



*Round Hill
Community Church*

The News Letter

June 2006

PASTORAL MESSAGE

The Blessings of Leading the Confirmation Class

Each year as Pastor, I have taught and led the Confirmation Class, along with some very able and gifted help (for five years with Carmel, and this past year with Shannon). As the leaders of a program that is unique and tailored to our own church, we have experienced the exciting process of guiding our eighth grade students along pathways that eventually lead to their confirming the faith that their parents professed upon the baptisms of their infant children. For us who lead this program, it is a special privilege and great honor to do so . . . and it is always profoundly enriching to our own experience of growing in the faith we share.

Many are the times I have wished that we could have videotaped the various classroom discussions and experiences we have had with the members of the Confirmation classes, making them somehow available to all our members . . . so that you, too, could share in their discoveries, their struggles, their questions, and their sheer delight in being together and enjoying the wondrous benefits of being in such a committed "learning community of fellow pilgrims." And many are the times I have lifted my heart to God in glad thanksgiving for the chance to have been able to recapture something of the joys in the Christian adventure we call "faith."

Do you remember such joys yourself?

- the joy of discovering firsthand something of the reality of God's love at work in your own life?
- the joy of opening the pages of the Bible and sensing that the story you are reading is somehow "reading you" . . . addressing you in a way that is challenging you, comforting you, changing you?
- the joy of participating in a caring group of fellow learners who know you by name, who miss you when you are absent, who laugh with you and smile with you and convey to you that you count and are important in their lives?
- the joy of encountering a divine mystery in God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit who knows us better than we know ourselves, who acts to remind us of important truths and deep values, who nudges us to attend to the needs of others and in doing so invites us to find the "best self" we have in ourselves to be?

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CONFIRMATION CLASS OF 2006



*2006 Confirmands with Bob Culp and Shannon White:
(first row) Perry Minella, Michelle Feghali,
Matthew Minella, Elizabeth Green, Casey Minella
(second row) Scott Huley, Caroline Melly, Merritt Piro,
Laurel Weill, Lucy Cobbs, Haley Purse*

The eleven members of the Confirmation Class and their families shared dinner in the Parlor with Bob Culp and Shannon White on Sunday, May 7. The members of last year's class (with some help from their families), by tradition, prepared and served the dinner. Bob had some brief comments and Shannon shared "personal blessings" for each one of the Confirmands, indicating in these the unique spiritual gifts in each Confirmand.

The following weekend the group spent a day at church reflecting on how the classes have been meaningful to them and composing their Statements of Faith. On May 21, each member of the class shared with the congregation a portion of that statement during the worship service. There are excerpts from what they wrote on the next two pages of this newsletter.



CONFIRMATION CLASS OF 2006 – STATEMENTS OF FAITH EXCERPTS

Lucy Cobbs

Before beginning these classes, I was in a fog and somewhat lost when it came to discussing how I perceived God. Now, although I still have many unanswered questions, some of the fog has burned away. I believe that this class is about teaching you how to see after the fog is cleared; which path to walk along and how to walk it.

Before these classes, God was like a Hollywood star to me; I knew his name and knew the gossip about him and what he had done but I didn't know him personally and had never met him. I think I first formally met God on October 23, when we had our first orientation. Since then, I have had a glimpse of God at each class, slowly getting to know him as we discussed the Trinity, the Bible, Jesus, the church, and God himself. I believe a church is like an airport. A person goes to a church to take off and fly away and to lose oneself in God's teachings. At the end of a flight, a person will come slowly back down and land softly in the church pews. Round Hill Church is the ultimate airport; it has beauty. Everything, from the actual wooden beams that support the roof to the tight community of people who are the glue and nails that keep the beams together, is beautiful. The entry hall is like the small tunnel you walk through to enter the airplane; it is the passageway leading to a whole different world; a sanctuary where there is no danger.

Laurel Weill

This Church is in its heart
A society of persons.
We strive to raise each other
To innovative pinnacles.
We arrive with our faith and beliefs to church,
To assess all that God has accomplished for us,
And review what we can do to assist him
In the construction of a better community
For the world.
The church seems to be a place where
I can turn to praise or pray,
Ask questions to the Lord,
A place of comfort,
Where nothing can make my life
Wrong or upset me.
The church is like strong holding arms,
They grasp me and cradle me in their warmth,
They catch me when I fall down,
They seem to always be living
Right up the street from my home.
The church is my strength that holds me together
When crazy or unknowing,
I can turn to and question,
Can help to comfort me in the times of need,
When I have nowhere else to turn.
A place of worship,
That seems to relieve and soothe all that enter it.

Elizabeth Green

Round Hill Community Church has made a huge impression on my life because it has provided a place for me to come and worship God, but to also witness the love and compassion for others. The church's mission is to provide a place to worship and to help each other in the community and the world. It is a place to provide love and protection for people. The church has succeeded in doing this for me and millions of other people in the world. It is my refuge, and it is a place where I learn the wonders of the Bible. I hope that in the future the church will act as a place where I can come to be close to God, but also a place where I know that I can feel safe and connected to the people in my surroundings. I want to belong to Round Hill Community Church because it is a place of compassionate people who can teach me about my history and the passages in the Bible that tell the stories of my ancestors. This church has provided a loving retreat for me in the past years, and I hope that it will continue to be my sanctuary for years to come.

Perry Minella

When I was five, life was easy. God was a figment of my parents' imaginations that I pretended to know personally so they would be happy. For me, Mom was God. She gave me a band-aid and kissed my injuries to make them better. With magical healing powers like that, who else could she be? But then I grew up, and God became real. I found him in the sight of the full moon as I fell asleep and in the daffodils that grew in my backyard. He came alive in the autumn leaves and in the stars that fell from the sky in the summer. He became this beautiful stranger, like a painting – to be looked at, but not touched. Then I joined the Confirmation Class and suddenly that red velvet rope separating me from that exalted figure disappeared. I learned to see him and to hear him, whenever he chose to speak to me.

Caroline Melly

Faith to me is very important. It has helped me through the hardest times, and I am grateful for that. There are many people who have influenced me throughout the years, but there is one man who stands out the most. Everyone in this church may refer to him as Banks Adams, but to me he will always be Pop Pop. This man is the Godliest person in my life and has helped me so much. Pop Pop is a great man in the church and out.

God to me is not just everywhere, God is in everyone. I am not going to lie, but I was not the most religious person before this class. It has brought me a lot closer to God, and I am very appreciative for that. Like my grandfather, God has helped me through many things for the past couple years, not only the hardest times but the happiest moments of my life. Not only has he helped me but he has helped others that are very close to me.



CONFIRMATION CLASS OF 2006 – STATEMENTS OF FAITH EXCERPTS

Michelle Feghali

God is one topic I have a hard time with. I mean it's no calculus class, but it's still confusing to me. God is confusing to me because it's just weird knowing that God can be anywhere at anytime, that God knows everything about everyone. God is like a spy camera for the entire universe to be watched. He knows where you are at all times. Nobody can hide. And now that I'm older and know that somebody important is watching me every second of my life, I feel like I need to do the right thing because your third parent is watching your every move, and if you screw up too badly they would know. I know it sounds crazy, and I'm not like that all the time but I try to be because it helps me determine whether my decisions are good or bad. This church fought hard to get where it is now. We are a non-denominational church who invites anyone in who would like to come. That's what I love about this church. Some churches would turn away people that might cause a fuss in the community. But not our church and the good part about it is that nobody does make a fuss. They welcome the newcomers here. Though there are some people in church that love to gossip.

Matthew Minella

The discoveries that I have made this year are my love for this church and that the church has been through so much. It has an amazing history. God for me is reflected in the children in the Mead School Child Care Center, my parents, and my friends. I say that the children in child care reflect God because God to me is a person who makes you happy and sad. The kids there make me happy every time I am there and sad if they start crying. I see parents as reflecting God because they are the enforcers, but they help you make good choices. If you are going down a road that you were not meant to go down, they help you get back on the right road. I also see God as a person you can talk to, have fun with and trust. He is a friend, and he is there when you need to talk to him when you are having a bad day. In a way, God is a child, a parent and a friend to me.

Haley Purse

The role of the church in my life is very important. It is the place where I can let go of all my stress and anxiety of everyday life and relax even if it is only for one hour. It is the place where I can have my "alone time" with God, where I can know that God is there for me in struggle and cheering me on in defeat. At church, I know that God is there. I want to be able to keep my faith in God and use it for doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with my God. When doing justice, God can help me decide if I want to sacrifice something of mine to help others; when loving kindness, God can help me to not be selfish and self-centered but to respect others. And with walking humbly with God, God can help me stay whole and intact, making sure that I do not slip. I would like to leave you with a quote written by the Goo Goo Dolls that exemplifies God as a parent. "You could hide beside me maybe for a while, and I won't tell anyone your name."

Merritt Piro

My family and I do many different community service projects together. The most rewarding feeling that I got from a community service project was when I did a program called Guiding Eyes for the Blind. This involved taking care of puppies to help them become guiding eye dogs. This program is interesting to me because God, like the dogs, is my guide. I am the blind man and God represents the dog that has helped steer me through many obstacles in my life and will hopefully continue. The Holy Spirit and Jesus also represent a God-like figure in my mind. The Holy Spirit gives me the power to believe in God and the teachings of Jesus. Through the teachings and examples of my Confirmation leaders, Reverend Culp and Shannon White, I have learned how God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are intertwined in my life. Confirmation has been an inspiring experience, which has resulted in my choice to join this church.

Scott Huley

What brushes with God have I experienced? To put it bluntly . . . NONE. Although I haven't really experienced God in that special way, I do still believe he's out there . . . somewhere . . . anywhere . . . everywhere guiding us. You really can't be taught about God. That's for yourself to figure out. You can however be taught to know the Bible. The Bible helps you find your own answers about God. Also the community around you can be an excellent source of 'brushes' with God.

If there's one thing I've learned this year it is that I've got a loving community. One I am happy to join.

Casey Minella

I have been coming to the Round Hill Community Church since I was about five. I have seen the world change around me, from the tsunami to 9/11 to the New Orleans ordeal, but one thing that I have not seen, is the change in this church's attitude and people. Without the people in this church I would not feel the love, the hope, the kindness, and the generosity that religion is. The power of a religion should be based upon that of a community's faith. The people in our community have come from different provinces, different religions, different worlds, and have come to share their love of God with each other. They are helping and leading others, just like me, to understand words such as faith. This is what I truly call faith. Faith is community and faith is gratefulness. Faith is compassion, faith is family, and faith is friends. I look around me and see my mentors, my leaders, my partners accompanying me on the road to religious conviction and bettering myself as a person. This is why I want to become a member of this church. I also want to become part of the tradition and continue the tradition of welcoming newcomers just as if we had seen them yesterday. That is what religion is. Religion is people.



CHURCH SCHOOL

Youth Help Save the Rain Forest

In May the Church School children set out to save the rain forest. They learned about the critical condition of Central and South American rain forests and then raised money to donate to an organization that works to promote sustainable business practices within rain forest regions. They made posters and beautiful thank you cards to help educate the congregation about the plight of these unique ecosystems.



The project allowed members to purchase stickers of rain forest animals and trees, which were then placed on a giant map – allowing the rain forests to “grow” with each purchase.



A purchased sticker being placed on the map

Please stop by our table at the Church Picnic to see our beautiful map covered with trees, and our final fund-raising amount. The children enthusiastically raised more than \$2,300 on their first Sunday and plan to continue sales through the end of the church year.

Our youth have chosen this project to connect the idea of stewardship with their theme this year of “. . . walking humbly with God” (Micah 6:8). We wish to thank the congregation for its generous support of this project and of the environment.



*Church School Director Eileen Brehm
with Sophie Grueterich*

Mississippi Smiles

The Mississippi children have received the “Summer Fun” care packages that our students assembled on Easter Day as their outreach activity. We received a thank you note from Reverend George Barnett, whose two congregations received and distributed the care packages. The letter read:

Dear Friends,

On behalf of many happy children I want to thank you. The cartons of fun things was a great idea and very well received. Thanks and God Bless!

George Barnett, Pastor



Annual Picnic – June 4

The regular Church School year will end on June 4, and I hope you all will join us on the front lawn during the Fellowship Hour where there will be food, games, and activities. Walk toward the balloon rainbow where you can visit the Rain Forest table to make final donations and see our “reforested” map of Central and South America. Students will be selling more “rain forest friends” to raise the money.

And as a wrap-up of this year’s theme, all students will get their picture taken and make “Promise Clouds,” which will be on display all summer in the Church School hallway. Students will also present gifts and words of thanks to this year’s wonderful staff of volunteer teachers. Hope to see everyone under the rainbow!



CHURCH SCHOOL

An Invitation to Teach

This community has many wonderful parents who volunteer their time to teach school. For the summer I would love to open this opportunity up to the entire congregation and have any member, regardless of whether you have a child in the Church School or not, come teach one or more Sundays. You can share stories from your own life and spiritual journey, or you can use a prepared lesson from the *Bible Quest* curriculum. There are also many books in the library here, which you can select to read to the children. I am available all summer to assist with the planning of the lessons. Even if you have never taught before, if you feel any compunction to try it, please do! I guarantee that when one teaches, it is often the teacher who learns as much as the students. That is my experience, anyway.

Please let me know if you are interested in teaching any of the summer Sundays from June 11 through August 20 or signing on to teach a session (fall, winter, or spring) for Pre-K through second grade, Grades three and four, Grades five and six, or Grades seven and eight. If you prefer to share the responsibility of teaching with another member that is fine, but please let me know.

I am grateful to all of our members who share their time with the students on Sundays. It is so important in a learning environment to show the children how our community gives time to nurture each other. The children learn from the books that God is love, but they also get to see that love in practice when you spend this time with them.

– Eileen Brehm, Church School Director

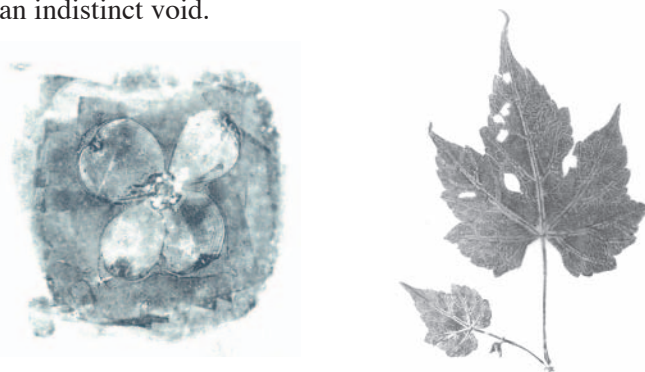


LES BEAUX ARTS GALLERY



Work by Greenwich artist Heather M. Sandifer will be the focus of an exhibition June 11 through July 10, at the RHCC Beaux Arts Gallery. Botanical monotypes will be featured in addition to recent paintings.

The monotypes evolved out of the artist's frustration with the fragility of plant specimens preserved through traditional methods of pressing and drying. The monotypes – unique prints, each executed separately by hand – are black, white, and shades of gray. Occasionally, one sees a hint of color. Some have the clarity of scientific specimens and feature elegant, usually singular, plant forms. Others Heather describes as “moody, fierce botanicals.” These monotypes depict primordial plant forms that emerge from and retreat to an indistinct void.



A textile designer, Heather received a Certificate in Botanical Art and Illustration from the New York Botanical Garden. In addition to her art and design, she has written on garden subjects for various publications and has taught at the New York Botanical Garden. She is a Pen Woman in both arts and letters, a Master Gardener, and an active member of the Native Plant Center.

– Mirella Hajjar

A DAY AT THE OPERA FOR ALL AGES

We have purchased premium orchestra tickets for the Sunday, November 5, matinee at 1:30 p.m. for a production of *Hansel and Gretel*, starring our very own Julianne Borg as Gretel! For those who wish, we will be having an early dinner in the Lincoln Center neighborhood “with the star” immediately after the performance. This is the perfect introduction to opera for any age. We’ll offer two ticket prices; one for the opera alone (great for families with young children), and an opera with “dinner with the star” package. We are planning to carpool. Call the Church Office at 869-1091 to reserve your tickets now.



COOKING FOR ST. LUKE'S

Well, we rushed the season a bit, but a hot special at Stop & Shop lent itself to a meal reminiscent of Thanksgiving. We did turkey breasts with sage, a traditional stuffing, cranberry sauce, green beans, cornbread, and cake for dessert. This was the first month that ten residents from McKinney (an HIV program) joined the group for dinner, so we made extra food to accommodate the increase in numbers.

We had a great crew cooking at my house from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.: Jean Bergstresser, Robin Browning, Louise Hoffman, and Becky Jaspersen. Then I was joined by Kerri Ann Hofer and Jenny Rye, who drove with me to Stamford to serve the meal. This was their first involvement with St. Luke's and we welcome their interest and enthusiasm. Our next date is Monday, June 19.

– Carrie Finlayson



PASTORAL MESSAGE

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- the joy of finding yourself amidst a larger community whose members welcome you into the shared journey of faith and service, whose smiling presence reminds you that you are not really alone, and whose tender embrace is able to steady your steps in times of uncertainty and pain?
- the joy of learning that our faith is something that will always be growing, that we really never arrive, that it is along the journey that we discover certain signposts that guide us and inspire us and nurture us . . . and that our faith invites us to see in a whole new fashion so that we may embrace the Way and the Truth and the Life that is offered us as we follow Jesus as Lord and Savior?

I am grateful each year for the Confirmation Class members. For they serve as “living reminders” of the wondrous joys that are ours in the common faith we share. Perhaps next year we can invite those of you who would like to assist us to recapture such joys and blessings along with us? I'd really like that, and I suspect you would, too!

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”

– Bob Culp

BENEVOLENCE AND OUTREACH

Mississippi Hurricane Workcamp Update

Sandy Motland, Marshall Clark, Dee Lewis, Jamey George, and Shannon White were sent by RHCC to Mississippi in March to help in hurricane relief efforts. One of the people who touched them most was Rhonda Hatch, a social worker who refused evacuation efforts because she wanted to stay with her animals. She barely survived Hurricane Katrina as the ocean waters rose up to her neck in her living room. She now lives in her driveway in a FEMA trailer.

Six months after the devastation, the Round Hill crew worked with Rhonda on her house one of their days in the Gulf Coast. They ripped down dry wall in her living room and listened to her tell her moving story. The crew also left a small donation of cash from the church.

Here is a note dated May 10 from Rhonda:



My Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your time and gifts. The precious gift in the card made me cry for a long time. The money could not have come at a better time. The house is coming right along. It's all been taken out except 1/4 of the bedroom. So when I get that out, I'll be ready for the next step, my electric, air, heat, and plumbing. That will be taking place in the next month so by the end of June I should be ready to rebuild, like sheet rock . . .

So sorry it took me so long to write, I have so much on my plate. It's so hard to get things done in the trailer.

Again, thank you and many prayers. Please remember it is your hearts and prayers for progress that helped me go forward . . . I could have never gone forward without ya'lls help.

Love in Christ,
Rhonda

Rhonda also said she's working again . . . which is an answer to prayer since she had just lost her job an hour before we met her.

Another RHCC group will be going back to the Gulf Coast in late June . . . this time to New Orleans.

– Shannon White



WOMEN'S GATHERING

Mary G. Hull was our featured speaker for the last event of the year. She has been a member of the Church since 1959 and we were fascinated by her memories and little-known stories of our formation and background. Over many years, Mary has served several terms on the Board of Trustees and on various committees of the Church. And, she has been a member of the Church choir from 1962 to the present, which alone translates into a substantial commitment – approximately forty-nine Thursdays and Sundays each year devoted to choir practice!



Mary has been the Executive Director of Greenwich Green and Clean since 1987 and is a dedicated volunteer to the Greenwich community and its environmental and conservancy groups. In 2006, she won a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Volunteer Center of Southwestern Fairfield County, and she was granted the Civic Leader Award in 2005 by the Greenwich Chamber of Commerce.

It was my pleasure to have the Women's Gathering at my home on May 19. Everyone contributed to a fabulous meal. We started the evening with wine and soft drinks, shrimp cocktail, cheeses, zucchini squares, and stuffed celery. Some of our entrees included pork tenderloin, gazpacho, chicken breasts stuffed with Boursin, beef tenderloin, asparagus, green beans amandine, chicken pot pie, and quiche. These were accompanied by interesting and delicious salads, and the dinner concluded with various desserts and fruit.

Save the Date! September 22, 2006

Our first meeting in the fall will be a dinner on a Friday evening. We've been invited back to Livvy Floren's home. Instead of our traditional speaker format, we have something planned that's a little bit different. Stay tuned and watch upcoming newsletters for details.

Organizational Meeting – June 11

Members of the committee will meet after church and fellowship hour at Carrie Finlayson's home at 255 Round Hill Road. Light refreshments will be served. Let us know you are coming by emailing cfinlayson@optonline.net or calling 869-4661. Anyone who wants to join the committee for next year is welcome to join us.

– Carrie Finlayson, Co-Chair

MEMBERSHIP



Jebb Agnew, Louisa Stone, David Agnew, Mary Lennon

New and nearly-new members who have joined the church recently were honored at a New Members dinner on Sunday evening, May 21. Not everyone invited could attend, but we were delighted to have with us Jebb and David Agnew, Kathy Burdick, Helen and Bruce Dixon, Mary Lennon, and Louisa and Emerson Stone. Less-new members were represented by Kathy and Bob Culp, Charles Lee, Nancy Mazzoli, Debbie Lipner, and Julia and Bill Boysen. A good time was had by all as we enjoyed the chance to get to know each other better. Charles cordially invited us to participate in the many diverse offerings, committees, and projects that Round Hill Community Church has to offer.

– Debbie Lipner and Julia Boysen



Bruce Dixon, Kathy Burdick, Charles Lee

CHRISTMAS ON ROUND HILL

The Round Hill Workshop is ready for business in the lower level of the Church. The easiest access is to use the stairs to the left of the entrance in the Narthex. The door will be labeled. If you are interested in doing some early Christmas crafts, please call Lynda Treadwell or Nancy Mazzoli to tell us you'll be there so one of us can be available for guidance. Bring some friends and spend a few hours crafting and chatting. We will publicize formal workshops as soon as we have the dates set. We look forward to seeing many of you this spring and summer and appreciate your creativity and time.

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June 2006

The News Letter
Round Hill Community Church
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RHCC DISCUSSION GROUP

The RHCC Discussion Group meets the third Tuesday during the months of September through November, and January through May from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Participants come from diverse religious backgrounds. All seek to learn more about the Christian faith, its history, scripture, tenets, doctrines, and theological perspectives and their present-day equivalents.

We have a few openings for new participants. Summer reading for members will be Paula Fredriksen's *From Jesus to Christ*, Second Edition, and Bart D. Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus, The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. If you are interested in being a part of this group beginning in September, please speak to me after church or call me in the next few weeks at (203) 661-2977.

– The Rev. Anita E. Keire

PLEASE FEEL WELCOME

The Church Sanctuary is open for prayer, meditation, and reading the Bible every weekday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We encourage those who wish to use the Sanctuary for this purpose to do so, and to be encouraged in the disciplines of prayer, meditation, and scriptural reflection.

JUNE/JULY SERVICES AND SERMONS

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| June 4 | <i>Rejoicing . . . Always!</i> Bob Culp
Annual Church Picnic – Casual Dress |
| June 11 | <i>Do You Believe in Miracles?</i> Bob Culp
The Sacrament of Baptism |
| June 18 | <i>Unlikely Gardens</i> , Shannon White |
| June 25 | <i>Our Culture and Our Faith</i> , Bob Culp |
| July 7/2 | <i>Having Hope in a World of Despair</i> ,
Bob Culp |
| July 9 | <i>Learning to Greet the Dawn</i> , Bob Culp |

JUNE IMPORTANT DATES

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|---------|--|
| June 4 | Special Prelude of Spirituals, 9:45 a.m.
Annual Church Picnic, 11:15 on the Green |
| June 11 | Organizational Meeting for Women's
Gathering at Carrie Finlayson's |
| June 19 | Cooking for St. Luke's, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Call Carrie Finlayson for information |