



## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

### THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church  
605 Ridgebury Road  
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Ave, Ridgeburians!

Well, Lent begins this month (really, it does) and that being the case, I thought I would dedicate my piece this month to a brief explanation of the 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, who, in addition to consolidating the Empire's administration, rebuilding its defenses, and founding the city of Constantinople, also recognized Christianity as the Empire's state religion. After he did so, converts swarmed into Christian churches, and many of them traveled to Jerusalem to see for themselves where the great events of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection took place. Both to encourage the practice, and to give these swarms of pilgrims something to see (since Jerusalem had been leveled by the Romans in two massive wars in the first and second centuries, and was still a bit of a mess), Constantine built a series of massive churches on sites traditionally associated with Jesus and the Apostles. 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, so that Good Friday was observed on the Friday before Easter, the feast of the Ascension 40 days after Easter, and so forth. 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 having done so were also 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 things required preparation, and 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, and 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, so 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, as 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.

Cheers,  
John



I think we have started the year 2010 off in terrific fashion. Our Epiphany Pageant was an overwhelming success thanks to our talented Sunday school students. What a wonderful beginning we had to our 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration on January 24!! We had some new friends sharing our day with us. The publicity from the Ridgefield Press and the Danbury News Times was fantastic. Many thanks to Sharon Straiton and her committee, Betty Miller, Tod Dickson, Nancy Boersma, Bill Lucas, Alice Kenny-Lucas, and Dottie Rogers. I know we will enjoy all the future events being planned with equal enthusiasm.

Our financial house was put in order as we approved our 2010 budget at the meeting January 31. Our thanks and best wishes go to the Trustees as they seek outside funding for the Meeting House improvements. We will know by the May meeting what type grants and support are available to help our historic "church on the corner".

Our Mission Committee will be informing us over the next few months of the many ways we can offer support to those outside our church family. Take the time to look over their information, which is now located by the door in Shields Hall. You will find great ideas and lots for us to do.

As we wind our way through the winter, we should take a moment to be thankful for the members and friends of Ridgebury Church who work together and care about each other every day. We are all stronger because of our collective support. We make a difference in each other's lives and to the world around us.

God bless,  
Elizabeth Sganga

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### Stewardship Update

The response received from the members and friends of Ridgebury Church, was a combination of fellowship, friendship and camaraderie. In my judgement, we have no equal. We are blessed with all the above, and while money is not the barometer we use to determine a church's future, there is a certain amount of importance attached to it. The results of a Stewardship campaign are testimony to the fact that we have a stake in our continuing faith. We as a church here at Ridgebury, are unique knowing that fellowship and worship are important parts also.

Here are the results of this year's campaign:

60 letters were sent to members and friends of our church.  
45 pledges were received totaling \$76,936.  
Of the 45 pledges, 2 were new.  
Last years results yielded \$74,382 from 43 pledges.

20 pledges from last year were increases.  
14 pledges remained the same  
9 pledges decreased from last year.

Thanks to all for supporting Ridgebury Church. The future is in good hands.

Chris Miller  
Stewardship



As the Lenten season approaches (Ash Wednesday is Feb. 17th), it is time to take stock. In the six weeks between now and Easter, ask yourself these questions: Where am I headed spiritually? Do I need to listen more? Do I need to learn more about God's word? Do I need to be more responsive in my dealings with others? Do I need to serve more?.

LENT is a somber and subdued time. The air is permeated with a strange uneasiness that tears at the heart and reminds Christians of a shameful event in the history of the world.

LENT can be a time of deep regeneration, spiritual revival and feelings of awe as we pause to reflect on our Lord's final days.

In an attempt to identify with Jesus, some Christians give up a favorite food or activity during LENT. Others increase and deepen their prayers. Some work to help the homeless. The season of LENT may bring a measure of welcome solace.

One way that you can take stock is during our church services that are being held during the season of LENT. The Ash Wednesday service is on Feb. 17th at 7pm. There will also be Saturday night Lenten services this year. The first service is Feb. 20th at 5pm. They will continue until March 27th. The Saturday night Adult Discussion group will be moved to 6pm during Lent.

I ask each of you to consider joining us in our services during Lent and sit silently with God and to seek guidance for our lives.

As always, if you ever have a concern, comment or question, please see any of the Deacons.

"Thank you, Lord, for the sacrifice of your son. As we move from ashes to hope, help us to keep our focus on you and no other. Amen."

*From the Upper Room*

In God's Love,  
Carole Bishop

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## Mission Committee News

The Mission Committee has been busy planning ways for our congregation to reach out to others. Our bright new Mission Corner area just inside the door to Shields Hall will make it easier for you to keep apprised of what is currently happening mission-wise and of the opportunities available for your participation in the mission life of the church. Be sure and check it out!

The month of January was focused on Elon Homes and how we can help them buy much needed equipment through saving the labels from various food products. Throughout this month of February, we will be collecting items for Church World Service Hygiene Kits—small packages of basic supplies (small, inexpensive items) destined for shipment to people in need in the U.S. and all over the world.

Our plan is for members to donate items which will be assembled into at least 20 kits by members of the Sunday School. We will then ship them to a central location where they will be available to be sent out on a moments notice whenever a disaster occurs. These items include a 16" by 28" hand towel (not a fingertip or bath), a washcloth, a wide-tooth comb, a nail clipper with no metal files or emery boards, a wrapped bath size bar of soap, a toothbrush in original packaging, six band-aids, and a one-gallon plastic bag with zipper closure. In order to assure the proper balance of numbers, there will be a sign-up sheet in the Mission Corner for you to designate which items, and how many, you wish to contribute. If you prefer to make a cash donation, \$13 would cover the cost of one kit plus shipping.

We invite you to view the *Heart to Heart* video which traces the journey of CWS kits from the hands of volunteers to the storage facility in Maryland and then on to people in need here and abroad. The video will be shown during coffee hour throughout the month of February.



## 250th Celebration

What a wonderful day January 24th was and a special thank you to all who made it happen. The area newspapers have been very supportive of Ridgebury Church and have let everyone know that we exist and have offered an invitation to others to come and celebrate with us.

I think the Committee has worked hard to provide some interesting and wonderful programs for the upcoming months. It is our hope that each of you (and your friends) will join in this celebration and learn about our history and the people who came before us.

Some trivia --

Did you know that eighteen members formed our church?

Did you know that in the late 1800's over a thousand women were employed to finish shirts that were cut out in New York City and brought to Ridgebury for sewing?

Did you know that Governor Abraham Ribicoff, Governor of Connecticut, spoke at the 200th Celebration service on September 11, 1960?

Periodically, our historian Nancy Borsema and the Committee will be giving you facts about Ridgebury Church. It is our hope that this will be a great history and learning experience for us all.

Thank you again for your support and enthusiasm.

Sharon Straiton, Chair  
250 Celebration Committee

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### *250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Calendar*

#### *January*

*24 Banner Hanging  
Celebration Begins – Worship Service and Brunch*

#### *April*

*18 Historic Anglican Service with St. Stephen's Episcopal Church  
4pm in the afternoon*

#### *May*

*30 Annual Memorial Day Service and Graveyard Ceremony  
4pm in the afternoon*

#### *June*

*13 Children's Sunday and All-Congregation Photo*

#### *September*

*12 Rally Sunday*

#### *October*

*17 Worship Service, then Anniversary Luncheon at the  
Ethan Allen Inn in Danbury*

#### *January, 2011*

*23 Worship Service - Celebration Concludes*

*Date Not Yet Determined  
Anniversary Musical Recital*



FEBRUARY Birthdays



- 2 Bryn Welton
- 8 Amanda Grose
- 9 Payton Shevlin
- 11 Rich Pando
- 23 Amber Raymond
- 24 Karl Steidl

February 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 11:30a Congregational Meeting	1 7p Deacons Meet	2 1:30p Adult Bible Study <i>Groundhog Day [USA]</i>	3	4 7:15p AA Meets	5	6 5p Adult Discussion Group
7 Family Sunday 10a Communion	8 7p Trustees	9 1:30p Adult Bible Study	10	11 7:15p AA Meets	12 <i>Lincoln's Birthday [USA]</i>	13 5p Adult Discussion Group
14 11:30a Missions Meeting <i>Valentine's Day [USA]</i> <i>Quinquagesima Sunday [Christian]</i>	15 7p Council Meeting <i>President's Day [USA]</i>	16 1:30p Adult Bible Study <i>Mardi Gras/Fat Tuesday [USA]</i>	17 7p Ash Wednesday Service <i>Ash Wednesday [Christian]</i>	18 7:15p AA Meets	19	20 5p Lenten Church Service 6p Adult Discussion Group
21	22 <i>Washington's Birthday [USA]</i>	23 1:30p Adult Bible Study	24	25 7:15p AA Meets	26	27 5p Lenten Church Service 6p Adult Discussion Group
28	1	2 1:30p Adult Bible Study 7p Deacons Meeting	3	4 7:15p AA Meets	5	6 5p Lenten Church Service 6p Adult Discussion Group