The Heritage of God’s People

First in a new series, Heritage and Hope, developed for the first anniversary of our service at Copper Hill

# Scripture: Isaiah 54

# Key Thought: In New England, heritage is an important concept; this prophecy of Isaiah points us toward a deeper understanding of the heritage of the Christian Church.

# Heritage runs deep here at Copper Hill Church

## Connecticut's Foundation as a Religious Colony

Connecticut was originally founded by [Congregationalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregationalists) who split away from the [Massachusetts colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts_colony) between 1635 and 1636. The first settlers founded three towns on the [Connecticut River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connecticut_River) in [Windsor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windsor,_Connecticut), [Wethersfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wethersfield,_Connecticut), and [Hartford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartford,_Connecticut). One of the main purposes of the Fundamental Orders was to formalize the relationship between these three towns. The core foundation of the Fundamental Orders incorporates the ingrained religious background of the colony’s founders. They called for “an orderly and decent government according to [God](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God)” in attempts to pursue “The liberty and purity of the gospel of our Lord [Jesus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus).”[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Connecticut_Constitution#cite_note-2) Until 1818, the [Congregational Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_Church) stood as the [established church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Established_church) of the [state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state). All Connecticut residents were required to attend church and/or pay taxes to support the Congregational faith. Anyone belonging to another [Christian sect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_sect) such as [Baptist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptist), [Episcopal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episcopal_Church_(United_States)), or [Quaker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quaker), had to provide documentation signed by a church officer indicating attendance and financial support of their separate church in order to avoid paying taxes to the Congregationalists. (From Wikipedia article on the History of the Connecticut Constitution)

We are reminded by this small historical note that our state, has, as did most of the original 13 colonies a solid Christian history in is beginnings. That is part of our heritage.

**The Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies of New England; May 19, 1643**

### The Articles of Confederation between the Plantations under the Government of the Massachusetts, the Plantations under the Government of New Plymouth, the Plantations under the Government of Connecticut, and the Government of New Haven with the Plantations in Combination therewith:

Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely, to advance the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity with peace; and whereas in our settling (by a wise providence of God) we are further dispersed upon the sea coasts and rivers than was at first intended, so that we can not according to our desire with convenience communicate in one government and jurisdiction ; … (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\_century/art1613.asp)

From George Washington’s Farewell Address:

“Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles….,…..Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice ? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.” (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\_century/washing.asp)

### President Andrew Jackson, “The Bible is the rock upon which our republic rests.” (Pulpit Helps Feb. 91) (WO-PO-GO)

## Supreme Court 1892 –

“Our laws and our institutions must necessarily be based upon and embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible that it should be otherwise; and in this sense and to this extent our civilization and our institutions are emphatically Christian.” Church of the Holy Trinity V. Unites States

President Woodrow Wilson concluded,

“America was born a Christian nation for the purpose of exemplifying to the nations of the world the principles of righteousness found in the Word of God.” (Pulpit Helps Feb. 91)

Friends, anyone who says that The United States did not begin as a deliberately Christian country is either completely ignorant of colonial American history or they are intentionally trying to re-write history.

Today we need to pray for our country. Like a successful child who is now ashamed of the poor country parents brought him up right and taught him the values that have made him successful in the big city; our country has become ashamed to confess the Christian values and name the Savior who has blessed them and taught them freedom and justice and fairness and equality.

Our Own church’s history:

## Why our church was founded in 1816

In 1816, “Connecticut was entirely in the control of the Federalist Party and the established Congregationalist Church. Though the [Democratic-Republican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic-Republican) party had been organized in 1804, Connecticut, known as "the land of steady habits" for its custom of re-electing those in power in elected power until they died, it remained the last holdout of the [Federalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federalist) party in America.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Connecticut_Constitution#cite_note-4) It was also the last state to effectively have an established state religion, and a Constitution going back to the days of the British Empire. In 1815, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Methodists, and other members of other dissident denominations to the established Congregationalist church, combined with the Democratic-Republican party to form the [Toleration Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toleration_Party). In 1816, they held a convention and ran a slate of candidates. In 1817, they took control of the state Assembly (lower house), and elected [Oliver Wolcott, Jr.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Wolcott,_Jr.) as Governor, and [Jonathan Ingersoll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Ingersoll) as Lieutenant-governor.” (From Wikipedia article on the History of the Connecticut Constitution)

In the history book – East Granby; the evolution of a Connecticut town by Mary Jane Springman and Betty Finnell Grinan – I read that the Federalists, in an attempt to “bolster their waning support….repealed the fine for absence from church on Sundays- (read that Congregationalist Church)” in 1816. Power was shifting away from the Federalists who were closely aligned with the Congregationalist Church. Methodists of the time were part of the opposition movement in CT that would lead to the writing and adoption of the 1818 Constitution of CT that replaced the colonial orders of government and disentangled the government of Connecticut from the Congregationalist church for the first time in its history.

These brief history notes tells us more about the significance of the date of our church’s founding. Our Church’s founding date is 1816 – Looking forward to our 200th anniversary in just 2 years. That was the very first year that the political situation in CT allowed for any real independence from the Congregational church. The three founding couples of our church were Seth Griffin, Aristarchus Griffin, and Calvin Gillett with their wives. (from p. 125; the history book does not name the wives.)

Keep the following for reference but don’t use for the sermon

In 1639, a year after the founding of the state, the Rev. [Thomas Hooker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hooker) gave a sermon that formed the basis of [Fundamental Orders of Connecticut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_Orders_of_Connecticut), the first state Constitution. Since then, an "Anniversary Election Sermon" was given at the [Center Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Church_of_Christ_and_the_Ancient_Burying_Ground) in Hartford to celebrate the fusion of church and state. After a procession through Hartford of militia, assemblymen, and clerics from all over the state, a prominent cleric would preach a political sermon to the assembly, who would then order the better ones printed. One measure of the event's importance is the attention given to the sometimes long winded sermons: President [Ezra Stiles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra_Stiles) of Yale preached one in 1783 that lasted five hours and was 99 pages when printed.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Connecticut_Constitution#cite_note-5)

Governor Wolcott, knowing the Toleration Party would, after the spring elections of 1818, soon have the votes to take a slim majority in the upper house as well, asked the Episcopalian Rev. Harry Croswell to give the politically important Anniversary Election Sermon the next year, an event that would signal the end of the Standing-Order in Connecticut. Croswell, a former Federalist crusading journalist who had been sued for seditious libel by the Jefferson-party in New York in the famous [*People v. Croswell*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_v._Croswell) case, had entirely abandoned politics for religion; he was now the Rector of the large and influential [Trinity Church on the Green](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinity_Church_on_the_Green) in [New Haven, Connecticut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Haven,_Connecticut). But instead of giving the expected triumphant political sermon, or yet another standard election sermon of the sort that had been delivered since almost the founding of Connecticut in 1638, he gave an Election sermon in the spring of 1818 that strongly insisted on the total separation of church and state. Croswell's sermon had strong and immediate impact. It was ordered printed in an unprecedented four editions around the state: composed by a former newspaper editor from a time when paper was scarce and space was tight, it was only 11 pages when printed, or about 30 minutes long when preached.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Connecticut_Constitution#cite_note-6)

Meeting just after the unusually short Anniversary Election Sermon was delivered, the General Assembly made a significant change to [voting rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_rights) in Connecticut. All white males who paid taxes or served in the militia were deemed eligible to vote. This eliminated the previous property requirements that had grown onerous as more of the population moved to jobs in commerce or manufacturing rather than agriculture.

Even more significantly, the General Assembly also called for a constitutional convention that year. The most important ballots cast in the General Assembly was the vote on whether only a [simple majority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority) of the [legislature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislature) would be required to approve whatever constitution was ultimately drafted. Many favored requiring anywhere from a sixty to eighty percent majority for adoption of a new government.

It seems that Croswell's well-received and powerful short sermon was efficacious;[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Connecticut_Constitution" \l "cite_note-7) those in favor of a simple majority carried the vote by 81-80. Thus single vote margin passed the resolution vital to the future success of the constitution that would, among other things, disestablish the state church, separate church and state, and end the last theocracy in America.

Each town sent a number of [delegates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delegates) equal to the number of representatives held in the Assembly. The convention convened in Hartford on August 26, 1818. As one of the first orders of business, a twenty-four man committee was appointed to prepare a draft constitution. The very next day the committee returned with the Preamble and Bill of Rights. Their speed was not due to ingenuity. The draft was borrowed almost verbatim from the constitution [Mississippi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi) created a year earlier in 1817. After the remainder of the constitution was drafted, the convention approved the document by a two to one margin on September 16, 1818. The voters were given three weeks to consider the proposed constitution. On October 5, a vote was held. A majority cast their ballots in favor of the constitution, with the resolution passing 13,918 to 12,364. The ultimate vote proved the importance of requiring only a simple majority’s approval, for a sixty or eighty percent requirement would not have been met.

As a result of the new constitution, the [Congregational Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational_Church) was finally disestablished, although Christianity remained the constitutionally favored religion. Newly received voting rights were also solidified, as the convention provided constitutional rights to vote for all white males who paid taxes or had served in the militia. With the 1818 Constitution, separation of powers was finally brought to Connecticut government. An independent judiciary was approved. Both Supreme and Superior Court judges were now given life tenure to the age of seventy (this was changed to eight years in 1856). The Supreme Court of Errors was reduced to five judges, with each judge retaining a role as a Superior Court judge. Decisions of the court could no longer be appealed to the legislature.

The constitution did not significantly change the role of the executive, and the branch remained relatively weak. The executive did however, became a constitutional and independent part of the government. The governor was no longer granted a seat in the legislature. He was granted the new power of veto, but any of his vetos could be overruled by a simple majority vote from the Assembly. This made the [veto power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veto_power) essentially useless since any bill would have to pass both houses by a majority anyway. The General Assembly retained the authority to [nominate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nominate) judges under the new constitution. This was not changed until 1880, when nomination powers were transferred to the governor.

The legislative branch also experienced a few changes. The Council was renamed the Senate. By constitutional mandate, half the legislative sessions were to take place in [Hartford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartford) with the other half convening in [New Haven](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Haven). Surprisingly, the method in which towns were assigned a number of representatives was left unchanged. Each town predating the constitution retained two representatives in the lower house regardless of population, with the exception of several newer towns which were granted one vote. Although many amendments were added over the years, the Constitution of 1818 remained in operation until 1965. There was also a Constitution of 1955, but it merely incorporated prior amendments into the main body of the constitution. (From Wikipedia article on the History of the Connecticut Constitution)

## The heritage of Our Sanctuary

The Building of our current sanctuary – Our Cornerstone – actually there are two of them – one on each side, say 1839 - History book says it cost $1400 to build in 1839.

Did you ever wonder what hymns might have been like in 1839?

I was given a reproduction of a rare hymnbook published in 1737 by John Wesley, founder of Methodism, not Charles who we usually think of as the hymn writer of early Methodism. Here is Psalm 146 from it. Note that the Psalms were set to music in poetry form. (p. 9)

In those days, hymnbooks only had words in them. The hymnbooks were small to be easily carried in the saddle. I have an early Methodist circuit rider’s hymnal from 1843.

## The heritage of Renewal

Another great part of the heritage of our church is renewal, revival, God’s unusual working in our own area.

Jonathan Edwards, the preacher whose famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” sparked the First Great Awakening” in America preached that same sermon not far from here in Enfield CT in 1741.

“Then in 1740, like a great flash flood, the Great Awakening rolled through New England, and Northampton was included. It was at this time that Edwards preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" at Enfield with such remarkable results. It is estimated that 10 percent of New England was converted during this time. Imagine today 28 million converted in 2 years. Picture every church in your town doubling or tripling in the next 2 years, and you have some grasp of the enormity of what happened.” (from article by William Farley called Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening - <http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200201/200201_104_johnathan.cfm>)

Late in the 19th century the Holiness movement was in full swing and Methodism was its home. It was a revival movement that focused on preaching about sanctification, that is dedicating ourselves completely to God so that his Holy Spirit could cleanse our motivation and help us love God more purely. It was often promoted by camp meetings. One camp- meeting place was on the Griffin property. People would come from miles around to listen to preachers. At the larger ones, more than one preacher would be preaching at once in different areas of the campground. There was an exceptional night of revival right here at Copper Hill Church that is recorded in the history of East Granby.

“The writer, at a single evening meeting in the church, which lasted from 7 o’clock until midnight, witnessed as many as 15 persons who became apparently unconscious. Some were stretched upon the floor; others were lying or being supported upon the seats. This visitation of the Spirit was regarded as a great blessing, and it certainly did strengthen the church in numbers. (Charles Horace Clark quoted in p. 127 East Granby; the evolution of a Connecticut town by Mary Jane Springman and Betty Finnell Grinan)

# Isaiah wants his listeners to understand the spiritual heritage to which they are heirs.

## The situation

Israel in Isaiah’s time was overrun by enemies. There were many widows; God’s punishment for disobedience and idol worship was in evidence.

## Promises of increasing again

God by Isaiah sent a message of renewal. Isaiah predicted that the people would increase in numbers again. He used an image of a spreading tent that was growing in size. He predicted a return of prosperity to Israel.

# The church, the people of God today, are grafted into the inheritance of the people of God.

## The situation

Today, our nation is departing from God too just as Israel did often in their history. But whenever they returned to God, his blessing also returned. That was part of their inheritance because of the covenant.

Today we live under the New Covenant. But Isaiah 54, we are prompted to ask ourselves, “What is the heritage of the people of God for today”

## The promise of renewed relationship leading to new security, growth, rebuilding, reestablishment, and abundance.

One of the key characteristics of God’s relationship to Israel was his steadfast love, his covenant love. He was faithful to Israel; faithful to keep his part of the agreements.

As chapter 54 explains, God as builder is Creator of both blacksmith and destroyer. So He is ultimately in charge of destiny.

The word for inheritance previously used of the land – here is being used more spiritually. The heritage of the people of God is in their covenant relationship to their Maker and husband who can rebuild and make fruitful. He can take away reproach and make joy return. He can establish children in righteousness and in peace. That is what he still desires to do today for us.

## The church as the bride of Christ now shares this inheritance

We are people of the New Covenant; the Covenant God promised in Jer. 31:31 – a covenant of forgiveness, a covenant where the laws of righteousness are written on our hearts.

The Bible describes our relationship to God as grafted into the vine. Jesus used the analogy of the vine - “I am the vine, you are the branches.

Ro 11:17-18 “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not boast over those branches.” NIV

We are also described as the Bride of Christ. (See Eph. 5 a passage that is often read a weddings and Rev. 19:7-9, the description of the Wedding supper of the Lamb.)

## More than conquerors though Him

Easter mornings is Jesus victory statement – He invites us to share in it by giving us in our lives inner strength which Paul describes as resurrection power. Eph 1:19,20

These three metaphors; branches grafted in, bride of Christ, and conquerors all help us think about our spiritual heritage in Jesus today.

# Conclusion: How does this apply to Copper Hill Church?

## Situation:

Copper Hill church has had many years of trials - of scarcity of resources and lack of pastoral presence because of the dual parish situation.

But also during all these years, there has been a great heritage of faithfulness among the lay leaders of this church to keep this lighthouse for God operating.

Now God has rewarded that faithfulness with a great opportunity.

## Opportunity for Showers of Blessings

He is giving an opportunity for Copper Hill to increase. We are seeing some of it already. He has allowed the pastoral situation to change so that you have your own pastor. He has sent several young couples to begin renewing the church for the future. He has put wise, hard-working and dedicated lay persons in leadership. And now he has sent significant financial resources.

## Fix thoughts on Jesus – Keep the main thing the main thing

The promise of renewal is relational. For Israel, it all came down to their relationship to their Maker, their God, Jehovah. For us it is the same, our fruitfulness depends on abiding in Jesus, keeping the main thing, the main thing.

## There will be obstacles – but with God’s help we can be victorious – we must be victorious for the sake of the next generation!

## Heritage is for claiming!`

## Heritage is for building upon!

## Heritage in God leads to Hope! ill Church