

THE BRIDGE

Connecting the Fair Haven Community

Summer 2006

GOOD NEIGHBORS

A Deep Faith in the Institution of Marriage

How one couple has lived a life filled with love and happiness through God.

GEORGE AND BARBARA COULOMBE CELEBRATED THEIR MARRIAGE VOWS OVER 40 YEARS AGO HERE AT ST. JAMES' CHURCH. When they decided to wed, the young couple agreed strongly that the lifelong partnership upon which they were about to embark was not simply about the two of them. As important as their love for each other was the love they each felt for God. In sharing this special relationship with their Creator, it has truly defined their life – adding further joy on their happiest days and granting them strength through the harder times.



George and Barbara Coulombe have a lifetime of photographs that tell of a special relationship with their family and their church.

St. James' has been a cornerstone in the life of the Coulombe family, as have they in the life of this 163-year-old church.

(See Historical Haven article.) When George Coulombe and Barbara Mead married 41 years ago, they established a commitment to each other and to a life of faith together. The couple has worshiped here about as long as any one else in the congregation. It is the place they raised their three children—Susan, Peter, and David—in Christian faith, teaching, and love. All three kids are now grown and married, and daughter Susan who resides nearby still loves singing on Sundays.

The Coulombe family supports the mission of St. James' through their own hard work and generous gifts. George, a long-standing vestry member quips, "I've been on just about any committee that ever existed!" He remains quite active in the governing body, and the financial acumen honed during his long career as an accountant for United Illuminating has proved a great service to keeping St. James' running soundly. Apart from some short sabbaticals, he has kept the books the entire forty-plus years he has been a church member. George takes special interest in the liturgy and was, at one time, the only lay reader. He later organized other parishoners to take part in the lay readership.

It was Barbara, however, who first attended St. James' when, as a little girl, her family moved to Fair Haven. Her mother Rose Mead, now deceased, was a beloved member of St. James' and taught Sunday school for many years while raising Barbara and son Richard in her faith. Barbara, herself, began teaching Sunday school at only age sixteen when Father Vogt, the church's pastor, asked her to take on this important work, which she did for the next twenty years. Years later, Father Vogt performed Barbara and George's marriage ceremony.

Young Barbara Mead was near graduation from SCSC, and student teaching at Dunbar Hill School in Hamden when she first met George Coulombe at his church, St. Thomas' on Whitney Avenue. Barbara fondly recalls George's smile that first caught her eye. They met again at a church party and it wasn't long before George asked her to a Peter, Paul, and Mary concert. Their fun first date led to a lifetime romance. The couple was married the following year and the new Mrs. Coulombe continued in the teaching profession until the birth of their first child, Susan, the following year. It was at this point the couple decided she should postpone her career to stay home to raise the family.

Once their kids were a little older, Barbara began working part time in the St. James' office where she handled church business including the production of bulletins, monthly newsletters, and public relations matters. It turned out to be a job she would enjoy for seventeen years. In 1981, Barbara was offered the job of musical director at St. James', playing organ and piano, and directing both adult and youth choirs. She is still playing organ on Sundays. It was during this time that George and Barbara both earned master's degrees

and Barbara a divinity school degree. It was seventeen years ago that "Mrs. Coulombe" returned to classroom teaching, and today is the popular music teacher at St. Mary School in Branford and St. Vincent de Paul in East Haven. Somehow, in her incredibly busy life, she manages to offer private piano lessons to more than thirty students each week. Barbara believes, "You can affect a lot lives through your work!"

George and Barbara share in their Christian marriage a special interest in the young people they have come to mentor and often attend these youngsters' ball games, plays, and concerts. They were active for years in Christian groups like Cursillo and Emmaus as leaders and sponsors for many young people and adults alike. George is Treasurer of the Deanery of New Haven, where Barbara also worked for twenty years.

The years of camaraderie the couple has enjoyed with fellow St. James' members as they organized Couples clubs, bowling leagues, fundraisers, dinners, or kid's Halloween parties, has provided them a special place to share their Christian marriage with family and lifelong friends.

† 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

A HOUSE OF WORSHIP BUILT ON A SOLID FOUNDATION

St. James' Episcopal Church was the first church in Fair Haven built east of the Quinnipiac River on what soon became Church Street (now East Grand Avenue.) The Rev. Dr. Harry Crosswell set the cornerstone on July 8, 1844 on a plot of land donated by Captain Isaac Brown. The church actually began on March 30, 1843 when some parishioners from Trinity Church on the New Haven Green and others from Christ Church, East Haven all decided their churches were too far from home and organized an Ecclesiastical Society in Fair Haven. The members of the Parish of St. James' held services in their houses, and in a store on the southwest corner of Grand and Quinnipiac Avenues until the new church building was complete. Workers chose the beautiful sandstone used in completing the Gothic structure from Captain Brown's quarry. Bishop Thomas Church Brownell, founder, and first president of Washington College (later renamed Trinity) in Hartford consecrated the Church on June 17, 1845.



The years 1904-06, saw installation of a new heating plant and the chancel removed to accommodate a vested choir. The first decade of the new century also brought a parish paper, called *St. James' Chronicle* and formation of both the Young Girls' Choir and the Men and Boys' Choir — considered one of the city's finest. With the beginning of the First World War came the dissolution of this talented group.

In 1933, the basement at St. James' underwent expansion to accommodate the growing church school. The Rev. David R. Johns led 80 members, who contributed 5000 hours of labor, in excavating the basement, thus saving the church \$5000 — no small sum during The Great Depression. In the famous hurricane of 1938, the church's tower was nearly demolished, so modifications lowered the original height. On March 18, 1943 —the parish marked its centennial with a special service and celebration presided over by Rev. Johns' who soon

after retired, having served as rector for over twenty years.

It was not until the sixties that the church saw any major changes with the building of a rectory. Dedicated on Sunday, November 22, 1964, the rectory was the vision of the Rev. Charles M. Vogt who saw the need to create a better facility for the Sunday school children who numbered in the hundreds. In the decades since, St. James' saw a distinct change in the community, and fluctuation in membership. Today it is a revitalized church, and reflective of the community in which it exists — a mix of cultures and ethnicities, and a unique bilingual place of worship for the Fair Haven community.

*The following sources were the basis for this article:
St. James' Church 125th anniversary history by Elsie Meickle
Fair Haven: A Journey Through Time by Doris B. Townshend*

Throughout its 163-year history, St. James' has undergone many changes to both the structure of the building and the make-up of its congregation. The 1850s saw completion of the chancel at the back of the church and installation of new chandeliers and lights. At the time, church records note there was a Sunday school of "fifty or more pupils and nine teachers." In 1862, during the Civil War, major work began on the interior. The addition of a cathedral roof, carved woodwork, stained glass, carpeting, and grand pipe organ made St. James' an especially magnificent house of worship and "never in a more prosperous condition!" In the following decade the parish women first served church suppers, in support of various missions — and physical changes included removal of the gallery and replacement of the pews in 1882.

RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

**Ending Homelessness—
One Family at A Time**



According to the National Mental Health Association, nearly forty percent of the nation's homeless are families. They represent the fastest growing population of the homeless, and un-thinkably, 1.2 million children are without a home everyday.

Life Haven, Inc., located on Ferry Street is working hard each day to address this problem in our own community through their successful temporary shelter programs for homeless women and their families.

The programs are individualized and the logical extension of Life Haven's fundamental mission as an emergency shelter for homeless pregnant women and women with young children. Founded in 1992 as a small grassroots effort, the Life Haven shelter now serves twenty families at any one time, offering residence to 150 families each year and helping 250 children. Last year this non-profit served 22,000 snacks and meals.

There are many reasons for women and their families to become homeless. Most often Life Haven sees families evicted due to break-ups, domestic violence, financial difficulties, or disasters. With the support of a range of services, including vocational opportunities, education and childcare, Life Haven helps these families regain stability and develop skills for independence. They have enjoyed a 90 percent rate of success in assisting families who enter their program establish permanent housing in the local community.

To learn more about Life Haven, Inc. or give them support, please visit their website: www.lifehaven.org

Pastoral Reflections

Preparing Couples for Christian Marriage Today



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

The theme of Christian family and marriage in this issue leads me to offer a couple of reflections on my experience as a pastor of doing pre-marital counseling in the church today.

The first thing I have noticed is that I am doing less and less of it all the time. Whether it's because fewer couples are bothering to get married, or because those who do are choosing not to get married in the church, we pastors are less busy doing pre-marital counseling than before. This is perhaps especially true in the city ministry environment.

Honestly, I have come to believe this is a good thing. Less is more. Whereas in earlier generations a church wedding was considered normal in society, and the church was expected to perform marriages almost as a

civic duty, now in my experience couples who want to get married in the church are more conscious of bringing Jesus Christ into the center of their married lives. The church views Holy Matrimony as nothing less than a spiritual and physical joining of a man and a woman in Christ. It's really a marriage of three not just two. The few who come to me today seeking pre-marital counseling seem to understand that and desire it more.

The second thing about today's pre-marital counseling is the demand for knowledge about compatibility. You know those internet dating services offering 60-point surveys to see if you are compatible with a person before you ever starting dating. I can do those too. There's the MMPI, the MBPI and many others all designed to show if you can really share a home with somebody or not.

Compatibility is a good thing to know about ahead of time, but I wonder if with all the new technology we are really asking the right questions. The tests are mainly focused on issues of personality and temperament, rather than in my judgment the more important factors of life values and purpose. To me a marriage even between complete incompatibles is likely to survive and thrive as long as there is an evidence of oneness in life direction, and especially in the determination to put God first in all things.

Family Matters

Fun for the Youngsters

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

Please mark your social calendar for two fun upcoming church events you and your kids will not want to miss!



Vacation Bible School

St. James' Church and Trinity Church, Branford, are teaming up to do a joint Vacation Bible School on Monday, August 14, to Friday, August 18. We are experimenting with evening hours for the program, 5:00-8:30 PM, to get the greatest participation possible. Each night parents can drop their kids off at St. James at 5:00 PM and pick them up at 8:30 PM. Transportation to and from Branford will be provided. VBS offers vital Christian education in a fun-filled setting. There will be games, arts and crafts, and refreshments for kids entering grades 1-4. The VBS is free of charge. To register your child, please call Betsy Haugh (469-6087) or Blanca Little (467-6083).

Pastor's Picnic

The third annual Pastor's Picnic is scheduled for September 9, 12:00 Noon- 4:00 PM, at Pastor Geoff and Blanca's home behind the church. There will be food (including the now traditional roasted pig), games for children, and fun for the whole family. At the picnic parents can register their children entering grades 1-3 for the Saturday Literacy Program to begin later in September. For information contact Blanca Little (467-6083).

COMMUNITY AND CHURCH CALENDAR SUMMER 2006

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

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

Sunday school for children and teens during both services.

Alzheimer's Support Group: Every 1st Wed., 6 PM, The Mary Wade Home, 118 Clinton Ave. Light dinner and respite care provided. Call Rosanne Mondrone, 203-562-7222. The weekend transportation program is free for those 60 years and older. Call ext. 148 for info.

June 28th at 6:30pm The Branford Town Band will give a free concert in Mary Wade back yard. Punch will be provided.

St. James' Literacy Program: Saturdays, 2-4 PM, at the Church. September-June for kids ages 5-8. Call Blanca Little, 203-467-6083.
Neighborhood BBQ: Wednesday, June 14, 6 PM, 345 Summit St. Bring a dish or dessert if you wish. Call Alex Rhodden. 203-469-2141

Vacation Bible School: Monday-Friday, August 14-18, 5-8 PM. Christian teaching, games, fun outside. Call Betsy Haugh, 203-467-6958

This publication is made possible by a grant from the Church Missions Publishing Company of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, which seeks to promote the Gospel through the entire Anglican Communion, and which respects the dignity of every human being.

Created for the Fair Haven community by



62 East Grand Avenue, New Haven, CT 06513
Voice: (203) 467-6958 • Fax: (203) 467-1171
Web: www.stjamesnewhaven.org
E-Mail: office@stjamesnewhaven.org

THE BRIDGE SUMMER 2006

Managing Editor: Tom Shultz
Editor: Geoff Little
Contributors: Betsy Haugh, Geoff Little, Tom Shultz
Design: Tom Shultz/Creative Attitude
On the web at: tomshultz.com

© 2006 St. James' Episcopal Church