



The Carriage Stone

May 2024

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



“The Carriage Stone” is the Newsletter of
The New Hempstead Presbyterian Church

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*“Holy darkness, blessed night,
Heaven’s answer hidden from our sight.
As we await you, O God of silence,
We embrace your holy night.”*



-Dan Schutte

“Holy darkness.” I never thought of darkness as being holy before. Yet this idea based on the writing of St. John of the Cross a mystic who lived in the 16th century C.E., encourages us to embrace the darkness of our lives for it is here we encounter God. This is indeed the promise of the resurrection. No matter what may be happening in our lives, no matter what “dark night of the soul” we are experiencing, God is with us, transforming the night into day.

This is not sentimentality that diminishes the pain we may be encountering. On the contrary, it recognizes that this suffering is part of our human condition. It validates our experience while at the same time freeing us from being in bondage to it. This is power of the Jesus’ story: his life, death and resurrection.

What a wonderful idea, to think of God, who by God’s very being is beyond human understanding, becoming human. This Deity, so desired to be in relationship with humanity that God became human in the man Jesus; not to initiate some cosmic justice of avenging God’s honor, or ransoming humanity from the devil; not to exact cosmic retribution, but to be in solidarity with creation, all of creation.

God became human to be one with humanity and forever become part of every aspect of the human condition, its joy and sorrows.

The Resurrection is God’s ultimate redemption of whatever we are experiencing in our lives. It is the light shining in the darkness: the glimmer of hope and new life we intuit when we feel as if we are being overcome by sadness. It is what helps us breath when we cannot find our breath. Resurrection is the promise that there is no suffering separate or foreign to God’s experience and so God shares our pain, our sorrows and our suffering ultimately creating new life from the darkness, transforming our hearts. This is indeed holy.

God, however, cannot do it alone. God respects our freedom and our choices. Can we, in this Easter season allow God to transform our lives? Can we let go of our pain, our resentments, our grudges and any other addictions we have to the energy of the darkness? This is question before us. The answer is we cannot; not at least without God’s help and grace.

So in this Easter Season may we pray to be released from the hardness of heart toward ourselves and toward anything that separates us from the love of God that we may experience the joy of new life promised us in the Resurrection.

May we indeed embrace the holiness of our nights.

Blessings,

Angela

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela".

Keep Rockland Beautiful

From Mark Zacheis

Our church hosted a Keep Rockland Beautiful clean-up day again this year, on April 20. Thirteen of our folks and eleven community members participated in picking up trash along New Hempstead and Old Schoolhouse roads. It had rained a bit overnight but by starting time the rain had stopped, the sun came out, and the temperature was around 60 degrees. Perfect! In a matter of hours, our hardy team had picked up close to 40 bags of trash, plus a variety of construction debris, car parts, and a cell phone. The road looks lovely now and thank you to all of you who participated. Note that it was Karen who found Kirby this year.



The Manse

By Mark Zacheis

Lots of things have been done in the manse since my last report in the Carriage Stone. The electrical service has been upgraded; a new circuit breaker box, new light switches and outlets on the first floor, and dedicated circuits for the microwave and refrigerator have been installed. The microwave and the refrigerator have been installed as well. The three new kitchen cabinets were delivered and put into place. A new counter has been installed. The kitchen has received a new coat of paint on the ceiling, walls, and trim (see picture of kitchen progress so far) but there is still lots to do in that room. We've made a lot of progress removing the tile from the upstairs bathroom but it is a long process. With the weather turning warmer, we've made a lot of progress on the gardens and landscaping. And a new set of stairs has been installed to the basement (see before and after pictures). Many thanks to those folks who have given their time to get these things done. We hope to get some of the other rooms prepped for paint soon so that we can schedule a painting party. In the meantime, if you would like to help please let me know, and if you happen to pass by the church and see people working in the manse, be sure to stop in to say hello and to see the progress being made.



The Mission Committee

The final tally for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering raised came to \$2,431; thank you all for contributing so generously. As promised, the Mission Committee committed \$2,080 to the Family Farm Bundle, plus various bees, chickens, and other livestock. We hope to have more information about where in the world these gifts ended up in a future article.



The balance of \$351 was sent to the [OGHS](#) general fund. This is the one offering that we support that goes outside of our local area.

The second special offering of the year that our church supports is the Pentecost Offering, which will culminate on Pentecost Sunday, May 19. This year we are designating the proceeds to go to the [MLK Multi-Purpose Center](#) in Spring Valley. The Center offers a variety of programs to the community and you'll hear more about them in four Minutes for Mission leading up to Pentecost Sunday. The one we are most familiar with, and which some of our members participate in, is their community food distribution program. Food insecurity is a real issue for many people in Rockland County and has only gotten worse with the inflation of food prices. Please contribute what you can.



Pentecost Music

From Lois Anderson

May 19, the first Sunday of Pentecost, the choir will perform spirited music with our guest musician, guitarist Burr Johnson.



Madison String Quartet

From Mark Zacheis

The Madison String Quartet presented their program "Harmony Through Time" in our church's sanctuary on April 6, as part of the Morning Music Club's concert series. The program included music for string quartet written by Ludwig van Beethoven, Walter Kaufmann, and Arturo Marquez. Our Fellowship Committee provided a reception following the performance.

The next Morning Music Club concert is scheduled for May 18 at 2 PM, also to be held in our sanctuary.

Next Fellowship Event: Tour of Wildflower Island

From Nancy Jacobs

Wednesday, May 15, 10 AM- Meet at NHPC to carpool

Cost (including entrance fee, parking and travel) \$20 per person

The two-acre [Wildflower Island](#), a refuge within the greater Teatown preserve in Ossining, is home to roughly 280 species of wildflowers, trees, shrubs, ferns, grasses, sedges, and rushes.

May is the blossom time for many of these species, now rare in Rockland.

In the 1990s, when Rockland's old forests were being cut to build residential neighborhoods for the booming population, Nancy Jacobs transferred now-rare species — like the Pink Lady's Slipper to the island in order to save them from destruction. She enjoys visiting them, and so will you.

There is a limit of 12 people to go on this date. Sign up during coffee hour. Pay in advance. Reservations are needed in order to have the experienced Teatown volunteers provide a tour. We will carpool. Only the threat of lightning storms will cancel the event.



Pack a bag lunch to eat at their picnic tables after the tour.

There's a signup sheet on the bulletin board just inside the Colonial Room door. Sign up, and then contact Nancy Jacobs with questions. There are already four people signed up to go.



Palm Sunday Luncheon

From Terry Lucas

The annual traditional Palm Sunday luncheon, once again, was met with great enthusiasm and warm fellowship. Many thanks go to the Deacons and the Fellowship Committee for organizing and setting the stage for this much-anticipated event leading into Holy Week.

It was wonderful to see so many friends, families and guests coming together to enjoy a meal featuring a variety of delicious dishes and desserts. Judging from the laughter and lively chatter throughout Murchison Hall, a good time was had by all.

