



## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

### THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church  
605 Ridgebury Road  
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

Well, that was a sight I never really thought I would see!

You probably know the sight I mean: The sight we all saw on Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>, when Barack Obama became the 44<sup>th</sup> president of these United States. Now, some of you reading this doubtless voted for Obama, and others of you doubtless did not, which is all well and good, and fine by me as well, but whether you voted for him or not, I would submit that there was still a reason for us all to be both amazed and proud of what happened on that day, for only here in America could a man like Obama become president.

Although, that being said, as I watched those parts of the inauguration that I had a chance to see, I found myself wondering: "OK, it's great that we've finally elected a black man to the presidency, and he seems like an unusually bright guy as well. Now, can someone tell me why such a bright guy would *want* to become president at a time like this?" I mean, after all, the country is in probably the worst shape domestically since Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president in 1932, what with an economy in recession, jobs disappearing like ice on a hot day, the nation's banks burdened with God-only-knows-how many billions of dollars of worthless assets (although this does not seem to prevent their chief executives from showering outrageous bonuses on themselves,) housing prices and retail sales continuing to collapse, and so forth. And if that wasn't bad enough, on the foreign front, we're in a good deal *more* trouble than we were in 1932. When FDR became president, the United States was at peace, and separated from the world's trouble zones by two wide oceans. But that's not true today. Today our new president is faced with ongoing ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the struggle against worldwide terrorism, and who knows what else. And then, of course, there are the problems the Obama administration will face that didn't even *exist* in 1932: global warming and other environmental concerns, international humanitarian problems, tensions between nuclear powered rivals like India and Pakistan, and, of course, the ongoing mess in the Middle East. Yes, if ever there was a president seemingly set up for absolute and complete failure in the midst of overwhelming problems, it would appear to be Barack Obama. And that is why our new president needs our help.

First, and most important, he needs our prayers. We pray for our country every weekend in church, but it might not be a bad idea if you started doing it on your own as well. After all, our new president is taking office at a pretty dreadful time, and he's probably going to need all the help he can get. Second, he needs our patience. Don't think that our current mess is something that will work itself out, because it's not. It took the better part of twenty years for things to get as bad as they are now, so its going to take a while—maybe a long while—before things get better. Finally, President Obama is going to need us all to grow up a little bit. For the past decade or so we've been living high on other people's money, not our own efforts, and now a lot of that money is gone—and its not coming back. As a result, we're going to have to work more, play less, and get along without some of the indulgences some of us have grown used to, which won't be much fun at all.

As I mentioned above, maybe some of you voted for Obama, and maybe some of you didn't. But none of that matters now, because Barack Hussein Obama is the only president we're going to have for the next four years—four years that are going to be as critical for our nation as any four years in our history—and whether or not you supported him during the campaign, you're going to have to support him now, because if President Obama does well over the next four years, we're all going to do well over the next four years. And if he doesn't—well, then we may find ourselves in trouble that will make this past year look pretty good by comparison.

John



The Christmas holidays are always a special time for me and my family - the big tree, the decorations in the house, the smell of candles and pine, the Christmas music, the baking and most of all the anticipation that my grandchildren feel. I look forward to attending Church during this period because it always such a joyful time. I love to hear and sing the carols and hear the familiar Bible stories.

But, another time of the Christian year that I also look forward to is the Lenten season. It gives me a time to reflect and helps me to remember that God does exist in my life and to remember that my faith is one of the most important things that I and all of you possess.

As we approach the Lenten Season (Ash Wednesday is February 25), let each of us take the time to reflect. One of the ways that reflection can occur is to take part in the weekly (only seven weeks) of adult discussion. This group will meet in the evenings, once a week from Ash Wednesday thru Easter. If you wish to become a part of this group, please contact Rev. Heeckt or myself.

I quote - "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." Hebrews 11:1-3

I ask each of you to consider joining with us in our services during Lent and to continue our faith journey. God Bless.

God Bless,

Sharon Straiton  
Chairman of Deacons



The Happiest of New Years to you all. Looking back at 2008, we have a great deal to celebrate, thanks to all our members and friends.

Our "little church" participated in a big way during last year's 300<sup>th</sup> celebration of Ridgefield. John gave 2 presentations for the Historical Society on religion in our area during the 1700's. These talks were so well received he was asked to give 2 more in the fall. We presented a very meaningful tribute to our revolutionary heroes buried at Ridgebury Cemetery with our special Memorial Service in May. Our church Beanbag Toss at the Country Fair was a huge success and the interest in it lasted well after the event.

The attendance at the Blessing of the Animals last spring was well over the attendance from the year before. We welcomed 17 new people to membership. All things considered, the 2009 Stewardship Campaign did fantastically well.

Ridgebury Church's Alternative Missions Fair at Christmas presented us with an abundance of wonderful opportunities to share some of what we have to assist others. The Goals and Responsibilities Survey that was recently distributed will give Council some feedback as to how things are going and what we can do better.

For this and so many other accomplishments, right down to workdays and committee responsibilities, you all deserve a huge "**Well Done**". You care, you step forward when needed, and it shows in all that has happened last year. I would like to extend my heartfelt thank you for making us the kind of church community that we are.

2009 asks no less of us than 2008. We will be considering and acting on our options for the meetinghouse. It's both exciting and daunting to think about, but I trust in our togetherness and resolve to do what is the most beneficial for this wonderful community of Ridgebury Congregational Church. May God be our guide.

-----And did you know? We are going to be 250 years old in 2010!!!!-----

Christ's love be with you,  
Elizabeth Sganga



To all the members and friends of our "little white church on the corner", thank you for your commitment and faith for 2009 and beyond. Ridgebury Church is truly blessed to have your support. As a result of our campaign, we have committed a final total of \$75,406 for 2009. This total is a result of 45 pledges received. The cost and joy of discipleship is evident in our congregation.

On behalf of the Stewardship Committee  
Chris Miller for the Committee

A minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him in front of the service station. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump. "Reverend," said the young man, "sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip". The minister chuckled, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my Business".

---

### From the Missions Committee

The Mission Committee is pleased to announce that Lori Cipot, daughter of our esteemed head deacon, Sharon Straiton, and former member of this church, will grace the pulpit on February 22, helping to launch our awareness campaign for the upcoming One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering.

Lori is currently a member of the First Congregational Church of Bethel, UCC and is in the process of becoming a licensed minister. She was recently one of several UCC members who traveled to New Orleans, LA and Biloxi MS on an education mission trip sponsored by One Great Hour of Sharing and Hope Shall Bloom. We will look forward to having her share her interesting travel experiences with us. Hope you can all be present.



---

**SAVE THE DATE - SATURDAY, MAY 2ND  
TAG SALE ON CHURCH GROUNDS  
\$25.00 PER SPACE, YOU KEEP THE PROFITS  
MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW.**



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!!!!



## PRESERVATION ARCHITECT UPDATE

In January 2008, Trustees received approval from Council to select a preservation architect who would tell us what condition the meeting house is in and what we might be able to do to improve the condition.

In February, Trustees held a meeting in the Parsonage to review a list of preservation/restoration architects that John had developed after looking at many websites. Specifically, Trustees wanted architects with experience in both preservation and churches if possible. Trustees developed questions that would be asked of all the architects. Trustees also spoke with various churches and organizations in the area that had work completed in order to get their ideas and suggestions. Wilton Congregational Church (route 33 south, just prior to route 7) was especially helpful in outlining how they went about their project and sent various materials that detailed how to get input from the congregation and additional steps that could be taken once the initial phase of the study was completed.

In September, three architects were selected to come look at the meeting house, prepare a proposal and make a presentation to Trustees. The three architects were: Faesy/Smith (Wilton), Jay Bright (New Haven) and Paul Bailey (also from New Haven). In addition, through the efforts of John, Bill Lucas and the Ridgefield Historical Society, we also welcomed a Circuit Rider, Gregory Farmer, who looked at the church (at no charge) and gave us a short report. Trustees thought this report could serve as a benchmark.

During the formal presentations, Trustees learned of several organizations and individuals who might help in securing grants in order to help defray some of the expenses. All architects stated that knowing that the meeting house is on the National Register of Historic Places might make it easier to secure the grants.

At our December 2008 meeting, Trustees selected Paul Bailey to complete the first phase of the project. Paul's firm is composed of nine professionals and he is approved by the CT Historical Commission as a Historical Architect. His complete proposal is on the book shelf in Shields Hall if you wish to review it and see the various projects he has completed including the Wilton Congregational Church and the Redding Congregational Church.

At the end of February, beginning of March, Paul will bring in a structural engineer and a mechanical engineer, both of whom also have considerable experience in historic structures. Recommendations will be summarized, budget estimates given, and digital color photos will be included in the final report. For the initial phase of our project, Paul has provided us with the name of an individual to contact and guide us on obtaining a CT grant. Bill Lucas and John have started on this process with the hopes of obtaining at least half of the \$13,175 it will cost to study the condition of the meeting house, make recommendations and provide us with a cost estimate for what needs to be done prior to looking at any expansion options.

---

## FURNACE UPDATE

Trustees asked four firms to provide a bid for a new furnace:

Lee Montanari Fuel Service - Ridgefield  
Joe Mulvaney Plumbing and Heating - Ridgefield  
Steve Main - Ridgefield who services our furnace  
Richard Straiton Construction - Bethel

After a review of the bids and proposed scope of work, Richard Straiton Construction was selected. One of the reasons for the selection was the knowledge that Mr. Straiton has concerning the meeting house. For example, in his bid, he suggested an electronic purifier that would help with the air in the meeting house.

Prior to the installation of the furnace, a concrete slab was laid by Rich, Vinnie and Drew. The Knights of Columbus in Danbury donated the concrete and provided an extra set of hands in building the concrete slab.

During the week of January 19<sup>th</sup>, Rich and Vinnie built a retaining wall to stop dirt falling on and near the furnace from the side wall. The furnace was installed on Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. On Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, the furnace will be fine tuned and the interior of the church will be cleaned in time for services to be held Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup> and Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup>.

FEBRUARY Birthdays



- 2 Bryn Welton
- 8 Amanda Grose
- 9 Payton Shevlin
- 11 Rich Pando
- 23 Amber Raymond
- 26 James Shonk

Office Telephone: 203-748-2806  
 Visit our Web Site: [www.ridgeburychurch.org](http://www.ridgeburychurch.org)  
 E-mail Us: [Office@Ridgeburychurch](mailto:Office@Ridgeburychurch)

February 2009

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

