



OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

Have I ever told you guys the Benjamin Franklin story? I probably have at one time or another, but it's a good one, and an Instructive Historical Example as well, so bear with me while I tell it again. Franklin's last service to his country was serving as one of Pennsylvania's delegates to the Constitutional Convention. The Convention met at a time when the young United States' future seemed to hang in the balance, and the Convention itself was at times a divisive and rancorous affair. But, at the end of the process the delegates had managed to hammer out our Constitution. Franklin hadn't said much publicly during the debates, but as the delegates were preparing to sign the formal copy of the Constitution, Franklin rose and addressed them. For some time, he said, during good days and bad, he had sat in his chair and had considered the chair in which the Convention's president, George Washington, had been sitting. Now, if you go to Independence Hall in Philadelphia you can see the actual chair. It's a big one, and one the top of the back is a carving of the sun looming over the horizon. The question Franklin had asked himself, over the long, hot summer during which the Convention had met was whether the sun carved on the back of Washington's chair was a rising sun, or a setting sun. And while we would like to think that America was a rearing success from the start, that just wasn't the case—in fact, there were a lot of people who wondered if the infant United States would survive as a nation at all. You see, the Founders were trying to set up a kind of country that no one had ever tried before. There had been republics, of course, but they had been little, tiny things (like the Venetian or Athenian republics,) and all the best political thinkers agreed you could never, ever, have a successful republic much bigger than that. After all, there had never been one, and for most folks, that was all the proof they needed. We Americans, though, were trying to establish a BIG republic, by far the biggest anyone had ever attempted, made up of all sorts of people from all sorts of places. And this, many people were convinced, was a trick that nobody could possibly pull off.

Which brings me back to George Washington's chair. The chair, of course, was a metaphor for America, and Franklin was wondering about what sort of future the new nation faced. He had had his doubts during the Convention's darkest days, Franklin added, but now he was pleased to report that he was convinced that the sun on Washington's chair was rising, not setting, and that America had a bright future laying ahead of it.

And interesting story, you say, full of interesting historical detail, but what does it have to do with Ridgebury Congregational Church? A fair question so let me explain. I've been thinking a bit about from whence our Congregation has come, and to where it might be headed. Over the past few of years we have seen definite signs of growth around here: attendance is up at worship; Sunday School enrollment is up; and our income has been up enough to fund the first surplus budget the Congregation has seen in ages. Overall, the trend is a good one, and I both thank and congratulate everyone who has played a part in that. But, if we are no longer the church we were a few years back (just think about all of you who weren't members here when I started as minister), what sort of church would we like to be two, or four, or ten years from now? That's more than a rhetorical question, because we are getting to the point where we need to make a number of important decisions about what goes on around here: How big do we want to get? What sort of services should we offer? How do we move newcomers to the Congregation into leadership roles? Should we take a more active position on social issues, and if so, which ones? What are we going to do about the Meetinghouse? About Sunday School and meeting space? Important questions all, but the most important one has to come first, because the way we answer that question will go along way to answering the others: What sort of church do we want to be?

The Scriptures say that "where there is no vision, the people perish." So what's *your* vision for Ridgebury Congregational Church? What sort of church would *you* like it to be? At the outset of another program year here at church I ask you to join me in reflecting on, and seeking God's leading on, that very question. It may seem like rather an intimidating question at first, but if nothing else, having to ask it means that, with God's help, we are in a position to control something of our own destiny, and in this day and age, there are a lot of other churches that would love to be facing that opportunity. Early in the coming year the Pastoral Relations Committee (the same nice folks who brought you the congregation survey earlier in the year,) will be leading a series of congregational conversations on this very topic. But don't wait until next year to get started thinking, dreaming, and praying about it.

And remember, those guys in Philadelphia were willing to think, dream, and pray big, and we all know how that turned out!

Cheers,
John



WELCOME to our new program year!!! Many activities have started already with many more being planned by our boards and committees. A listing of the officers, board and committee members is provided for you in this issue of the Cornerstone. Suggestions and comments are welcome and can be directed to the appropriate group for discussion.

Barbara Kapp, our Clerk, has resigned her position due to her move to Portland, Maine. She has accepted a position as Director of Development for the Portland Conservatory of Music. We sincerely thank her for her year of service to Ridgebury Church, not only as our clerk, but also as our music director for the Saturday evening service and as a choir member. We will miss her, but send our prayers for a successful new adventure in her new home.

Council wholeheartedly welcomes our newly appointed Clerk, Lessley Burke. Lessley is a new member and we sincerely thank her for accepting this position.

Speaking of new members, Council would like folks to wear nametags at coffee hour. We believe it will be most helpful as our newer members and friends become more familiar with our "seasoned worshippers". After a month, we would like to know if you have found it helpful.

I am sure that there is quite a bit of information in this Cornerstone about some of our upcoming activities, from Bible study to our 250th Celebration. Participation is open to all as we learn, grow and celebrate together in Jesus' name.

Christ's love be with you,
Elizabeth Sganga



Well, it's that time of year again. The summer fun is just a memory and the fall activities have started. With that being said, our Sunday school program is underway. I have only heard good things about the activities that are going on during Sunday school. We have two wonderful teachers in Liz Sganga and Sally Miller. If you get a moment during Fellowship hour, take the time to thank them for teaching our young people God's word. We will continue the tradition of having the first Sunday of each month be a Family Sunday. There will be no Sunday School on these days. We will involve the youth in these services.

Thanks to everyone who stopped by the Adult Christian Education table these past two weeks during fellowship hour. John had plenty of information and literature on the wide variety of topics that could be discussed. There will be two adult education groups this fall. There will be a Tuesday afternoon discussion group that will begin on Oct. 13th at 1:30 in Shields Hall. The other group will begin on Oct. 17 at 5pm. If you have never been to one of these discussion groups, please attend and see what it is all about.

At the September Deacons meeting, it was suggested we have a Volunteer Sunday. This would be during the Oct. 25th service. We would like to see what the folks in our congregation do as volunteers. So, if you volunteer for a local community organization, we want to know about it! There will be an insert in the bulletins in October for you to fill out. There are blue boxes in the narthex at church and also in Shields Hall for you to deposit the insert. We want to thank those who unselfishly serve their communities in a volunteer capacity. This all ties in with a recent sermon asking "Are you a doer?.."

As always, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to see any of the Deacons.

In God's love,

Carole Bishop
Chairman of Deacons



Please mark Saturday, October 17th on your calendars. This will be the Church Work Day. All are invited for some hard work and good fun.

The clean-up will start at 8:30 and go until ????????

Hope to see you there!!!!!!

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

More Information on the Children's Defense Fund

John mentioned a couple of weeks ago that he had once met Marion Wright Edelman, the founder of the CDF. She is an amazing woman, having taken the words of the Gospel of James (which we have been hearing a lot about last month from the pulpit) seriously. The daughter of a Baptist minister and the first African-American to be admitted to the Mississippi Bar, she has won numerous awards, including (to name only a few) the Albert Schweitzer prize for Humanitarianism and the Community of Christ International Peace Award. Her organization is a Better Business Bureau accredited charity and has been given very high marks by Charity Navigator and the Independent Charities of America. It is wholly independent and has never taken any government funds.

Ms. Edelman founded the CDF 36 years ago in Washington, D.C. as a voice for poor, minority and disabled children who could not help the situation into which they were unfortunately born. As she said in her own words, "If you don't like the way the world is, you have an obligation to change it. Just do it one step at a time." To this end, by utilizing well researched and carefully thought out policies and programs, she and other members of the CDF have worked diligently to persuade Congress through legislation to overhaul foster care, support adoption, improve child care, and protect children who are homeless, abused and neglected. They have also devised and implemented programs across the nation that work directly with both young, disadvantaged children, to help level the playing field for them, and with older youth and adults, to teach them to give back to their communities by being advocates for children at risk. You are in the process of learning about the CDF's work during brief Mission Moments during the worship service. There is so much more that they do than we can tell you, however, that I suggest you visit their website at www.childrendefense.org.

On October 18, the day will be collecting our fall mission offering, we will participate along with thousands of other Christian and faith-based communities across the nation in the *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths* Celebrations. The purpose of the Children's Sabbath is to celebrate and acknowledge the sacredness of children and to commit ourselves to live out the Divine mandate to nurture, protect and advocate for all children. Through this observance, hopefully we will more clearly see the vision God sets before us for bringing about a better tomorrow for our children and our nation.

Prayerfully consider what you are able to give and join us on the 18th. Checks should be made out to RCC and we will send the lump sum to the CDF. Thank you.

The Mission Committee

Pastoral Relations Update

This month, your Pastoral Relations Committee focused on one of its key responsibilities- recommending the 2010 compensation package for Rev. Heeckt. This responsibility is described in our bylaws, Article XVII, point 6. The compensation package proposal was presented to Council and included in the budget we will all review at the October congregational meeting. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the compensation package proposal please feel free to contact any one of us on your Pastoral Relations Committee (alphabetically): Nancy Boersma, Tod Dickson, Alice Kenny Lucas, Elizabeth Sganga.

Respectfully submitted,
Alice Kenny Lucas, Chair

Stewardship Update

Well, it's almost that time of year when we have to start thinking of our commitment to the church for 2010. Even though there are 3 months before the end of the year, plans are being made by the Stewardship Committee for 2010.

We will begin the formal campaign toward the end of October and use the Sundays in November leading up to November 22, when we have scheduled our annual Stewardship Brunch.

Naturally, if we have all the pledge cards in by then it makes the budget planning that much easier.

You will be hearing from our committee soon. In the meantime, please keep your 2009 pledge current and up to date.

For the Committee,
Chris Miller

A new pastor was out visiting his parishioners one Saturday afternoon. All went well until he came to one house. Although it was obvious someone was home, no one came to the door, even after he had knocked several times. Finally, he pulled out his card, wrote "Revelation 3:20" on the back, and stuck it in the door.

The next day as he was counting the offering he found his card in the collection plate. Below his message was the notation "Genesis 3:10."

Revelation 3:20 reads: "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me."

Genesis 3:10 reads: "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked."



Thanks to the anonymous donor for our new kitchen window and our air conditioner.

They're GREAT!!!!

250th Celebration

What an exciting time this is going to be for Ridgebury Church. The committee has met and is exploring different ways we can celebrate this great event in our church history.

A little bit of trivia- "The Ridgebury Ecclesiastical Society with a congregation of 18 members in January of 1760 was recognized by the colonial Connecticut General Assembly in 1761." What a difference from our membership today.

The plan is to begin our celebration on January 24, 2010 with a worship service and a brunch to follow.

The committee will keep you updated as events are confirmed. If you have any ideas, please let me know or any member of the committee.

250th Celebration Committee

Sharon Straiton, Chair
Dottie Rogers
Alice Lucas
Nancy Boersma
Rev. Heeckt

Tod Dickson
Bill Lucas
Liz Sganga
Betty Miller



Christmas Dinner

Mark your calendars for The Ladies' Annual Christmas Dinner.

It is to be held at "Chuck's Steak House" on Wednesday, December 2nd at 6:00 pm.

The dinner price is \$31.00 per person.

More details to follow.

Betty Miller, Chair

The Communications Committee is looking for someone with some computer skills to help with the Church's web site.....you do not have to have the skills of a Steve Jobs.....but OK if you do. Two to three hours a week is all that would be required. We really need you. As a bonus, you would also become a member of the Communications Committee

Please see Bill Lucas if interested.

October 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30 7:30p Choir	1 7:15p AA Meets	2	3
4 Family Sunday	5 7p Deacons Meet	6	7 7:30p Choir	8 7:15p AA Meets	9	10
10a Communion						
11	12 7p Trustees <i>Columbus Day [USA]</i>	13	14 7:30p Choir	15 7:15p AA Meets	16	17 10a Church Work Day 5p Adult Bible Study
18 11:30a Annual Budget Meeting	19 7p Council	20 1:30p Adult Bible Study	21 7:30p Choir	22 7:15p AA Meets	23	24 5p Adult Bible Study
25	26	27 1:30p Adult Bible Study	28 7:30p Choir	29 7:15p AA Meets	30	31 5p Adult Bible Study <i>Halloween [USA]</i>

OCTOBER Birthdays



2	Betty Miller
9	Connor Rowe
11	Nellie Clapper
13	Pam Rittenhouse
15	Tod Dickson
18	Barbara Grose
20	Rich Straiton
26	Sean Rowe
	Matt Orr
30	Bob Dever

Officers, Board and Committee Member Nominations – May, 2009

1 Year Term ends May 31, 2010; 2 Year Term ends May 31, 2011

*(Chair) sits on Church Council (Bylaws Article VII)

OFFICERS (Article IV: 1 year term)

Moderator*	Elizabeth Sganga	
Vice Moderator*	Marty Ollinger	
Clerk*	Lessley Burke	
Treasurer*	Vincent Sganga	
Assistant Treasurers	Melissa Steidl	Sally Yarrish

OFFICIAL DELEGATES* (Article V: 2 votes at Assoc./CT Conf. Meetings: 1 year term)

Sally Miller Kim Welton

BOARD OF DEACONS* (Article VIII: up to 12 members; 2 year term)

May 2010	May 2011			
Carole Bishop	Matt Orr	Barbara Ollinger	Marsha Albats	Jessica Juska
Sally Yarrish		Katherine Barry	Tod Dickson	

BOARD OF TRUSTEES* (Article X: 6 members + Treasurer: 2 year term)

May 2010	May 2011				
Bill Lucas	Rich Straiton (advisory)	Marty Ollinger	Sue Bankes	Nancy Boersma	
Lou Yarrish		Melissa Steidl	Drew Cochrane (advisory)		
Vincent L. Sganga					

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE* (Article XI 3 minimum; 1 year term)

Chris Miller

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE* (Article XIII: 3 minimum, 1 year term)

William Lucas Carole Bishop Joy Manger Liz Rowe Wynd Harris

MISSION AND SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE* (Article XVI: 3 minimum; 1 yr term)

Linda Hayward Dottie Rogers Matt Orr Barbara Grose (advisory)
Jean Early Linda Cochrane (advisory) Karl Steidl Evan Juska

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE* (Article XVII; 2+1 Deacon: 1 year term)

Moderator or Vice Moderator: Elizabeth Sganga Deacon rep: Tod Dickson
Minister choice: Nancy Boersma Elected by Congregation*: Alice K. Lucas

Following positions do not vote on Council

HISTORIAN (Article XV: 1 year term) Nancy Boersma

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE (Article XII: 5 minimum, 2 year term, Reports to Deacons)

May 2010: Barbara Grose (advisory)