The Spire

From Your Pastor

March 2008

The Sunday before Easter is known as either Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday. Pastors get the choice to select one each year. I alternate between the two.

Palm Sunday we know. It is a parade, is it not? A triumphal entry into Jerusalem? Passion Sunday feels like it belongs to some other religious tradition. Even the name befuddles us. *Passion* usually means something else. In this one case, it comes from one verse badly-translated and only in the King James Version, from Acts 1:3: *"To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion…"* In this rare one-time use, *passion* means *suffering*. Therefore, *Passion Sunday* focuses on the suffering of Jesus. That's gloomier than a palm-waving donkey-riding triumphal parade.

Who wants to focus on suffering? … other than Mel Gibson, who did quite well by the movie *The Passion of Christ.* After his movie, which hit box offices not-so-coincidentally at Easter-time, a cartoon in the *New Yorker* magazine depicted filming the movie. Studio lights illuminated Jesus on the cross, stage hands with buckets stood out-of-sight below, as the megaphone-shouting director hollered *"BLOOD… give me more blood!"*

Yuk. When I select *Passion Sunday*, people don't like it. There's always a couple who are appalled: How dare I spoil the mood and spirit of their spring-time celebration of new life, renewal, and the happy anticipation of the coming season! I get their point. After a long, cold winter of inclement weather, the anticipation of spring is cause for joy and celebration. So is Easter, which gets easily intertwined with that same commemoration of the sprouting of spring. Both spring and Easter remind us of the "*re*" words: rebuild, renew, restore, refresh, reshape, recreate, reassure, rebirth, recover, redeem, rekindle, replenish, resurrection. Spring and Easter both point to new life.

Lent reminds us of the cycle of life. It is a time of reflection. It's purpose is to focus on penitence. That's not something Congregationalists are big on: sorrow, regret, shame, confession, apology, remorse, atonement. Many would just as soon avoid that part and skip right to the happy ending.

That is our loss. Easter Sunday cannot be fully appreciated without experiencing Good Friday. The cross – the symbol of our faith – must be a necessary part of the Christian journey. Easter is not just a fable with a happy ending. Suffering exists. Evil is real. Loss happens. Denial is artificial. The wonderful news *"He is not here. He has risen."* rings hollow and as a fairy-tail finale to those who have not wondered, in song, *"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?"*

I too love the anticipation Spring. Stand aside from seasonal commemoration for a moment and focus instead upon Easter. My gut feeling is that we cannot fully grasp or appreciate the miracle of Easter without somehow feeling a twinge of the suffering of Jesus of Nazareth. He suffered horribly. In the final moments, might you and I have been among those who betrayed him or at least abandoned him? How can we ever sense the grace of God if we do not sense our own possible imperfection of not being there when he needed us?

This year, immerse yourself in the penitence of Lent and the passion of Christ as you prepare for the greatest celebration for people of the Christian faith, sung in tribute as the Hallelujah chorus: The Resurrection of Christ.

– John Zehring

Sundays and Lenten Services in March

March 2	Message: *Hard Questions at Eastertide*. Communion. Fourth Sunday in Lent. Sermon Talk-back following worship. 3:30 p.m.: Interfaith Peace Service 5:00 p.m.: Confirmation Class – Planning Confirmation Sunday service
March 5	**Lenten Wednesday Worship Service and Luncheon** at Kingston Congregational Church, noon, with the Reverends John Zehring and Ray Bradley (preaching).
March 9	**Confirmation Sunday**. Fifth Sunday in Lent. Dr. Charles Barnes, Conference Minister, preaching. Presentation of Confirmation Verses by Pastor Zehring. Daylight Savings Time begins.
March 16	**Passion Sunday**. Message: *Meditation on a Nail*. Junior Choir singing. Annual offering for One Great Hour of Sharing.
March 20	**Maundy Thursday**. Simple supper with sacrament of Holy Communion and Service of Tenebrae. 6 to 7 p.m., Fellowship Hall. Come enjoy a simple supper, listen to the choir sing, and then at the table, we will celebrate Communion. Following Communion, the Deacons will read scriptures about Jesus' last night, extinguishing the candle as each scripture is read.
March 21	**Good Friday Service** at Kingston Congregational Church, noon, Fireplace Room. John Zehring, preaching. Canna Falby, piano. Come reflect on the Seven Last Words of Christ.
March 23	**Easter**. Services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. The 9 a.m. service is oriented to families, with a presentation by the children. No announcements. Message: *Witnesses to the Resurrection.*
March 30	**Casual Sunday**. Kevin Munroe, Assistant to the Pastor, preaching. Message: *Without a Doubt*

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)

March's Deacon of the Month is Frank Lenox.

In Sympathy

The congregation extends deepest condolences to Delight Carpenter and the Carpenter family on the death of Cheslie Carpenter who died on February 15th. A memorial service will be held in the sanctuary on March 8th at 2:00 pm.

The congregation also extends deepest condolences to the family of David Curtis who died on February 19th. A memorial service was held in the sanctuary on February 22nd.

Interfaith Community Peace Service

The Peace and Justice Task Force would like to invite everyone to attend the annual Interfaith Community Peace Service on March 2nd from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. with refreshments to follow in the Fellowship Hall. Last year there were thirteen faith communities represented, and we hope that the Kingston Congregational Church will lead the way in numbers of participants. We are excited to have the children's choir singing during this year's service.

Each faith representative will light a candle and say a brief peace prayer. We will, as an interfaith community, light candles in memoriam to the victims of war. We will again be invited to view and make flags for the Peace Flag Initiative. Please come and share in this very meaningful service.

The following officers were elected at February's All Boards Meeting:

Deacons: Chair, Frank Lenox; Secretary, Tom Brillat; Strategic Planning, Kevin Pelton

Trustees: Chair, Sharon Davis; Vice-Chair, Jeff Richardson; Secretary, Carol Blanpied; Strategic planning, Sharon Davis

Christian Ed.: Chair, Michelle Davis; Secretary, Jill Dumican

Mission: Chair, Tina Letcher; Secretary, Sarah Simeone; Strategic Planning, Cindy Buxton

Progressive Dinner Update

Mark your calendars! The 2008 KCC Progressive Dinner will take place on April 26th 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.

Sign up in Fellowship Hall on March 16th, March 23rd or April 6th.

Flower Donations

The Flower Committee is requesting that anyone interested in donating flowers in memory of a loved one, please contact Vickie Wallace, 295-1970. We would be glad to assist any member of the congregation with this request.

Thank you.

Women's Fellowship Program

"A Walk in the Garden"

Monday, March 10th at 7:00 PM

Renew, Relax, Refresh

Men's Fellowship 2008

Saturday Seminar

George Fitzelle presents: Dealing with Life's Challenges, Past and Future
Saturday, March 15, 2008
9 – 11 AM in the Fireplace Room
Join other men of the congregation as George leads discussion on this topic
Sign-up sheet on Fellowship Hall Bulletin Board

April Retreat

Retreat at Irons Homestead April 25 – 26
See their website: http://www.ricucc.org/irons.html
In combination with a work day at Irons on April 26th
Stay tuned for particulars
Sign-up sheet on Fellowship Hall Bulletin Board

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, Richard Geisler, Frank Lenox, Jim Ross

6th Annual SPNM Benefit Concert

Sunday, March 9th at 3:00 pm

Phillips Memorial Baptist Church
565 Pontiac Avenue, Cranston

A musical extravaganza by:
RIUMA (RI United Methodist Conference Children's Choir), St. Matthew's Church Choir
Henry Barnard School Chorus, Greenville Vocal Ensemble, Arlyn Valencia, Violinist
Martha Sobaje, the SPNM Kids

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 SPNM.
Refreshments will follow the concert.

Church School Open House!

Please join us for Coffee Hour "downstairs" after church on April 26th. Come meet the church school teachers, visit the classrooms, get information about the church school and "Safe Church" policies, and have some refreshments with the Teachers, the Board of Christian Education and the Church School Director!

While enjoying the refreshments provided by the CE Board, please take a moment to fill out a brief **Church School Survey**. This survey will help the Christian Education Board to assess our church school program so that we can provide the best program possible for our children and youth.

HEIFER PROJECT

Thank You to everyone who has contributed so far to the Heifer Project. As I write, we have only completed "Penny Sunday", but if the amount the children collected that first week is any indication, they are well on their way to beating last year's total.

VBS

Save the date! Canonicus Camp - July 21 to July 25. Young people from Kindergarten through high school will enjoy games, crafts, swimming, nature, music and food as they gather with other area churches for a week-long exploration of God's love.

Confirmands' Potluck Luncheon

On Sunday, March 16th there will be a Palm Sunday potluck luncheon for the confirmands and their sponsors immediately following the worship service. The confirmands and their sponsors are asked to meet in the fireplace room and to bring a dish to share as we join Reverend Zehring and the confirmation leaders in celebrating the newest members to the church.

A Little History about our Sundial

Samuel B. Jones, Jr. 1900 – 1961

As you know, the lovely sundial, stone patio and shrubbery located in the rear southwest yard of our church, was donated and constructed in memory of Samuel B. Jones. Upon collecting research from family members: daughter Patience Ericson of Frenchtown, NJ, and son Charles of Warwick, RI, and grandson Sam Jones of Wisconsin; as well as our own Ralph Browning, who was Sam's close friend; and Carolyn Henn who attended the Edgewood Congregational Church in Cranston with the Jones family, we now have some wonderful insight as to just who this fine gentleman was.

Sam was born in Palmyra, NJ. After serving in the Marines in WW I, Sam worked in sales in the steel industry, becoming district manager in New England for Armco Steel. Sam and his wife, Emma Kipp, had four children, three of whom graduated from URI, and one graduated from Williams College. He and his family lived in NJ, Marblehead, MA, and Edgewood, RI. In 1955, he and Emma moved to their beloved country home in Exeter, just south of Route 102, and he was soon appointed to the Bd. Of Education in Exeter. While living in South County, the family joined KCC. Sam loved our church, his country, sailing, writing and painting.

In 1660, Sam became Chair of our Building Committee to construct Fellowship Hall, connecting our sanctuary to the Church House. The Building Committee consisted of 7 members: Chair Sam, Ralph Browning, Elizabeth Wells, Fred Jennings, Bea Pelton, Alice Hope and David Curtis. They worked hard, amidst some controversy over the large front window and "esthetics of design". Finally, the state and town Historical Commissions approved the plan, and Ralph as chief Estimator of Gilbane, got firm prices from all the subcontractors for heating, ventilation, electric, etc. Gilbane's bid was $135,000 to complete the job, which did include some repairs to the Fireplace Room and Coir Room. (The target had been $125,000.00.) There was a church meeting called on July 16, 1960 to get an approval vote so the building permit could be obtained. Sam was ill that evening, so Ralph conducted the meeting and got an OK. Ralph remembers keeping the meeting brief, because his wife Charlotte was in labor delivering their son, Tom, and Ralph was anxious to get back to SCH.

Sam loved sundials and had one constructed at almost every one of his homes. One day, Sam asked Ralph what he thought of having a sundial at KCC. Ralph thought it would be a good idea, and assumed Sam was going to build one in our front courtyard upon completion of the Fellowship Hall. The Hall took 2 years to build, and while Sam was able to participate in the groundbreaking, he was very ill and did not live to see the Hall completed. After his death, his wife Emma continued to be an active church member, and she became a housemother at Chi Omega Sorority at URI.

Grandson Sam Jones fondly remembers Grampa as being lots of fun. At their Exeter home, which is still in the Jones family, Grampa dammed up their brook and made a big pond. Next he put a grab bar on a pulley so the children could swing out over the pond. We understand when Patience visits the homestead each summer, she has been known to come to KCC. Patience was married in our church to John Ericson, so when she visits again, we'll all be sure to give her a big welcome. Charles Jones also plans to visit us in the near future, so how fortunate we are!

Submitted by Audrey Hallberg