



Round Hill
Community Church

The News Letter

December 2008

Catching the Spirit of Round Hill

Hearing the Bells and Embracing the Work of Christmas

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was filled with sorrow at the tragic death of his wife in a fire in 1861. The Civil War broke out the same year, and it seemed this was an additional punishment. Two years later, Longfellow was again saddened to learn that his own son had been seriously wounded in the Army of the Potomac. Sitting down to his desk one Christmas Day, he heard the church bells ringing. It was in this setting that Longfellow wrote the following lines, lines that contain a wondrous message that speaks to us amidst these tumultuous days of challenge:

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men!
And thought how, as the day had come
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!
Till, ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men!
Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good will to men!
It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good will to men!

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Christmas on Round Hill

The following article was sent to Alice O'Gorman a couple of years ago by Kay Waggoner, a former back-country resident now living in California. The note attached to the article read: "Dear Alice, Thought you would enjoy seeing this. Tina Close (Bettina's daughter) sent it from Wilson, Wyoming, where her husband found the *New York Times* (November 10, 1963) under a house he was repairing. Talk about SMALL WORLD DEPT!"



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CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

“A child is not a vessel to be filled but a lamp to be lit.”

December Scripture Verses

Mark 1:3

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

Luke 2:11

...to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Christmas Pageant

Our annual children's Christmas Pageant is scheduled for Sunday, December 14. Join us as the Church School children bring to life Jesus' birth with Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and Magi.

Rehearsals are slated for November 30 and December 7 during Church School.

Children's Service

The second children's service will be held in the Meeting Room on Sunday, December 21. All children are welcome. The prayers, scripture readings, singing, and sermon are led by our youth.

No Church School

There will be no Church School classes on Sunday, December 28, but childcare will be provided.



Church School children enjoyed making gingerbread houses for the holiday season

Toys for Nicaragua

During November the Church School children collected many bags of small toys for children in Nicaragua who live in the village of Josefina Gutierrez.

Josefina attends our Sunday services regularly with Joan Cox. She will take the toys with her on December 7, when she makes her annual Christmas visit to her home, and she will give the toys to the children so that each may have a gift at Christmas. As she did last year, we hope that she will bring back a video of the children in her village receiving the toys and we will show it to our Church School.



Joan Cox and Josefina Gutierrez with donated gifts for children in Nicaragua

Check the calendar on our website
roundhillcommunitychurch.org
for the most current information
on events at RHCC.

Click on *Calendar* under “Topics.”
Then click on an event for times and details.



REMEMBERING AND CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY



Some Pastoral Notes from Bob Culp

Twenty-five years ago this month, our church family was making preparations to begin worshipping in a new Sanctuary. After worshipping as a community church since 1921 at the corner of Round Hill Road and John Street, and then breaking away from any denominational ties in a historic struggle for religious independence in the late 1970s, the congregation was poised to move from their temporary worship center in the Community House and enter into a sanctuary whose elegant simplicity and lofty angles reflected modern New England's spirit of rugged individualism and its sturdy belief in the freedom of religion.

As we begin to celebrate and remember the exciting history of our congregation beginning this month, it will be important for us all to recognize the continuity of our Christian witness in the back country of Greenwich, which truly stretches into the 1800s. For many generations, God's love in Jesus Christ has been proclaimed and shared along these back roads in Fairfield County in transforming ways, and our church has played an important role.

In our age of discontinuity, an age when former paradigms no longer work and old formulas have proven to be bankrupt, it is important for us to remember that one of the things that can hold us together and inspire us to greatness as a church family – if we let it – is our history.

Paraphrasing Peggy Noonan in her newest book *Patriotic Grace* (as she speaks about our need as Americans to come together as a nation), we, as current members of Round Hill Community Church, need to cultivate a sense that we have inherited and

are a part of a great church family, by the grace of God, created by women and men whose lives still have much to teach us, whose lives can move us, whose commitments can electrify our spiritual and intellectual environment and help us see ourselves more clearly. Those members in our midst, both well established as well as new, need to know that we are a part of a grace-filled continuum, a human continuum of great meaning and worth. If we can cultivate and share our love for this fellowship, for the gifts of meaning and inspiration and service we have come to know in our life together, we will come to sense not only a renewed pride in the uniqueness of who we are as a church family, but also we will feel a profound gratitude for God's love at work in our midst through the years, as well as a yearning to invite others all around us to "come and taste and see that the Lord is good."

Noonan writes, "A shared sense of pride in who we are and what we've been will help us see each other as . . . the same. That sameness will be a real glue in a tearing time." While she is referring to Americans and American history, what she says holds true for us as fellow members of a unique congregation joined together in a common mission, which is to serve the Lord with gladness and to come into God's presence with thanksgiving.

Our remembering and celebrating will begin on Christmas Eve at both 4:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., as we recall the first services that took place in the new sanctuary in 1983. And then on January 4, I will share a special "dialogue sermon" with Walter Wagoner, recalling his words from the very first sermon preached in the new sanctuary and reflecting on the truths he identified that are still woven into the fabric of our faith and life together as Round Hill Community Church. I hope very much that you will attend these special services, and also that you will invite friends, neighbors, and colleagues to attend with you . . . for such an inviting and welcoming spirit is very much a part of our history!

– Bob Culp



WORSHIP

Creed Revision Update

After our Forum in September, where we encountered some heartfelt objection to making any changes in the Creed, the Worship Committee decided to scale back the scope of what we were considering and to offer only the most modest change to what seemed to be the most troublesome part of the Creed for many people.

Our current suggestion is to change only the words “the one true God” to “the Lord our God.” This change will not disrupt the cadence of the Creed in any way (same number of syllables), so the Creed would read as follows:

I believe in God, the one universal Father of all mankind, revealed supremely in Jesus Christ, our Lord, and present with us to guide, comfort and inspire in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Kingdom of God; and in the mission of the Christian Church to proclaim the Gospel to all the world, exalting the worship of the Lord our God, and laboring for the progress of knowledge, the promotion of righteousness, the reign of peace, and the realization of human brotherhood. United in Christian love, we pray and labor for the coming of the Kingdom, the triumph of righteousness and the life everlasting. Amen.

We’re looking for feedback from the congregation on this proposal by the end of January, so please be in touch with either Claire McKean or Marion Piro, or any other member of the Worship Committee. There is also the Suggestion Box in the Parlor if you wish to leave a comment there. We want to thank everyone for their thoughtful attention to this matter.

– Claire McKean and Marion Piro



Readings during the Advent Workshop

WOMEN’S GATHERING

A large group of women with a lot of fresh ideas and enthusiasm came to a short meeting of the Women’s Gathering on Sunday, November 9, following the service. Here are just a few highlights.

- We set dates for two meetings of the Women’s Gathering before the summer break. Please put them on your calendars:

Friday, January 30

Dinner in the Parlor at Church

Friday, May 1

Dinner at Amy Minella’s home

- There were many offers to help at future gatherings. For the upcoming year each event will be organized by a team of two women in order to lessen the burden on the Chairperson.

- We may simplify the food at some of our Gatherings so that we all spend less time in the kitchen or dashing for takeouts, but we won’t cut out desserts! Simpler menus will also be less disruptive on our generous hostesses.

- Whenever possible, we will arrange childcare during the Gatherings to make it easier for all women to participate.

- Attending a Women’s Gathering is a wonderful way for other women in the community to be introduced to the life of Round Hill Community Church, and we particularly want to encourage everyone to invite a friend, neighbor, or acquaintance to our gatherings.

Our January 30, 2009, Gathering is timed to break up the winter blues and will offer easy parking. We will meet for supper in the Church Parlor on Friday evening, January 30, at 6:30 p.m. We are very much looking forward to hearing Shannon talk about another facet of her life: that of a TV journalist. She will show us excerpts from some of her programs, for which, as you may know, she has received national awards. We plan to arrange childcare and a movie and pizza for children, which we hope will free up many of you to come.

If you have any ideas for future Gatherings or if you can help, please let me know. Also, we are always looking for speakers and those who might be able to offer their home for an event.

– Rhona Johnson, Chair



STEWARDSHIP THOUGHTS

Raising money is never an easy job, no matter how great the cause, but this year has several added challenges with the state of volatility that our economy is currently in. I've asked a number of you what Round Hill Community Church means to you and have received many answers, but they all seem to hearken back to three main things, and not necessarily in this order:

- friends made at the Church who have become as close as family in many instances
- the music program, which is truly world class; Chris Kabala is clearly a musical genius and we are fortunate to have him as our Minister of Music
- our caring and compassionate ministers, Bob and Shannon, who not only bring us thought-provoking sermons each Sunday but also are on call to each of us as needs arise

I'd like to share a little bit of what the Church means to me. Every so often I like to get to Church early and sit listening to Chris and the choir preparing for the morning service. I really enjoy that five to ten minutes before the Sanctuary begins to fill up as a time for reflection and meditation. It sometimes feels as if the Church is like a big wood stove; I sit there reflecting with just a few other parishioners as the stove is getting started. As more people arrive the fire seems to burn stronger and brighter, and by the time the service begins, the fire is raging with the heat of our congregation. There is true strength in our numbers.

By now, everyone should have received my letter asking for your pledges to keep our wonderful church going strong for another year; if you haven't received a letter, there are extra copies on the table in the Narthex. I want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, those of you who have already sent in your pledge cards. Those who have not had a chance as yet to do so, it would be greatly appreciated if you could get them out as soon as possible. At the present time we are a little over a third of the way to our goal, which is just great, as this is not an easy year for any of us financially.

Once again, thank you all. I am so proud to be a part of this incredible group. Thank you for that privilege.

– Ward Davol, Stewardship Chairman

We all recognize that our world has changed from a financial viewpoint and it would be easy for all of us to just say, "not this year." However, we can't hide in our homes and not live our lives. In fact, our church and church family are a sanctuary for us in hard times like this. But our church depends on the annual support of all of us, its members, to pay for its operations. With the endowment down in value, we will be taking fewer dollars out of the endowment for operating expenses, so the contributions members can give for stewardship is even more important.

The finance committee has met and created a realistic budget for next year. We have cut as much as we can and we have lowered the stewardship pledge goal to \$425,000 – about 5% less than last year. More than 50% of the budgeted expenses are for the salaries and benefits of our dedicated staff. Another 10% is for benevolence and outreach. Paying for maintenance expenses and administrative costs takes 25%. And of course, what would we do without our music – 15% of our budget goes toward supporting our music program.

I do realize people may have to prioritize their contributions this year. For me, it's not hard to make the Church my top priority – it is the place I come to each week to be with friends, to find peace, to enjoy the music, and to hear a good sermon (although not necessarily in that order).

So I am asking for your support – hopefully you can give as much as last year and, for those of you who can, maybe you can give a bit more. We will be grateful for all contributions, big and small. Thank you.

– Amy Minella, Chairman, Board of Trustees



The "Roundabout" van donated by RHCC to the Transportation Association of Greenwich (TAG)



PASTORAL MESSAGE

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And in despair I bowed my head;
 "There is no peace on earth," I said;
 "For hate is strong
 And mocks the song
 Of peace on earth, good will to men."
 Then pealed the bells more loud and deep.
 "God is not dead, nor doth he sleep!
 The wrong shall fail,
 The right prevail,
 With peace on earth, good will to men!"

While our historical context may be different some 145 years later, we still know the sadness and anxiety of Longfellow, and we know, too, his longing to experience the message of peace and good will for all God's children within a world too often filled with the despairing cries and tears of war-weary souls. Indeed, we yearn to hear those bells on Christmas Day, hoping not only that their message may announce the dawning of a new day of peace, but that they may also touch each one of us deep inside, reawakening within us a childlike sense of expectancy and hope as we seek to join hands together with God in the making of such a new day.

Howard Thurman shares his vision of such reawakening with these words, which I hope may bring inspiration, challenge, and encouragement to you all as we move toward Christmas Day, and the wondrous work that lies beyond. He writes,

When the song of the angels is stilled,
 when the star in the sky is gone,
 when the kings and princes are home,
 when the shepherds are back with the flocks,
 then the work of Christmas begins:
 to find the lost, to heal those broken in spirit,
 to feed the hungry, to release the oppressed,
 to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all
 peoples,
 to make a little music with the heart . . .
 and to radiate the Light of Christ,
 every day, in every way,
 in all that we do and in all that we say.
 A Blessed and Merry Christmas
 to Each and All!

— Pastor Bob Culp

DECEMBER SERVICES AND SERMONS

- Dec. 7** *Where the Good News Begins*, Bob Culp
- Dec. 14** **The Christmas Pageant** presented by the youth and children of the Church
- Dec. 21** *Where God Entrusts the Treasure*, Bob Culp
 The Sacrament of Baptism Observed
- Dec. 24** **Christmas Eve Services**
 4:00 p.m.
 Family Service led by Shannon White
 9:30 p.m.
 Music Prelude
 10:00 p.m.
God's Home with Us, Bob Culp
 Traditional Lessons and Carols
- Dec. 28** Rev. Kitty Garlid, Chaplain at Greenwich Hospital, guest preacher



*Sandy Motland, Nancy Meek, and Rhona Johnson
 with plum puddings packaged and ready for sale
 at Christmas on Round Hill*

The News Letter is edited by Nancy Mazzoli,
 Claire McKean, Lawrence Sterne, and Lynda Kinney



MUSIC AT ROUND HILL

Messiah Sunday

On Sunday, December 7, the choir and soloists, accompanied by strings, will present their annual Messiah Sunday performance. Excerpts will include the choruses "Glory to God," "For Unto Us a Child Is Born," and "He Shall Purify." Risa Renae Harman and Jenna Hintz will sing the solos "He Shall Feed His Flock" and "Come unto Him."

Hark How the Bells

Traditional carols will be rung at the 4:00 p.m. service on Christmas Eve by the recently formed Round Hill Bell Choir. Comprised of high school and junior high school youth, along with their parents, the group is now accepting new members.

Christmas Eve Prelude and Service 9:30 p.m.

Once again the joyful sounds of brass will fill the Church during the Christmas Eve Prelude. Traditional carols, as well as some colorful 20th-century pieces, will be performed. The newly formed Chamber Choir will have its debut singing Poulenc's brilliant "Hodie Christus Natus Est," and Alice Parker's spritely arrangement of "Les Anges" ("Angels We Have Heard On High").

The choir will perform Mendelssohn's beloved "Behold a Star from Jacob Shining," the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" from the Pinkham Christmas Cantata, and a movement from the Rachmaninoff Vespers. The brass will be performing many of the Canadian Brass arrangements of familiar carols.

South Pacific Trip – February 21

Lincoln Center's award-winning revival of *South Pacific* is the hit of the 2008-2009 theater season. We have 30 tickets for the Saturday afternoon matinee, followed by dinner at Josephina's. The price for both the dinner and the show is \$145.00, and if you prefer to attend the show without dinner, it is \$90.00. This is probably not a good time to procrastinate. Call the Church office if you're interested in joining us.

– Christopher Kabala

CHRISTMAS ON ROUND HILL

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Christmas on Round Hill



**Saturday, December 6
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Train Rides Children's Activities Santa Pictures
Fabulous Food Treasure Trove Holiday Greens
Handcrafted Gifts, Jewelry, and Ornaments

Round Hill Community House

Fast-forward forty-five years, and our current Christmas on Round Hill has very much the same feel. Members and back-country neighbors have been attending weekly workshops since last March, making handcrafted items to sell at the fair. Several members and friends of RHCC will have booths and be selling ornaments, food products, jewelry, and gifts. Our Fabulous Foods section will feature baked delicacies from our members' kitchens. We are also selling traditional plum puddings. Living Greens will offer potted holiday plants and terrariums. And we can't forget our burgeoning Treasure Trove, filled with new and well-loved treasures for all ages. Although we won't have soufflé for lunch, we will have sandwiches, hot dogs, soups, homemade cookies, hot mulled cider, and hot chocolate.

The fair on Saturday, perfect for the whole family, will feature photos with Santa, crafts for the children to make, and rides around the campus on the Round Hill Express. Admission on Saturday is free; children's activities and photos are available at a nominal charge.

Bring your family and friends and "have a merry little Christmas on Round Hill."

The News Letter

Round Hill Community Church
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Bob Culp
Minister
Shannon White
Assistant Minister

Visit our website, roundhillcommunitychurch.org to view more pictures, read past sermons, learn about the activities and history of RHCC, and check the monthly calendar.

DECEMBER 2008 AT ROUND HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Christmas on RH Setup Trustees' Meeting 8:00 p.m.	2 Christmas on RH Setup	3 Christmas on RH Setup Staff Meeting 1:00 p.m.	4 Christmas on RH Setup Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	5 Christmas on RH Setup Christmas on RH Preview Party 6-9 p.m. Community House	6 Christmas on Round Hill Holiday Fair 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Community House
7 Second Sunday Advent 10:00 a.m. Worship Service Forum: Long-term Relationships, 11:15 a.m., Mtg. Rm.	8	9 Meditation 7 p.m., Meeting Room	10 Women's Spirit Rising, 12 p.m. Holiday Lunch Mt. Kisco	11 Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	12	13
14 Third Sunday Advent Christmas Pageant All are welcome 10:00 a.m. Worship Comm. Mtg. 11:15 a.m. Prayer Service 5 p.m.	15 Cooking for St. Luke's	16 Keire Discussion Group, 6:30 p.m. Meeting Room	17	18 Newsletter Deadline Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	19	20
21 Fourth Sunday Advent 10:00 a.m. Worship Service Children's Service Meeting Room 10:00 a.m.	22	23	24 Office Closed Christmas Eve 4 p.m. Family Service 9:30 p.m. Music Prelude 10 p.m. Candlelight Service	25 Office Closed Christmas Day	26 Office Closed	27
28 10:00 a.m. Worship Service	29	30	31 Office Closed New Year's Eve	WORSHIP AND CHURCH SCHOOL SUNDAYS AT 10:00 A.M. CHILDCARE AVAILABLE IN LES BEAUX ARTS GALLERY SILKSCREENS BY RICHARD LEVINE: "IN SHIVA'S PRESENCE"		