



SEPTEMBER 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 on 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. The chair, of course, was a metaphor for America, and Franklin was wondering about what sort of future America 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.

An interesting story, you say, and well told at that, but what does it have to do with Ridgebury Congregational Church? A fair question; let me explain. As many of you know, when the calendar turns from August to September it does more than mark the end of summer and the beginning of autumn. It also marks another anniversary of my tenure as Minister here at Ridgebury. It will be the beginning of my third year as Minister in a week or so, and as I frequently do at this time of year, I've been thinking a bit about from whence our congregation has come, and to where it might be headed. Over the past couple of years we have seen definite signs of growth around here: Attendance is up at worship; Sunday School enrollment is up, we will have our first Confirmation class in ages starting in a few weeks; we have celebrated three baptisms so far this year (with more on the horizon); we have welcomed new members and are planning to welcome more before the year is out; and our income has been up enough to fund a modest budget surplus (even during the summer!). 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 two years ago, and clearly we are not, the question then becomes: 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? What about a Youth Group? 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? About bathrooms? 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? As we enter 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.

Cheers,

John



"This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you." - Exodus 12:2

September begins our church year of worship, Sunday school, confirmation, Saturday Vesper Services, adult discussion groups, and plans for many more spiritual filled gatherings.

The Deacons feel that they have worked with our minister to provide something for everyone and every age. Please join us in as many of these programs as you are able and tell a friend or neighbor about us. Everyone is welcome. We hope to build and develop a new relationship with God and feel the rewards by setting aside time to be with him.

Help us celebrate God's work at Ridgebury Church by attending Saturday Vesper Service on September 6th at 5 PM. This service will be preceded by a cookout (yes, Rev. Heeckt will be at the grill). Bring a salad, dessert or whatever you would like to go with our meal. We will provide hamburgers and hot dogs (and the fixings). The picnic will begin at 3:00 PM.

Sunday, September 7th, we welcome back our Sunday School teachers and our youth from summer vacation. This is "Rally Sunday" when we celebrate the beginning of our church school year. It will be followed by an ice cream social.

Rev. Heeckt will conduct his first Confirmation Class since coming to Ridgebury. There are four young people who will be joining this class. The first meeting will be a potluck dinner on September 14th.

Adult discussion groups will begin later in the month of September. These groups are a great way to continue to grow in faith and friendship.

As Rev. Heeckt and the Deacons make more plans, we ask that you participate in as many of these things as you are able. We hope that you can set aside time to develop a relationship with God. This time will bring challenges and new ideas. It will provide an opportunity for us to express together what our priorities are for life in this world where God has placed us.

Let us pray, and dream, that we may feel God's spirit fulfilled in all that we can be.

God Bless,

Sharon Straiton

Chairman of Deacons



There's so much information in this month's Cornerstone for you to peruse. We're looking forward to sharing all these activities with you. Fall brings with it a new sense of excitement. Any other ideas are always welcome.

Hoping to see you all next month,

Elizabeth Sganga

Moderator



As we roll into the new church year, it's not too early to think of what our commitment to Ridgebury will be for the next year. Although our formal Stewardship campaign doesn't commence until late October, we need to start thinking in earnest (who's he?) about what we will pledge for 2009. As chairman of the Stewardship Committee, you will be hearing more about our theme for this year in the weeks to come. The theme for the campaign is "The World of the Generous Gets Larger and Larger." We don't want to lose sight of our pledge for this year, but at the same time keep our monetary thinking cap on for the next year.

P.S. Cast your bread upon the waters, but first make sure the tide is coming in!

Sunday after church, a mother asked her very young daughter what the Sunday School lesson was about. The daughter answered, "Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt". Needless to say, the mother was perplexed. Later in the day, the minister stopped by for tea and the mother asked him what that morning's Sunday School lesson was about. He said "Be not afraid, thy comforter is coming."



Neighbors in Need -- Another World is Possible

The Neighbors in Need offering, which we will receive on October 5, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Through UCCTakeAction.org, our national Justice and Witness Ministries office offers resources, new updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice.

Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hocak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska.

Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the US.

Neighbors in Need helps make another world possible. It needs your support. Please give generously.

The Mission Committee



Please mark Saturday, October 18th 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!!!!!!

SEPTEMBER Birthdays



- 5 Heather Stroili
Tyler Stroili
Ingrid Gallaway
Jean Early
- 7 Sue Blaisdell
- 9 John Stroili
- 11 Chris Rowe
- 25 Lou Yarrish
- 28 Sharon Straiton
- 29 Nathan Phelps
- 30 Courtney Welton

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Visit our Web Site: www.ridgeburychurch.org

E-mail Us: Office@Ridgeburychurch.org

September 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 <i>Labor Day (USA)</i>	2 7p Deacons Meet	3 7:30p Choir Practice	4 7:15p AA Meets	5	6 3p Rally Weekend Picnic 5p Vespers Service
7	8 Rally Sunday 10a Service with Communion 10a Sunday School Starts 11:15a Ice Cream Social during Fellowship Hour	9	10 7:30p Choir Practice	11 7:15p AA Meets	12	13 5p Vespers Service
14	15 10a Baptism during service 5:30p Pastoral Relations	16	17 7:30p Choir Practice	18 7:15p AA Meets	19	20 5p Vespers Service
21	22 7p Council Meeting	23	24 7:30p Choir Practice	25 7:15p AA Meets	26	27 5p Vespers Service
28	29 11a Missions Committee	30	1 7:30p Choir Practice	2 7:15p AA Meets	3	4 5p Vespers Service

