



*Round Hill
Community Church
The News Letter*

January 2004

PASTORAL MESSAGE

The Challenge Before the Church

Religion is the most dangerous energy source known to humankind. The moment a person (or government or religion or organization) is convinced that God is either ordering or sanctioning a cause or project, anything goes. The history, worldwide, of religion-fueled hate, killing, and oppression is staggering.

(Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, introduction to the Book of Amos)

Long before the horrific events of September 11, 2001, the world community experienced the tragic and destructive dimensions of hatred inflicted by those somehow blinded by religious zealotry and made mad by the untended wounds inflicted by the powers and principalities in the world. Through the years, in every nation including our own, there have been self-righteous and arrogant administrations, along with multitudes of their followers in pews, who, in accepting a faith wrapped in flags of religious nationalism, patriotism, piety, and unregulated economic exploitation, have ignored the teaching of religious prophets and mystics.

The challenge before the church is to be a “reminding presence” in our age of the teachings and witness of Jesus, especially regarding the way we treat those who may differ from us, those who may be perceived as our enemies, even those who may persecute us and utter all kinds of evil against us.

Jesus offered a radical, life-affirming alternative to the vicious cycle of retributive violence in his time, which is as viable today as when he spoke his challenging message in the Sermon on the Mount. He knew that the pattern of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” had created a world that was blind and unable to speak words of compassion, and understanding, and forgiveness. He knew that a different way needed to be employed within the arena of human relationships toward the end of fostering community and right relationships, as well as mercy and justice. He spoke words that cut deeply into the fabric of assumptions and world views,

and he modeled a morality of radical trust and profound love:

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.

If anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well.

If anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.

Many read those words and dismiss them as overly idealistic and hopelessly naive, sensing they reflect a weakness of backbone and a masochistic willingness to be stepped on and used. But those words of Jesus reflect the benchmark for determining morality and justness. They reflect true spiritual strength, not weakness. And they indicate the willingness to use one’s power to give up the destructive tools of worldly ways and to embrace an alternative way that may bring peace and justice.

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RHCC Advent Workshop 2003



ADVENT WORKSHOP



Families made Advent wreaths aided by some of the Youth Group members



The George family reading one of the passages during the lighting of the Advent candles



A group of high school youth led the singing of the carols

PRESERVING OUR STORY

Please mark your calendars to join us on Thursday, January 15, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to update our church school photo album. No experience is necessary – you are welcome to come and go as your schedule allows.

9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.: Creative Memories consultant Ellen Pizzo will assist us (if you've never "scrapbooked" before, she'll be able to get you started).

12:30: Lunch provided

1:00-3:00 p.m.: More scrapbooking!

This is a fun and easy way to assist in the preservation of our church memories. If you haven't yet seen our photo album it is available in the Parlor. Please RSVP to the church or to kerriann@mac.com.



FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

By popular request, the Family Bible Study has been re-scheduled for Friday, January 9, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room. This intergenerational event will allow us time after the holiday rush to explore the central story of Christmas. Please read the *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* by Barbara Robinson with your children and youth and come ready to learn about the culture, life, and geography at the time of Jesus' birth. Carmel Tinnes will lead a short lesson followed by a simple meal. Please RSVP to the church, or kerriann@mac.com.



THE STORY OF A STORY

On the morning of December 14, the Round Hill Community Church was the set of its annual Christmas pageant. The story behind the pageant goes back quite a few years. Linda Seaver, former Director of Children's Ministries at RHCC, grew up in a church where the Christmas Pageant was the major event of the church school year. The children reenacted the story of Christ's birth and in this way entered into the mystery of faith.

Moving to this area years later, Linda went on a search to find a pageant that had some of the same feeling in their pageant. She found it in the Round Hill Community House where the performance took place on a stage. That pageant was the creation of Ann Winston, the Director of Christian Education for Children. Ann was an educator and artist who loved children. She wrote the script and started making the animals and palm trees at the First Church of Round Hill before a group of parishioners split off and moved down Round Hill Road to become Round Hill Community Church. Ann went with them as did the pageant. It was there that Linda found the pageant that would connect her with her childhood.



From 1984 on Linda worked as Ann's apprentice. Over the years they made a few additions to the animals, constructed a manger, and scoured tag sales and thrift shops to find materials for the elaborate costumes they created. Originally Ann had hung a Swedish paper star over the manger. Then ten years ago Linda found the tin Swedish star that hangs there now. Every child in the congregation can take part in the drama. The older students pick the parts they want, but a person can only play a particular role once. This year Laura Huley was Mary and this made up for the fact that she never got to play Baby Jesus. There is always an understudy for this key role as there is always a chance that a baby will be sick. Babysitters become informants in selecting who will play this central part.

At one point Linda suggested that they create a backdrop with the scene of Bethlehem. She looked through old books to find pictures of what Bethlehem might have looked like at the time of Christ's birth. She sketched the village and the land around it on canvas and Ann painted it. Linda did some more research to find out what constellations would have been in the sky at the time and place of the birth. The tiny bright lights that shine in the backdrop are in approximately the positions they would have been that night.

From 1986 to 1999, Linda was in charge of the pageant. Now Carmel Tinnes is the Director of Education and continues the tradition. Each year the pageant changes a little. After all, there are new children to step into the roles and become a part of a story filled with wonder. Through drama and art, the children are able to give the congregation a gift more precious than any the three kings brought to the small child in the manger so many years ago.

Sandy Motland





NEW MEMBERS



Lyn and Bob Harmon are both artists. Bob does sculpture, and Lyn likes to paint and design jewelry. Lyn started a group of spiritual explorers at her former church, has a doctorate in psychology, and has published children's books. Lyn and Bob lived in Mexico part-time for several years.



Susan and Lawrence Sterne have returned to Greenwich after living in Vermont for ten years. They run their own business, Economic Analysis Associates, and enjoy sailing.



Mary Stone grew up in Panama, where her father was a master pilot on the Panama Canal. Then she went to college in California. She works for GE asset management. Her interests are golf, swimming, gardening, reading, and music. She studied classical piano for many years.



Priscilla Simon grew up in the beautiful and historic city of Budapest, Hungary. She is serving an internship at Conair, the hair products company in Stamford. Priscilla enjoys driving around the countryside exploring her new surroundings, which is how she discovered our church. Now Ella and Arto Szabo have someone with whom they can speak their native language.

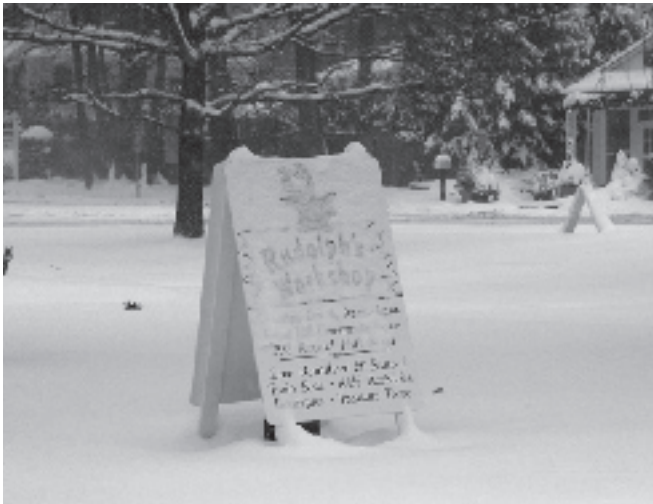


Nancy Gray and Thomas Lynch joined the church this November. After weekendening here for two years, Nancy, Tom, and their twelve-year-old son Collin moved from New York City to Greenwich full time in the summer of 2002. Tom is a private equity investor and Nancy a management consultant. In their spare time, Tom helps coach Collin's GBA basketball team and also serves as a director of a NYC performing arts organization. Collin is in seventh grade at the Stanwich School. The whole family is delighted to join such a "wonderfully open, warm church community."

Edie Wilson, Membership Chairman



RUDOLPH'S WORKSHOP



Such are the vicissitudes of fate that the snow kept falling on all the planning and work that went into Rudolph's Workshop. Those that made it to the Friday evening gala had a wonderful time and a few even got there Saturday morning. The vendors did their best and the shoppers were able to find terrific gifts. It was a beautifully planned event and will be a great success next year. Many thanks to Lynda Treadwell, Leslie Lee, and their elves.

FORUM FACTS FOR JANUARY 11

Ethical Dilemmas in Parenting

Why is it so much harder for us to teach values to our children than it was for us to learn them ourselves growing up? What can parents today do in the face of the many forces that challenge our own values and work against the moral development of our children? How can we find the right balance between character and achievement for our children?

Join Greenwich Academy Lower School head Jody Visage, and psychiatrist Diana Deacon for a lively discussion of these and other ethical dilemmas parents face in trying to do the very best for their children.

Brook Calkin, Chairman

WOMEN'S GATHERING

Join us on Friday evening, January 23, for a warm and cozy gathering of old friends and new acquaintances as we women of the church come together for a festive potluck dinner at Sandy Motland's. Catherine Brandt will be our speaker. Invitations will be mailed, but save the date now!

Anne Alexander and Julia Boysen, Co-Chairmen

POSSIBLE CELL TOWER

The Board of Trustees at the December Board Meeting voted to proceed further in the discussions we have had with Verizon, which is representing six cell phone companies in their proposal to us that we permit the construction of a cell phone facility in the woods behind the Community House. This approval to proceed was granted on the conditions that we proceed with *great caution*, and that all discussions with the cell phone companies be mindful of the interests of our neighbors and of our town.

To this end, on Tuesday, January 13, at 7:00 p.m. in the Community House there will be an information meeting at which representatives of the cell phone companies will be present. All people interested in this matter – our neighbors, town officials, and any other interested parties in Greenwich – are welcome to attend this meeting to ask any questions or to express any concerns that they might have.

If anyone in the church has any questions or concerns, I encourage you to share them with me, or with Lloyd Hull, Art Landi, Joe Pellegrino, or Suzy Simpson, who together with me form the Church Committee charged with handling this matter.

Ken Bartels



This photograph shows the balloon that was flown at the height of the proposed tower to give some idea of what it will look like. Another balloon will be flown, depending on weather conditions, from January 12 to January 15.

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PASTORAL MESSAGE

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Such a posture is a daring risk to take, isn't it? Certainly, it cost Jesus his life as he was cruelly put to death upon a crude cross of wood. But his pattern of living and loving needs to determine the pattern of our lives and the measure of our own passions and values – as individuals, as a community of faith, as a nation and world community.

Within our church, we need to embrace such a challenging vision. For ours is a faith that is broad enough to include all God's children. Ours is a love that is deep enough to attend to the needs of the least of these. And ours is a hope that is visionary enough to see the possibilities of a new world. May it be so with us as a church family in the coming new year.

Pastor Bob Culp

Calling All Keys . . .

If you have picked up keys to church buildings and have discovered them at home, please return them to the church office as soon as possible. Thank you.

JANUARY SERVICES AND SERMONS

- Jan. 4 *How Then Shall We Live?*
(Jer 29:10-14)
Jan. 11 *Faith for Wintry Weather*
(2 Cor 11:22-30; 12:10)
Jan. 18 *A Progressive Dream*
(Jer 18:13-17)
Jan. 25 *The Great Forgiveness*
(Mt 18:21-22)

IMPORTANT DATES

- Jan. 1 Office Closed
Jan. 8 Women's Brown Bag Bible Study
Jan. 9 Family Bible Study, 5:30-7:00 p.m.
Jan. 11 Forum: Ethical Dilemmas in Parenting
Jan. 15 Women's Brown Bag Bible Study
Scrapbooking Event, 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Jan. 22 Women's Brown Bag Bible Study
Jan. 29 Women's Brown Bag Bible Study
Feb. 8 New Member Sunday