



MARCH NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

Well here we are at the beginning of Lent and I thought I would dedicate my piece this month to a brief explanation of how the season developed.

As you might imagine, the historical development of Lent is tied very closely to the development of Easter. In the ancient Church, pretty much everything that we today associate with Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost was all celebrated as a single observation the ancient Church called "*Pascha*." This is hardly surprising when one remembers that the ancient Church was tolerated by the authorities at best, persecuted by them at worst, and distrusted by them almost all the time. (Imagine, a time when Christians were seen as a challenge to the established order! Something to think about there, perhaps.) All of this changed during the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great. In addition to consolidating the Empire's administration, rebuilding its defenses, and founding the city of Constantinople, he also recognized Christianity as the Empire's state religion. After he did so, converts swarmed into Christian churches. Many of them traveled to Jerusalem to see for themselves where the great events of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection took place. To encourage the practice and to give these swarms of pilgrims something to see, Constantine built a series of massive churches on sites traditionally associated with Jesus and the Apostles. Jerusalem had been leveled by the Romans in two massive wars in the first and second centuries and was still a mess. The Church of the Holy Sepulchere in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem are two that remain, albeit in greatly modified condition, from Constantine's building project, and old Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome was another. As pilgrims continued to come, the Bishops of Jerusalem began to break up the old *Pascha* observation into a series of chronological celebrations. Good Friday was observed on the Friday before Easter and the feast of the Ascension 40 days after Easter. By the early fourth century, the churches in Jerusalem and the immediate vicinity were celebrating the Easter season much the same way we observe it today.

One of the things that had always happened during *Pascha* was that new converts to the faith were baptized and welcomed into fellowship. In addition, people who had committed particularly serious sins were encouraged to do formal penance and welcomed back into fellowship. As *Pascha* broke up into the Easter season we know today, both of those things were done on Easter (well, actually on the Great Vigil of Easter, which was observed the night before much the same way we observe Christmas Eve). Of course, both of those things required preparation. The ancient Church dedicated a LOT more time to them than we do today. It took three full years for converts to complete their preparation to join the Church. The 40 days before Easter were set aside as a time for particularly rigorous instruction. Forty days also became a traditional time for penance as well. Over time, the tradition developed of all Christians observing a forty-day period of personal preparation for the coming of Easter. Thus, Lent was born.

Today, our Lenten observation continues to owe something to the ancient traditions of preparation for baptism and penance. The Church sets aside Lent as time of serious personal spiritual self-examination, a time when the believer considers his or her relationship with God and reflects on how that relationship can be deepened and strengthened, so that he or she is better prepared for the great celebration of Easter. In addition to encouraging private reflection during Lent, our worship service changes rather dramatically to reflect the emphasis of the season. For example, as the celebration of Holy Communion has been for centuries the central celebration of the Christian faith, we do not celebrate Communion during Lent. In addition, to encourage people to reflect both on their personal standing before God, and on the ancient confessions of our faith, our Call to Worship during Lent focuses on the 10 Commandments and on confession and forgiveness. We will confess the central truths of Christianity using the words of the Apostles' Creed.

Cheers,
John



As we approach the Lenten Season, Rev. Heeckt has previously suggested that each of us take the time to reflect on our own personal relationship with God. I suggest that we not only look to ourselves, but to others around us.

As Christians, when we follow Jesus it also means we teach others about him. We can each do this most effectively by the way we live our lives and by the example we set for others. We can also teach others by talking about him. Sometimes that may be difficult and it may be easier to simply do good deeds. We may feel our time is limited and we are already overburdened. There are many around us who need a telephone call, a hug, or just a friendly smile that lets them know we care.

The prophet Isaiah told us that we can please the Lord by helping others. Jesus told us the same thing. Who are the hungry and afflicted? They are our neighbors – those who don't have enough to eat, they have no place to live, they are in hospitals and nursing homes, or are alone and need a friend. Through God's guidance, we can do his work.

One of the ways we can reflect on our own personal relationship and learn more about ourselves is to join the Lenten Evening Discussion Group. We will be reading and discussing Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis. We will meet on Thursday evenings at 7 PM in the Meeting House. For those of you who don't like to go out at night, there is Tuesday afternoon discussion group which discusses the lectionary for the coming week. They meet at 1:30 PM in Shield's Hall. Please consider joining one of the groups.

As you observe the Lenten season and prepare for the Holy Week services, invite your neighbors to join with us in God's name.

God Bless,

Sharon Straiton
Chairman of Deacons



We may be over what some would consider the busiest time of year, Christmas. There are still many "irons in the fire" here at Ridgebury Church. We are most grateful to Alice Kenny Lucas for assuming the responsibility of grant writing for us as we investigate the needs of our meetinghouse. One grant request is already in the mail. Thank you Alice!

We had an excellent response from the survey that was recently sent out. Thank you all for caring enough to take the time to think the survey through and submit your thoughts. The Pastoral Relations Committee will organize the information, present it to Council and then to the membership with ideas and suggestions. Council and all the boards and committees are always striving to improve in Jesus' name, sincerely trying to make decisions based on what's best for the majority. Last, but not least, we are always open to listen.

It's that time of year again when Council appoints a Nominating Committee for the 2009/2010 year. If you would like to express an interest in a particular committee, please speak to Brien Locke, our Vice Moderator. All the committee members will be announced shortly.

Christ's love be with you,
Elizabeth Sganga



The WHITE ELEPHANT SALE will be held on Saturday, May 2nd on the Church grounds.

The cost is \$30.00 per space and you keep the profits!!

The committee is looking for a volunteer to man the church table during this sale.

If you have any questions, please e-mail wes@ridgeburychurch.org or see Sue Bankes.



Are you interested in hosting Fellowship Hour or reading scripture during church? There is a sign-up sheet in Shields Hall or you can see any of the Deacons.

Please sign-up!!!!

GREEN TEAM UPDATE

Remember to be on the lookout for ecologically beneficial products and services for our "Go Green" project. There is a green box in Shield's Hall for your "finds". Have your kids look too as there are all kinds of things marketed today. Look wherever you go.

Remember to include what the find is, where it is found and your name in case I have questions.

This is going to be an on going project, so keep your eyes sharp. Mother Earth thanks you for your efforts.

Thanks,

Linda Cochrane

Easter Flowers will be for sale again this year. Look for the order form in the upcoming March bulletins.

Details will be available on the order form.

The Flower Committee



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), as part of Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM), 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, including our own.

The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and health care, agricultural development, 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, as witnessed by Lori Cipot on her recent trip to the Gulf area.

The OGHS offering is based on the premise that every human being is created in the image of God and that all are kin in the human family; that the earth and its resources come from God and are provided to serve the needs and support the spiritual growth of all; that we are charged to recognize the most vulnerable as our special concern, in keeping with the practice of Christ.

OGHS is traditionally a Lenten offering in the UCC tradition, and will be received this year in our church on March 22. You will be hearing more about this offering during the worship services in the upcoming weeks and hope that you will decide to give as much as you can. Thank you.

Let me introduce you to . . .

By Liz Rowe

Barbara Kapp has been a member of Ridgebury Congregational Church for the last two years. She has shown her dedication to our church as our Saturday night organist, member of our choir, mentor to one of our confirmation students and Clerk. She is very happy to have found our church through Sharon Straiton, who is a grief counselor of Healing Hearts. Barbara had attended this group after the death of her husband and was asked by Sharon if she would be willing to play for our Saturday night Vesper Services. Barbara plays the piano so she was only too happy to offer her services and anyone who attends our Saturday night service appreciates listening to her playing.

Barbara was born and raised in Kansas City and contrary to how most people perceive Kansas, she did not grow up on a farm! She grew up in an area similar to Ridgefield and enjoyed suburban life. She was raised in a Congregational Church and Ridgebury reminds her a lot of the church of her youth. She has one sister and two brothers, all who live out West. They try and get together for reunions every year or so, if possible.

Barbara attended the University of Kansas and received a four year degree in Music and a PhD in Music Theory. For two years, she worked for an Opera Company in Kansas as Box Office Manager. While working there, she met her husband, who was a conductor for a touring opera. His company was located in New York City, so she left Kansas and moved to the East Coast to be with him. They married and she became involved in his orchestra as the Executive Director. They soon became parents to a daughter, Madeline ("Maddie"). When she was young, she would tour with her parents and the orchestra all over the world. Barbara and her husband moved out of the city to Westchester when Maddie was of school age. They wanted to live in a suburban setting and Barbara continued working throughout the years.

For several years, they vacationed on Prince Edward Island and found it to be their favorite place. Barbara and her husband loved it so much they bought a house there and spent many years up there. She still loves getting away and spending summers there. It is a long drive but well worth the trip. Maddie currently attends college in Toronto and Barbara likes to visit her when she can. Her daughter is following in her footsteps as she is studying music and has recently been asked to play the violin and sing in her church in Canada.

Barbara lives in a townhouse in Danbury with her two cats. Her late husband owned a classical record label and Barbara still maintains the business. She handles the mail order business from her home. She enjoys participating in a yoga class, a book club and belongs to a Mahjongh club.



- 4 Paget Grose
- 6 Thomas Barry
- 6 Diane Earle
- 12 RoseMary Frederick
- 13 Chris Miller
- 13 Marsha Albats
- 21 Robert Mirrielees
- 23 Pat Welton
- 24 Vincent Sganga
- 29 Kristen Heyel
- 29 Katherine Barry
- 30 Kelsey Heyel
- 31 Lynne Keeler

March 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Family Sunday	2 7p Deacons Meet	3 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	4 7:30p Choir Practice	5 7p Lenten Discussion Group 7:15p AA Meets	6	7 5p Vespers Service
8 Daylight Savings Time Begins [USA]	9 7p Trustees	10 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	11 7:30p Choir Practice	12 7p Lenten Discussion Group 7:15p AA Meets	13	14 5p Vespers Service
15	16	17 1:30p Adult Discussion Group St. Patrick's Day [USA]	18 7:30p Choir Practice	19 7p Lenten Discussion Group 7:15p AA Meets St. Joseph [Christian]	20	21 5p Vespers Service
22 11a Missions	23 7p Council Meeting	24 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	25 7:30p Choir Practice	26 7p Lenten Discussion Group 7:15p AA Meets	27	28 5p Vespers Service
29	30	31 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	1 7:30p Choir Practice April Fool's Day [USA]	2 7p Lenten Discussion Group 7:15p AA Meets	3	4 5p Vespers Service