

THE BRIDGE

Connecting the Fair Haven Community

Summer 2004

GOOD NEIGHBORS

A Community Built Around Many Bridges

Peter Treffers moved to a busy corner in Fair Haven in order to start building some bridges of his own.

ONE OF THE REMARKABLE THINGS ABOUT FAIR HAVEN is the high level of involvement by local residents in their neighborhood's issues. At least that is how attorney Peter Treffers sees it from where he sits in his home and law office—only a stairway's climb from the intersection of Quinnipiac and Grand Avenues near the Grand Avenue Bridge. As a long time resident of Fair Haven, Peter feels inspired by the positive changes that have come about because of hard working neighbors finding ways to make it a better place to live. In a neighborhood defined by its bridges, you might describe Peter's practice as a local bridge-over-the-troubled-water of everyday legal problems.



Attorney Peter Treffers stops on the front steps leading up to his law offices and Fair Haven home.

A good neighbor and citizen, Peter Treffers has long strived, in his work and now by his faith in Jesus Christ, to fulfill a desire to serve. Through his practice of the law, Peter hopes to realize some of his own personal and spiritual goals helping to solve the various legal problems of the average, everyday person. In a way, like the busy Grand Avenue Bridge nearby, Treffers offers a reliable means for people to cross over the wide and ever-moving river of life and safely navigate the tricky, daily currents that threaten their well-being.



When Peter first moved to Fair Haven in the early nineties, he lived up the hill on Hemingway Street. For nearly thirty years, his law office was located downtown near the courthouse and he crossed the Grand Avenue Bridge each day to get to work. About five years ago, Peter decided that he would rather have his practice centered in Fair Haven and moved to the busy corner. For one thing, it would be easier for the people who most needed his services to find him. Location! Location! Location! Now, rather than being less accessible to the people for which he felt he could do the most good, he was visible in the local neighborhoods of east New Haven.

Law was a bit far afield from where Peter first began with studies in European history at Wesleyan University back in the Sixties. The young Peter studied French and German before taking an interest in learning Russian with a goal of entering the new, but growing cold war field of Soviet studies. Discovering an interest in the law, he earned his degree from Indiana University.

Years later, and now a practicing attorney, Peter focused on representing claimants in matters pertaining to worker's compensation cases. He found it to be very satisfying work—and in helping people who were injured, he could see a tangible good. Peter felt empathy for these people and their problems, and found he could do something to relieve their troubles. Ultimately, however, he came to believe the changes in worker's compensation laws enacted in 1993 prevented him from acting fully in his clients' best interest. Frustrated, he looked to other areas of the law to find work that he felt solved essential problems for people, and found the answer in creating a neighborhood law firm.

These days, as he practices general law in the community, Peter is busy and happily solving some of the everyday problems and universal headaches that afflict people here. Buying a

house, negotiating mortgage problems with the bank, stopping foreclosures, resolving tax issues, mediating domestic issues—these are the kinds of challenges in which Treffers finds great reward working to resolve.

An active member of the St. James' Church community, Peter finds the Hispanic services bring him an especially meaningful religious experience. He really loves the people and the diversity at St. James', where he has become increasingly interested in the church's activities since joining about three years ago. Only more recently has Peter's introspective nature inspired him to reflect on how the law relates to spiritual needs, and plays a role in everyday living. He ponders the writing of St. Paul who, in his New Testament letters, commented extensively about the Ten Commandments and the purpose of obeying the law. Treffers likes to consider the question Paul asks about whether simply following the law makes someone a good person—or whether it is one's faith beyond the law. In meeting Peter Treffers you will likely discover, however, that of all the laws, the one that inspires him most is also one very essential and basic to us all: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

† St. James' Response Card *Please, let us hear from you!*

- I would like to make the following comments on this issue of *The Bridge*:
- I would like to request prayers from the church for the following:

- I would like a pastoral visit from the church.
- I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the ministry of St. James' Church in Fair Haven. Enclosed is a check for the following amount: \$ _____

Name:
Address:
Telephone:
E-mail:

Please clip and mail to: St. James' Church, 62 East Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT 06513 (Or, better yet, drop it by the church office anytime. We'd love to talk to you.) **Thank you!**



HISTORICAL HAVEN

THE BRIDGE THAT BUILT FAIR HAVEN

According to local historian, neighborhood preservationist, and author Doris B. Townshend, "The history of Fair Haven begins with the building of the first bridge over the Quinnipiac River in 1791." In her enjoyable and fascinating 1976 book, **Fair Haven: A Journey through Time**, Ms. Townshend traces the origins, and chronicles the development of this colorful and important neighborhood. Through her detailed research, you can see how much the three bridges that have spanned the river at this same narrow point may constitute some of Fair Haven's most defining and important features.

The place where the Grand Avenue Bridge crosses the river today is the original spot that caught the imagination of colonial entrepreneurs on both sides of the Quinnipiac back on the late eighteenth century, and inspired them to replace the long-running ferry with the first permanent means of crossing. The ferry had provided the shortest route to the outer reaches of the New Haven Colony for more than a hundred years. As the settlement, then known as Dragon, began to grow along the eastern side of the river, commerce dictated the need for a more convenient route to New Haven. Besides the ferry, the only crossing of the river was an unreliable wooden causeway further up river known as Morris's long bridge. It made its way through the marshes to connect with the Middletown road.

On March 21, 1791, permission came from the Connecticut General Assembly to begin a bridge.



Construction on the toll bridge project began in the summer of that year with the creation of a new, wide road known as Grand Street on the west side of the river and the connector to what is now known as Quinnipiac Avenue on the east side. The cost, in theory, paid through the inadequate funds raised in an earlier lottery, and by allowing the building contractors to levy a toll. The whole building and management of this bridge was soon embroiled in a controversy between New Haven, Fair Haven and East Haven. In fact, it was not long before, in 1796, East Haven got permission to build a bridge across the harbor connecting it with New Haven and soon after completed Tomlinson's Bridge.

The second bridge at this location replaced the original bridge of 1793 when it opened in 1861 during the first year of The Civil War.

It had sidewalks for pedestrians and featured a horse drawn railway. Unlike the original bridge, the new one did not have a draw. Ice or floods had long-plagued that particular feature of drawbridge design.

Electricity replaced horse-powered rail and in the period 1896-98, the Berlin Iron Bridge Company built an impressive metal railroad crossing for the river. Resting gracefully on seven stone piers, the iron bridge measured 427 feet long and 50 wide. Today it is the same Grand Avenue Bridge and a Fair Haven landmark. The fact that this huge structure has turned some 2000 times a year for over one hundred years pays testimony to the impressiveness of this engineering feat. It is a marvel of Yankee ingenuity!

RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

Bridge Over the River Q

As you cross the Grand Avenue Bridge, you may have had a bit of curiosity about the small building—The Bridge House—nestled among the upper trusses of this iron structure. Maybe you were even a little envious of those anonymous, solitary bridge operators who work up there and must have the most amazing view! If you ever sat waiting those excruciatingly long eight minutes it takes to open and close the bridge, you have surely wondered what it takes to stop traffic and move this handsome piece of 19th century engineering knowhow.



Bridge operators Mike Bendel, Steve Cole and Gary Herriot serve the community.

"In the most basic terms, it swivels like a huge *Lazy Susan*," quips Gary Herriot, one of seven members of the crew that manage this vital community crossroad. Gary speaks passionately on the significance of the bridge and its importance to local commerce and tourism. He is part of the experienced team that serves virtually out of sight 24/7 to ensure the safe control of marine and vehicle traffic over and around the bridge.

The bridge operators move the span on an "open on demand" basis. Under marine law, the bridge cannot restrict commerce on the river. When a vessel radios the bridge house, the operators immediately notify emergency services to make them aware of the situation, and to be alert for possible traffic delays. Herriot advises, "Safety is the key!" On a typical peak summer day, the crew will move the bridge about 25 times. So many procedures are essential to safely moving the bridge, computerized systems are now used to manage this industrial age gem. It is truly a bridge across time, spanning the 19th to the 21st Century.

Pastoral Reflections

Jesus—the Bridge to Life with God



BY THE REV. GEOFF LITTLE
PASTOR, ST. JAMES' CHURCH

We at St. James' Church have a confession to make with respect to this newsletter, and this first anniversary issue spotlighting the Grand Avenue bridge is the right place to make it! Our choice of the title "The Bridge" is not so much about our making a connection with the neighborhood as it is about proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the only bridge to God. Indeed, it is our constant prayer that you might make Jesus the bridge to God for yourself.

Though the word "bridge" does not appear in the Bible, there are plenty of bridge-like allusions to God. In the Old Testament when the Lord brought the people of Israel, not over, but through the Red Sea they sang: "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling" (Exodus 15:13). Then, in

the well-known words of Psalm 23, we read, "The Lord is my shepherd...he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul."

In the New Testament we find Jesus saying about himself, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." (John 10:9). Then he reveals, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6). Finally, the Apostle Paul writes about Jesus: "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by the one Spirit." (Ephesians 2:17-18).

I know that to many, perhaps to you, these passages come across as unsettling and exclusive. In fact, I would say they make no sense at all, unless one accepts two foundational ideas (like pillars of a bridge) as true: 1. we imperfect human beings need a bridge to God because we cannot reach his perfection on our own; and 2. Jesus, the God-Man, is the only one worthy to be that bridge.

Friends of Fair Haven, humbly and prayerfully I ask you to cross the bridge to life with God. When you find you cannot make it on your own, Jesus is steel and pavement to hold you up. The journey across is life-long, and not always easy; but Jesus will lead you and guide you. Those of us in the church, any Christian church, are your companions along the way.

Family Matters

The Dream Lives On

BY BETSY HAUGH
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN
AND FAMILY MINISTRIES,
ST. JAMES CHURCH

It was only a short year ago here in *The Bridge* that I shared with you of my life-long dream to serve children, and how God has allowed me

to do just that at St. James' Church. St. James' also had a dream—that of starting a day care center—only the real challenges of funding and licensing were overwhelming. We had to give up that dream and ask ourselves, "What does God want us to do now?" Praying for guidance, we found a new dream—that of creating a literacy program for children here in Fair Haven.

Now more than a dream, we are running a program. With almost no funding, we somehow manage to hold classes each Saturday afternoon for 30 students. Recently we added an English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) class for parents of literacy program kids.



Next, the God of surprises gave us a generous grant through the Community Action Agency. It means we are able to purchase the materials and equipment we desperately need for this program, including a computer lab far beyond our wildest dreams.

Do we have more dreams? Yes! We would like to expand the Saturday afternoon program into an after-school program. It will be exciting to see where God leads us next!

For information about the St. James' Literacy Program, please call the church at (203) 467-6958 or email me at: elizabethhaugh@hotmail.com.

Created for the Fair Haven community by



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Episcopal + Evangelical + Intercultural

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COMMUNITY AND CHURCH CALENDAR SUMMER 2004



Services every 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays
10 AM: Bible teaching and Holy Communion, English language.
12 NOON: Bible teaching and Holy Communion, Spanish language.

Service every 1st Sunday
10 AM: Bible Sermon and Holy Communion, bilingual. Community lunch following the service.

Church Picnic: Sunday, August 1, 11:00 AM, Chatfield Hollow State Park. Baptisms in the brook!

St. James' Literacy Program: Saturdays, 2-4 PM, St. James' Church. Sept. - June. ESL for adults, too!

Boy Scouts: Mondays 7-9 PM, St. James' Church. Call Bill Mason at (203) 469-0786

Quinnipiac River Community Group: every 2nd Tuesday, 7 PM, Yacht Club

Alzheimer's Support Group: every 1st Wednesday, 7 PM, The Mary Wade Home, 118 Clinton Ave.