

The Carriage Stone

June 2009

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church, New City, NY.
The English Church



Worth Reading

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Summer Reading
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"The Carriage Stone" is the Newsletter of
The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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FROM THE PASTOR

Good Reads for Summer

The calendar says spring, but it's been a chilly, drizzly one! Hopefully, the days will warm steadily and the pace of life will slow a bit. As a Christian, I tend to read fiction with an eye to how God might be present in the story (whether or not the author intends that presence.) Here are some suggestions for summer reading; stories and/or memoirs where it's not too difficult to see spiritual themes. Hope you can make some time this summer for a good book.

Death Comes for the Archbishop

by Willa Cather.

This is one you may have read in high school, but it is worth a second look. The title is somewhat misleading; it's actually a fictionalized account of the life of the Archbishop of Santa Fe in the late nineteenth century. A lovely, quiet story of a life faithfully lived.

The Great Failure

by Natalie Goldberg.

Goldberg is a Jewish Buddhist (Yes—such things exist!) who has devoted her life to meditation and writing. In this memoir, she explores two formative relationships in her life; one with her father, the other with her monk-mentor.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato-Peel Pie Society

by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows.

A recent best-seller, this delightful novel is written in the form of letters. It tells the story of a writer who becomes friends with a group of people on the Channel Island of Guernsey, and learns their story of survival during the Nazi occupation of WWII. While not an explicitly “religious” book, people of faith will have no problem seeing the presence of God as the story unfolds.

Mr. Golightly's Holiday

by Sally Vickers.

A somewhat difficult read, as layers of events are peeled back as the story is told. This novel asks very provocative questions about God, Jesus, good, and evil.

The Shack

by William Paul Young.

This seems to be a book that you either love or hate. I loved it. While Mr. Young is not the world's best writer, he does tell the story of the Love of God (capital letters intentional!) in a way that had me in tears more often than not. Again, a provocative read, one not everyone will agree with. I'd love to have a discussion group next fall on this one!

Happy Reading!



Pentecost Offering

Pentecost is an amazing, life-giving day in the community of faith. At Pentecost, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to transform human life and all of creation. Through our participation in the Pentecost Offering, we will be helping to bring the

transforming love of God to children at risk, youth and young adults.

The Pentecost Offering is a tangible way to demonstrate that Spirit within us! It gives us the opportunity to use 40 percent of the amount we receive to minister in our own community on behalf of children at risk. This year, our gift will be to an after-school program run by the Salvation Army in Spring Valley.

Through General Assembly ministries, the Pentecost Offering also makes an astonishing impact as it guides and nurtures the faith of Presbyterian young people, calls forth a new generation of church leadership and advocates for children at risk on a national level.

Thank you for your support of the Pentecost Offering on May 31. Your gifts will have an impact now and in the generations to come!

Tag Sale

Thanks to all who donated to, purchased from, sold items at or cooked food for the tag sale in May. Thanks, also, to Sparkle the Magical clown for her inspired haberdashery and for bringing in the customers. The sale was a big success, both as a fundraiser and as a fellowship activity.



Thanks So Much!

Strawberry Festival

The Olde-Tyme Strawberry Festival and Square Dance will be on June 20 from 1–6 PM on the church lawn. There will be strawberry-themed foods, free square dancing, a bake sale, the return of Sparkle the Magical Clown, church memorabilia and old-fashioned games to play. The highlight will be a presentation by our own choir. Events are spread throughout the time, so you won't want to miss a minute.

Since the local community will be joining us for this event in our 275th anniversary celebration, we will need everyone's help. Sign up sheets are appearing in the Colonial room. A big staff will be needed during the event and advance preparation, such as cooking your strawberry specialties, is desired as well.



Book Bonanza

Reader's Service at Stony Point is hosting a Book Bonanza in June. A huge selection of used books in all areas (fiction, non-fiction, children's) both hard cover and paperback will be for sale. The sale runs June 19 (noon to 9 PM), June 20 (9 AM to 9 PM, but don't miss the strawberry festival!) and June 21 (2 PM to 6 PM). Proceeds benefit Stony Point's mission of recycling used books to mission workers and institutions in developing countries. Reader's Service is located at W. Main Street and Crickettown Road in Stony Point. Visit stonypointcenter.org for more details.

Worship Time Change

We'll be going to our Summer Worship schedule on June 14. Worship will begin at 10 AM in the Sanctuary. Enjoy your summer!

Opera Performance

Sunday, June 7 at 4:30 PM, the Rockland Opera will perform at New Hempstead Presbyterian Church. The performance is entitled "Heroes and Villains in Opera" and includes Arias, Duets and Ensembles from *Il Trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi. Performers include Mezzo-soprano, Rita Matheson as Azucena; Soprano, Alexandra LoBianco as Leonora; Tenor, Emanuel Morra as Manrico; and Charity Wicks at the Piano.

The performance is dedicated to the memory of Barbara Hurley.

NHPC members can buy tickets in advance for \$5 through the church office. General admission is \$10; seniors and students pay \$8. For more information, contact the Rockland Opera at (845) 574-4591.

Hearing Aids

We all know individuals who struggle with day to day living because of a hearing loss. While the purchase of hearing aids for many is only a dream, help is available for those who lack the resources to purchase hearing aids. The Starkey Hearing Foundation works to make hearing aids available to those in need. The Foundation has a program that serves low-income individuals residing in the US to acquire hearing aids.

Hearing aids are provided through an application process to those low-income individuals permanently living in the US who have no other resource to acquire hearing aids. All applicants must meet the program's financial criteria, complete the application process and be approved for hearing aids.

Hear Now works with licensed practitioners, in the applicant's area, willing to donate their time and talent to assist clients with the fitting and follow up processes.

If you want further information, please call the Hear Now program at 1-800-328-8602 and ask for the Hear Now program. Please visit the Foundation at www.sotheworldmayhear.org.



Tim Bidon, son of **Marc** and **Laura**, had his artwork exhibited at Rockland Community College in the Young Artists at Work exhibit recently. Tim's work was chosen to represent the 11th grade. Good for you Tim!

Congratulations on the baptism of **David James Dewey** on May 17. We welcome him into the family of God.

Our prayers and sympathy are with **Milagros Lorico** following the death of her father.

As an expression of sympathy, the Legislature of Rockland County, on a motion by Harriet Cornell, adjourned its meeting of May 5, 2009 in memory of **Barbara Hurley**.

If you know a full-time student (high school or college) who programs computers, direct him or her to www.dyalog.com/contest2009. The company is running a programming contest with cash prizes. Deadline to enter is July 1. Thanks to **Shirley Martignetti** for pointing this out.

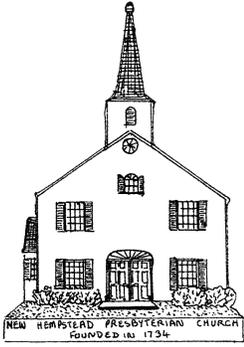
Press Release

From Howard Whitehouse

[[Howard did such a great job on the press release for our 275th anniversary that we wanted to share it with you. It gives the familiar history of the church and his sense of humour shines through. I've added a few of Bob Greenhalgh's drawings along the way.]]

This year marks the 275th anniversary of the founding of New Hempstead Presbyterian Church. It will be a year of celebration.

Many Rockland County residents will recognize our church, standing on New Hempstead Road, just as the hill climbs to meet Highway 45. It



looks like a picture-book American church, an old-fashioned structure built in white wood. At night it glows with candles in each window. People stop, just to look at it.

But this is the new building. We just recently put it up, in 1828.

It stands on the site of an older church, dating from 1734. In that year settlers founded “The English Church,” the first English-speaking congregation in New York west of the Hudson River. The village where it stood had been laid out by settlers from the Long Island community of Hempstead – hence the name New Hempstead – and at first the new church was governed as part of the Long Island Presbytery.

What are Presbyterians? The Presbyterian Church is a Protestant denomination of the Christian faith, tracing its roots from the work of John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland in the C16th, through England and especially Scotland to the New World. It has no permanent hierarchy of bishops, but operates according to a connectional system of government. In the early days of the New York colony Presbyterians (along with other Protestant groups outside the official Church of England) were listed as ‘Dissenters’ and widely excluded from public office. Many Presbyterians found that the edges of settled territory were more amenable than the established cities; thus they came found to New Hempstead. The first handful of settlers arrived in 1713; more came in groups in 1720 and 1725. It came time to found a church for the community. Previously the small Anglo settlement in what was to become Rockland County had held their weddings, baptisms and funerals at a Dutch church in Tappan. Few of the new arrivals spoke Dutch, however, and Tappan was twelve miles away – a long way by foot, boat or horseback.

At first, services were held in a log-built schoolhouse (which survives only in the name of the road next to the church). Around 1742 a simple, plank-built church without tower or steeple was constructed. It was about 30 feet by 36, whitewashed, and instructions were made that the floor be scrubbed clean with sand on a regular basis.

New Hempstead Church was involved in the Revolutionary War. Continental forces camped on the church property in 1778. Coe’s tavern, which stood on the far side of Old Schoolhouse Road, was a popular place for rest and refreshment on the way to King’s Ferry (near Stony Point), where the Hudson could be crossed. A group of British prisoners held nearby made an escape bid, and in the confusion, two were shot by guards; a history of New Hempstead from 1934 suggests that they were buried

close to the old church.

Coe’s Tavern was also



connected with the famous Benedict Arnold plot to betray West Point to the British. Local legend has it (the details are sketchy and open to dispute) that Major John Andre, Arnold’s British contact, was held captive overnight at the church. Other versions say he simply had a meal there. Major Andre was regarded by all who met him as a decent and honorable man, and both sides regretted his subsequent hanging as a spy.

The church was apparently quite damaged by the time the war ended. Records for the next few decades suggest hard times. It is noted that “*In 1797, the Rev. Allan Blair became pastor here jointly with the Presbyterian Church of Haverstraw. He agreed to give one-half his time to each congregation and was to have the free use of the New Hempstead parsonage. Mr. Blair’s salary for the half time he gave’ to this congregation was \$125 per year. The call, written so earnestly and so reverently, has a*

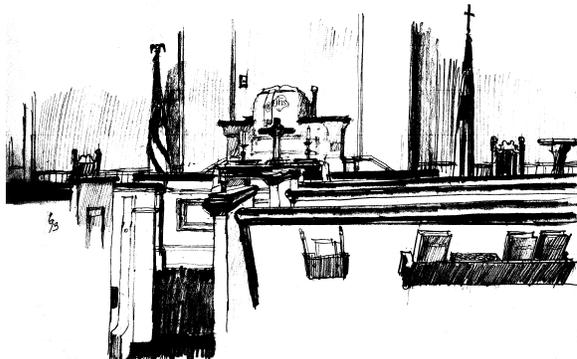
touch of pathos for us when we read that the money was paid so that the minister might “be free from worldly cares and avocations.”

Indeed, when The Rev. Blair left in 1809, no pastor was found until 1817. Times clearly improved, because in 1827 the congregation decided to rebuild ‘The English Church’ in a larger, more handsome style.



The treasurer’s “account of monies paid for building new church and to whom” shows a total of \$1,476.50 for the new church and for new stoves, a bell, rope, blacksmithing, etc., \$148.80” - a total cost of \$1,625.30. To fund the project, each of the pews was sold to members of the congregation, each parishioner making a commitment to pay for the upkeep of the church and the pastor’s salary. Careful use of resources is a Presbyterian habit, so the frame of the old church was sold to a member, and a ‘Historical Sketch’ written for the church’s bicentennial in 1934 mentions that it was still standing on a farm nearby. In 1934 Rockland County still had many farms.

New Hempstead Presbyterian Church settled down as a small parish church with a close community of members. The records indicate various events: a Sunday school started in 1851. Lightning struck the roof in 1879. A fine white manse was built for the pastor and family in 1904-5. An addition to the church, housing offices and a gathering room was added in 1930. We have a list of ministers, including the unbeatably named Rev. Abijah Green (1852–1853) and, some forty years later the equally memorable, Aipheus P. Meeker.



Two hundred and seventy five years since the founding of NHPC, the world has changed beyond all recognition. In 1734 the British colonies in North America were a narrow band of settlements along the eastern coast of the continent. Canada was French, Florida Spanish, and the southernmost crown colony was the newly founded Georgia. What was to become Rockland County was thinly populated and mostly Dutch speaking. By the time the present church was built, John Quincy Adams was president of the twenty-four United States, with a recorded population of twelve million. There was not yet a single mile of railway in the country, and the new church bell was brought to Haverstraw by boat, then carried by wagon.

The congregation of New Hempstead Presbyterian Church remains strong, serving the community as it has for almost three centuries. The ministers are no longer exclusively men with unusual names – the current pastor is the third woman to hold the office. Members of the congregation come from all continents except Antarctica (and we are working on that). The church hosts a long established AA group, a nursery school and Rockland’s office for Habitat for Humanity. It helps support a food bank and a hostel for homeless men. It is a hospitable church, famous for its remarkable choir and music program. In recognition of the anniversary, the church will offer a program of special events.



