



APRIL NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

Ah, Eastertime, that season when the warmth of the Spring sun and the gentle Spring breezes offer us such a refreshing change from the long, cold winter . . . oh wait, Spring only sprung yesterday and the wind chill outside as I'm writing this is about 18 degrees—hardly what one thinks of as Easter weather, is it? And so, as a public service, let me begin this month by offering an answer to the question so many of you have asked: Why the heck was Easter so early this year? Well, as you might expect with any question about the history of the church, the full answer is both long and complicated. Fortunately, we can sum it up as follows: In the ancient church there was no consensus about when Jesus' resurrection should be celebrated. Some who saw it as the Christian Passover felt it should be celebrated when the synoptic gospels said it occurred, that is, a few days after the Jewish Passover. And that would have all been well and good, had the Jews and the Roman Empire followed the same calendar; but they didn't, with the result that Passover fell on a different day of the Roman week every year, which meant the celebration of the resurrection did as well. This was a problem for others in the church, who believed that Jesus' resurrection wasn't a updated version of something else, but rather something completely unprecedented. Accordingly, these folks believed the resurrection should be celebrated on the day all the gospels said it occurred, "the first day of the week," or Sunday, regardless of when the Passover occurred in a given year.

What was the larger church to do? Well, for centuries, it didn't do much of anything. There were arguments and debates about who was right, but for the most part, people were willing to agree to disagree. (Which, let us observe in passing, demonstrated a fine sort of spirit that probably should have been extended to a number of other nasty squabbles in the early church, but the less said about that, probably the better; there's no sense not letting bygones be bygones, as they say). All was well and good with everybody celebrating the resurrection on their own favorite day until about the time of the emperor Constantine the Great, who seems to have tried to get the Council of Nicea (yes, the very one that gave us the creed of the same name,) to arrive at a common date for resurrection celebrations. The Council's deliberations didn't settle the matter conclusively, but it did set in motion the process that led to the final agreement about how the date for celebrating the resurrection should be determined: it would always be celebrated on the

first Sunday following the first full moon following the vernal equinox (that is, the first day of Spring). And if that wasn't complicated enough, to make it even more interesting, the vernal equinox that would be used to calculate the festive day wouldn't be the regular old celestial vernal equinox, which can fall on any day between March 20th (in a leap year like this one) or the 22nd. Rather it would be a special ecclesiastical vernal equinox, which always falls on March 21st.

What this means is that while Easter usually falls on some date in April, when the weather in our neck of the woods is beginning to feel a little more balmy, there is always the small chance that the first full moon following March 21st will occur on the evening following, or on the 22nd. Then there is the very small chance that the first Sunday following that first full moon following the vernal equinox will be the very next day after, or on . . . well, you can probably do the math from this point.

So what's the point of all this? Well, in addition to answering the calendar question, the above explanation sets up a significant theological point. When Easter comes later in the year, along with the warm sun, the soothing breeze, the new leaves on the trees, the blossoms on the crocuses and the daffodils, and all of that other "springy" sort of stuff, it's easy to make the connection between the new life we feel all around us in the Spring, and the new life we have in Christ as a result of the resurrection. Many a minister has made just that point over the years (in fact, if memory serves, I did last year as well), and it's a perfectly good one. But even if it still feels an awful lot like late winter on Easter Sunday (and the weatherman seems to promising that it will), the point about new life in Christ still holds: When God raised Jesus from the dead on Easter morning, He did so to fulfill His plan to bring new life to all of us—a new life that offers us, as I have mentioned on more than one occasion, both the future promise of eternal life with God and the present promise of a richer and more rewarding life right now. Both promises are great ones, and when we take hold of them we give ourselves the chance to enjoy something of a springtime rebirth within our lives and spirits—even if it still feels more than a bit like winter outside!

Cheers,
John



Sometimes on Sunday mornings do you have questions after our minister has given the sermon? Do you sometimes wonder why Jesus did the things he did or why he was criticized for his actions?

Well, there is a way you can get your questions answered. Come to the Saturday Night Vesper Services at 5 PM.

What is the difference between a Prophet and the Messiah?

If you are not supposed to work on the Sabbath, why did Jesus perform so many miracles/ healings on the Sabbath?

What was the first word Jesus said after the resurrection?

The Saturday Night Vesper Service gives you the opportunity to come, listen to the meditation and then ask those questions. Rev. Heecht will answer or explain to you what you don't understand or what you would like to know more about. The meditation is usually based on the New Testament reading that will be read on Sunday morning.

The question and answer sessions are very informative and well received. No body has a "stupid" question. Your question might just be one that someone else wants to ask also.

So, on behalf of all the Deacons, I invite you try the Saturday Vesper Services just once. Let us know what you think. I think you will be pleasantly surprised and enjoy the service.

God Bless
Sharon Straiton, Chair of Deacons



One interesting thing we do at Council is discuss concepts and attempt (hopefully) to make them meaningful to us as a congregation. With welcoming new members: Shannon and Tod Dickson, Wynd Harris and Barbara Kapp; and the Nominating Committee actively recruits next year's officers, boards, and committees, the question of "What does membership in Ridgebury Congregational Church mean?" has popped up in different conversations.

Article IV of our Constitution outlines the operational details:

- how to become a member
- the rights and responsibilities of membership; and
- how membership is ended

but what does that mean to us as individuals? While Council discussed the question, Rev. Heeckt went right to the heart of the topic. He said, "Being a member means that one: worships, works, contributes, and prays." One of the strengths of our congregation is that it enables each of us to combine the amount of worshipping, working, contributing, and praying that's right for us. It also gives us the flexibility to alter that mix over time. As we think about membership, let's follow Rev. Heeckt's lead and look at the "big picture" attributes of membership. Let's continue to explore the blend of worshipping, working, contributing, and praying that's right for us individually, then let's see where that inquiry takes us as a congregation.

Let's continue this interesting journey together.

Respectfully submitted,
Alice Kenny Lucas
Moderator

Let me introduce you to . . .
By Liz Rowe

Josette Williams is a 30-year member of Ridgebury Congregational Church. Over the years, she has provided the church with a tremendous amount of her time in bringing its history to life. Two years ago, she helped transform Shields Hall into a museum for the Rochambeau event that was held here in town. Presently she is setting up a 18th century display at the Ridgefield Town Hall, which will include a diorama that she and Hank built in addition to copies of old church record books. Another task at hand is recording all of the veterans who are buried in the Ridgebury Cemetery. Josette is full of historical knowledge and if you ever have the chance to talk to her about our church and town history, you should take the opportunity to do so.

In addition to having a wealth of knowledge about Ridgefield history, she has lots to share about WWII. Born in Japan on August 19, 1934, she is the youngest of four sisters. Her mother was an American and her father a Canadian who worked for the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company. (WHILE THEY WERE LIVING IN THE FRENCH SECTOR OF SHANGHAI, CHINA, HER MOTHER AND FATHER WORKED FOR THE BRITISH INTELLIGENCE - THE BRITISH UNDERGROUND. THEY COORDINATED PLANS TO RELEASE FRENCH SOLDIERS FROM THE JAPANESE SHIPS AND HIDE THE SOLDIERS THROUGHOUT SHANGHAI UNTIL BRITISH SHIPS ARRIVED IN PORT HER FATHER ESTABLISHED THE "NINE-FIFTEEN CLUB" AMONG THE ALLIED NATIONALS IN SHANGHAI -PUBLISHING NEWSLETTERS, ESTABLISHING AN UNDERGROUND MOVIE THEATER AND FINANCING A SHORT WAVE RADIO STATION WITH REGULAR BROADCASTS.) Josette has written an article detailing missing WWII material that belonged to her father, which was put into the official archives and published in "Studies in Intelligence" in early 2001.

During the war her family lived in many places, including the U.S. and Canada, finally settling in Greenwich, CT where she and her sisters went to boarding school. Josette graduated from Smith College, majoring in Government and Economics. She lived for two years in NYC where she met her husband Hank. They were married in 1958 and have raised three daughters - Cindy, Renee and Marnie and have seven grandchildren with whom they love spending time. Josette has worked at several companies over the years in addition to being involved in town politics as Chairman of the GOP Town Committee, serving on the Ridgefield Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. At RCC she was Chairman of Trustees and now serves as our Historian and sings in the choir.

Other current projects include transcribing a WWII Philippine Diary and transferring 16mm film for the Explorers Club in NYC. She will also be doing a presentation on China for kindergartners in New Canaan, as well as volunteering at the Ridgefield Writers' Conference for 4th and 5th graders. Josette will be presenting her memories of WWII at Founders Hall and the First Congregational Church and would be glad to share the full "memories" text with anyone who is interested.

STEWARDSHIP

As we have finished the first quarter of the church year, it's very important to keep your pledge up to date. With the church working on a budget as it does, we count on a planned flow of expenses and income.

Our commitment is vital to keeping the church operating. The following is the summary of pledges to date.

2008 pledges for the year: \$56,759
1st Quarter pledges expected: \$14,190
1st Quarter pledges received: \$10,233

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee,
Chris Miller

From the Missions Committee

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, as part of Our Churches Wides Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, small business, micro-credit, emergency relief, and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

To date, Ridgebury Church has contributed \$675.00 to this special missions offering. Thanks to everyone who gave so generously.

From the Flower Committee

Now that Spring is almost here, can Spring flowers be far behind???

Nothing enhances the church service like flowers on the altar. If you would like to contribute flowers to grace the altar, please sign up on the sheet in Shields Hall. If you would like to include a dedication, please note who or what the flowers are for and it will appear in the bulletin.

Green Team evening

Global Warming. The majority of scientists worldwide agree that it is the most pressing issue of our time. Here at home, the warming of Connecticut is predicted to change our state as we know it. The Warming of Connecticut, a one hour documentary on ways to alleviate the effects of global warming in Connecticut will be presented on April 19th at 7:30 PM in Shields Hall followed by coffee and dessert.

5th Annual Blessing of the Animals

This year's Blessing of the Animals ceremony will be held Sunday, May 4, 3:00 p.m., outdoors at Shields Hall.

All pets and their owners are welcome. Look for more news of this event in upcoming Sunday bulletin inserts.
Questions? Contact Karen Edwards at 730-2688 or Edwardskr@aol.com.

APRIL Birthdays



2 Guy Welton
2 Tyler Welton
9 Kelly Hislop
17 Anne Judge
21 Thomas Shevlin
24 Larry Hibbard

April 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 11:30a 300th Anniversary Cmte	31	1 April Fool's Day [USA]	2 7:30p Choir Practice	3 7:15p AA Meets	4	5 5p Church Service
6 10a Service with Communion	7 7p Deacons Meet	8 7p Trustee Meeting	9 7:30p Choir Practice	10 7:15p AA Meets	11	12 5p Church Service 6:30p Adult Discussion Group
13	14 7p Communications Meeting	15 Tax Day [USA]	16 7:30p Choir Practice	17 7:15p AA Meets	18	19 5p Church Service 6:30p Adult Discussion Group
20	21 7p Council Meeting	22	23 7:30p Choir Practice	24 7:15p AA Meets	25	26 5p Church Service 6:30p Adult Discussion Group
27	28 5p Pastoral Relations Meeting	29	30 7:30p Choir Practice	1 7:15p AA Meets Ascension Day [Christian]	2	3 5p Church Service 6:30p Adult Discussion Group

Office Telephone: 203-748-2806
 Visit our Web Site: www.ridgeburychurch.org
 E-mail Us: Office@Ridgeburychurch.org