 2007

December Sundays and Christmas Services

December 2 First Sunday of Advent: Hope candle. Message: *Go up to the mountain.* Communion. Advent Workshop.

December 9 Second Sunday of Advent: Peace candle. Message: *Ten tips to get peace in your life.* Sermon Talk-back following worship.

December 16 Third Sunday of Advent: Joy candle. Message: *Missing the moment.*

December 23 Christmas Sunday: Love candle. Family Sunday: No Church School. Message: *To you is born this day…* No announcements today.

December 24 7 p.m. Christmas Eve Family Service. Pageant. Lessons and Carols.

December 24 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Communion Candlelight Service. Message: *He came to bring you enough.*

December 30 Casual Sunday. Relax: wear comfortable clothes, attend a brief worship service, and stay after for coffee and refreshments. Kevin Munroe preaching. Message: *Follow the Magi, Follow the Star*

December's Deacon of the Month is Frank Lenox.

2007 Autumnal Meeting

The Autumnal Meeting at Kingston Congregational was a great success. Thankfully the inclement weather didn't deter many people. There were 125 attendees with 26 churches represented. Kingston Congregational looked great. Rev. John Zehring and the clergy of the RI Conference put on an inspirational worship. The volunteers were amazing and kept everything wonderfully organized. They not only kept our cars from being ticketed, they also put on a lovely "breakfast" and a delicious lunch. The keynote speakers did a terrific job. The workshops by Susan, Florence and Seekonk Congregational went very well. We would like to thank everyone that took part in Autumnal Meeting - we couldn't have done it without all of you!

(an excerpt from the RI UCC weekly e-mail newsletter)

Silent Auction is a Huge Success!

On Sunday November 4, 2007 Kingston Congregational Church hosted a fund raising event held in the "Fellowship Hall" next to the church sanctuary.

The attendance was nearly 250 people! We raised $9,500.00 with more still coming in!

This was a fantastic time that offered many gifts for sale, raffle tickets for baskets and an incredible selection of items to bid on. The participation was really wonderful to have an event where so many people could get together and have fun!

Thank you so much to all who donated items to the auction. Your gifts filled our Fellowship Hall with spectacular opportunities! Art work, Vacations, Oriental Rug, a Sail Boat, Gift Baskets! And so much more! Wow!

A Huge Thank You to:

Nancy Tortolani who printed all the auction information and kept a detailed accounting of all items along with helping with the design and execution of the set-up.

A great team who came together and worked hard to make this event a success. Those individuals provided all the ingredients needed to make the day a perfect one!

Nancy Barth, Connie Pike, Jim Ross, Carol Mackenzie, Ann Lenox, JoAnna Burkhardt, Michael Wakefield, Marcus Ferrelli, Elizabeth McNab, Amy Hubertus and Meredith soon to be Meredith Foss!

*Special thank you to a super office secretary Shirley Schock who helped with all the notices, mailings and e-mails.

I look forward to enjoying the holiday season with so many friends!
Mark Tortolani

The Christian Family Life Committee
Announces the Kingston Congregational

Advent Workshop

Sunday, December 2, 2007
After Worship Service
KCC Fellowship Hall

Activities

Crèche Figure Painting
Stamped Metal Ornaments
Bead Ornaments
Cookie Decorating
Pine Cone Bird Feeders
Advent Wreaths – bring clippers

Note: there is a $10.00 charge for Advent Wreath supplies.

Casserole Crew

The coordinator of the Casserole Crew has been instrumental in connecting the able-bodied chefs of our church with those who are having difficulty finding the time or energy to prepare a meal. The coordinator simply contacts members of the 'crew' to prepare and deliver a meal for named members. If you are interested in helping with this position, please contact a member of the Board of Deacons.

Librarian Needed

The church library, located behind the sanctuary, needs a librarian to shelve returned books, sort through donations, and answer any questions from the congregation. If you are interested in this position, please contact a member of the Board of Deacons.

Peace and Justice Task Force

The Peace and Justice Task Force would like to update the congregation regarding the Pastoral Letter on the Iraq War. Over 60,000 names were collected on the petition, which was delivered by Rev. John H. Thomas, the UCC's general minister, and Rev. Linda Jaramillo, executive minister for Justice and Witness ministries to representatives of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and House Minority Leader John A. Boehner. Unfortunately, requests for a meeting with the public liason's office in the White House to hand deliver the petitions were denied. Speaking to a group of clergy and laypersons who had gathered in D.C., Thomas said, "This, for us, is a very meaningful witness of the whole church." Rev. Thomas and Jaramillo were arrested for refusing to leave a no-protest zone near the White House gate. They were later released and fined $100 each.

The Tradition of Giving

Dear KCC Member,

Christmas has been a season of traditions for me throughout my entire life. It has been one of celebrating with family, going to church, enjoying pageants full of kings and angels, and helping those in need. We all have Christmas traditions of one kind or another. Mine was built on having Christmas in Kingston on Christmas Eve so that we could drive to Leominster, Massachusetts that night to have Christmas Day with my mother's parents and family. That tradition of celebrating Christmas on Christmas Eve has "stuck" to this day even though the trip to Massachusetts ended years ago. New traditions merged into the old tradition. It worked to keep the Metz Christmas celebration on Christmas Eve so that the Munroe family could celebrate together on Christmas Day. Now with Kileen and Scott married with children the traditions have to change. We have to add Baltimore and Blue Bell, Pennsylvania into the equation. But that is all right as long as we are with those we love, celebrating the birth of Christ and giving to those in need. Some traditions will change while some stay the same.

The Christmas Offering with our dedicated mission work is a tradition. The mission groups we give our offering to may change from year to year, but the tradition of helping people is just as healthy and strong as ever. We surveyed the congregation in October of this year and asked them where they wanted their mission money to go. They rated 10 state, local and international mission opportunities indicating low interest to high interest. This information provided us with your interest in particular missions. We want the mission work to be YOUR TRADITION.

We will use our tradition of sharing the Christmas Offering between three organizations. Then we look at the categories of state, local and international communities while choosing <u>your top choices</u>. We will be giving to: Rhode Island Food Bank, Jonnycake Center, and Heifer. You showed intense interest in supporting the Rhode Island Food Bank. Sixty percent of the congregation rated the RI Food Bank with high interest. Coincidentally the Jonnycake Center was the second highly rated organization with almost a 50% high rating. The highest rated international organization was Heifer. This information is so valuable to us. It will help us as we shape our programs for the future with education and requests. We want to thank all those who participated in the survey. We hope that you will generously support the Christmas Offering tradition at the Kingston Congregational Church. The tradition of giving to others in need has always been such a powerful part of our church. It is a wonderful thing at a wonderful time of the year. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Our very best to all of you,
Margaret C. Munroe, member of Board of Mission

P.S. The Christmas Offering – A Christmas Tradition Forever

The Jonnycake Center

On Sunday, December 16th Susan Gustaitis will come for a Mission Moment to tell us about the Jonnycake Center. The Jonnycake Center is our local South County food bank. They provide holiday food baskets, toys at Christmas, a summer "farmer's market," summer feeding program for school age children, discount toys, household items and clothing, and other services to those in need in our community. Susan will be available after the service, during coffee hour, to answer questions and give us more information.

Santa's Workshop 2007
South Providence Neighborhood Ministries
December 16 – 20

CHRISTMAS GIFTS, HATS AND GLOVES ARE NEEDED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, especially teens. Please bring them to church by December 16th.

If you can help at S. P. N. M., please call Grace at 461-7509, x108 to sign up for a specific time.

Sunday, December 16	12:00 pm – 3:00 pm	**Drop off and set up**
Monday, December 17	9:30 am – 12 pm; 1–3 pm	**Sort and set up**
	5:30 – 8:00 pm	**Distribution**
Tuesday, December 18	9:00 am – 12:00 pm	**Distribution and restock**
	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	**Distribution**
Wednesday, December 19	9:30 am – 12:00 pm	**Distribution and restock**
	5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	**Distribution and restock**
Thursday, December 20	9:00 am – 12:00 pm	**Pack up and clean up**

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

A NOTE OF THANKS

Many thanks for the very generous response to our Annual Fall Appeal Letter to the women of KCC. $2,468 has been received from 73 women!! We are pleased and grateful that again in January these dollars will enable us to fund our customary annual donations to local service organizations.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

This will be on Friday, December 14th, at 6:00 p.m.
See insert for details.

CHRISTMAS SALE

The sale will be on Sunday, December 9th, before and after the service. This year we will also include "Cookies by the Pound" along with our usual handcrafted and baked items.

Men's Fellowship

Ideas for 2008 Activities

At a recent meeting of the planning group, the following suggestions were put forward as possible activities for the Men's Fellowship in 2008:

Major Activities

Retreat at Irons Homestead
Travel to Block Island or Museums

Saturday Seminars – Topics

Financial, Political (local), Spiritual (prayer life), Social Justice, Life Stressors, Cooking

Sports

Golf, Bowling, Hiking, Bird(watch)ing
URI away (and home) Women's (and Men's) Basketball

On-going Activities

Men's Breakfast, USDA Wildlife Refuge Assistance

Hands-on Activities (may require using tools)

Blue Jean Sunday and other Projects for Trustees

Do you have other Ideas or Suggestions?
Contact: Gary Harlow (2008 Men's Fellowship Coordinator)
gary.harlow@yahoo.com or 295-2747
for the Men's Fellowship Planning Group:
Tom Brillat, Tom Butcher, Marc Ferrelli, Frank Lenox, Jim Ross

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

The Advent season has begun. As we await the birth of the Christ Child, our thoughts turn to those children whose lives may not be so joyful during this holy time. The children of our Church School have again set up a **"Mitten Tree"** in the Fellowship Hall. We are asking the children to decorate the tree with **new hats, scarves and gloves**, and to provide **unwrapped toys** to go under the tree. The adults of the church are welcome to help as well! All donations will be given to South Providence Neighborhood Ministries.

And speaking of Christmas. . .

The Christmas Eve Pageant is right around the corner, and I can always use help "backstage" to help the children with costumes, cues, and questions during the 4:00 pm service. If you can help, please contact Joanne.

CHURCH SCHOOL REGISTRATION ON LINE!!!!

Good news for those who have not yet registered their children for church school this year! You can now fill out a registration form on-line at the church's web site, kingcongchurch.org .

Welcome to Kingston Congregational's Junior High Fellowship

A new group is forming and if you are in grades 5-8 we hope you will join! We plan to come together for both community service and social activities. If you are interested in joining or would just like to find out more information,
please contact either
Beth Larimer at constructionsolutions@msn.com
or Sue Buntz at sbuntz@cox.net

We look forward to hearing from you.

The Kingston Congregational Church

Anyone who would like to give a Christmas Poinsettia in memory of a loved one is requested to complete this form.
Please return the form with your payment to the church office or place in the collection plate by December 9th.

The cost per Poinsettia is $15.00.

I would like to purchase _____ poinsettias at $15.00 each for a total amount of $_____.

Given by _____Date_____

Please choose one sentiment per poinsettia:

"In memory of _____

_____"

or

"In thanksgiving of _____

_____"

or

"In celebration of _____

_____"

Please check one:

☐ *I would like to take my poinsettia following the last service on Christmas Eve.*

☐ *I would like to pick up my poinsettia on the Tuesday following Christmas.*

☐ *I would like to donate my poinsettia to a shut-in.*