

Round Hill
Community Church

The News Letter

December 2011

Catching the Spirit of Round Hill

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Christmas can be a bit confusing to some people, especially to children, because there are two different stories that are told this time of year. One is the story about a baby born of a virgin and placed in a manger. The other is about Saint Nicholas, who gives gifts to all the children of the world at Christmas. There is truth in both stories – profound truth, poetic and prophetic truth, even a measure of historical truth.

When preachers protest that stories about Santa Claus threaten to overwhelm and obscure the story of Jesus, they usually have in mind the Santa Claus who parades down Fifth Avenue, or the “right jolly old elf” of Clement Moore’s famous poem. But the story of the real Santa Claus, the real Saint Nicholas, is worthy of mention when people of faith gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus.



Nicholas grew up in a small city in Lycia, in Asia Minor, not far from where Jesus had lived. He was the only child of prosperous parents who died when Nicholas was quite young, leaving him alone and wealthy. He moved to Myra, a larger city, and dedicated himself to God’s service, eventually becoming a bishop and leader in the early church. He attended the

first Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. and helped draft the Nicene Creed, an early historic statement of the Christian faith.

But today Nicholas is not remembered for his wealth, or for being a bishop. He is not remembered for his contribution to the Nicene Creed. No, today Nicholas is remembered for his remarkable

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Christmas on Round Hill

Preview Party
Friday, December 2
6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Christmas Fair
Saturday, December 3
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

Church School is off to a great start. We have enjoyed some of the special annual traditions like Rally Day and the Blessing of the Animals, we have celebrated World Communion Day and World Food Day, and we have learned about some of the mission work that Round Hill Community Church is involved in. In order to practice the service we are called to do as Christians, we even helped prepare meals for the homeless.

Recently we have been focusing on why and how we pray. What is prayer? What are some things we can pray for? How does prayer help us communicate with God?

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- What are some things we can pray for?
- How does prayer help us communicate with God?

These are important questions that help us understand our relationship with God. Do you practice prayer at home? Try saying this prayer together with your son or daughter:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for hearing our prayers and for acting on our behalf. We thank you and are grateful for all that you provide. May we have the wisdom to seek you each and every day. Amen.

In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart.
– Mahatma Gandhi

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CHURCH SCHOOL



Saturday, December 3

Christmas on Round Hill

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Community House

Visit Santa, ride the Round Hill Train, and participate in fun holiday crafts and activities.



Sunday, December 11

Advent Workshop

4:00 to 6:00 p.m., Meeting Room

Invite your friends and come decorate your own gingerbread house under the expert and fun guidance of Roland Kistler. There will also be Christmas treats and drinks, singing of carols, and the lighting of the RHCC Christmas trees on the front lawn.

Please RSVP to the Church Office so we can be well prepared!



Sunday, December 18

Christmas Pageant

10:00 a.m., Sanctuary

Our annual Christmas pageant is always a special event for all at our church. We invite your children to participate in the Pageant! *Rehearsal is Saturday, December 17.* Please call Diane Davol (203-564-0607) or Mary Ann Debnar (203-829-1039) to register your children.

Happy Holidays!

– Connie Blunden



TRANSITION COMMITTEE

The Board of Trustees has established a Transition Committee to help the Church move through the transition from our former minister, Bob Culp, to our interim minister, Doug Miller, to our new minister (once she or he is chosen). Mary Ann Debnar, Steve Fuzesi, Caroline Lazzara, and Helen O'Malley all have agreed to serve on this committee; Dick Bergstresser (Chair of the Board of Trustees) and Doug Miller are *ex officio* members; I have agreed to serve as Chair. The Transition Committee will work very closely with the Search Committee; indeed, Mary Ann and Helen both also serve on the Search Committee.

Dick has asked the Transition Committee to examine several matters of Church operations. These matters include:

- Prioritization of the use of our Capital Improvement Funds
- Review of policy for the use of the Community House
- Enhancement of our Youth Ministry
- Revision and improvement of RHCC By-laws

In addition, the Transition Committee will explore ways to increase our congregation's engagement in the life of the Church.

We aim to be as inclusive as possible in our work to ensure that as many viewpoints as possible are heard.

Each of us has taken responsibility for one of these matters; I will lead the examination of the Capital Improvement Funds, Caroline will lead on the Community House review, Mary Ann will lead the deliberations of our Youth Ministry, and Steve will lead on the revision and improvement of the Church's By-laws. Helen will lead the exploration of ways to increase engagement.

Helen will talk with inactive or former members of our congregation to get an idea as to why these members are not currently engaged with our church.

We aim to be as inclusive as possible in our work to ensure that as many viewpoints as possible are heard. To this end we have scheduled a series of two-hour discussions of each matter. These discussions will take place on specified Monday evenings at 8:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room. All who are interested in any or all of these subjects are encouraged to come and join in the discussions. This is our schedule:

Monday, November 28

8:00 to 10:00 p.m., Meeting Room

Discussion of Prioritization of the use of our Capital Improvement Funds

(No meeting in December – holiday season)

Monday, January 30

8:00 to 10:00 p.m., Meeting Room

Review of policy for the use of the Community House

Monday, February 27

8:00 to 10:00 p.m., Meeting Room

Discussion of enhancement of our Youth Ministry

Monday, March 26

8:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Revision and improvement of RHCC By-laws

Over these five months Helen will talk with inactive or former members of our congregation to get an idea as to why these members are not currently engaged with our church. Helen will also solicit input from active members of our church. Others on the committee will participate in these discussions also.

The Transition Committee is an advisory committee. We will make recommendations to the Board



TRANSITION COMMITTEE

of Trustees in each of these subject areas. The Trustees will then act on our recommendations or not, as the Trustees determine. Recommendations and actions will be published in *The News Letter* on an ongoing basis as they are accepted by the Trustees.

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We look forward to your involvement; thank you!
– Ken Bartels, Chair



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MEMBERSHIP

Our committee is working hard mailing new Greenwich residents a letter welcoming them to our town and introducing them to our church. So far, 150 letters have gone out.

On Sunday, November 13, we welcomed new members Samira Loschiavo and Heidi Morrison at our new member service.

Born in Lebanon, Samira just retired from working at the United Nations for 28 years. She lives in Cos Cob.

Heidi was born in the Czech Republic and grew up in Germany. She has lived in Greenwich for many years with her family. A widow, Heidi has worked for IBM and has a daughter, Julia, who is in college and lives in Oregon.

We continue to explore ways to attract new people to the Church and encourage everyone to talk to their friends and share their ideas with us.

– Grada Herrick

WOMEN'S GATHERING

The next Women's Gathering will be held on Friday, January 6, 2012, at 6:00 p.m. in the Church Parlor. An invitation with details will be mailed soon.

– Bunny Prokop

*The News Letter is edited by Nancy Mazzoli,
Claire McKean, Suzy Simpson, and Lynda Kinney*



MUSIC ON ROUND HILL



SING! BACH CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

CHRISTMAS EVE
ROUND HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH
GREENWICH

Interested choristers are
welcome to join our
Christmas Eve performance:

Choir Rehearsals
Thursdays
December 15 and 22
8:00 p.m.

Performance
Christmas Eve Service
8:45 to 11:00 p.m.

Call Christopher Kabala
at 212-873-3792
for information, score,
and learning CD

December 11 Messiah Sunday Prelude, 9:50 a.m.

The RHCC quartet, adult choir, and string ensemble will present excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*. Tenor Patrick Hogan will sing the recitative and aria "Comfort Ye," and "Every Valley." Bass Scott Tomlinson will sing the lyrical aria "But Who May Abide." Risa Renae Harman will sing "Come Unto Him," and Jenna Hintz will sing "He Shall Feed His Flock." The choir will sing the choruses "And the Glory of the Lord," and "For Unto Us a Child Is Born."

Handel announced with great fanfare that his new oratorio would receive its premiere on April 13, 1742. He cannily arranged for a public rehearsal to take place the day before. It caused a sensation. As a result, hundreds of eager listeners had to be turned away from the official first performance.

Since then, performances of *Messiah* have been literally countless, its impact incalculable. As English musicologist Charles Burney wrote, some 40 years after the premiere, "... this great work has been heard in all parts of the kingdom with increasing reverence and delight; it has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphan and enriched succeeding managers of the oratorios, more than any single production in this or any other country."

A combination of many elements has won *Messiah*

its enduring popularity. The qualities that have elevated it above those created by so many other composers are the richness and variety of the music, the insightful matching of word and sound, and the consistently inspired evocations of such universal emotions as pathos, serenity, and joy. It is also a deeply satisfying work to perform, be they artists, seasoned professionals, or enthusiastic amateurs.

Messiah consists of three sections. In the first, the way is paved for the Redeemer's coming. After His Advent is announced, there follow descriptions of the events of the nativity. Part One ends with the chorus singing "His yoke is easy, His burden is light."

The McZolis to Sing at the Christmas Eve Family Service

Charlie McKean, Jack McKean, John Mazzoli, and George Mazzoli will once again sing at the Family service at 4:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. The "McZolis" will present a variety of carols, ranging from Mark Haye's jazzy arrangement of the spiritual *Rise Up Shepherd* to John Goss's *See Amid the Winter Snow*. The four excellent singers were first members of the Children's Choir, later the Youth Choir and Adult Choir, and now reunite each year at Christmas to sing at the family service.

— Christopher Kabala

LES BEAUX ARTS GALLERY



In keeping with nature and the environment, Les Beaux Arts Gallery is presenting “Observations,” a series of landscapes and seascapes by the noted British artist Michael Thornton-Smith. The exhibit opens on Sunday, December 4, and runs through January 12, 2012.

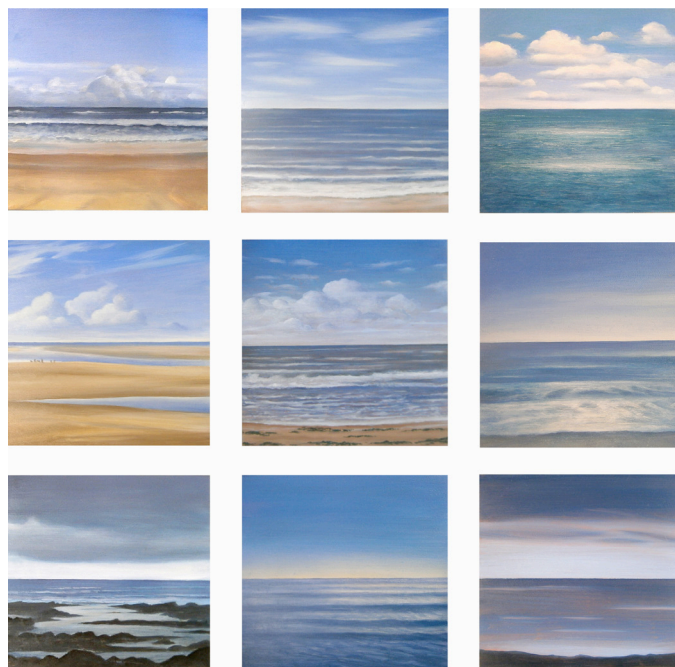
Thornton-Smith is a landscape painter par excellence who never stops exploring nature and its exquisite details. He explains his latest body of work in these terms: “My paintings express a response to my perception of nature, they represent a particular place; my chosen locations are the Appalachian trail, the British Virgin Islands, Nantucket, rivers in Connecticut, and studies on the nature of horizon. By grouping the images together, the sense of place conveys the illusion of a pristine world; with this perspective there is a continuity of the creative thought process about a particular place.”

By grouping the images together, the sense of place conveys the illusion of a pristine world; with this perspective there is a continuity of the creative thought process about a particular place.

Thornton-Smith grew up in the English countryside. His early sketches were studies of his surroundings. He was influenced by the tradition of British landscape painting. Traveling has been a source of inspiration for his work, and the paintings that were created by visiting various countries throughout Europe, Africa, and America celebrate his experiences.

Thornton-Smith has a BFA from Central School of Art in London and an MA from the University of London. He came to New York when he won a Fellowship at the Whitney Museum in 1980. Since then, he has remained in the city, where he is based. He has participated in numerous exhibitions and his work is included in many corporate art collections including Belle Haven Club, Round Hill Club, Tiffany & Co., Saks Fifth Avenue, and others.

– Mirella Hajjar, Gallery Curator



BENEVOLENCE AND OUTREACH



On Sunday, November 27, we will once again put up our traditional Angel Tree. This tree is decorated with paper angels, and on each one is the name of someone with a special request for Christmas. All of the families selected for our Angel Tree are known to Nancy Fuzesi, a social worker in the Norwalk public schools and member of the congregation. Each of these families has a different story, but here are a few to give you an idea of why they need you.

All of the families selected for our Angel Tree are known to Nancy Fuzesi, a social worker in the Norwalk public schools and member of the congregation.

The first family consists of an eight-year-old boy and his four-year-old sister. They have just spent the past two weeks at Kids in Crisis while their mother underwent a special treatment for her spreading cancer. There is a father, but he was abusive toward his son. He and the mother have been separated for the past year. The mother has had to quit her job as a nanny due to her illness and there is very little income. They live in two rooms in a house belonging to a church member. There is no money to celebrate Christmas.

Another family has a nine-year-old girl whose mother is away at a drug treatment facility. She has been living with a grandmother who also takes care of other children. Although the grandmother works in a supermarket, she struggles to make ends meet.

A third family is made up of a great-grandmother who has custody of three children under the age of seven – with one on the way. The children's mother and grandmother are disabled. This great-grandmother used to be a school bus driver but is now working very hard to care for everyone in her overly crowded home. None of the children have fathers in their lives.

The Angel Tree is for . . . all of the struggling families who want to keep the magic of Christmas alive for as long as possible.

The final family is a mother with two little children. The eight-year-old boy brought in a letter today and was very excited. He showed it to me and said it was written by an angel. His grandmother, to whom he was very close, recently died. Apparently he has been writing to God to find out how she is. An angel wrote back to him yesterday. The letter was beautiful and reassuring in saying that God is taking very good care of his grandmother and that she is happy. The little boy said he wrote back and thanked the angel for the letter but asked for a photo of God with his grandmother!

The Angel Tree is for this little boy, his sister, and all of the struggling families who want to keep the magic of Christmas alive for as long as possible.

Thank you for supporting the Angel Tree again this year. **Please select an Angel on Sunday, November 27, and bring it back gift wrapped, with the angel tag attached, by Sunday, December 18.**

Thank you.

—Nancy Fuzesi

BENEVOLENCE AND OUTREACH

Mission Trip to Belize February 7 to 14, 2012

In 2001 Hurricane Iris, a category 4 hurricane, made a direct hit on Monkey River, Belize, a village of 200 people. The villagers all survived by barricading themselves in the one cinder block building in the village,



but the rest of the village was destroyed. Rev. Ted Hoskins led a group of volunteers from Maine to help in reconstruction a month later. I joined him the following year, bringing volun-

teers from my church in Connecticut. We have been going back to Monkey River every year since then. The village is now rebuilt and the heavy lifting is completed. Last year the village was electrified and the volunteers installed a computer lab in the school.

Monkey River is on the coast, far from any other village or town. You can only get there by boat, and there are no cars around, only footpaths. It is located on the Caribbean Sea at the mouth of the Monkey River. The villagers are mostly fishermen, and some of the young men earn money as guides for jungle tours for tourists who travel daily to the area. English is the language of Belize, formerly British Honduras. It has the second longest barrier reef in the world and is known as a place for diving and environmental awareness.

While in Monkey River the volunteers live in the "hotel," a simple building with double rooms. Yes, there are flush toilets and showers. We have bottled water delivered to the village for our use before we arrive. I have never gotten sick. We eat in the homes of the villagers. Some of the women volunteers assist in the four-room school. Others assist in the clinic, whenever we bring a doctor or dentist with us. The men help with whatever needs to be done to improve life in the village. We have a lot of free time and a lot of fun. One night is usually spent in a resort on the way to Monkey River on a rented school bus. We go on jungle tours and learn about natural medicines and the environment. I will be talking more about the planned trip in the coming weeks, and showing

pictures of the village.

Ted Hoskins will join us Sunday, December 11, to preach and will stay on after the service to talk about his work in Belize organizing fishermen and working with environmentalists following his "retirement" from 25 years of very successful ministry in a Congregational church in Westport.

The trip this year will cost approximately \$1600, all inclusive. Put it on your calendar and plan to join us. You won't be sorry, unless you spend too much time in the sun.

— Doug Miller



Neighbor to Neighbor Is in Urgent Need

Cereal • Canned Fruit • Pasta and Pasta Sauce •
Peanut Butter (regular size jar) • Jelly •
Rice • Dried Beans (Kidney and Black) •
100% Juice • Soup

Please reach out to help others in the Greenwich community. You can drop items off in the boxes located in the RHCC Narthex, or deliver them to Neighbor to Neighbor in the Christ Church Annex at 248 East Putnam Avenue. Many, many thanks!

PASTORAL MESSAGE

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generosity. He had seen the great needs of the people around him. He remembered the stories of Jesus, how Jesus had cared for the poor, the sick, the children – those who had been forgotten by others. He wanted to follow Jesus in the most tangible way possible. So he would often take off his beautiful bishop's vestments and disguise himself as someone who was poor. Then he would go through the city and leave gifts where he knew there was great need. He especially liked to help children. And when the startled people found these gifts, they wouldn't have any idea why they had received them or from whom.

It would be good for us to remember the story of Saint Nicholas when we see gifts under the Christmas tree that simply say: "From Santa Claus." They are gifts given as if anonymously, without any thought of thanks being offered in return. To give a gift in such a way was a rare thing in Nicholas's day, and is no less so in ours.

Eventually the identity of the mysterious gift giver was discovered, and stories about Saint Nicholas's generosity spread throughout the region and throughout the world. These stories are a reminder of the power that can be unleashed when a single life is gripped by the Spirit of Christ . . . the Spirit of Christmas past, present, and for all time. Nicholas walked among the people giving gifts to those in need, not seeking anything in return, not even a word of thanks. It was his way of sharing what he believed had happened in the birth of that babe in the manger, the love of God manifested in the world.

– Douglas Miller

*We should give as we would receive, cheerfully,
quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace
in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.*

– Seneca

PASTORAL RELATIONS

The Pastoral Relations Committee has been established to provide a means for Church members to convey to the minister, through a member of the committee, any matters or concerns, and for the committee to discuss with the minister, from time to time, matters or concerns about which they, personally, have become aware.

Committee members are:



Bruce Dixon
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Grada Herrick
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Michael Sandifer
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As always, Church members are welcome and, in fact, encouraged to contact the minister directly at any time.

COMMUNICATIONS



The Communications Committee is looking for a qualified graphic artist, preferably proficient in Adobe InDesign, to serve as editor of *The News Letter*. The newsletter is published ten times a year, September through June. Articles are submitted by committees and Church staff directly to the editor and chair of the Communications Committee. The editor, following the layout design conceived many years ago by Marcel and Helen Itin (O'Malley), has a week or so to produce an issue, including photos when possible, often supplied by our photographer, Arto Szabo. There is a group of three or four people who proof the final draft, and then the staff in the office make copies to mail to those who still want a printed version, and post the online version to our website.

If you are interested in taking on this position, please contact Suzy Simpson at 203-622-6611 or suzsimp@verizon.net.

Thank you.

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship letters were mailed to members in early November and pledge cards should be returned to the Church Office before the end of the year.

In the letter, the Stewardship Committee affirmed that “our outreach contributions are 14+% of our budget. We have thought-provoking sermons, and a splendid music program. The new church school program is an ambitious undertaking, one which we need to have, and need to do well. We [have hired] a Director of Christian Education, and are reviving the adult education/lecture series, and hope to resume the ‘mission trip’ this coming spring. These are the things a church should do, and they cost. Please carefully consider our church, its mission, and your involvement, and support.”

If you have questions, please feel free to contact:

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The News Letter

Round Hill Community Church
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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 2011 AT ROUND HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
LES BEAUX ARTS GALLERY: "OBSERVATIONS" LAND AND SEASCAPES BY MICHAEL THORNTON-SMITH				1 Meditation 6:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	2 CHRISTMAS ON ROUND HILL PARTY 6-9 p.m.	3 CHRISTMAS ON ROUND HILL 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
4 Worship and Church School, 10 a.m. Fellowship in Community House	5 Trustee Meeting 7:30 p.m.	6	7	8 Meditation 6:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	9	10
11 Messiah Sunday Prelude, 9:50 a.m. Worship and Church School, 10 a.m. Advent Workshop 4-6 p.m., Meeting Room	12	13	14	15 Meditation 6:30 p.m. Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	16 Newsletter Deadline	17 Christmas Pageant Rehearsal
18 Christmas Pageant, 10 a.m. Angel Tree gifts due	19 Cooking for St. Luke's, 3 p.m.	20	21	22	23	24 Family Worship Service, 4 p.m. Candlelight service of Lessons and Carols, 9:30 p.m.
25 Christmas Day	26 Office Closed	27 Office Closed	28 Office Closed	29	30	31