



*Round Hill
Community Church*

The News Letter

February 2006

PASTORAL MESSAGE

The Closeness of Heaven

There are many spiritual traditions in which you can find stories about heaven. One Vietnamese tale contrasts heaven and hell. In hell, everyone is given an abundance of food, and then are given chopsticks that are a yard long. All persons have all the food they need, but because the chopsticks are too long, they cannot bring the food to their mouths, and they all go hungry.

In heaven, the setting is exactly the same: everyone is given an abundance of food, and their chopsticks are also a yard long. But in heaven, the people use their chopsticks to feed one another. A single act of compassion can transform hell into heaven.

There is a Zen story in which a large, tough samurai went to see a diminutive monk. "Monk," he said in a voice accustomed to instant obedience, "teach me about heaven and hell!" The tiny monk looked up at this warrior and replied with utter disdain, "Teach you about heaven and hell? I couldn't teach you about anything. You're dirty. You smell. Your blade is rusty. You're a disgrace, an embarrassment to the samurai class. Get out of my sight, I can't stand you." The samurai was furious. He shook, turned red in the face, and was speechless with rage. He pulled out his sword and raised it, preparing to slay the monk with a single stroke. At that instant, the monk shouted, "Stop!" The samurai paused, shaking with murderous energy. "That," said the monk softly, "is hell."

The samurai was overwhelmed. He realized the compassion of this little man who was willing to sacrifice his life to offer him this teaching about hell. He put down his sword and felt a tearing in his heart. He then lay down, placed his head in the lap of the monk, and wept. "And this," whispered the monk, "is heaven."

We can move from hell to heaven, or from heaven to hell, in an instant. I suspect we have all felt that shift when the heart suddenly hardens, or is suddenly broken open. The hope of our faith is that we may be open to see and listen and celebrate those times in our daily lives when heaven is

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BENEVOLENCE AND OUTREACH

Neighbor to Neighbor

Round Hill Community Church has supported Neighbor to Neighbor for more than a decade. The church makes a financial contribution each year and for the past year has designated one Sunday a month to collecting nonperishable food. In this way the congregation becomes part of what Neighbor refers to as "caring connections." The small local agency provides a point where individuals, families, and congregations can reach out and offer assistance to neighbors in need. It is quite simple. But it has become less simple now that the number of people who need help has grown exponentially. Five years ago 90 households were eligible for food assistance. Last March 200 were. In December 2005 the number was 275 households.



Your contributions are more important than ever. Please continue to bring in food for the pantry. Dried beans, boxed milk, peanut butter, jelly, and canned fruit are needed. You will make a difference. Food is collected in the Narthex on the third Sunday of each month.

— Sandy Motland



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Gettin' Together

The new format for the church school has begun! Tossing bean bags? Knotting our bodies together? Writing on the wall? Does this have anything to do with God? Absolutely!



Students knot their bodies together in a group activity about friendship.

All students have been gathering in the Meeting Room after the Children's Message to participate in lively exercises that help them embody the values and themes from each Sunday's Bible story. Accepting a stranger (Ruth and Naomi), friendship (David and Jonathan), and God's ever-presence (Psalm 139) have all been explored by having the students interact through guided activities and sharing their ideas in active discussions.

Students then break out into grade level classes for a closing discussion that connects the Bible story, the group experience, and their everyday lives. Participation is contagious in this kind of a group – and I am pleased to see that our circle is getting bigger each Sunday!



Attention Families

The season of Lent is coming. All families will be receiving information and ideas on how to celebrate this special time in your home.

– Eileen Brehm

Saying Thank You and Good-Bye

The church school students had a special gathering to wish Carmel Tinnes well and thank her for her years of guiding them through their church lessons. Annette Grueterich and Kerri Ann Hofer organized a "quilt-making" as a gift for Carmel, on which all the students placed their handprints in beautiful primary colors. We all wish Carmel well in her new move.



MISSION TRIP 2006

Mission Trip Meeting at Putnam Valley Methodist Church February 12, 2006, 9:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.

We will meet in front of the Community House and carpool to Putnam Valley. Youth registered to attend this year's summer Mission Trip must attend. Please confirm your attendance by February 5 so enough drivers can be arranged.

Youth Fellowship Events

Discussion Group Meetings February 5 and March 5 in the Community House after the Children's Message.

Middle School Youth Fellowship: February 5, 2006

We will meet at Dorothy Hamill Rink to skate together from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. The fee is \$5.00 with skates and \$8.00 if you need to rent skates.

– Tina Pusser



YOUTH GROUP

January was another busy month for Youth Group and for the parents of the children in Youth Group. This month saw the success of the “Sex, Drugs, Drinking, and Rock ‘n’ Roll” forum. Tom Mahoney held three separate sessions, one with just adults on January 22, one with just the youth on January 25, and a final session with youth and parents on January 29. The forum’s function has already been covered by the *Greenwich Time*, and in the previous *News Letter*; however, it was the reception with the Youth Group that was still unknown.

On the 25th, around twelve high school students participated, with three being from outside of the church. The middle school forum had the same level of participation as well. The hour seemed almost too short as the minutes flew past while an interactive game was played in labeling level of risk to activity. The second part of the meeting was more of an information session that involved stories as illustrative examples. The group enjoyed the time spent with Mr. Mahoney and enjoyed Tina Pusser’s and Shannon White’s participation as well. However, it is hard to tell if new information was passed on and if the session would have been better spent delving into the complexities of the teenage mind in relation to decision making.

The very last minutes came close to reaching a discussion, but it did not fully explore the subject matter. At the end, though, despite a shortage of time, everyone walked away having had a good time while learning and being made aware.

– Kara Pellegrino

Ed. Note: Kara has attended Church School at RHCC for many years and was confirmed several years ago. We are very grateful for her valuable contributions to the News Letter on youth issues.



BE A MORE EFFECTIVE PARENT

Attention All Parents!

Take time during Lent to sharpen your parenting skills and create more harmony in your family. Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, or STEP, is a six-week course offered throughout the country that has provided over three million parents with a practical approach to raising children. Parents will view videos, use workbooks, and participate in small group discussions to gain skills for raising children with high self-esteem.

Linda Seaver, a Round Hill Community Church member, family therapist, and former Director of Children’s Ministries, has led many STEP classes in the area. We are fortunate that she has agreed to facilitate two different groups this winter/spring.

Parents of Pre-School Children

(Focus on pre-school aged vs. school aged)

Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, and April 6

RHCC Meeting Room

Parents of Adolescents and Teenagers

Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

March 8, 15, 22, 29, and April 5, 12

RHCC Meeting Room

There is a fee of \$100 per parent for each series. Scholarship funds are available if there is a need. Please talk to Shannon White or Bob Culp.

RSVP and pick up your textbook before class by calling the Church Office at 869-1091. This series will be open to the public, so please call now as space is limited!

On a personal note, I am currently taking the series for parents of elementary-aged children, which is being offered, once again, through the Bedford School System. I have gained so many practical tools in the first two weeks. After the first session, I knew we must offer this at Round Hill. I encourage you to attend.

– Shannon White



RHCC FORUMS

February 12

Becky and Bon Jasperson on Volunteering in Prisons



Matthew 25:36

I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Becky and Bon Jasperson will talk about their challenging and rewarding volunteer work in state and federal prisons. Their experience includes mentoring youth in the Connecticut Manson Youth Institution, visiting inmates at the Federal Correctional Institution in Danbury, visiting the prisoner-run Network program at the New York State Fishkill Prison, fundraising for a college program at Sing Sing Prison, and observing the Exodus reentry program mentioned by the president in his last State of the Union message.

January 29

Sex, Drugs, Drinking, and Rock 'n' Roll

During the month that we celebrate love within relationships, it might be helpful to hear what some of our teenagers and their parents had to say during the recent joint forum called "Sex, Drugs, Drinking, and Rock 'n' Roll." These were questions posed by Tom Mahoney from the Greenwich Health Department and compiled answers of adults and youth:

What are the characteristics of a healthy relationship?

Communication, honesty, trust, happiness, caring, compromise, understanding, respect, concern, sacrifice, openness, friendship, time together, helping each other grow, equal power, working out problems, loyalty, listening, having interests and friends, fun, humor, the ability to repair, forgiveness, acceptance, stability.

In which ways or times should parents and children talk about sexuality?

In the car, at the dinner table, reading the same information, before a social event, during a trip to the doctor, when trouble brews, after today's forum, on vacation, during a TV show or after a movie, at puberty, when they are worried about their children, less awkward times, while cooking, in private, with humor, after work or school, when the child wants to, at a wedding, randomly, at 7:23 p.m., when help is needed, with a doctor.

What are five communication skills?

Listening, not thinking about responding while listening, unbiased feedback, being non-judgmental, using "I" statements, looking eye-to-eye, tone, smile, understanding, good follow-up, examples, family meetings, timing, writing notes, cooperation, two-way talking, letting things go, forgiveness,

being clear, up-to-date language, talking, debating, asking questions.

The idea presented is that talking with your children or your parents about sensitive issues is not a one-time occurrence but rather something that may take place over a lifetime. The quality of a relationship and self-esteem are keys to helping young people make healthy choices for themselves. Keeping an open mind and a non-judgmental ear may help teens come to their parents when they need to seek help or guidance.

– Shannon White

MEN'S GROUP

On Sunday, February 26, at 8:30 a.m., the Men's Group will have a breakfast gathering in the Meeting Room. Our speaker will be our own Fred Keire. Fred has a fascinating story to tell about his recent sailing expedition in the far north. The lecture will be accompanied by a selection of Fred's digital photographs.



A donation of \$5.00 is suggested to cover the cost of the continental breakfast. Please call the Church Office if you plan to attend so we can arrange for seating and food.

– Ron Wilson, Co-Chair



WOMEN'S GATHERING



The week preceding January 20 was one of stress. No light or heat, spotty phone service, no cable TV, and equally bad, no internet or email! All of our 21st-century toys were taken away. So the women gathered on Friday evening to celebrate the restoration of our basic necessities, to bask in the warmth of a heated church and good fellowship, and to enjoy food cooked in a real oven by our very own Dee Lewis (thank goodness her cooking facilities were intact – I kept checking).



The main course was a “Dee” creation in honor of our speaker Nancy Meek – chicken with mushrooms and wild rice and *cherries*. Delicious! Nancy generously donated the cherries to the menu. Others contributed appetizers, salads, drinks, and desserts that made for a sumptuous repast. We said farewell to Carmel Tinnes and Susan Currier, who are moving away. We will miss them both greatly. We honored those with November, December, and January birthdays and

Kerri Ann Hofer won the raffle for a birthday prize.

Our speaker, Nancy Meek, held us spellbound with stories of her life and her current involvement with cherry farming in Michigan. She is restoring the property and replacing older trees while making sure that her efforts are environmentally friendly. We sensed that she is combining a commercial activity with her concern for nature and spiritual interests. We saw great pictures and learned quite a bit. I never knew that all of those great cherries were harvested by shaking them off the trees with a machine. Thanks so much, Nancy!



March 5 – Brunch/Luncheon

Our speaker is our new Assistant Minister, Rev. Shannon White, and Swan Grant has graciously agreed to host our gathering in her lovely home. The lunch will be potluck following fellowship hour, so look for our flyer and RSVP to Lynda at 869-1091. We all look forward to learning more about Shannon’s background and her interesting life. Child-care will be available.

– Carrie Finlayson with Dee Lewis, Co-Chairs





PASTORAL MESSAGE

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already alive, possible and present within us – in this moment, in this very breath. At such times, it is as if we can feel the leaven in the bread, already kneaded into our life. All we need to do is hold it in our hands, and feel it rise.

Through the compassionate generosity of our congregation, as well as the enormous investment of time and talent on the part of so many of our members who serve the tender needs of our society (on countless community boards and in innumerable volunteer opportunities), we are able each new day to bring the loving reality of heaven into the world . . . such as shall be done by our work team that will be traveling to Mississippi in early March. Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is within you.” It is as close as your breath, as close as your children and grandchildren, as close as the touch of a loved one, as close as the kindness and love you show to those God gives you to see – whether next door or along the Gulf Coast or halfway around the world.

– Bob Culp

The Five-Finger Prayer

1. Your thumb is nearest you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C. S. Lewis once said, a “sweet duty.”
2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct, and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, rabbis, imams, priests, and pastors. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, legislators, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God’s guidance.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger; as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble, or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.
5. And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all, which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, “The least shall be the greatest among you.” Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

A Special Prayer by Robert Louis Stevenson

Lord, behold our family here assembled. We thank you for this place in which we dwell; for the love that unites us; for the peace accorded us this day; for the hope with which we expect the morrow; for the health, the work, the food, and the bright skies that make our lives delightful; for our friends in all parts of the earth.

Give us the grace and strength to forbear and to persevere. Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind. Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies. Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavors. If it may not, give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we may be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and to all changes of fortune, down to the gates of death, loyal and loving to one another.
Amen.

MEMBERSHIP

New Member Sunday – March 19

It is always a wonderful occasion when we welcome new members into our church family. Often people who buy a home in the backcountry are also looking to join a caring and meaningful church community.

Together we can open our doors to individuals and families who might be looking for a place to worship and a place where new friendships blossom. The many varied activities foster innumerable possibilities at Round Hill Community Church.

The Membership Committee encourages you to invite your friends and neighbors on any Sunday, and please remember that we will take in new members on Sunday, March 19 – New Member Sunday. Should you have any questions, call the Church Office at 869-1091.

– Julia Boysen and Debbie Lipner, Co-Chairs

MUSIC NOTES



Christopher Kabala
Part II Stormin' Heaven
Friday, March 10, 8:00 p.m.

Christopher Kabala will present a lecture performance of Beethoven's Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111 and Messiaen's *Regard de l'Esprit de Joie*. Beethoven's love affair with the piano encompassed his entire life. He was a brilliant performer, a peerless improviser, and one of the greatest composers for the instrument. His 32 piano sonatas represent an unparalleled journey of musical development, unprecedented in scope and invention.

The Sonata in C minor Op. 111 is both his last piano sonata and the zenith of this form. The phrase "Heaven Storming" is often used to describe the rarefied atmosphere of his third period, as his relentless musical development pushed the limits of compositional craft beyond traditional confines into the realm of uncharted waters. In the musical world, Op. 111 is regarded with a respect that approaches reverence. The lecture will present a biographical context for the work and also explain the compositional processes Beethoven uses to create this masterpiece of unprecedented beauty. Messiaen's *Regard de l'Esprit de Joie*; written in the first half of the 20th century, is a fierce and wild ride for both performer and audience. Messiaen Storms the Heavens with his own vocabulary of asymmetrical rhythms, incandescent harmonies (he was influenced by jazz) and the presence of bird calls. This piece is less abstract than late Beethoven, and its intent is to give expression to the rejoicing of God and the heavens at the birth of Christ. Tickets are \$15 and include the bountiful reception that will follow.

An Afternoon of Chamber Music
Sunday, February 5

The Chamber Players of the Greenwich Symphony will perform at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 5, in the Sanctuary. The audience will have the opportunity to visit with the musicians at a wine and cheese reception following the concert.

The program will feature a Brahms sonata for viola and piano, a Dohnanyi string trio, and the Messiaen *Quartet for the End of Time*. Flyers with more details are available outside the Church Office.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$5 for students and may be purchased at the door. Also, there is a group rate available at \$15 per person for groups of ten or more by special arrangement. (Please call Carrie Finlayson, Treasurer, at 869-4661.)

An Evening of Chamber Music
Friday, March 3

The Center of Chamber Music will hold a concert in the Sanctuary at 8:30 p.m. on Friday, March 3. Featured soloists will be Tanja Becker-Bender on violin and J.Y. Song on piano. Refreshments will be available following the concert. For ticket prices and additional information, call 661-6626.

Youth Choir Ski Trip

On January 20, the RHCC Youth Choir took a well-deserved trip up to the Stratton Ski Resort in Bondville, VT. The Minella family generously contributed their house near the mountain for the choir and their families to stay in throughout the trip. Chris Kabala, the director of the Youth Choir, headed up the trip, including food preparation and leading excursions on the mountain itself. While many on the trip chose to enjoy Stratton Mountain itself, others visited the nearby town of Manchester to explore its various shops and attractions.

After enjoying a Saturday of skiing and shopping, Mr. Kabala rehearsed the choir on Sunday morning before everyone headed back to Greenwich. They are preparing for Youth Music Sunday, which has been rescheduled for a later date due to delays of rehearsals due to weather.

— George Mazzoli

church@roundhillcommunitychurch.org
www.roundhillcommunitychurch.org
(203) 869-1091

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395 Round Hill Road
Greenwich, CT 06831

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Lent begins on March 1 this year. We will observe the date with our traditional Ash Wednesday service beginning at 7:00 p.m. Following a service of meditation and prayer in the Meeting Room, there will be a light dinner in the Parlor. This is an opportunity to share in reflection and fellowship with your church family. We are asking people to bring salad, bread, wine, or cookies. Please call the Church Office at 869-1091 or email us at church@roundhillcommunitychurch.org to RSVP.

LENTEN STUDY LUNCH SERIES

Shannon White will lead a lenten study BYO lunch on Wednesdays at noon beginning on March 1 called "Living the Questions." It is a video and discussion series by John Dominic Crossan, entitled "Victory and Peace or Justice and Peace?" The questions that will be addressed are: 1) Justice and the World: What Is the Character of Your God? 2) History and Jesus: What Is the Content of Your Faith? 3) Worship and Violence: What Is the Purpose of Your Prayer? 4) Resurrection and Community: What Is the Function of Your Church?

FEBRUARY SERVICES AND SERMONS

- Sunday, 5 *The Antidote to Anxiety*, Bob Culp
Sunday, 12 *The Grace to Do God's Will*, Bob Culp
Special Minute for Mission on Prison
Ministries by Becky and Bon Jasperson
Sunday, 19 *The Survival of the Church*, Bob Culp
Sunday, 26 *A Moment of Clarity*, Shannon White

FEBRUARY IMPORTANT DATES

- Sunday, 5 High School Discussion Group during worship
Middle School Youth Fellowship, Skating
at Dorothy Hamill Rink, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Chamber Players of GSO, Sanctuary, 4:00 p.m.
Friday, 10 Valentine Dinner Dance, 7:00 to 11:00 p.m.
Sunday, 12 Mission Trip Meeting, Putnam Valley
Methodist Church, 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Sunday, 19 Food Collection for Neighbor to Neighbor
Monday, 20 Cooking for St. Luke's, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Call Carrie Finlayson for information
Tuesday, 21 Rev. Keire Discussion Group, Meeting Room,
6:30 p.m., E. Pagels's *The Gnostic Gospels*
Sunday, 26 Men's Group Breakfast with Fred Keire,
Meeting Room, 8:30 a.m.