The Spire

From Your Pastor

December 2008

Carry your own light with you

In a store, I mentioned to the cashier how the ominous gray clouds looked like they were bringing the snows of winter. *"O good,"* she said. *"I love snow. I can't wait."*

Me too… most of the time and especially at the first winter snow. I look forward to every change of season. One of our Christmas hymns sounds like it takes the opposite point of view: *"In the bleak midwinter,"* wrote Christina Rossetti, *"frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone."* Bleak. Midwinter. Moan. Groan. I suppose it's all how you look at it.

Stephen Covey described proactive people in his Seven Habits of Highly Effective People:

> *Reactive people are often affected by their physical environment. If the weather is good, they feel good. If it isn't, it affects their attitude and their performance. Proactive people can carry their own weather with them. Whether it rains or shines makes no difference to them.*

Proactive people can carry their own weather with them. It could be said that people of faith can carry their own light with them. The midwinter may turn bleak outside, but within them burns a candle of inner light. The times, like the current economic crisis with its harmful loss and dashed dreams to so many, also appear bleak, but people of faith can carry the light of the world within them. In bleak times, people of the light can say to God in prayer that *MY times are in Your hand.*

We are people of the light. In lieu of a Christmas story, the Gospel of John tells about the coming of the Word of God into the world:

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it…
The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Therein lies our hope, peace, love and joy – the beloved old familiar words of Advent. His light enlightens you. Then, no matter what the darkness, you carry your own light with you.

So too did Christina Rossetti, bleak winter notwithstanding. The fourth verse of her hymn provided the world with one of the most beautiful children's poems:

What can I offer, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
If I were a wise one, I would do my part;
but what can I offer: all my heart.

Whatever the weather this December and whatever the times may bring,
carry your own weather with you, carry the inner light within you, and
even while the media reports that people are giving less this year, consider what you desire to offer Him that is worthy.

– Pastor 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)

Sundays and Christmas Holy Days in December

December 7 Message: *Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace to some*.
Communion. Second Sunday of Advent: PEACE.

December 14 Message: *Missing the Moment*. Third Sunday of Advent: JOY.

December 21 CHRISTMAS SUNDAY. Message: *Keeper of the Springs*.
Fourth Sunday of Advent: LOVE. No verbal announcements today.
Family Sunday: teachers and children remain in worship.

December 24 4 p.m. Christmas Pageant Family Service of Lessons and Carols

December 24 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Communion Candlelight Service.
Message: *Do Not be Afraid.*

December 28 Casual Sunday. No church school, activity period for Children K-2.
Message: *Jesus Repeated Himself*. The baptism of Marah Anne Nelson

December's Deacon of the Month is Mike McMahon.

Baptism:
Francisca Lezaeta Gregory Parents: Todd Gregory and Pamela Lezaeta November 2, 2008

Congratulations

Congratulations to Neil and Nancy Ross on the birth of their grandson, Kingston Anton Williams Ross born on October 19th to their son Brook and his wife Christina.

Congratulations to Brian and Jaime Nelson (and grandparents Bill and Alinda) on the birth of their daughter Marah Anne Nelson born on October 29th.

Congratulations to Britt and Meredith Foss on the birth of their daughter, Merryn Sinclair Foss who was born on November 6th.

Congratulations to Dick and Diana Geisler on the birth of their granddaughter Ilsa Lange Malloy born on November 13th to their daughter Lori and her husband Roark Malloy.

In Sympathy

The congregation expresses deepest condolences to John Ferry and family on the death of his wife, Elizabeth Ferry who died on November 10th. A memorial service will be held in the sanctuary on December 6th at 11:15 am.

The congregation expresses deepest condolences to Sharon Davis on the death of her second mother, Mary Harvey.

The congregation also expresses deepest condolences to Susan Baran on the death of her father, Carl C. Beauchamp who died on November 12th.

KCC's New Garden Bench

The new Garden Bench with our steeple emblazoned on the back, is placed securely outside our kitchen door and we hope everyone enjoys using it. We felt it would be helpful for you to use when unloading things from cars; or to use while waiting for a friend or for a a ride; or to use when simply enjoying a friendly chat on a pretty day. The bench is made of Shorea wood which is a relative of Teak. It is very strong, resistant to rot and insect damage, and can withstand extreme weather. Thanks to Howie Hallberg for assembling the bench and giving it 2 treatments of teak oil. Thanks also to Mike McMahon who built the concrete pad under the bench, and who bolted it safely to that pad. Funds to pay for this bench came from a grouping of memorial funds, known as our Sanctuary Fund.

Submitted by Audrey Hallberg

Women's Fellowship 2nd Annual Christmas Cookie Sale

The cookie sale will be on December 7th, before and after the church service in Fellowship Hall. Come and join us. Choose from a wonderful assortment of cookies to be bagged and bought by the pound.

CHRISTMAS LETTER

Along with all the joys and traditions of Christmas comes the stark reality that there are millions who will not be sharing that happiness without our help. As we sit down to a sumptuous Christmas dinner, we need to be mindful of those who have nothing to eat. We often think that food shortages exist primarily in third world nations but indeed, it is a fact that one of every eight Rhode Island households is suffering from lack of adequate and nutritious food. The number of food pantry meal disbursements from the Peace Dale's Jonnycake Center this past October was almost 23,000 compared to 10,500 for the same period in 2006.

With the economy in turmoil, bank foreclosures forcing many families from their homes and unemployment at record levels, there is an ever increasing demand for family shelters. The Welcome House in Peace Dale, for example, is full to capacity and being inundated with requests from families who have lost their homes. And by the way, all of the adult residents at Welcome House have at least one job and are supporting as many as 3 children at the shelter. We have been told by the director at Welcome House that they could not survive without the faith-based community. And all of this is taking place in our own backyard of South County.

In an ideal world, we would reach out to help all the poor, the sick and the hungry around the planet but unfortunately this is not possible. We are therefore dedicating our Christmas offering of this year to local charities like the ones above. As Rev. Sharon Key reminded us in her guest sermon, "what we give, we will receive". Please give from your hearts.

We wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Clark Bridgman for the Board of Missions

KCC Can Be Part of the Change: the 100 Days Campaign

As a followup to John Zehring's fine sermon on torture, your Peace & Justice Task Force and Missions Board have a message for president-elect Obama, and we hope you'll sign on. Amnesty International is urging Obama to take 3 crucial actions in his first 100 days in office to renew America's commitment to human rights:

- announce a plan and date to close Guantanamo
- issue an executive order to ban torture and other ill-treatment, as defined under international law
- set up an independent commission to investigate abuses committed by the US government in its "war on terror."

You can either sign the petition on the Harvest Table in Fellowship Hour or use your computer to write to Obama: "Amnesty International USA" alerts@takeaction.amnestyusa.org

S. P. N. M.

Join in the excitement of Christmas at South Providence Neighborhood Ministries by sending gifts or volunteering to usher parents in making choices. A fun time is had by all!

CHRISTMAS SANTA'S WORKSHOP
SOUTH PROVIDENCE NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRIES

Items needed: hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, underwear, socks, boys & girls toys, Games, gift certificates, movie passes, wrapping paper, infant & teen items.

Please deliver all donations by Monday morning December 15.

Volunteers needed:

Sunday,	Dec. 14	Noon – 3 pm	Receive donations and set up
Monday,	Dec. 15	9:30-12:00; 1-3 pm	Receive donations and set up
Monday,	Dec. 15	5:30-8:00 pm	Distribution
Tuesday,	Dec. 16	9:00-12:00 pm	Distribution and re-stock
Wednesday,	Dec. 17	9:30-12:00 pm	Distribution and re-stock
Wednesday,	Dec. 17	5:30-8:00 pm	Distribution and re-stock
Thursday,	Dec. 18	9-12:00 pm	Pick up and clean up

To volunteer, sign up in the office (461-7509) or e-mail Yvette Kenner at info@spnm.org for an assigned time.

Library Note

Suzanne Kenyon has kindly donated some wonderful and inspirational books to KCC's library. I have placed them on the coffee table and invite you to read them and be inspired.

Tracy Heffron

Church School News

On November 30th Bibles were presented to our third grade Church School students. This year their teachers are Amy Hubertus and Jane Buxton, and the teaching assistant is Anna Gyorgy. Bibles were also presented to several fifth grade students who did not previously receive one. Karen Elliot is the fifth grade teacher.

The Students receiving Bibles are:

Third Grade

Nate Hubertus	Zoe Saurette
Clarice Jennings	Lily Trodson
Sarah Menard	Rae Turco
Josh Pelton	Ashley Cromack

Fifth Grade

Casey Gauvin
Zack Quarella
Josh Remington

It doesn't seem possible that it is the Advent season already! As we await the blessing of 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 Fellowship Hall. The children will be encouraged 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.

Church School Survey Results

Here are the results of our church school survey that many of you filled out at our open house last May.

Results of Church School Survey 2008

97% of the total congregation and 100% of parents wanted the children to stay for part of the service.

96% of both congregation and parents wanted church school to take place during the service

56% of parents and of the congregation were aware of what was being taught in the church school, and 13% of parents and 14% of the congregation had no idea what was being taught.

76% of the congregation and 74% of parents were satisfied with the current curriculum, No one was completely dissatisfied, 24% and 26% respectively responded 4 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 was dissatisfied.

Most of the parents and congregation found the classrooms clean and inviting.
When asked to rate the importance of various aspects of Christian Education for Children, **Teachers as role models, and Christian values were deemed the most important** to both parents and the congregation, with 100% of both groups rating them either 1, 2, or 3 on a scale of 1-5.

Number of combined #1 and #2 responses from parents (and mirrored by the congregation)**:**
Christian Values 95%
Teachers as role models 86%
Knowledge of Bible stories 83%
Child's relationship with teacher 78%
Knowledge of Scripture 65%
Understanding of church service 65%
Peace and Justice concerns 65%
Stewardship 57%
Knowledge of sacraments 47%

Overall:
82% of parents were very satisfied with the church school program
91% were very satisfied with the quality of the teachers
69% were very satisfied with the Summer Activity Time (30% were satisfied and 4% dissatisfied)

Safe Church Policy:
68% of parents and 74% of the Congregation are aware of the policy

The survey provided space for suggestions and concerns which included:

- More children involvement during the service
- More interaction between grades
- VBS at our church
- Cold classrooms/dark hallways
- Consistent use of sign-out sheets
- Weekly postings and e-mails
- Description of weekly lesson in bulletin
- Children's Service led by associate pastor
- More emphasis on Bible stories and songs
- Create Child and Parent Library
- More help for CE Director from CE Board (teacher recruitment, activity times, classroom preparation for fall, organizing supply closet)
- CE Board members should attend church functions (especially Family Life events)
- Children don't bring home anything related to church/Bible stories

Each comment/suggestion was made once with no duplication.

Rhode Island Interfaith Power & Light presents

"Faith Lights Our Way"

The SECOND ANNUAL interfaith conference on developing a religious community response to Climate Change in Rhode Island

LASALLE ACADEMY, 612 Academy Avenue, Providence, RI

Thursday January 8, 2009, 5 pm - 9:30 pm

A conference for clergy, lay leaders, parents, educators, business people, students and other interested persons.

Exhibits Open/Registration 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Keynote Speaker 7:00 pm

Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, President and Founder, Interfaith Power and Light

The Reverend Canon Sally Grover Bingham is a priest in the Diocese of California, chair of the Episcopal Diocesan Commission for the Environment and has been active in the environmental community for twenty-five years. She is also founder and president of The Regeneration Project, which is focused on its Interfaith Power and Light (IPL) campaign, a religious response to global warming. The IPL campaign includes a national network of over 4,000 congregations with affiliated programs in 29 states. She has brought widespread recognition to the link between faith and the environment, and as one of the first faith leaders to fully recognize global warming as a moral issue, she has mobilized thousands of religious people to put their faith into action through energy stewardship and advocacy.

Sally serves on both the National Board of the Environmental Defense Fund and the Environmental Working Group as well as the national advisory board for the Union of Concerned Scientists. She recently joined the Forum on Children and Nature. The Interfaith Power and Light campaign and the Rev. Bingham have received numerous awards including the 2007 U.S. EPA Climate Protection Award, the Purpose Prize, the Energy Globe Award and recognition as a "sacred gift to the planet" by the World Wildlife Fund. Rev. Bingham was recently named one of the top fifteen green religious leaders by Grist magazine and was installed as Canon for Environmental Ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of California.

Refreshments and Exhibits 8:00 - 8:30 pm

Concurrent Workshops 8:30 - 9:20 pm

** Workshop Areas **

Schools and Youth, Faith and Advocacy, Faith Communities, What Homeowners Can Do

REGISTRATION INFORMATION AND DIRECTIONS

Suggested donation $10 at the door. No donation is suggested for students.
For more information or registration, please call (401)338-3916, register on-line at http://www.riipl.org/pre_register.htm **or mail or fax the form found on the rack in Fellowship Hall. Fax: (401) -268-3833 or mail to RI – IPL, 230 Lantern Lane E, N. Kingstown, RI 02852.**

LaSalle Academy is located on Rt. 44 (Smith St) in Providence, at the corner of Academy Avenue. Follow the signs to park in the rear of the building.

(Information provided by Terry Schimmel of KCC's Peace and Justice Task Force)

The following is an outline of a speech given by
Consecrating Steward Christine Pelton during the worship service on November 2nd.

Thanks to Tom for asking me to be a part of the consecrating steward program. It encouraged me to really think about what this church truly means to me and hopefully all of you.

A few weeks ago during his sermon, John mentioned the term *sanctuary*. It struck me that this is precisely what this church means to me and possibly for many of you here today. A sanctuary:

A sacred place, a consecrated spot
A house consecrated to the worship of God
A shelter from hardship, a refuge, a safe place

And in today's society where stress seems to be a huge part of everyday life, this, the KCC, is our sanctuary . . . Our refuge!

I grew up in the Catholic faith and although I came away with a basic understanding of the Bible and religion in general, I always felt:

Disconnected
Each week - the bulk of the service seemed to be similar to the last
No fellowship or sense of belonging
I felt that I was going through the motions; however, my spiritual needs were not being met so eventually- church drop out!

Several years ago - my daughter Emma had been to a handful of church services with friends and relatives and started asking lots of questions about God, Jesus and why we don't go to church . . . .Although we answered her questions at the time, Kevin and I felt that our children needed more spiritual guidance and we also felt the push to have our spiritual needs met as well. . . . So we started our search for a church that we could feel connected to and begin our spiritual journey with our children.

The KCC did just that. . . .

Welcoming (from the moment we stepped in the door)
1 hour of peace - young kids
Kid friendly - children big part of the church, involved: (Children's Christmas service, confirmands' service, coffee hour) members' candy in the bushes outside - feel important
Service varies week to week (not reciting from rote memory)
Communion is a meaningful, shared event
Music - fortunate to have not only Enrico and the choir but also a treat to have special music
Lift people up in prayer - powerful
John's sermons - so well spoken and well thought out. It seems
effortless how he relates passages from the bible to our every day lives
Leave always feeling lifted up and more enriched than when I came.
Some of the most powerful - unpredictable, (John dumped a table over)
Last but not least - fellowship. The coffee hours and special events encourage and provide the "Connection" - (Blue Jean Sunday - getting to know one another)

i.e. I recently had a shoulder problem

John's calls and visits- genuine, comforting

Casserole crew- helping hand when need it the most

Sometimes when we get up late and it takes a little extra effort to get here

Worth it - reasons mentioned

Never feel cheated

I truly believe, in this church, we have found our spiritual home. We are part of an extended family and with all that is going on in our society today, we are so fortunate, now more than ever, to have KCC as:

Our sanctuary

Our safe place

Our refuge

I feel that this church has and continues to enrich and fulfill not only my family's but I'm sure many of yours as well, the special and desperately needed, spiritual guidance that was missing in our lives.

Sometimes, on Sunday mornings, if we get up a little late and it takes some extra effort to get here, it always feels worth it for all of the reasons I mentioned and more. I never feel cheated or that I've wasted my time.

It is here at the KCC that we have found our spiritual home and family. We are one part of a whole, one part of this extended family. And now, in today's society, more than ever, the Kingston Congregational Church is our sanctuary, our safe place, our refuge.

<u>The Women's Fellowship of Kingston Congregational Church</u>
<u>Invites All Adult Members and Friends to the</u>

Annual Christmas Dinner
Friday, December 12, 2008

6:00 pm Appetizers & Hot Cider in the Fireplace Room
6:30 pm Dinner in Fellowship Hall by Wolf Rock Caterers

MENU
Yankee Pot Roast
OR Stuffed Filet of Sole
Oven Roasted & Mashed Potatoes
Butternut Squash & Mixed Vegetables
Salad & Rolls
Apple Crisp with Ice Cream
Coffee Decaf or Tea

7:45 pm PROGRAM
Music in the Sanctuary with Women's Singing Group "All-In-A-Chord"
Join Us to Celebrate the Holiday Season With Joy
Music & Friendship at Kingston Congregational Church

Before Dec 08: **MAIL** the form below with a check to KCC-Women's Fellowship, and send it to: Canna Falby, 75 Purgatory Rd, Exeter, RI 02822 or **CALL** her, 295-9742 to make your reservations, choice of entrée and pay at the door.

Reservations are $15.00 per person. Please indicate your choice of entree

---------**Cut here and return by Dec 08**----------

please print clearly circle one for each person

Names attending:_____ ROAST or FISH

_____ ROAST or FISH

Your phone number please: _____

# of persons
_____x $15.00 each--
enclosed is my check for_____