



Round Hill
Community Church

The News Letter

May 2010

Catching the Spirit of Round Hill

Your Impact Upon My Ministry

Sermon from April 18, 2010



Almost 35 years ago on a Sunday afternoon in early June, I went forward from the pew Kathy and I were sharing in the Presbyterian church in Punxsutawney, answered searching questions about my calling to the ministry, and then knelt down in front of my hometown congregation for the “laying on of hands” and the ordination prayer. As I knelt down, I

was surrounded by twelve or so ministers and elders who placed their hands upon me as the ordination prayer was offered, and when I arose, by the grace of God, I had been set apart as a duly ordained Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Even though I had grown up in the church as a “preacher’s kid,” was familiar with many of the church’s rituals, and had completed my Master of Divinity degree and all the trials of ordination, I confess that I was unprepared for that moment. I remember feeling the weight of the entire world upon me as the hands of these church leaders were placed upon my head and shoulders, and as I sensed deeply the awesome responsibilities of my becoming a minister. But as they lifted their hands off me, I immediately felt a floating lightness and gracious freedom, and I was overwhelmed, especially making my way around this small circle exchanging the peace of Christ and then, at the end, being embraced by my father who was sobbing.

It was one of the most memorable, moving, and humbling experiences I have ever had. In fact, it is rivaled only by my marriage to Kathy and the births of our three daughters.

Over the last year or so, I have been doing a great deal of reading and reflecting about the vocation of being a minister, which Lillian Daniel and Martin Copenhaver (two United Church of Christ parish ministers) describe in their recent book as *This Odd and Wondrous Calling*. This fascinating and helpful book comes from the genuine life experiences of its clergy authors, and it deals with

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Opera at Round Hill

Opera Arias and Ensembles

Verdi Mozart Gounod
Strauss Barber Offenbach

Christopher Kabala, *Piano*

Friday, May 21
8:00 p.m.

Wine and Cheese Reception

Tickets \$25 Students \$5



Risa Renae Harman



Jenna Hintz



Patrick Hogan



Landon Bowie

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Family Worship Sunday – May 16

The date is set for Family Worship Sunday – a special Sunday for the children in our Church. Families, please make a note on your calendars; and to all members, we hope you look forward to this service as well. Children will remain seated with their families, while some have been selected to participate in reading prayers, singing hymns, ushering, and assist in other roles. The children also look forward to delighting the congregation by hosting Fellowship Hour following the service. If any parents want to assist with the details of this special May day, please contact me at 203-918-5268.

Children's Ministry Committee

Thank you to all parents and children who stayed after Church on April 25 to gather in a classroom for a sweet treat and fill out the Church School questionnaires with personal experiences, ideas, and suggestions as we look to the future. Thank you to Clare DeNicola for your enthusiasm and leadership. This committee will continue to meet periodically and we welcome any parent who wishes to join the group.

– Eileen Brehm



Bob Culp introducing a newly baptized baby to the congregation

CHRISTMAS ON ROUND HILL

Mark your calendars now because the exciting and festive Christmas on Round Hill will take place Friday, December 3 and Saturday, December 4. Some of the previous committee members met on March 24 and we are off to a good start. Most of the same people from last year's committees have graciously offered to help again this year. We have made some changes to our committees and are also looking to bringing in some new members. Those of you who would like to help, please contact Diane Davol. There are several places on committees that need to be filled.



We are bringing back a magician for the children's event on Saturday. That was a fabulous addition. Some new vendors will be added as well. The Treasure Trove will remain as it always has – a well-run ship. The ever popular Santa Pictures will also be returning. And we could not have our fair without Fabulous Foods, Living Greens, Something Special, and our many other vendors.

We would like to thank Amy Minella for chairing the event last year. She has updated and digitized all our records, greatly assisting in our future planning. Thank you, Amy!

This is such a happy and festive event – please come out and get involved.

–Diane Davol, Chair



NEW MEMBERS



Bob Culp with Harold Kuplesky and Richelle Ivarsson, who were welcomed as new members of our church on April 11



MUSIC AT ROUND HILL

A Night at the Opera

Come to the Sanctuary on the evening of May 21, at 8:00, and be transported to the world of opera. Our choir's soloists, Risa Renae Harman, soprano; Jenna Hintz, soprano; Patrick Hogan, tenor; and Landon Bowie, baritone, will sing both ensemble pieces and solo arias. They have selected songs from Bellini's *Norma*, Verdi's *La Forza del Destino*, Handel's *Alcina*, and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, as well as others.

Our soloists sing all over the country and in Europe, as well as here in Greenwich. The Sanctuary will ring with beautiful music and there will be a sumptuous reception in the Parlor afterwards. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$5 for students.

Spirituals Sunday, June 6

Join us at 9:50 a.m. for the prelude to hear favorite spirituals performed by the choir and soloists, accompanied by drums, piano, and string bass.

Chamber Players

The Chamber Players ended their 38th season with a splendid finale. Several members of the RHCC congregation serve on the Board of Directors of the Chamber Players and, as such, we would like to thank all who attended our concerts. You have supported us enthusiastically by subscribing, by becoming "Friends," and by attending our annual benefit. We hope you will join us again next season in this beautiful church as we continue to enjoy together many Sunday afternoons filled with musical delights.

– Carrie Finlayson, Louise Hoffman,
Suzy Simpson, Jan Ziembra



CENTER FOR FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Teen and Adult Mission Trip in Haiti July 25 to July 31

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the nation of Haiti, killing thousands of men, women, and children, and leaving more than three million lives in need of immediate assistance. Many children have lost their parents. Families are torn apart. A city of over one million is left in shambles.

Many around the world have responded to the crisis by giving generously of their time, their prayers, and their money. The needs continue to be immense, and those who have been working there tirelessly since that time are welcoming those who can come and provide additional assistance and support.

We have an opportunity to go from July 25 to 31 to work among the people through a group called Adventures in Mission (www.adventures.org).

What Will We Be Doing?

Our work will be alongside some of the 200 pastors working in Port au Prince as they continue to uplift thousands of men, women, and children in the area. We will be involved in listening to their stories and providing ministry as needed alongside our Haitian counterparts; we will be helping to set up “tarp houses” to replace the houses many are living in now made of bed sheets (that’s an especially important job since the rainy season will be in progress); we will also serve in food lines as needed.

What Will We Encounter?

Since the rainy season is beginning now and continues through August, we will most likely encounter rain and intense heat. We will be living in tents we take with us and our conditions will be primitive (although there are toilets . . . a plus for those of you who have been with us to Nicaragua!).

What Is the Cost?

The fee for our time in the country is \$390 (may vary some) plus airfare and expenses.

Why Go?

Someone recently said, “What can you do in a week in Haiti?” The answer is quite honestly, not much... but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t go and be a presence and support to those who have worked day in and day out to give comfort and hope in the midst of some impossible situations.

Who Can Go?

Anyone in high school through adult.

If interested, please contact Shannon White immediately at Shannon@roundhillcommunitychurch.org or 914-588-5666. The absolute deadline is May 12. No exceptions. Once we have our group, we will discuss all medical issues, etc.

Nuclear Tipping Point Tuesday, May 25, 7:30 p.m. Church Parlor

“Al Qaeda has been seeking nuclear weapons for ten years. What if they get one?”

– The 9/11 Commission Report

On Tuesday evening, May 25, at 7:30 in the Church Parlor, we will show the film *Nuclear Tipping Point* produced by the Nuclear Security Project. Discussion will follow.

Nuclear proliferation and control is a subject of great urgency for us all, and it is presented here in carefully reasoned conversations.

Former Secretaries of State Colin Powell, Henry Kissinger, George Schultz; former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and former Senator and Chairman of the Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn make the case for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons.

They conclude that the threat of a terrorist attack with a nuclear weapon is one of the gravest dangers facing us today and they outline concrete steps that can be taken now in order to lessen the immediate risk and begin the process leading toward the eventual control and total elimination of all nuclear weapons.



LES BEAUX ARTS GALLERY

Les Beaux Arts Gallery will end its season with Joyce Blumenthal, a photographer who is bringing the garden indoors. The exhibit will open on Sunday May 16, and will run through June 22.

Blumenthal's photographs have a stunning sense of design and captivating colors as a result of her training in the art of painting. Color and design are major elements in her art. "I've always been fascinated with color and how it excites the senses. Design and patterns are everywhere, some commonplace and easily recognizable, others hidden amongst the shadows," she explains.

For many years, Blumenthal worked on large scale color-field paintings, but her passion for arts led her to constantly search for new ways to express her creativity, and photography was the perfect medium for that purpose. In recent years, and with the help of a digital camera, she has created many series of nature and botanical photographs. "I have found that photography, with its infinite possibilities, has taken the place of my previous use of paint and canvas," she says. "It allows me to uncover the exciting essence of a scene, a flower, or other subjects in new and challenging ways."

Blumenthal was educated at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art, where she developed her knowledge of color and design. She is an active member of the Mamaroneck Artist Guild and the Westchester Photographic Society. She has had many solo

exhibits at the Harrison Library, Ossining Library, the Mamaroneck Artist Guild, and the Westchester Arts Council in White Plains. Her photographs are in private collections including Lawrence Hospital in Bronxville and the Bridge Deck in Hartsdale.

– Mirella Hajjar, Gallery Curator



**Check the calendar on our website
roundhillcommunitychurch.org
for the most current information on
events at RHCC. Click on Calendar.
Then click on an event for times and details.**

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



PASTORAL MESSAGE

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such topics as how we can understand the weekly ritual of shaking hands at the door at the end of a service, how ministers come to a clear sense of their clerical identity and pastoral authority, how to find a balance between ministerial expertise and pastoral wisdom, how one of them as a young minister learned to pray, and other similar mundane, but important matters that pertain to the ministry.

The book is anecdotal and filled with real-life situations in the course of one's ministry, it is suggestive rather than prescriptive, and certainly it has been written out of a true love for the church and its ministry. As Peter Gomes observes in his Foreword to the book, it is "a credible testimony of why women and men still respond to a calling that by most of the world's professional standards makes no sense." I'm confident that many in the church today, whether in the pulpit or the pew, would find this a good and rewarding "read."

Martin Copenhaver begins one of my favorite chapters with this intriguing observation: "Being a pastor has made me better than I am. That is because the pastoral vocation requires that I act in ways that seem beyond me." Citing a sermon written by Rev. Amos Adams in Rochester Massachusetts nearly 300 years ago, Copenhaver notes the various ways in which being a minister can enhance one's spiritual life through the different duties that fall to ministers every single day. Whether it involves growing in the life of prayer, learning how to govern one's tongue, seeing chance encounters as opportunities for pastoral assistance, learning how to care for people who may not be particularly likeable, learning the art of being on call even in the middle of the night . . . ministry, in Rev. Adams' perspective, is a veritable "school of virtue" that lasts a lifetime.

In his sermon, Rev. Adams puts it this way: "The continual exercise of pastoral affection, in earnest care, tender pity, and affectionate sympathy with the flock in all their variety of circumstances, in trouble and in joy, hath a most powerful tendency to form in us those habits of goodness, that liken us to the angels of light." Copenhaver writes, "Update the language a bit, and the Rev. Adams could have been writing about my experience of how pastoral ministry has formed me in ways that make me better than I am."

Of course, it doesn't always work that way; but more often than not, it does. I suspect that is why Jesus tells his followers to act in particular ways, regardless of how they feel at the time. He counsels us to turn the other cheek, to pray for our enemies, to be not anxious about what we are to eat or the clothes we wear, to be forgiving and childlike in our attitude and demeanor. He focuses upon actions, not because interior dispositions are unimportant but because most often we act our way into a new way of thinking and feeling, rather than the other way around. Graciously,

the pastoral vocation requires that I act in ways that seem beyond me.

I remember Tom Long telling of Max Beerbohm's story "The Happy Hypocrite," which deals with a wicked man who falls in love with a virtuous woman. He knows, because of his failings, that he has no chance to woo her successfully if he approaches her just as he is, undisguised. So he puts on the mask of a saint, wearing it continually and comporting himself in a saintly way every day. Sure enough, she falls in love with the man – or, more accurately, she falls in love with the saintly mask.

Years later, when a spurned lover of the hypocrite discovers the deception, she confronts the hypocrite in the presence of the woman he loves, and she challenges him to take off his mask and show himself to be the ugly, repulsive thing he truly is. After considerable protest, when he finally drops his mask, he discovers what he could not possibly have anticipated: under the mask of the saint his face has become transformed. His is now the face of a saint . . . and his life matches it.

Beerbohm correctly labeled the character in his story a "hypocrite," for clearly it was the man's intention to deceive, to pretend to be someone he was not, to hide behind the cloak of pious pretense. When somebody takes on the pastoral role, obviously it cannot be as a deceitful disguise masking intentions that are less than honorable. Nevertheless, I believe the pastoral role can be worn or embraced in the fervent hope that one might be inwardly transformed to its likeness. Or, as Rev. Adams put it, we assume the role in the hope that "the continual exercise of pastoral affection, tender pity, and affectionate sympathy" might "form in us those habits of goodness."

I'm pretty sure that's what Paul had in mind when he urged the members in the fledgling community of faith in Rome to "put on Christ." He was urging his readers to assume Christlike qualities in their daily lives, to wear them as they would a new and perhaps ill-fitting set of clothes, so that some day they might fit, that they might grow into them, and thereby become fitting expressions of who they had become. Of course, the clothes may be too full in some places at first, and not fit snugly at all, making the wearer feel more than a little awkward. But I well remember getting new clothes as a child that were a little big, and being told that it was important to have "room to grow."

Indeed, what seems to cause you to trip all over yourself today allows for the possibility of growth tomorrow. I've come to recognize that those who have experienced some form of transformation in their lives sometimes tend to exaggerate both the "before" and "after" dimensions of their lives. So, I want to be up-front about the fact that if I had not become a pastor, I doubt very much that I would have become a member of Hell's Angels or a child of the darkness. Rather, I think in many respects that I



PASTORAL MESSAGE

would have become pretty much the same kind of person I am. But because of those whom I have known in the various churches I have served, and you who are God's people here at Round Hill Community Church, I have been changed in many gracious and special ways . . . "for good." There is a very unique "spirit" that you embody as a church family.

As the Narthex plaque proclaims, this church family is not focused upon what distinguishes us from one another, but what we have in common – the thoughtful creed we affirm, the gracious prayer we offer, the shared and individual faith journeys that are ours, the gracious unity we experience amidst our rich diversity. This unity is so beautifully reflected at the kneeling rail during communion, where each one is welcomed and has a special place and meaningful opportunities to share your considerable gifts of time, talent, and treasures, as you receive and are nourished by the food God alone can provide.

Indeed, there is an openness and acceptance of all who come through our doors, a genuine delight in greeting friends old and new, and a warm embrace of those times to enjoy and build up a fellowship that is accented by laughter and tears and love . . . whether around the parlor table, or at a church dinner at the Community House; participating in lively living room conversations in members' homes, or sitting together in the Meeting Room at one of our forums or meetings; or talking with one another in the hallway admiring the many displays in our art gallery, walking prayerfully around our outdoor labyrinth, or simply sharing in the fun and fellowship of doing crafts in the craft room.

There is a wondrous curiosity and yearning to grow in the faith that is ours, a willingness to explore and live the questions of life's meaning, a contagious hope for opportunities to challenge and be challenged, to broaden and deepen understandings of what it means to be a human being "fully alive" in the world today, and to live out these discoveries through a life of service to "the least of these." Indeed, there is a willingness to share in generous fashion the love and gracious blessings we have received . . . and to do so joyfully, in gratitude to God for the loving and life-giving gift of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And without question, there is a great appreciation for meaningful worship, inspiring music, thoughtful sermons that connect the unfolding dramas of our lives with the transforming narrative of our faith, and pastoral prayers that reflect the hungers and hopes, the joys and sorrows, the yearnings and needs we feel upon our hearts being expressed to a loving God who, we believe, hears and receives all these, as we listen for God's still, small voice. Worship happens here as we open ourselves to be comforted and awakened, encouraged and renewed, guided and touched by the presence of God from whose love we

are never separated, and whose love we are called to proclaim and share in our words and deeds.

Being with you and experiencing these memorable dimensions in our life together these last eleven years, I believe I have grown in gracious ways. I have become a better preacher, pastor, teacher, counselor, and spiritual friend . . . and I am grateful beyond words for the gift you have been to me and my family.

There is a passage in Matthew's gospel that I have gravitated toward through the years as a kind of mantra that anchors me along the journey of faith, and I especially appreciate the translation of Jesus' words as given in Eugene Peterson's *The Message*: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life . . . Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Here, in this place of grace, this community church family . . . among you, my friends . . . I have come to feel the truth of these words in powerful ways. Paraphrasing Martin Luther, I don't think anyone would describe me as one of Rev. Adams's "angels of light." But I do believe that by assuming such a role and serving with you in the shared ministry that has been ours, being your pastor has made me better than I am. And indeed, in many respects, I have come to experience the closer company of our Lord, and I am learning to live more lightly and freely. My hope and prayer is that you have been able to experience some measure of this as well.

– Bob Culp

MAY SERVICES/SERMONS

May 2	"A New Commandment?" Bob Culp
May 9	"No Longer Orphans," Bob Culp
May 16	"Gifts," Bob Culp and a number of children and family members leading the service
May 23	"Graduating in the School of the Spirit" Bob Culp Sacrament of Communion observed
May 30	Shannon White preaching

The News Letter

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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.

MAY 2010 AT ROUND HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 "A New Command-ment?" Rev. Culp, Worship and Church School, 10 a.m.	3 Writer's Workshop, 7 p.m. Trustee Meeting 8 p.m.	4	5 Craft Wkshp, 2 p.m.	6 Choir Rehearsal 8 p.m.	7	8
9 "No Longer Orphans," Rev. Culp, Worship and Church School, 10 a.m.	10 Writer's Workshop, 7 p.m.	11 Lifeline Screen- ing, 8:30 a.m.	12 Women's Spirit Rising, 1 p.m. Craft Wkshp, 2 p.m.	13 Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	14	15
16 "Gifts," Rev. Culp and children and families, Family Worship Service, 10 a.m.	17 Cooking for St. Lukes, 3 p.m. Writer's Workshop, 7 p.m.	18	19 Craft Wkshp, 2 p.m.	20 Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	21 Newsletter Deadline Opera at Round Hill 8 p.m.	22
23 Pentecost Sunday "Graduating in the School of the Spirit," Rev. Culp, Worship and Church School, 10 a.m. Communion	24 Writer's Workshop, 7 p.m.	25 <i>Tipping Point</i> , Movie and dis- cussion, 7:30 p.m.	26 Craft Wkshp, 2 p.m.	27 Choir Rehearsal 8:00 p.m.	28	29
30 Rev. White preaching, Worship and Church School, 10 a.m.	31 Memorial Day Office closed Writer's Workshop, 7 p.m.	<p>WORSHIP AND CHURCH SCHOOL SUNDAYS AT 10:00 A.M. CHILDCARE AVAILABLE</p> <p>LES BEAUX ARTS GALLERY: PHOTOGRAPHER JOYCE BLUMENTHAL</p>				