



*Round Hill
Community Church
The News Letter*

February 2005

RELIEF EFFORTS

Sometimes crises, even thousands of miles away, help to bring out the best in all of us. By responding together as a community, we enrich and give more meaning to the response than acting alone. The RHCC response to the tsunami of 2005 is certainly a case in point.

At its regular meeting on January 3, only days after the tsunami struck shore, the Board of Trustees empowered Pastor Bob Culp to design and conduct a worship service focused upon the tragedy that occurred in South Asia on December 26, when tsunamis created significant damage along more than 1,000 miles of shorelines and killed, by some reports, more than 200,000 men, women, and children. The Board also authorized a special offering to be received that day, with a letter to be sent to all members and friends inviting them to respond generously to this offering.

On January 9, the worship service took place with many members and friends in attendance. The service included special prayers and litanies, special music that included Harpist Barbara Allen and Soloist Julianne Borg, an extended Mission emphasis presented by Steve Fuzesi and Carmel Tinnes, who informed the congregation about the process whereby decisions would be made concerning how the funds would be used in the near and far future, and the special offering that was collected by members of

PASTORAL MESSAGE

The following are excerpts from the January 9 special service sermon.

I have been seeking – as many of you – to know what this tsunami means within the unfolding drama of the world's families, as well as within the story that is ours as God's people. With the dead being placed in common

graves while the living souls close by remain in shock or have chosen to distance themselves in their numbness and pain, we all are struggling to read and comprehend the plot of this challenging story we are witnessing, and living.

David Brooks writes, "Human beings have always told stories to explain deluges such as this. Most cultures have deep at their core a flood myth in which the great bulk of humanity is destroyed and a few are left to repopulate and repurify the human race. In most of these stories," Brooks observes, "God is meting out retribution, punishing those who have strayed from his path. The flood starts a new history which will be on a higher plane than the old."

We struggle, though, with nature's fury and apparent indifference – with the earth's changing, the mountains shaking, the waters roaring and foaming in such a blind and cruel manner that kills so many of our brothers and sisters, so many of our sons and daughters. And we resist, too, what nature may be revealing about an impersonal power that stands apart



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RELIEF EFFORTS

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our Confirmation Class and youth. The sermon that day preached by Pastor Bob Culp, "Encountering Tsunamis Today," has been posted on our church's website for your information and for others to read. Also, News Channel 12 filmed significant portions of the service and presented a very nice news piece on our efforts later that same day during several time slots.

The offering on January 9 and in the weeks since, coupled with the memorials that have been donated in honor of Kay Cook who died on January 7 and for whom such causes and needs were dear to her heart, has been wonderfully generous! To date, more than \$24,000 has been donated, with additional offerings coming in almost every day.

The Board of Trustees authorized the Benevolence and Outreach Committee to designate how such monies would be used. The committee members talked, heard from others in the congregation, and exchanged many emails. At its meeting on January 19, the committee members conducted a thoughtful and stimulating discussion about the usage of such funds, along with a carefully documented process of discerning of the various organizations that are involved in tsunami relief efforts. After a thorough discussion, the committee unanimously agreed that we would immediately send 75% of the funds collected thus far to three organizations that are working "hand in hand" with one another, and whose impact has been significant and extremely helpful. The remaining 25% of the funds we will retain until we are able to establish a direct linkage to a village or region through one of the helping agencies we are supporting. The committee thought that with just a bit of time we could better determine if such a targeted helping opportunity more directly and personally linked to RHCC could be identified. Our hope is that this will occur very soon.

The three agencies' tsunami response efforts we are supporting are:

American Red Cross/International Response Fund
(through our Greenwich chapter)

AmeriCares Tsunami Relief Fund
(based in nearby Stamford)

UNICEF (US Fund for Tsunami)

We discovered in our research that both the Red Cross and AmeriCares organizations are utilizing UNICEF delivery systems and contacts that are already in place and have an established rapport and critical knowledge of the affected areas. The three organizations

have well-established "track records," use more than 90% of all funds for direct program usage, and are all highly rated by evaluating groups, both in the USA and abroad. All three are initially focused on the immediate needs and have the infrastructure and commitment also to a longer term response focused on clean water, sanitation, physical and mental health support, food, and ultimately development programs to ensure the future of the devastated communities.

The Benevolence and Outreach Committee wishes to thank our fellow members of the congregation for responding in such a loving and generous fashion. We are truly a congregation with the will and capacity to respond to the needs of others wherever hardship strikes in our global village. Our gifts will make real the compassion and living faith of our fellowship, and will convey to those who receive assistance that God's love is that which binds us together in our common hopes and efforts to bring healing and wholeness to all in their time of special need.

How extraordinarily blessed we are to be able to share our blessings!

Robert B. Culp, Pastor

Benevolence and Outreach Committee:

Stephen and Nancy Fuzesi, Co-chairs

Win Adkins

Christine Gerli

Annette Grueterich

Hadi Hajjar

Louise Hoffman

Kerri Ann Hofer

Nancy Meek

Sandy Motland

Michael Sandifer

Joan Warburg

Rev. Bob Culp (advisory member)

FORUM FACTS

There will be a sermon talk-back on February 27. The sermon will be "True Power Lunches: Our own laves and fishes freely offered allow God to satisfy the hunger of those in need."

On March 13, Hadi and Mirella Hajjar will tell their story.

Brook Calkin, Chair, Forum Planning Committee



MUSIC NOTES

Christopher Kabala planned lovely music for the service on January 9. Harpist Barbara Allen and soloist Julianne Borg were special guests. Both have been at RHCC before. Julianne was soloist with the choir before she left to sing with New York City Opera.



Barbara Allen playing harp during the January 9 service

Organ Restoration

The extensive renovation of the Milbank Organ by the Walker Technical Company will begin on February 7 and be completed within two weeks. The renovation will include complete rebuilding of the organ console, keyboard, new speaker installations, and most importantly, the replacement of the outdated analog electronics with the most advanced digital electronics currently available. When finished, the organ will resemble the sound of the great Skinner organs produced in this country during the first part of the twentieth century; one of the golden ages of organ building. A large number of pipes from several fine Skinner organs have been digitally sampled at a speed two to four times faster than a normal CD, resulting in an authentic duplication that is truly remarkable for an electronic instrument. Since each pipe is individually sampled, the various tonal idiosyncrasies of the pipe will be duplicated, giving the instrument a liveliness, richness, and clarity that the present instrument does not have. The improvements, clearly discernible to the average listener, will make the instrument less shrill and more pleasing to the ear. In the next few weeks when you hear the present organ, listen carefully and try to memorize the sound; and then compare it with the renovated sound at the end of February. You will be amazed and very pleased.



Susan Deaver

Bach Sunday Lenten Series

A Lenten series focusing on the music of J.S. Bach will commence on February 13, with Susan Deaver performing selections from the sonatas for flute and piano during the Communion Service. Dr. Deaver has performed worldwide as both flute soloist and conductor. She is presently on the faculty of CW Post University, where she is conductor of the CW Post Orchestra and director of the 2005 Chamber Festival.

Christopher Kabala, Minister of Music





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Lent and Easter Church School Theme

This year the Church School will focus on seeds and bulbs as symbols of new life. Young children can understand this concrete symbol of new life. In all the classrooms, the children and youth will plant flowers and watch them grow, hopefully blossoming out by Easter. The Church School banners for the Easter Parade this year will carry this theme, so look for blossoms on Easter morning. The Easter banner parade will occur during the opening hymn of the worship service. Children will gather in classrooms at 9:55 a.m. to get lined up. There will also be a special fellowship time with activities for children in the Community House following worship.

Be sure to check the *March News Letter* for dates and times of the Ukrainian Egg Workshops, Labyrinth Walks, and the special youth-led “Walk through Holy Week” and Hands-On Museum. (The last two events will be on Palm Sunday, March 20, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.)

Understanding Communion

On February 6, following the morning service, parents and their children are invited to a special luncheon and workshop focusing on the Meaning and Mystery of Communion. This will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

After participating in a simple meal at the Community House that will be “family-style,” with everybody assisting in the meal’s preparation, serving, and clean-up, we will move over to the fireplace area, where Bob Culp will conduct an informal “fireside chat” concerning the special stories and events linked to our observance of Communion. Participants will then break out into two groups to explore this sacred ritual through drama, baking, and other hands-on activities. Finally, everyone will gather in the Sanctuary for a brief Communion Service for all those who wish to participate . . . and the bread we have baked!

This is an important special event. If you plan to attend, please let us know soon either by calling the church office or by emailing Carmel. There already are 12 reservations! If you need child care, please let the office know, and we will arrange for it here at the church.

Special Tsunami Activity

To assist children after the devastation from the tsunami in Southeast Asia, the children and youth of our congregation will focus on a hands-on means of providing care and support. This activity is yet to be determined by the Christian Education Committee, but will be explained in a bulletin insert on the first Sunday of Lent. The assistance of church members and friends will be requested as the children and youth of the congregation learn more about becoming God’s hands in the world.

*Carmel Tinnes
Director of Education and Fellowship*

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

At our recent meeting on Sunday, January 16, we came to some conclusions and set some matters into motion that we wanted to describe to the Congregation:

- We thought in the light of events during the January 9 service when two people fell ill, it would be wise to develop a Medical Emergency Plan. This would allow us to respond promptly and wisely to any medical needs that might arise during the service. The Pastor, Dr. Phil Piro, and Fred Mason are taking the lead on that effort.

- As explained to the Board at its last meeting, we are looking into the possibility of inviting members of the congregation to read Scripture during the service. Many of us come from this tradition and we believe it presents a comfortable way to allow more members of the congregation to actively participate. However, Bob has advised us that doing this effectively is not as simple as it might seem, so we will be setting up some training in support of this effort. Please let us know if you are interested in participating in this initiative.

- With the Christian Education Committee, Carmel and Bob will lead us on February 6 in a workshop for families interested in having their children participate, advisedly, in Communion.

-In a much longer time frame, we are thinking about how the Communion ritual might be modified to better respond to contemporary sensibilities and concerns. For example, many mainline Protestant denominations now refer to the “cup of the new covenant and the bread of life” rather than the Body and the Blood. We very much welcome your thoughts here and will move slowly and carefully.

- We have scheduled another Feedback Forum for February 27 so that we can all discuss ideas or questions raised by Bob’s sermon as well as the items discussed above.

*Charles Lee and Mary Ann Debnar
Co-chairs, Worship Committee*



WOMEN'S GATHERING

Friday evening, January 21, was frigid outside but warm and welcoming for about 30 women of the church at Carrie Finlayson's home on Round Hill Road. Pat Kemp organized the potluck evening, which was full of laughter, lively conversation, and good food.



Featured Speaker Wilma Jordan-Green

Wilma Jordan-Green was the featured speaker. She captivated us with the story of her journey from Tennessee to New York; from a small publishing venture after college to the turnaround of a major national magazine; from selling her stake in the publishing business to starting her own mergers and acquisitions boutique; from total involvement with business to balancing business and motherhood. We'd give this story a five-star rating.



*Carmel Tinnes, Brook Calkin, and Gayle George
enjoy good company and food*



*Em Toohey, Alice O'Gorman and Joan Warburg
share a few laughs*

Join us at our next get-together on April 8. Invitations will be mailed. Information is also available through the Church Office. Please come and bring a friend.

*Julia Boysen and Anne Alexander
Co-Chairs, Women's Gathering*



PASTORAL MESSAGE

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and simply ignores such floods and tsunamis with all their destruction. Such an image of a heartless God, let alone a picture of a God who may intentionally sweep people away as with a flood – as if they were of no account, as though they were no more to that God than the flotsam and jetsam, the debris of creation washed back upon a vast, mangled and barren shore . . . such a picture of God is one that I find myself resisting with every ounce of my spiritual and intellectual energy.

In spite of the Job-like, despairing experiences of millions of people affected by the tsunami, I still believe there is a God – except the kind of God that is ours may not be the kind of God that we want. Our God creates us lovingly, individually, graciously. But God creates us in God's own image to be partners, not just recipients, in the ongoing work of creation, and building bridges of peace and justice, mercy and compassion, beauty and mystery. God does not protect us from our worst self, nor from the wrath of nature's storms and tempests; God only nurtures us to be our best self and equips us to endure and emerge as stronger and deeper souls, though walking wounded, limping, and hand-in-hand with others.

God is not a puppeteer, manipulating our every moment of existence. God is not a dictator, forcing or overpowering us to do what God wants us to do. God is not a hovering parent who somehow makes the decisions that we must make for ourselves. Because God has created us to be free as well as dependent, to be holy as well as humble, to be inquiring as well as to be still . . . bad things simply happen to good and innocent people, as well as to those who may not be so good or innocent. And our calling in the midst of every natural or personal tsunami that comes our way is to be as attentive and discerning as we can be . . . to sense or to recognize the gracious movement of God in and through everything that may befall us.

I cannot believe for a single moment that God was

responsible for what happened on the day after Christmas along the shorelines of the Indian Ocean. But please make no mistake about this – God was surely the first one to begin weeping on that fateful and terrible day.

You see, we people of faith believe that as we look upon the events of the world and our shared and individual history as it unfolds; and as we endure what the poet has termed that “desolate landscape between the regions of kindness . . . where we feel the future dissolve like salt in a weakened broth;” and as we endure the power and reality of human grief . . . we do so not as a people who have no hope. Indeed, through the hope that is ours, we live within the transforming light of another narrative. This is the narrative that tells us of God's love being made flesh and dwelling among us, that tells us from such life-giving love we will never be separated, and that assures us that we are not alone in the grief and suffering that we may know. In the words of Richard Bauckham, we live as characters “in a different story, or at least a version of the same story with a radically different ending, an ending that transfigures the significance of our own” . . . and, I would add, that transfigures the significance of the stories of those countless lives who were overwhelmed by walls of water, roaring and foaming.

In the end, without the One we call Lord, we have only rocks and mountains, only fire and wind, only water and waves to reveal a Mystery as menacing as it is majestic. But in our Lord's birth in a Bethlehem stable amidst an oppressed people yearning for their deliverance, we may know the God who is with us through the deep waters, we may trust the God who is for us in the desolate landscape between the regions of kindness, and we may lean upon the God who abides beside us, as one of us, in life and in death.

Bob Culp, Pastor

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Lent begins on February 9 and will be marked by a special Ash Wednesday Service. It will begin at 7:00 p.m. with meditation and prayer. Following the service a light dinner will be served in the Parlor. This is an opportunity to share in reflection and fellowship with your church

family. Please call the Church Office at 869-1091 if you wish to participate. We need people to bring salad, bread, wine, or cookies.



LET CUPID REIGN



On Friday, February 11,
the Men's Group is hosting our Annual Valentine's Dinner Dance.
Andy Burke Catering will prepare another delicious dinner and
Joe Delia and the All Stars will provide music to dance the night away.
The festivities will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Community House.
Tickets are \$80 per person.
Why not reserve a table for ten and invite some friends?
RSVP to the Church Office.

Phone: (203) 869-1091
Website: www.roundhillcommunitychurch.org
Email: church@roundhillcommunitychurch.org

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The News Letter
Round Hill Community Church
395 Round Hill Road
Greenwich, Connecticut 06831

MEMBERSHIP

On Sunday, February 6, new members will be welcomed to the church. Anyone interested in becoming a member should talk with Bob Culp or Edie Wilson.

Edie Wilson
Chair, Membership Committee

CELL TOWER UPDATE

On Sunday, February 6, immediately following fellowship hour (11:15 a.m.), Ken Bartels will provide an update on the proposed cell phone facility.

Nancy Mazzoli, Claire McKean, and Sandy Motland
work to bring you this monthly newsletter.
Please contact any of us with comments and ideas.

FEBRUARY SERVICES AND SERMONS

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| Feb. 6 | <i>God's Amazing Grace</i> (Jn. 3:16) |
| Feb. 9 | <i>The Dusty Self That We Are</i> (Gen. 2)
Lenten Sermon Series |
| Feb. 13 | <i>At the Break of Day</i> (Ps. 118)
Communion Sunday |
| Feb. 20 | <i>In Workaday Routines</i> (Mt. 10) |
| Feb. 27 | <i>True Power Lunches</i>
(Rom. 10-15; Jn. 6:1-14) |

IMPORTANT DATES

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| Feb. 3 | Women's Brown Bag Bible Study |
| Feb. 6 | New Member Sunday
Cell Tower Update, 11:15 a.m.,
Sanctuary
Meaning and Mystery of Communion
Lunch and Workshop,
11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. |
| Feb. 10 | Women's Brown Bag Bible Study |
| Feb. 11 | Valentine's Dinner Dance |
| Feb. 17 | Women's Brown Bag Bible Study |
| Feb. 20 | <i>News Letter</i> Deadline |
| Feb. 21 | St. Luke's Food Preparation |
| Feb. 24 | Women's Brown Bag Bible Study |
| Feb. 27 | Feedback Forum |