



DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Ave Ridgeburian

Well, here it is December already, and time for Advent. Advent may be my favorite season of the church year, in part because it has such an odd history. You see, most of the calendar of the church year makes a certain amount of natural sense. Take, for example, Easter and the various observances that surround it. Once you've got a date for Easter, everything else just falls into place. You know that all of the great days of Holy Week will come right before that, and the forty days of Lent right before those. You also know that Ascension Day will be exactly forty days after Easter, and that Pentecost Sunday will be fifty days after Easter.

The Christmas season is all neat and straightforward as well. You always know that Christmas is going to be on December 25, that there will be eleven more days to the season after that, and that Epiphany will show up right on schedule on January 6.

Not only are most of the observances of the church year arranged pretty neatly on the calendar, but their meaning is pretty straightforward as well. We all know that Christmas is about Jesus' birth, that Easter is about his resurrection, that Holy Week is about the great events of his passion, and that Lent is a time of spiritual preparation for both. We also know that Pentecost is about the gift of the Holy Spirit and Epiphany is about Jesus' revelation as the savior of the world—its all very tidy and clear.

Advent isn't like that. First of all, our word "advent" is derived from the Latin word, "adventus," which means "coming." Advent is about comings, in fact, it's about two separate ones! Advent has sort of been cobbled together out of two different historical precedents, both of which are directed towards different things. For example, there is an ancient tradition of viewing Advent as kind of like a second Lent, a time for getting spiritually ready for Christmas. The old name for this particular tradition was "St. Martin's Lent," since it began annually on the feast day of St. Martin of Tours (which is November 11, by the way). Others saw this time of year in an eschatological light—as time of looking forward to the great events of Jesus' second coming, the end of the current age, and the beginning of God's long-promised reign of righteousness and peace. Of course, these two things couldn't be more different in some ways. St. Martin's Lent looks backwards, toward baby Jesus in Bethlehem. The eschatological tradition looks forward towards the ends of the age, and, as the church tends to do, rather than one tradition developing at the other's expense. The two have sort of grown up together, with the result that the four weeks of Advent are the only weeks of the church year that are about two quite different things at the same time.

You can see this in the reading and music for the season. The readings from the lectionary for the first two weeks of Advent have something of an eschatological emphasis; the readings for the last two are all about setting up Christmas. The music does the same thing. Most advent hymns are about looking forward to Jesus coming, although they are frequently more than a little vague about which of Jesus' two comings they mean. Then there is always the temptation to start singing Christmas songs on the first Sunday in December, and this points up another of Advent's problems: coming so close to the extravaganza that is Christmas. There is a natural tendency for our Christmas preparations to sort of seep into Advent, so that the season becomes prep time for December 25.

I think the key to resolving the apparent contradiction is to remember that Advent is all about Jesus coming to us. If the church, over the years, has tried to cobble together a season that looks both forward and backward at the same time, that's only because the church has always believed that Jesus is coming to visit us twice. The first time in his human birth in Bethlehem of Judea. The second in his promised coming as triumphant king at the end the current age.

There might just be an important lesson in that, because Jesus didn't only come to us in his birth in Bethlehem, nor is he absent from us until his promised return. Oh, physically he's absent, I suppose, but spiritually he's with us all the time. He is with us in our successes and our failures, our struggles and triumphs, in all of the activities and quiet times of our everyday lives.

I think that's why I like Advent so much. It reminds us not only that Jesus has come in his birth in Bethlehem, and that Jesus will come again, but that Jesus is really with us all the time—and that's something that is well worth remembering!

Cheers,
John



With Christmas approaching, I'm sure you are all as busy as I am. Today I'm reflecting on the fact that it's also especially busy for Ridgebury Church as well. 2010 begins our 250th celebration. Sharon Straiton and her committee are busily organizing our activities, which begin January 24, 2010. I hope the members have submitted their thoughts concerning the renovations for the Meeting House. **Council would like to have all responses sent in by December 13th.**

Many thanks are due Sue Bankes and the entire Trustees for our relocated crosswalk and walkway. It looks terrific and is so much safer for all of us. We also need to thank the Mission Committee for all the work they have put into organizing the Christmas Mission Fair. It is such an important and worthwhile event at this time of year. When you see a Deacon, thank the Deacon, for bringing the true meaning of Christmas alive amidst all the hustle and bustle around us.

Looking ahead to 2010, unbelievable at it seems, please set aside January 9th for the production of the Sunday School pageant, as well as January 31st for our Annual Congregational Budget Meeting. We have many decisions ahead of us and as we work and plan together, I know we will find God's plan for us.

Prayers for a blessed Christmas,
Elizabeth Sganga



The beginning of Advent season is upon us. Advent is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. During this time, Christians observe a season of prayer, fasting and repentance, followed by anticipation, hope and joy.

Many Christians celebrate advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for his presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of his final coming at the end of time.

Advent begins on November 29th with families helping us with our worship services each week. The Advent Saturday night services began on Saturday, November 28th and run through the Advent season. The Saturday night church service is at 5pm.

December 6th is Family Sunday and Communion. This is the Sunday we also have our Annual Christmas Mission Fair. It will be from 11:00 to 1:30 over at Shields Hall.

On December 19th, the church will be decorated with traditional greens starting at 10:00am. Anyone who would like to come is most welcome.– no artistic skills are needed but are always welcome. If you would like to help, please contact Jessica Juska.

On Christmas Eve there will be two services, 5pm and 11pm. Both services will be filled with scribe and song. Communion will be received at our late service. Rev. Heckt and the Deacons will be working hard to make these services both meaningful and spiritual.

Our Sunday school will be presenting the Christmas pageant on January 9th. The show will be at 4pm with a pot luck dinner to follow. More information to follow in the next Cornerstone.

May God bless all of you and your families. I hope everyone has a very Merry Christmas.

In God's love,

Carole Bishop
Chairman of Deacons

MISSION FAIR NEWS

This year the Ridgebury Congregational Church's annual Christmas Mission Fair will be held on Sunday, December 6 from 11:00 to 1:30. The event will be held in Shield's Hall across the street from Ridgebury Congregational Church on the corner of George Washington Highway and Ridgebury Road.

This is a very special fair. The vendors are organizations that help people in need. All the funds collected go directly to these organizations. This year Church World Service, Heifer Project, Ten Thousand Villages, Interfaith Aids Ministry, Danbury Women's Center and two African Children's Orphanages will be represented. In addition there will be White Elephant treasures, and a light lunch, proceeds going the Ridgebury Congregational Church.

There will be something for the kids too! At the craft table we will be assembling warm fuzzy throws to donate to the Praxir Cancer Center in Danbury to keep chemo patients warm.

Give a friend the gift of giving through Heifer Project or Church World Service. You can buy bees, blankets, farm tools, chicks, cows, horse, or even an ox that will be given directly to a needy family nationally or abroad. Sound confusing? Come and check it out. What fun it will be when someone knows that you have purchased and give a goat in their name!

Donate food and clothing to needy local families through Interfaith Aids Ministry and the Danbury Women's center. Come to the Fair and learn how you can participate!

At the Ten Thousands Villages table you will be able to purchase interesting gifts made by artisans from all over the world.

Learn about the orphaned children of the Imbabazi Orphanage in Rwanda and Agape Orphanage in South Africa. Kids of genocide and aids victims that need our help. Hear their music and see their drawings. Fabulous original note cards and CD's will be available.

So think ahead for Christmas. This year do something different! Come down to the church and see what you can do to help the less fortunate.

For more information call the church office at 203-748-2806 or visit ridgeburychurch.org.

The Mission Committee

Christmas Fund Offering

On Sunday, December 20, you will find an envelope in the bulletin for the annual Christmas Fund Offering. The money raised through this goes to the UCC Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance Program and will be used to help clergy and lay individuals and their families who are in need. Thank you in advance for your support.

Stewardship Update

A brief Stewardship report: To date we have received pledges from 38 people for a total of \$69,417. As our budget was set at \$76,000, it looks like we have a way to go for 2010. There are still some pledges outstanding which can make up the difference for our budget.

Sincerely,
Chris Miller
(203) 744-5655
milleridge@sbcglobal.net



There is a Ping Pong Table up for grabs at no cost.
You are responsible for carting it away.



Christmas Dinner

LADIES' ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

December 2, 2009
Chuck's Steak House
20 Segar Street, Danbury, CT

Won't you join us for fellowship, food and fun at the Annual Ridgebury Church Ladies' Christmas Dinner? All women (and friends) of the church are welcome.

WHEN: Wednesday, December 2, 2009

WHERE: Chuck's Steak House, 20 Segar Street, Danbury, CT

TIME: 6:00 PM—???

PRICE: \$31.00 per person

This includes a choice of six entrees, bread, salad bar, baked potato, dessert, tax and gratuity.

RSVP by Sunday, November 29th.

Please make payment for dinner(s) in advance. Checks should be made out to:
RIDGEBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Reservations and checks may be given to me.

This year we are offering everyone the opportunity to contribute to a fund toward the 250th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

Further details will be following shortly in a letter. We're looking forward to an enjoyable evening where we all can share the joy of Christmas season.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Betty Miller
(203) 744-5655
bettyboop4219@sbcglobal.net

250th Celebration

There is a song we sing every year at this time - "We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing----"

After spending time with the 250 Celebration Committee, I feel these words are very appropriate. As we all put our heads together to plan this celebration, we did each event asking for the Lord's blessing that these events will be meaningful to each and every one of you.

The first event of the New Year will be the hanging of a banner to let our neighbors know what we will be celebrating for the coming year. Hopefully, some of those persons passing by will stop and visit us and attend one of our events.

On Sunday, January 24, 2010, there will be a "gathering" of our congregation to celebrate worship, followed with a pot luck brunch. We hope to have some special guests attend.

Please put this date on you "new" calendar and plan to attend.

Sharon Straiton, Chair
250 Celebration Committee



Help Decorate the Church with Poinsettias

Christmas poinsettias can be ordered until Sunday, December 6. Your plants will decorate the church from Sunday, December 20th through the Christmas holiday. Feel free to take them home and enjoy them either after the Christmas Eve service or Sunday, December 27th

Please place your orders with checks made to Ridgebury Congregational Church and note on the memo line "poinsettias". Orders can be mailed to the church (605 Ridgebury Rd. , Ridgefield , Ct 06877), placed in the collection plate, or put in the "flowers" mailbox in Shields Hall.

I wish to contribute chancel poinsettias for December services at Ridgebury Congregational Church.

Please note in the bulletin that the flowers honor:

- The memory of _____
- The birth of _____
- The marriage/anniversary of _____
- The birthday of _____
- The glory of God _____
- With thanks for _____

Number of 8" poinsettias (@\$18) _____

Number of 6" poinsettias (@\$7) _____

Optional donation for church decorations _____

Please send acknowledgement card _____

Name:

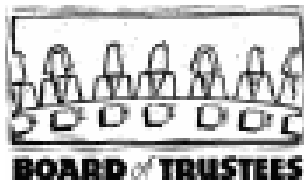
Address:

An acknowledgement card will be sent to the honoree upon request.



We will be decorating the church on Saturday, December 19th starting at 10:00am. Anyone who would like to come is most welcome- no artistic skills are needed, although we certainly welcome any new ideas!! Of course, there is always the possibility of food and drink and fun!!

Hope to see you there!!



To date, four questions have been asked concerning the report. Paul Bailey has answered them as follows:

1. Should we consider interior window shades with a decent R-rating to help improve comfort/insulation.? They could be down most of the time and raised all or part way for services. **ANSWER:** If these shades are actually “thermal” with a track sealed tight to the interior window jamb, they could help somewhat. These shades would be custom made with an inner lining of denim or another type of insulation batts, so it operates like a roman shade for opening purposes and has a puffier look than normal shades.
2. I do not see a cost to paint/restore the windows. Is that part of the \$26,000 for painting? **ANSWER:** The \$26,250 estimate was intended to include partial painting related to the exterior blown-in insulation. The \$43,500 estimate was for painting of the entire exterior, including windows.
3. It appears that we do not have a fire alarm in the church. Should there be a system that would connect to the firehouse. **ANSWER:** Our engineers have advised us that a fire alarm system is not required by the code for your building. (Trustees are investigating the cost of a fire alarm system for the church including installation and monthly charges and will report back to the congregation at the annual meeting.)
4. Can you explain the how the insulation for the crawl space will be done? **ANSWER:** If the recommended spray-in cellulose is used, a netting material manufactured for this purpose is stapled to the underside of the joists prior to spraying. After spraying in through the netting, the insulation will dry and hold its shape. If denim batts are used, they are secured by the same friction wires which are used for normal unfaced batt insulation.

If anyone has additional questions for Paul Bailey, please email Sue Bankes as soon as possible so that everyone can be well informed for our January meeting.

Pedestrian Walkway

Thanks to Rich Straiton and Vincent Sganga for their help in designing and establishing our new pedestrian walkway to the church. The walkway had been a town requirement when we requested that the pedestrian crosswalk be moved diagonally from the Shields parking lot. A new drainage system was also put in so that any standing water could be moved from the walkway. In the spring, stone dust will be added to the walkway.

Museum in the Streets Sign

Thanks to Nancy Boersma for being a super sleuth in locating our sign that had been removed so the pedestrian walkway could be put down. Nancy followed through with the highway department to reinstall the sign in front of the church.

DECEMBER Birthdays



- | | |
|----|---------------|
| 5 | Linda Hayward |
| 6 | Dottie Dever |
| 6 | Kathy Pando |
| 8 | Jo Hampton |
| 12 | Dottie Rogers |
| 14 | Phyllis Locke |
| 31 | Paul Albats |

December 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 <i>First Sunday of Advent [Christian]</i>	30	1 1:30p Adult Bible Study	2 6p Ladies Christmas Dinner	3 7:15p AA Meets	4	5 5p Advent Church Service 6p Adult Discussion Group
6 Family Sunday	7 7p Deacons Meet	8 1:30p Adult Bible Study <i>Immaculate Conception [Christian]</i>	9	10 7:15p AA Meets	11	12 5p Advent Church Service 6p Adult Discussion Group
10a Communion						
11a Mission Fair						
<i>Second Sunday of Advent [Christian]</i>						
13 11:30p Missions Meeting	14 7p Trustees	15 1:30p Adult Bible Study	16	17 7:15p AA Meets	18	19 5p Advent Church Service 6p Adult Discussion Group
<i>Third Sunday of Advent [Christian]</i>						
20 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent [Christian]</i>	21	22 1:30p Adult Bible Study	23	24 5p Christmas Eve Family Worship Service 11p Christmas Eve Worship Service <i>Christmas Eve [Christian]</i>	25 <i>Christmas [USA]</i>	26 <i>Kwanzaa Begins [USA]</i>
27	28	29 1:30p Adult Bible Study	30	31 <i>New Year's Eve [USA]</i>	1 <i>New Year's Day [USA]</i> <i>Mary - Mother of God [Christian]</i>	2