The Spire

From Your Pastor

January 2009

Your Roots

You should be proud to belong to this United Church of Christ. Our denomination, born of a union of four earlier denominations, has a long distinguished history. Consider some of the historic *firsts* of your denomination:

1620 Seeking spiritual freedom, forbears of the United Church of Christ prepare to leave Europe for the New World. Later generations know them as **the Pilgrims**. Their pastor, John Robinson, urges them as they depart to keep their minds and hearts open to new ways. God, he says, *"has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word."* Almost five centuries later, the UCC would uphold this vision in its national media campaign titled *"God is still speaking."*

1700 An early stand **against slavery**. Congregationalists are among the first Americans to take a stand against slavery. The Rev. Samuel Sewall writes the first anti-slavery pamphlet in America, *"The Selling of Joseph."* Sewall lays the foundation for the abolitionist movement that comes more than a century later.

1773 First act of **civil disobedience**. Five thousand angry colonists gather in the Old South Meeting House to demand repeal of an unjust tax on tea. Their protest inspires the first act of civil disobedience in U.S. history -- the *"Boston Tea Party."*

1777 Congregation **saves the Liberty Bell**. The British occupy Philadelphia -- seat of the rebellious Continental Congress - and plan to melt down the Liberty Bell to manufacture cannons. But the Bell has disappeared. It is safely hidden under the floorboards of Zion Reformed Church in Allentown – a UCC church.

1785 **First ordained African American pastor**. Lemuel Haynes is the first African American ordained by a Protestant denomination. He becomes a world-renowned preacher and writer.

1810 **First foreign mission society**. America's first foreign mission society, the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions (ABCFM) is formed by Congregationalists in Massachusetts. UCC sends first foreign missionaries to India, Near East, Turkey, Palestine, and Sandwich Islands.

1839 **The Amistad**. Enslaved Africans break their chains and seize control of the schooner Amistad. Their freedom is short-lived, and they are held in a Connecticut jail while the ship's owners sue to have them returned as property. The case becomes a defining moment for the movement to abolish slavery. Congregationalists and other Christians organize a campaign to free the captives. The Supreme Court rules the captives are not property, and the Africans regain their freedom.

1853 **First woman pastor**. Antoinette Brown is the first woman since New Testament times ordained as a Christian minister, and perhaps the first woman in history elected to serve a Christian congregation as pastor. At her ordination a friend, Methodist minister Luther Lee, defends *"a woman's right to preach the Gospel."* He quotes the New Testament: *"There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

1897 **Social Gospel movement** denounces economic oppression. Congregationalist Washington Gladden is one of the first leaders of the Social Gospel movement -- which takes literally the commandment of Jesus to "love your neighbor as yourself." Social Gospel preachers denounce injustice and the exploitation of the poor.

1943 The **'Serenity Prayer'**. UCC theologian Reinhold Niebuhr preaches a sermon that introduces the world to the now famous Serenity Prayer: *"God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other."*

1972 Ordination of **first openly gay minister**. The UCC's Golden Gate Association ordains the first openly gay person as a minister in a mainline Protestant denomination: the Rev. William R. Johnson. In the following three decades, General Synod urges equal rights for homosexual citizens and calls on congregations to welcome gay, lesbian and bisexual members.

1976 **First African American leader** of an integrated denomination. General Synod elects the Rev. Joseph H. Evans president of the United Church of Christ. He becomes the first African American leader of a racially integrated mainline church in the United States.

These are just a few mountain peaks seen above the clouds. Since its beginning, the United Church of Christ has been a voice of advocacy for those who are oppressed and a source of support to all in our denomination from California to Rhode Island.

In an age when some proclaim that God has spoken once and for all, the United Church of Christ stands tall to insist that God is still speaking. We take our inspiration from our earliest pastor, who never made it to the United States of America: *God has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word.* There is more to come… because God is still speaking.

Celebrate that you are a part of the United Church of Christ – a bold venture in faith that has led to many "*firsts*," especially in the advocacy of those whom the world has rejected.

And the king will answer them,
'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these
who are members of my family,
you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:40).

- 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)

Would you like to join the Kingston Congregational Church?

A meeting will be held **January 18** following the worship service for those wishing to consider membership in the Church. Please enjoy some brief refreshments at Coffee Hour and then come to the Fireplace Room (directions available at The Welcome Table in Fellowship Hall) to meet with John Zehring and a member of the Board of Deacons.

SUNDAYS IN JANUARY – Happy New Year!

January 4	Message: *Let it go*. Communion. The Baptism of Kingston Ross.
January 11	Message: *Offer a Good Word*. Mission Moment: George Weavill, for the RI Conference UCC. Following worship: Junior High Organizational Meeting. Budget Forum (second of two).
January 18	Message: *An Unfinished Work*. Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend. Following Worship: Meeting of those desiring to join the Kingston Congregational Church.
January 25	Message: *How then shall we live?* Reception of New Members. Following Worship: Annual Meeting of the Congregation. Children go directly to Church School today.
February 1	Installation of Board and Committee Members

January's Deacon of the Month is Nancy Ross.

The Annual Meeting
of
The Kingston Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

Will be Held in the Church Sanctuary
Following the Worship Service
Child care will be available

Sunday, January 25, 2009

10:45 a.m.

Nancy Holland, Clerk

Draft Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes of Quarterly Meeting October 26, 2008
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Stewardship Committee Report
6. Discussion and Adoption of the 2009 Budget
7. Nominating Committee Report: Election
8. President's Report
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Closing Prayer and Adjournment

The Kingston Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 10:53AM.
A quorum was declared by Moderator Tom Butcher.
It was M/S/P to adopt the agenda.
It was M/S/P to move the Treasurer's Report to the end of the meeting.
It was M/S/P to adopt the minutes from June 22, 2008.

Tom Heald talked about the Stewardship program called Consecrating Stewards. Sharon Key is today's speaker at the luncheon. Amy Huberteus spoke last week as a witnessing steward. Two more speakers are scheduled. Pledges are due November 23, 2008.

Sharon Davis presented the Trustees' Report.
The chimneys have been repaired with money from the Potter Fund.
The TV monitors are up and working in the choir loft.
The plans to modify the organ have been cancelled after the open forum discussion.
The insurance will still be with the UCC insurance broker because they lowered their prices.
The audit of the Endowment Fund has been completed.
Quotes are being obtained by Howie Hallberg for the kitchen renovations.
As of September 16, 2008 the State of Rhode Island is now requiring all churches to be inspected by the local fire department by the end of 2008. Jeff Richardson will be contacting the fire department for an inspection.
Andy, Audrey and Pat have been working making repairs and painting.
Pledges are due on November 23, 2008 and a budget hearing will be held on November 30, 2008 to discuss the 2009 budget.
Pat Cox will be taking orders for the wooden churches during November as a Trustees fund raiser.

Frank Lenox presented the Deacons' Report.
The congregation has released Kevin Munroe from his position as Assistant to the Pastor.
The deacons are exploring ideas for a new church directory.
Coffee Hour needs to be downsized in order to get volunteers to sign up to do it. It is recommended that two families sign up together.
The personnel committee has met to discuss staff salaries and has asked Enrico for an outline of his job duties.

Michelle Davis was away so Tom Butcher read the Christian Ed Report.
For the last quarter the CE Board was very busy. They met through the summer to plan the start of the church school and opened with an open house for parents and children to meet the new teachers and learn about the activities they will be doing through the year. The Board has also been busy evaluating the 2008 and 2009 budgets. A new curriculum was purchased for the preschool class. The Junior and Senior Highs started off with an event last Sunday which was rock climbing. The Family Life Committee put on a fabulous church picnic and fall festival during this quarter. Adult education began with Mike Coffey on the Book of Mark. We are currently in need of two new members on the Board.

Tina Letcher presented the Mission and Social Justice Report.
Thanks to all who donated to Blanket Sunday-approximately $1,600.00 was raised.
The mission fair and potluck supper was a success. All the mission groups were represented and gave a short talk about their mission.

Helen Rowe-Drake presented the Women's Fellowship Report.
The Women's Fellowship opened the year with a pot luck supper.
The gingerbread house decorating is coming up and help is needed to build the houses.
December 5 is the Christmas sale after church.
December 12 is the Christmas dinner.
The Women's directory is available.

Gary Harlow presented the Men's Fellowship Report.
The men have met at Iron's Homestead and had a golf tournament.
The next event is a URI basketball game.
Men's breakfast will resume in November.

Marcus Ferrelli presented the President's Report.
Strategic Planning committee is meeting today to plan the small group meetings.
Marcus encouraged everyone to take advantage of the opportunities to volunteer at church.

Old Business-
Jim Aukerman spoke about the "Spire Society" and the planned giving initiative that is being launched. Audrey Hallberg modeled the jewelry that is designed to recognize members. The hope is to increase the endowment.

Dick Geisler presented the Treasurer's Report.
Dick pointed out that the pledge figure being used for 2008 had to be adjusted to reflect the actual pledges received which is $20,000.00 less than anticipated.
The current deficit is $30,000.00.
Discussion ensued.

New Business-none

It was M/S/P to adjourn at 11:35PM.

A closing prayer was offered by John Zehring.

Respectfully submitted, Nancy Holland, Clerk

Adult Education

February 10, 17, and March 3

Tuesday evenings, 7 p.m. in the Fireplace Room
INSTRUCTOR: Jim Findlay
TOPIC: Ecumenism

Jim Findlay will lead a three-part series on "Ecumenism in America," starting on Tuesday night, February 10, 2009. Jim's research interest as an American religious historian focused on such topics, especially the National Council of Churches. Following the discussion on February 10, Don Anderson, Executive Director of the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, will speak on February 17th, and Laura Everett, Associate Director of the Massachusetts State Council of Churches, will speak about current developments in ecumenism at the national level on March 3rd. Please come!

Progressive Dinner Update

Mark your calendars! The 2009 KCC Progressive Dinner will take place on Saturday April 25th from 5:00 to 10:00 pm. The Family Life Committee is in the process of creating this year's menu and would like your input. If you have any favorite recipes for a long-cooking (3+ hours) entrée, please leave it in the Family Life folder outside the Secretary's Office.

S. P. N. M.

Please remember to bring food in for South Providence Neighborhood Ministries on the first Sunday in January. We are hoping to collect "a pyramid of peanut butter in January" (thank you for all of the food donated in December for the Jonnycake Center...we are alternating months for these two worthy recipients).

Your Board of Missions

S. P. N. M. Spelling Bee

South Providence Neighborhood Ministries' 2nd annual adult Spelling Bee will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2009, 2-5 pm, at Calvary Baptist Church, 747 Broad Street, in Providence. Mario Hilario, of Channel 10 TV, will be the Master of Ceremonies. Food will be available and there is ample parking. Last year three King Cong teams (3 spellers each) participated. We hope there is the same enthusiastic participation this year. Recruiting spellers will begin in earnest after January 1st. The fee for each team remains, as last year, at $200 (Remember, this is a fundraiser!) If there are lots of supporters, we can all share costs in small amounts. Come join the fun – and see King Congites WIN the brain-teasing contest!

For more information, contact Jim and/or Doris Findlay and Linda Mendillo. See also posted flyers.

Third Annual Mexican Dinner Coming Up Soon

The Board of Missions and Social Justice would like to invite everybody, kids too – there will be activities in the Fireplace Room for children – to a POT LUCK MEXICAN DINNER at 6 p.m. on Friday, January 23, 2009. Please sign up on the sheet on the Welcome Table in Fellowship Hall. And bring $5 or more, or lots more (!) to support Angelina's Shelter for Children in San Cristobal, Mexico.

The dinner this year will be special, not only because Susan Letendre, storyteller, explorer and founder of the 7 Story Market that supports Mayan women's handicrafts, will provide our entertainment, but also because Tina Letcher will be able to hand-deliver the money we have given at the dinner to Angelina! Tina and her husband are going to San Cristobal on an Elderhostel trip the very next week.

Environmental Task Force

The Environmental Task Force would like to invite you to another MOVIE NIGHT on Friday, January 30th at 7:30 pm in the Fireplace Room. We'll let you know the title soon! Decaf and cookies and popcorn provided. Save the Date!!

Attention all Junior High Students and Parents:

Please meet on January 11, 2009 after church to discuss future fellowship activities with the CE Board and other interested parties.

KCC Prayer Chain report for 2008

During the past year we have had 218 requests from KCC MEMBERS AND 313 requests for prayer support from loved ones of our KCC members totaling 531 REQUESTS. One of our 18 prayer links Abby Baird recently died and Ed Carney has become a new prayer link in our prayer chain.

We would welcome any interested in this KCC form of ministry to become a new link. Each link agrees to pray each day at some time and to honor the confidentiality of each request. If you would like to become a prayer link OR would like daily prayer support please contact:

DELIGHT CARPENTER 789 - 8006
BEVERLY LARIMER 783 - 6388
LOU PEARSON 783 - 8975 or
CAROL SHILLING 783 – 5677

Back in 1979, Sue Kenyon suggested the idea of a prayer chain for our church similar to one she had known in New Jersey. Sue who is now 102 is STILL one of our faithful prayer links in our KCC prayer chain, (recently moved to South Bay Manor).

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication
Delivered at Kingston Congregational Church – November 23, 2008
by Thomas H. Brillat

This week we will celebrate Thanksgiving in our homes. We will feast on the bounty God has provided each of us. And today, in our house of worship we celebrate our thanks by making a promise to our church – a financial promise – a pledge. It is our way, our tradition, our practical method, of saying thank you for so many wonderful things and for so many special people. Today is a day when we can rejoice in our abundance and feel confident that the world of the generous truly does get larger and larger.

I will give thanks by borrowing an idea I read in the paper. This past Friday Bob Kerr had a very simple column. It was a list; a list of things for which he is thankful. He borrowed the idea from an attorney who sends out Thanksgiving cards each year with his personal list of thanks inside. Here are some of mine.

Let us pray – Dear Lord we thank you for a tall white steeple glistening in winter's snow and summer's heat; for a sanctuary of peace. We thank you for more food than we need to eat at coffee hour; for bulletin boards with photos and stories and for a harvest table to welcome us and recruit our services. Lord we thank you for leaves to rake, windows to wash and for a parking spot on a rainy Sunday. We thank you for whispered conversations prior to each service and for those occasional ones during the service; and for ears to hear your word and eyes to see your works. We thank you for bass notes on the organ and choir voices we know come only from you; for parties at the beach or in the woods and for cell phones that help us when we get lost during progressive dinners. We thank you for teenagers sleeping in the cold and for parents who bring them hot chocolate. We thank you for boilers that creak, roofs that may leak and 200 year old floors that squeak. We thank you for seat cushions and large print bulletins; for candles and flowers and Bibles and hymnals. We thank you for giggling children and busy classrooms; for babies in daycare, for brides and grooms, baptisms and funeral goodbyes.

We thank you Lord for John Zehring – and sermons that inspire and those that make us uneasy; for visits in the night and comforting phone calls. We thank you for the introit and postlude and the magical musical gifts that you have given to your servant Enrico. We thank you for Andy and Shirley and Cathy and Joanne and Nancy and for all the volunteers that serve at KCC and beyond. For tables set-up and mail answered, reports compiled, records kept, a congregation educated and children cared for. We thank you for many familiar faces and treasured new ones.

But mostly Lord we thank you for the opportunity to share the mystical experience of life with You in this sacred place. It is with humility and gratitude that we dedicate and pledge our gifts to your service.

Amen