



## APRIL NEWSLETTER

### THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church  
605 Ridgebury Road  
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

Ah, Eastertime, that season when the warmth of the Spring sun and the gentle Spring breezes offer us such a refreshing change from the long, cold winter . . . which may actually happen this year, as opposed to last year, when as you may recall, Easter came right at the end of Winter. Which brings us back to a question many people ask around this time of year: Why does Easter always come on a different day? Why can't it just be like Christmas, which shows up so predictably on December 25 every single year? Well, actually, that's two questions; fortunately, they both have the same answer.

But, as you might expect with any question about the history of the church, the full answer is both long and complicated. Fortunately, we can sum it up as follows: In the ancient church there was no consensus about when Jesus' resurrection should be celebrated. Some, who saw it as the Christian Passover, felt it should be celebrated when the synoptic gospels said it occurred: that is, a few days after the Jewish Passover. And that would have all been well and good, had the Jews and the Roman Empire followed the same calendar; but they didn't, with the result that Passover fell on a different day of the Roman week every year, which meant the celebration of the resurrection did as well. This was a problem for others who, in church, who believed that Jesus' resurrection wasn't a updated version of something else, but rather something completely unprecedented. Accordingly, these folks believed the resurrection should be celebrated on the day all the gospels said it occurred, "the first day of the week," or Sunday, regardless of when the Passover occurred in a given year.

What was the larger church to do? Well, for centuries, it didn't do much of anything. There were arguments and debates about who was right, but for the most part, people were willing to agree to disagree. (Which, let us observe in passing, demonstrated a fine sort of spirit that probably should have been extended to a number of other nasty squabbles in the early church, but the less said about that, probably the better; there's no sense not letting bygones be bygones, as they say).

While this live-and-let-live kind of spirit is commendable in most areas of life, and didn't cause much trouble for commemorating Jesus' resurrection while Christian communities were few, small, and relatively far away from one another, as the church grew larger it became more of a problem. Finally, in 325AD the Roman emperor Constantine, who just seven years before had granted Christianity legal status within the Empire, decided to do something about it. What he did was call a council of church leaders to meet in a town called Nicea in what is today modern Turkey, and one of the things he charged the council with doing was figuring out a common date for resurrection celebrations. The folks at Nicea settled on the system we still use today: the festival of the resurrection would always be celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon following the vernal equinox (that is, the first day of Spring). Calculating when the vernal equinox occurred would be the responsibility of the bishop of Alexandria, who was then supposed to let his fellow bishops know when the resurrection would be celebrated.

What this means is that while Easter usually falls on some date in April, when the weather in our neck of the woods is beginning to feel a least a little more balmy, there is always the small chance that the first full moon following March 21 will occur on the evening following, or on the 22. And then there is the *very* small chance that the first Sunday following that first full moon following the vernal equinox will be the very next day after. . .which is what happened last year.

Why all the fuss? Well, in addition to answering the calendar question, the above explanation sets up a significant theological point. When Easter come later in the year, along with the warm sun, the soothing breeze, the new leaves on the trees, the blossoms on the crocuses and the daffodils, and all of that other "springy" sort of stuff, it's easy to make the connection between the new life we feel all around us in the Spring, and the new life we have in Christ as a result of the resurrection. Many a minister has made just that point over the years and it's a perfectly good one. But even if it still feels an awful lot like late winter on Easter Sunday (and this being New England, it may feel like that this year just like it did last year), the point about new life in Christ still holds: When God raised Jesus from the dead on Easter morning, He did so to fulfill His plan to bring new life to all of us—a new life that offers us, as I have mentioned on more than one occasion, both the future promise of eternal life with God and the present promise of a richer and more rewarding life right now. Both promises are great ones, and when we take hold of them we give ourselves the chance to enjoy something of a springtime rebirth within our lives and spirits—even if it still feels more than a bit like winter outside!

Cheers,

John



Whew, this is a big hill up to Jerusalem. We're almost there, and I can see the top of the temple. There is always so much excitement at festival time. Jesus looks very serious and tired. I'm glad he is riding a donkey. People are streaming in from everywhere to join in the parade. Over there I see a woman that Jesus healed. Look at all the children - running, jumping around, shouting, singing and waving palm branches. What a parade! "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna. Save us, Jesus we pray." All these people who have followed Jesus - what a sight! But there is Jesus, in front, on a lowly donkey, riding into Jerusalem, not an emperor, but like our Savior. (Taken from Daily Lenten Devotions by Eleanor Sudbrock)

As we celebrate Easter, it is time to begin our parade and remember how Jesus has affected our own lives.

On behalf of all the Deacons at Ridgebury Church we invite you to attend the following services with us -

April 5th – Palm Sunday – Everyone (if you are able) will meet at Shield's Hall, palms will be distributed, and the congregation will process to the Church. For those unable to walk over to the Church, they will be greeted by a Deacon and palms given to them at that time.

April 9th – Maundy Thursday – A communion service with scriptures hearing the last seven words of Jesus will be observed (7 PM)

April 10th – Good Friday – The church will be opened for prayer and reflection during the afternoon. (Rev. Heeckt will be participating in the service at St. Stephen's Church).

April 11th – Holy Saturday - The Saturday evening service will be similar to the ancient Christian tradition of the Easter Vigil (5 PM)

April 12th – EASTER SUNDAY – There will be two (9AM and 11 AM) services celebrating the risen Christ. These services will be full of music, celebration and communion. There will be a Fellowship Hour (hosted by the Millers in Shield's Hall) between the two services.

April 19th – Communion (There will be no Sunday school)

April 26th – Communion (Sunday school will resume)

Risen Lord, fill our cleansed Easter spirit with the proven belief of this moment, and let us rejoice in it always. Alleluia!

Respectfully Submitted,,

Sharon Straiton  
Chairman of Deacons



We are so pleased to report that the collection on March 22 for the special *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering totaled \$596.00. And, typically, there will be a few more donations coming in! All of us at RCC should be very proud to be a part of such a generous and caring congregation. Thank you.



"Spring has sprung", and all of us at Ridgebury Church are "busy as bees". As directed by our bylaws, 2009 is the year which requires us to do a review of our Constitution and Bylaws. Council appointed Nancy Boersma and Bob Devers to work with John and me to accomplish this task. We have met once and will be presenting the changes that have been submitted to us at the May Annual Meeting for consideration. Please take some time yourself to review this document and contact anyone on the committee if you would like an addition or change considered. Sincerest thanks to Nancy and Bob for serving in this capacity.

The Nominating Committee is also hard at work considering the nominations of board and committee members for next year. Information explaining the tasks of some of the Boards and Committees has been distributed during the past few weeks, along with the ability to nominate yourself or someone else. If you have not done so already, there is still time – just contact any member of the Nominating Committee or drop a note in the committee's mailbox in the office in Shields Hall. The committee members are, Chris Miller, Joy anger, Bill Lucas, and Phyllis Locke. Brien Locke, Vice Moderator, serves as chair of the committee. John and I also serve without vote. Our thanks go out to these members for their service in such an important process.

I'm sure you have all noticed by now the whiter appearance or glow when you walk into Church. Chris Miller did this sprucing up by way of painting the pews. The Meeting House looks terrific and a multitude of thanks goes out to Chris.

Stay tuned for an activity filled spring. I extend a thank you to all, in advance, for chipping in and agreeing to serve.

Christ's love be with you,

Elizabeth Sganga



The WHITE ELEPHANT SALE will be held on Saturday, May 2nd on the Church grounds.

If you or a friend are looking to sell those things taking up room in your attic or basement, there is space still available.

The cost is \$30.00 per space and you keep the profits!!

Contact Sue Bankes, Linda Hayward or Linda Cochrane to reserve your space.

There will be a church table that will be accepting donations of goods after April 19th.

## GREEN TEAM UPDATE

Earth Day 2009 is Tuesday, April 22. This will be the 39th Earth Day, which was born in 1970, a time when rivers caught fire (the Cuyahoga River in Ohio), and cities were choked by clouds of smoke.

Much progress has been made in 39 years as the government, grassroots organizations, and individuals have worked and changed to help protect the environment.

Ridgebury Church will observe Earth Day 2009 on Sunday, April 19th. The Green Team will be hosting coffee hour and you will be invited to view and take note of items we will have on display that are environmentally friendly products.

Thanks,

Linda Cochrane

---

### PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Pastoral Relations Committee has finished the SURVEY OF MUTUAL GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AMONG THE MINISTER AND THE CONGREGATION. We had a very good response and we thank you all. Your voices have been heard.

The Committee has compiled and organized the information. The responses from the Congregation and the Minister have been presented to Council. Our next step is to identify gaps and key opportunities for improvement.

It's a work in progress. We'll keep you informed and formulate a report for the May Congregational Meeting.

As always, we value your input.

On behalf of the Pastoral Committee,

Betty Miller, Chair

---

Church Clean-Up Day

Saturday, May 9th

Many hands make light work.

Lunch will be provided

---

Blessing of the Animals will be Sunday, May 31st at 4pm.

If anyone would like to help with the service, please contact

Sharon Straiton.

*Let me introduce you to . . .*

*By Liz Rowe*

I had the pleasure of visiting **Nancy Boersma** at her cute, antique home in southern Ridgefield. When I arrived, she and her dog, Neeka, welcomed me and I felt like I had stepped into a real piece of history. She has lived in her home for 18 years and it dates back to the mid-1700's. Nancy thinks it was once a roadhouse where stagecoaches stopped on their way to replenish their goods. It had been moved twice before settling on the property where it now is located, and a second story was added. Some of the original fixtures still remain. As she showed me around her house, she had a small wooden duck on colored strings hanging from one of her doorframes. She told me it was there so that people would "duck" so they wouldn't hit their head on the frame. The interior of her home is bright and cheery and her own artwork adorns the walls, some black and white sketches and others of pastels and watercolors.

Nancy was raised in Omaha, Nebraska and was the younger of two children. Her parents were both teachers and lived in Omaha until retirement, when they moved to North Carolina. Nancy graduated from University of Nebraska of Omaha with a degree in teaching, and taught non-departmental 7<sup>th</sup> grade to students after graduating. She married and has two children, Juliana and Dirk. She lived in Colorado and Iowa before moving to Dobbs Ferry, New York. She began teaching again at White Plains High School as an English teacher and taught there for 31 years, the last six years of which she was the Coordinator of the English Department. She bought her house in Ridgefield and commuted to her job in White Plains for one and a half years until retirement.

She discovered Ridgefield while driving from Mahopac to visit relatives in Westport. The area's historical homes appealed to Nancy, and she moved here the next spring. She currently serves on the board of the Historic Society, and is also the Chairman of the Tree Committee and the Facilitator of the Nonfictioneers book discussion group at the Historical Society. She introduced me to two books she was involved in editing, "Five Village Walks of Ridgefield" and "Ridgefield's Notable Trees", both of which can be found at the Town Hall or Squash's. She also took several art classes at the Ridgefield Guild of Artists and taught beginning art classes after being a student there herself.

Nancy is also very proud to be a new member of Ridgebury Congregational Church. She discovered our church through Bill Lucas who invited her to attend John's town discussions. Shortly thereafter, she started coming to the services. "These people are terrific", she says, of her new friends at Ridgebury Church.

Nancy's son and daughter-in-law live in New York with her two grandchildren, and her daughter and son-in-law live in Maryland with their two grand dogs. She enjoys visits from her grandson on a regular basis.

APRIL Birthdays	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2 Guy Welton</li><li>2 Tyler Welton</li><li>9 Kelly Hislop</li><li>17 Anne Judge</li><li>21 Thomas Shevlin</li><li>24 Larry Hibbard</li></ul>

## April 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	1 7:30p Choir Practice <i>April Fool's Day [USA]</i>	2 7p Lentin Discussion Group 7:15p AA Meets	3	4 5p Vespers Service
5 Family Sunday <i>Palm Sunday [Christian]</i>	6 7p Deacons Meet	7 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	8 7:30p Choir Practice	9 7p Maundy Thursday Service 7:15p AA Meets <i>Maundy Thursday [Christian]</i>	10 12p Church open for Prayers and Reflection <i>Good Friday [Christian]</i>	11 5p Vespers Service
12 9a Easter Service 11a Easter Service <i>Easter [Christian]</i>	13 7p Trustees <i>Easter Monday [Christian]</i>	14 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	15 7:30p Choir Practice <i>Tax Day [USA]</i>	16 7:15p AA Meets	17	18 5p Vespers Service
19	20	21 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	22 7:30p Choir Practice	23 7:15p AA Meets	24	25 5p Vespers Service
26 11a Missions	27 7p Council Meeting	28 1:30p Adult Discussion Group	29 7:30p Choir Practice	30 7:15p AA Meets	1	2 5p Vespers Service