



the Copper Hill Connection

December 2014

Pastor's Postings Meaningful Christmas Traditions

by Rev. Dr. Kelvin S. Jones

Christmas is a time when we all celebrate with special observances. What makes a good tradition? I believe that meaningful practices help us remember something important that we want to pass on to future generations.

Traditionally, the typical manger scene is inhabited, not only by people, but also by animals: sheep, camels, cows, a donkey, and more. Surprisingly, the Bible mentions only the sheep on the hillside. But our Christmas cards, crèches, and movies all have animals at the manger, and I'd hate to part with them. The donkey has helped me to remember Mary's journey, the camels—the coming of the Wise Men, the cows—the rough earthiness of being born in a stable. Animals also help children relate to the Christmas story.

The celebration of Advent (the four Sundays before Christmas) is another tradition that I find very helpful. John the Baptist challenged us, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him" (Matthew 3:3). In the busyness of Christmas cards, presents, and parties, observing Advent helps me remember to prepare spiritually. While I decorate my house, I will remember to beautify my soul with worship and right living in celebration of the birth of the "Righteous One." The candlelight of the Advent wreath reminds us of Jesus, the Light of the world.

One thing my family always did that I highly recommend is reading the story of the first Christmas from Luke 2 on Christmas morning before opening gifts. The most important result is the clear message to all that Jesus is indeed the center of the season. It will keep your celebration in perspective.

I hope these ideas have inspired you to plan some good Christmas traditions that help you remember what is most important at Christmas. Let's cherish and pass on good traditions.



**"A Savior has been born to you;
He is Christ the Lord."
(Luke 2:10, 11)**



CHRISTmas Celebrations

Christmas Caroling at Meadowbrook

Christmas carols are a delightful part of our Yuletide celebrations. Join us as we bring joy to the residents of Meadowbrook Nursing Home on Saturday, **December 13**. We'll meet there just before 2 PM.

Children's Sunday

On Sunday, **December 14** at 9:00 AM, the children of our church will present a special program—"The Hanging of the Greens." All the children will take part as the Christmas story unfolds, in readings and the singing of carols. They will carry to the manger small figurines that are part of a beautiful ceramic set. Your heart will be touched as even the smallest messenger reminds us that Christmas is a gift of love for everyone.

Following the program, we will gather in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments.

Christmas Choir

As the angels sang praises to God, so our choir will lift their voices in celebration on Sunday, **December 21** at 9 AM. Selections will include a medley of familiar Christmas carols with a new twist, and a men's quartet piece, "The Star Still Shines," as sung by Diamond Rio.

Christmas Eve Service

Join us on **December 24** at 5 PM for our Family Christmas Eve Service with Celtic harp music and our candle lighting tradition.

Ministries of Our Church



Food Pantry Support

We continue to support the food banks of East Granby, Granby, and Suffield. The collection box has been moved to the kitchen for the colder months.

As you do your regular grocery shopping each week, try to pick up an item or two for those less fortunate. Sadly, the need never goes away!

United Methodist Women

The Copper Hill United Methodist Women welcome all the ladies of the church to join us on Sunday, January 18, following the morning service as we make plans for the new year.

We chose this time specifically for the convenience of those not able to attend meetings normally held in the evening. Come share your ideas with us!

We will not meet again until March.

Gift Cards for Christmas Baskets

We are collecting gift cards for Christmas baskets as we have done for several years, for needy families in East Granby, Granby, and Suffield. The cards may be in any amount and should be for one of the large chains (e.g. Walmart, Target, Big Y, Stop & Shop). Cards are due on Sunday, Dec. 14.



Note Cards

We have a supply of note cards with our church's picture on the front. Please feel free to use one, either with the printed prayer or blank inside, to send to someone who is on your heart.

"Goings On" at Our Church



Winter Picnic

We all need a break during the winter "blahs." Since everyone seemed to enjoy last year's event, we're planning our 2nd Winter Picnic for Saturday, Feb. 7 at 4:00 PM. There will be activities and games for all ages. Please bring a salad or side dish, and a dessert, and we'll provide the hamburgers and hot dogs. We'll also turn up the heat, so plan to join us in your summer attire for a fun time!

New Flags

We recently replaced the American and Christian flags and their stands in our church's sanctuary. The flags were dedicated during our morning worship service on October 26.

Activities you may have missed

On October 26, a *Kids' Hayride and Costume Party* was enjoyed by the children of our church along with a number of their friends. There was a costume parade with prizes, a hot lunch with macaroni and cheese and veggies, and a hayride, followed by cookies, doughnuts, candy, and cider.

After a seven-year hiatus, we served our *Turkey Dinner* on November 1, with a great turnout for the one seating.

The UMW's *Holiday Bazaar and Luncheon*, held on November 21 and 22, was a big success.

On Sunday, November 30, we *decorated the Sanctuary* for the Christmas season and shared a *potluck lunch*.



Featured Mission Project – Smile Train

Each quarter our church designates a specified amount from the weekly giving to send to selected charities. This year's budget has designated \$625 per quarter for missions. Missions Chairman Jan Prevost and her assistant Susan Madry recommend specific charities to the Church Council. From these, the council then choose which charities will receive what amounts. This past quarter, three charities were chosen; Smile Train (\$250), Operation Classroom in Liberia and Sierra Leone through UMC Global Ministries (\$250), and the Children's Home in Binghamton, NY (\$125).

In each newsletter, we plan to feature one of the charities chosen by the council that quarter, so that you can get a better idea of the missions work of our church.

Church Conference Passes Key Motions

On November 23 the church conference considered the first two motions regarding use of funds from the generous gift that our church received from the Kenny Seymour estate.

Renovations: One motion allowed the trustees to draw up to \$30,000 for continuing renovations. So far, renovations have been covered by other funds on hand. But several projects that are underway will require additional funding. These projects include new doors, inside window layer, more new heaters, new lighting, and a new UM sign. This \$30,000 will be available to the trustees into the near future to maintain and enhance our existing facilities in ways we have not been able to do in the past.

Missions: The second motion pertained to missions giving. Every quarter, Jan Prevost and Susan Madry recommend about four charities to the church council as potential recipients of budgeted missions giving from weekly offerings. This year that quarterly gift totals \$625. This motion approved matching this quarterly budgeted missions giving with equal amounts from the gift or its proceeds. This practice will continue until a future church conference decides otherwise. This motion put into practice the intention we have had since our first discussions about the gift, an intention to be generous from what God has given to us. In the spirit of the Old Testament offering of "firstfruits," it is entirely appropriate that this motion be one of the first two passed for use of the gift.

Both motions comply with our guiding principle that the gift will not be used to replace regular budget giving, but rather to accomplish what we could not do through the regular budget.

Both motions passed unanimously. We praise God for this answer to our prayer for a spirit of unity in how we use the money that God has sent us.

Our first featured charity is Smile Train. Every year more than 170,000 children are born with cleft lip and/or palate. Most can't afford surgery. Clefts are a major problem in developing countries where millions of children are suffering from unrepaired clefts. Most cannot eat or speak properly and aren't allowed to attend school or hold a job. Being born with a cleft in a developing country is truly a curse. The good news is that every single child with a cleft can be helped with surgery that costs as little as \$250 and takes as little as 45 minutes. Smile Train provides free cleft surgery to hundreds of thousands of poor children in developing countries. They use technology and innovation to train and utilize local partner hospitals and doctors and provide them with resources, knowledge, and skills so that they can keep helping others. Smile Train is at work in 87 different countries. You can learn more about them on their website <http://www.smiletrain.org/> from which this information was taken. Copper Hill UMC is happy to help this fine charity.



New Ramp for Handicapped Entrance

Since the sidewalk leading to the handicapped entrance had settled by a couple of inches, it was no longer possible for some handicapped patrons to gain access through the Fellowship Hall. A ramp was installed at the entrance to allow all people to enter again. However, the door offers a little more resistance, so you do have to pull a little harder.

Copper Hill United Methodist Church
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Copper Hill Connection

the newsletter for members and friends of

Copper Hill United Methodist Church, 27 Copper Hill Road, East Granby, CT 06026

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If you would prefer to receive your copy by email, please let us know.

You're Invited!

Dec. 13—2:00 PM Christmas Caroling at Meadowbrook

Dec. 14—9:00 AM Children's Sunday
"Hanging of the Greens"
Coffee Hour

Dec. 21—9:00 AM Christmas Choir

Dec. 24—5:00 PM Family Christmas Eve Service
Celtic harp, Traditional Candle Lighting



Please join us every Sunday morning for our Family Worship Service—9:00 AM

Find us on the **web:** www.CopperHillChurch.us

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