The Spire

From Your Pastor

March 2009

Some of the Shepherd's sheep are gay.

Back when I had hair, only a few strands crossed the top. The day came when my hairdresser announced, *"John, it's time to do the deed."* He meant, of course, that the inevitable arrived and I had to accept that I was bald and he would finish the job.

I replied, *"Ok, if you are going to make me bald, then I want you to come to church once. Then it's up to you if you want to return."* He responded, *"John, I can't come to your church." "Why?"* I asked. *"Because,"* he said, *"I'm gay."*

I launched into how that made no difference, that he was welcome the same as anyone else. He told me how he had been kicked out of his home church where he grew up as a boy because he was gay. He recounted how he had visited a dozen churches of many denominations, seeking a community of faith where he could be welcomed as he was. *"Every one of those churches,"* he told me, *"had giant welcome signs out front. They all said 'Welcome.' Many said 'Everyone is Welcome.' I came to discover that they didn't mean me. Some told me I would burn in hell unless I changed who I was. Others welcomed me, but as a sinner… in the same category with harlots. I came to realize that those welcome signs don't mean a darn."*

That is why it is important for churches to be explicit in their welcome: there are some people out there searching for a community of faith who need to know that the welcome includes them… as they are, not as sinners needing to be changed.

My hairdresser, by the way, did attend. Then, he came back, joined, and soon became involved in leadership roles in the church.

Kudos to KCC for owning a Welcome Statement that is clear and inclusive. *"YOU are welcome here!"*

Isn't that enough? Not quite. Many churches today are becoming "*Open and Affirming*," which is a UCC term. Other denominations have similar statements. When one of the Shepherd's sheep who is gay attends an Open and Affirming Church, they can rest comfortably that they don't have to be looking over their shoulder and that they can trust the welcoming words. They can know that they are affirmed as fully human, that God doesn't make mistakes, and that they can be accepted as they are… just like anyone else. Should one of my precious little grandchildren turn out to be gay, I pray they will find a welcoming Open and Affirming community of faith to accept them and love them.

I have invited the Deacons to launch a year of study and prayerful consideration for whether or not The Kingston Congregational Church should vote to become an Open and Affirming church. I invited the Rev. Ray Bradley to meet with the Deacons to explain what would be involved. Following their meeting with Ray Bradley, the Deacons voted to pursue with the congregation this year of study. My Pastoral colleagues from the Newman Church and the Bristol Church (both just voted to become Open and Affirming) have offered to be a resource for KCC as we prepare ourselves to consider this choice.

In the year ahead, the Deacons will lead the congregation in opportunities for discussion and study of the biblical, theological, and historical perspectives. We recognize that many hold widely diverse views and want to provide everyone an opportunity to have a say or ask a question. If we handle this well, divisiveness should be kept to a minimum. Our welcome statement need not change – it is already open and affirming in principle and in practice. A vote to become an Open and Affirming Church would make it very clear to those like my hairdresser and perhaps to some of your friends or family members that the Kingston Congregational Church means it.

– 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 in March

March 1	Message: *"Love kindness."* Text: I Corinthians 13:1-6. Communion. First Sunday in Lent. The Baptism of Riley and Billy Ashworth.
March 8	Conference Minister the Rev. Dr. Chuck Barnes will join Pastor Zehring for the service, with Dr. Barnes preaching. Second Sunday in Lent. Adult Education follows the service with Jeff Richardson teaching the first unit on World Religions.
March 15	Message: *"Have the ten commandments gone by?"* Text: Exodus 20:1-17. Third Sunday in Lent. The Baptism of Merryn Sinclair Foss. Adult Education follows the service with Jeff Richardson teaching the second unit on World Religions.
March 22	Message: *"Celebrate God's love."* Text: Ephesians 2:1, 2, 5, 8. Fourth Sunday in Lent. First Sunday of Spring! Adult Education follows the service with Jeff Richardson teaching the final unit on World Religions.
March 29	Message: *"Two Jesuses."* Text: Matthew 27:15-26. Fifth Sunday in Lent. FIRE DRILL! 3:30 p.m. is the Annual Interfaith Peace Service, in the Sanctuary.

Confirmation begins this month

We're off schedule this year. On purpose. The reason: we are combining two years which will include 8th and 9th grade students or any that missed Confirmation and wish to participate.

There will be an **Organizational Meeting** with the Senior Pastor, the Deacons, and the Confirmation Coordinators with the CONFIRMANDS and their PARENTS on **March 18 at 6:30 p.m.**

The first **Confirmation Class**, taught by Pastor Zehring, will be on **March 22 at 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.**

Confirmation Coordinators this year are Frank Lenox and Jill Dumican.

In Sympathy

The congregation expresses deepest condolences to the family of Cheryl Ladd who died on January 31st. A service was held in the sanctuary on February 7th.

The congregation also expresses deepest condolences to Sunny Hocutt and family on the death of her husband, Lee Hocutt on January 31st. A service was held in the sanctuary on February 21st.

The congregation also expresses deepest condolences to Carrie Nally and family on the death of her husband, Thomas Nally on February 1st.

Interfaith Community Peace Service

The Peace and Justice Task Force invites everyone to the Interfaith Community Peace Service being held here at Kingston Congregational Church on March 29th at 3:30 p.m. Representatives from many faiths will be there to pray for peace and remember victims of war and violence. We are pleased to have the Children's Choir of Kingston Congregational Church singing at the service. We will again have the Peace Flags from the Peace Initiative adorn our church. Refreshments will be served after the service. Please come and bring your friends. We hope that Kingston Congregational Church is well represented!

One Great Hour of Sharing

The One Great Hour of Sharing offering will be taken on Palm Sunday, April 5th. Please give generously.

Thank you,
KCC Board of Missions

Film Documentary

The Board of Christian Education is sponsoring the film "Under Our Skin", an award winning documentary about Lyme Disease. Terry Schimmel will be showing it in the Fireplace Room after church at 10:45 a.m. on March 1st. This film expands awareness of the nature of this disease, how it has become an epidemic, and the need for more education and responsiveness. Terry will also have brochures and be available to answer questions. Recognizing the film's importance to parents, the Board will provide child care during the film.

Environmental Task Force Movie Night

Thank you to all who came to the Environmental Task Force movie night January 30th. We enjoyed popcorn and/or dessert and watched the movie "The 11th Hour" which discusses the current state of our environment including our oceans, air, soil, climate and their effects on public health, public policy and our future. Numerous experts from many disciplines appear in the film discussing their views of our current problems and possible solutions. They include scientists (such as Stephen Hawking), historians, economists, and others. If you missed movie night, but would like to see the film it is available to borrow from our KCC church library. Stay tuned for another movie night in the near future.

Mark your calendar!

The 2009 Progressive Dinner will take place on Saturday, April 25th from 5:00-10:00 pm. Sign-up sheets will be posted on March 8th, 15th and 22nd or call Cindy Dowgiallo 783-6452/ acld98@cox.net. Assignment packets will be available for pickup on April 12th and 19th. Let Cindy know if other arrangements need to be made.

Thank you and I hope all of you will participate as it is a wonderful way to meet fellow KCCers.

Senior High Pasta Dinner and Silent Auction

Please mark your calendars for the Senior High Pasta Dinner on Friday, March 6th at 6 pm. New this year will be a silent auction to help raise money for the mission trip to New Orleans in April. The cost for the Pasta Dinner is $5 for adults and $2.50 for kids.

The Senior High will be going skiing the next day, March 7th. Please let Sharon or Gail know if you are interested in going.

Planned Giving

The Planned Giving Committee invites you to attend a "Question and Answer" session at 10:45 on Sunday, March 29, 2009 in the Fireplace Room. Bring any questions you may have about how you can include the Church in your estate plan, how to keep from running out of money in these turbulent times, and any other related topic you wish to discuss. The committee is prepared to provide you with beneficiary designation forms for your retirement account or life insurance, together with help completing your forms. Members of the committee have expertise in wills, trusts, charitable gift annuities and other opportunities that are available to benefit you, your family and the Church. We will update attendees on the status of the Church's permanent endowment and The Spire Society, the Church's new planned giving initiative. Please grab a cup of coffee and join us for this brief, but informative, session. Thank you in advance for attending.

Jim Aukerman	Elizabeth McNab	Audrey Hallberg
Britt Foss	Tom Butcher	Bill Entwistle
Steve White	Dick Geisler	Karin Aukerman

Women's Fellowship

Monday, March 9th at 7:00 pm

Prentice Stout will present a program:
"Backyard Birds"

Men are invited to attend.
Refreshments will be served.

Library Note

Frances Hatch has donated a book in loving memory of her husband, John. The book is a signed copy entitled "A Season of Night, New Orleans after Katrina" by Ian McNulty who was very active at Christ the King Church. I will place the book on the Library coffee table.

Please remember to sign out any book you take home.

Tracy Heffron

Adult Education

March 8, 15, and 22

Second Hour, following worship
In the Fireplace Room

Topic: World Religions

Instructor: Jeff Richardson

<u>Church World Service</u> – Gifts of the Heart Kits

KCC Women's Fellowship invites YOU to participate by shopping, knitting, sewing or donating money. Church World Service sends these kits to other agencies all ready in place when there is a disaster within the US or around the world. Please see the CWS bulletin board for a list of where kits went in 2008.

Money Donations are needed to help us reach our goals!!

We purchase items in bulk during back to school sales and we hunt for the best bargains on items in stores and on the internet. If you would rather shop see needed items under school and hygiene.

Please make checks payable to: KCC Women's Fellowship

<u>Please use the envelopes marked CWS</u> to put check or cash into the offering plate or mail to our treasurer Canna Falby, 75 Purgatory Rd, Exeter, RI 02822.

Your entire donation is used for Church World Service and is totally tax deductible but will not show up on your church account as Women's Fellowship money is separate.

<u>SCHOOL KITS—Our goal is 225:</u>

Thanks to shopper Cindy Dowgiallo, we have all ready purchased 225: rulers, sharpeners, erasers, boxes of 24 crayons, and 675 spiral notebooks.
We purchased most of the school bags but have about 30 that need sewing.
We need: Pencils and <u>Blunt tipped</u> children's scissors

<u>HYGIENE KITS—Our goal is 100:</u>

We all ready have the toothbrushes, wide tooth combs, and Ziplocs from last year.
We purchased the hand towels at the Kay Dee Design sale in Sept.
We need: Washcloths (WalMart-- package of 8 for 3.29)
Soap—full bar size, individually wrapped
Nail Clippers— large size or medium (Job Lot 2/1.00)

<u>BABY KITS—Our goal is 30:</u>

This year we will try to again do 10 for girls, 10 for boys and 10 for either.
Each kit gets: 6 diapers, 2 pins, 2 shirts, 2 washcloths, 2 gowns, 2 blankets and 1 sweater. Please let Helen know if/what you are knitting!
We need: money to purchase the items!

Please join us for breakfast Wednesday, April 22 at 9:00 am to noon and help assemble the kits into boxes.

<u>Your</u> donation can make a difference; Help us help others in need!

Questions or comments: contact Helen Rowe-Drake 789-8910
www.churchworldservice.org

7th Annual S. P. N. M. Benefit Concert

Sunday, March 8

Phillips Memorial Baptist Church
565 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston

A Musical Extravaganza!

Children and Adult Vocal Groups

Listen to wonderful performances
while supporting this vital community
outreach organization.

Please bring canned goods for the SPNM Food Pantry.

Free will offering to benefit South Providence Neighborhood Ministries.

Refreshments will follow the concert.

South Providence Neighborhood Ministries
747 Broad Street, Providence
401-461-7509

Canned goods of all sorts will be collected at the concert for distribution by S.P.N.M. Contribute such items anytime before March 8 and they will be included. A matching gift of $1 from Louis Feinstein for each item provided will be applied to S.P.N.M.'s budget. Please help S.P.N.M.'s programs with these gifts!