



JULY/AUGUST NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

So, I've been thinking a lot about violence recently. A strange thing for a minister think about, especially when he's on vacation! Well, perhaps not, because, you see, violence is one of those things that a lot of secular people think we Christians have to answer for.

The argument goes something like this: One of the problems with religion (all religions broadly, of course, though it always seems that Christianity gets more blame for this than any other religion) is that religion is a breeding ground for violent behavior. All one has to look at, such people assert, is the history of things like the crusades, or the modern problem of Islamic terrorism, or the murder of abortion providers, to conclude that religion is bad influence on society, and we would all be better off without it. (Christopher Hitchens' relatively recent book, *God is Not Great*, rests principally upon an argument like this.) This has posed a serious problem for religious folk like us, and the usual response is something like, "Well, yes, a lot of terrible things have been done in God's name, but that's something different from terrible things being done at God's command, and anyway, religion inspires people to do lots of good things as well, so it can't be *all* bad, can it?" For years I've made excuses for religion just like that, but lately I've been thinking that the conventional debate misses the point altogether, which brings me to an immodest proposal: I would like to suggest that religion is not a root of violent behavior; indeed, religion isn't a cause of violence, but rather merely a convenient excuse for it. All violence, everything from World War II to the nasty spat you had with a family member, friend, or coworker last week, can be attributed to some combination of four things: fear, greed, envy, pride, or vengeance.

Let's take World War II as an example. Why did Nazi Germany invade Poland? Because Hitler was able to convince the German people that Slavs like the Poles were racially inferior to them (which is pride) because Germany had an unlimited right to extra living space in eastern Europe (which is greed), and because the German race had to protect itself from being contaminated by inferior peoples (which is fear). Why did Britain, France, and the United States go to war against Germany? Because we wanted to punish the Germans for what they did to the Poles--and a lot of other perfectly nice people whose only failing was not being German--(which is vengeance) because we were afraid that Germany might try to do to us what they did to the people of eastern Europe (which is fear) and because we believed democracy was morally superior to totalitarianism (which is pride).

Want a more modern example? Take Islamic terrorism. Such terrorism is fueled by a desire to strike back at the West for what terrorists see as generations of western cultural and political imperialism (which is vengeance) by a belief that the West is bent on Islam's destruction (which is fear) by a deep-seated inferiority in the face of western technical and economic power (which is envy) and by the belief in the superiority of Islamic culture and the memory of a golden era when Islamic civilization was in most ways the West's superior (both of which are pride).

In both cases, World War II and contemporary terrorism, God's name was, and is, invoked, and all sorts of nastiness is perpetrated in God's name, but if I'm right, all of that amounts to a smokescreen, a patent attempt to use faith simply as an excuse for human pathologies that have a much deeper, and more human, root. You see, if I'm right, and one way or another problem of violence can be boiled down to some combination of fear, greed,

From the pastor continued-

envy, pride, or vengeance, then the ultimate cause of the problem isn't religion, or economics, or politics, or any of the other things violence is usually blamed on. Rather, the ultimate cause of violence is us, because fear, greed, envy, pride, or vengeance aren't external forces that drive our behavior, they're forces deep within us, forces that are, like it or not, a fundamental part of our collective human nature. You might say that if I'm right, we've met the enemy, and they are us.

Also, if I am right, that may mean not only that religion isn't part of the problem, it may even be the best way of finding a solution, but if you want to know why I think that, you'll have to tune in next time.

Cheers,

John



July marks a new beginning in some ways for Ridgebury Church. Our new committees have been elected and they are meeting to plan for the fall events on the horizon. There are always so many new ideas, ways to change and also to keep what is working. You will find the list of newly elected officers and committee members in this issue of the Cornerstone. Sincerest thanks to all those who agreed to work together for the benefit of our church community. I'd also like to thank those of you who have taken a "vacation" from specific committee work. Your continued assistance is always welcome, so stay in touch.

I'd like to acknowledge at this time those special committees we have and the important roles they play in our church community;

Green Team – Members Joy Manger, Linda Cochrane, Jean Early, Betty Miller, Sally Miller, Naomi Emmons and Dottie Rogers, keep us aware of the myriad ways we can be environmentally friendly, some of which are so easy to do, it's amazing.

250th Committee – Members Sharon Straiton, Bill Lucas, Alice Kenny Lucas, Nancy Boersma, Dottie Rogers, Betty Miller and Tod Dickson, are getting started on planning a celebration of our 250 years as Ridgebury Congregational Church in 2010.

Grant Writer – Alice Kenny Lucas is our "go to" person when we decide to seek a grant for the work we are doing in the Meeting House. We have already been awarded a grant for the survey the architects are doing at this point.

Bylaws Committee – Members Nancy Boersma, Bob Dever, are coordinating the incorporation of the bylaw changes voted on at the Annual Meeting into our current document.

Your Council and Committee members hope to accomplish much and, as always, we ask for both your support and help over this church year. We have decisions to make, our heritage to celebrate and continued awareness of those in need– sounds like a full and productive agenda. With excitement we all forge ahead under God's guidance through Jesus' teachings.

Christ's love be with you,
Elizabeth Sganga



I have been thinking about what I should write for my first Cornerstone article. I have to tell you that I am much better as the editor of the Cornerstone than a contributor. But I'm hoping that will change as the year progresses. This article will just give you a quick update of what the Deacons are doing.

Our June meeting was a combined meeting of the minds with the outgoing Deacons and the new Deacons. Carole Bishop was elected Chairman and Sally Yarrish Secretary. I would like to personally thank all the Deacons that served on the committee for the last two years. Your diligence, hard work and loyalty to Ridgebury Church is very much appreciated. A special thanks to Sharon Straiton, the outgoing chairman of Deacons. The hours she spent on keeping Deacons running so smoothly are immeasurable. I have learned many things from her that I intend to share with all the Deacons on the committee. Sharon, good luck in all that you do.

I would like to welcome the 4 new members to the Deacons committee. They are Kathy Barry, Tod Dickson, Jessica Esposito, and Barbara Ollinger. I would also like to welcome back Marsha Albats, Matt Orr and Sally Yarrish for another exciting year. It is a pleasure to be serving with such dedicated people. I look forward to learning from each and every one of them.

In August, the Deacons will meet and plan for the upcoming Sunday school year and some of the fall events. We will be holding "Deacons Camp" at this meeting so that all the Deacons can learn all there is to know about being a Deacon.

So in closing, I will leave this short prayer for this committee and all the committees at Ridgebury Church:

"Lord, thank you for all the committed people who serve the needs of our church. Thank you for their faithful service on the committees. May they keep our church running smoothly and well so that all they do builds up the church and furthers Your kingdom."

In God's love,

Carole Bishop
Chairman of Deacons

TRUSTEES UPDATE

There is now a sign out sheet for rectangular tables and non-padded chairs posted on the bulletin board where you sign up for other things.

Non-padded chairs may not be taken over a Thursday and Thursday night due to their use for the AA meeting.

Thank you from the Trustees

Let me introduce you to . . .

The Confirmands

By Liz Rowe

This month I am featuring our recent confirmands. Please join me in welcoming these young adults to Ridgebury Congregational Church. They are looking forward to participating as new members in many ways.

Amanda Einarsen Grose was born 2/8/95 in Paraguay, South America. She and her mom, Barbara, lived together there for 9 months before coming home to Vermont in 1996. Later that same year Amanda and her family moved to Ridgefield. From ages two through ten, Amanda has learned to ride a horse, English saddle. She has traveled to different islands and countries. In the winter, Amanda skis and snowshoes, and in the summer she likes to hike, boat and swim. Amanda was active in the Girls Scouts for many years. For the past three years Amanda has been playing the drums. Amanda will be entering Ridgefield High School as a freshman in the fall and plans on joining the soccer team there.

Connor Rowe has been attending Ridgebury Congregational Church since he was five years old. He will be 15 years old in October and will be entering Ridgefield High School in the fall as a freshman. Connor is a well-rounded young man, but his real love is football. He has played quarterback for the last two years on the Ridgefield Raiders Youth Football League. He is looking forward to playing at the high school level. In his free time, he enjoys playing guitar, lifting weights and playing golf. He looks forward to getting his braces off in August!

Taylor Stroili lives in Danbury and goes to Broadview Middle School. She is in the 7th grade and a straight "A" student. She loves sports and plays basketball, tennis, and volleyball, but will join in any game she can. She spends a lot of time with her family and dog, Jessie. They have a Flagstaff trailer and go camping a great deal. She loves to act and sing and is in Concert Choir and theater. Her first theatrical experience was when she was five months old and played baby Jesus in Ridgebury Church's Christmas pageant.

Tyler Welton is following in his parents' footsteps by attending East Ridge Middle School. Tyler will be entering 8th grade in September where math and science are his favorite subjects. He plays clarinet in the school band and practices drums whenever he can. A huge sports fan, Tyler loves to play travel soccer and basketball. His favorite teams are the Dallas Cowboys and the Boston Red Sox. Tyler has dog named Becks (short for Beckham) and was born on his dad's birthday.

Kurt Steidl has had a ball in his hand almost since the day he was born. It didn't matter if it was a soccer ball, baseball or superball. His passion is basketball, however, and he plays year round at the national level. He is also a first baseman for Ridgefield in the Babe Ruth League. His favorite subject in school is math. He's looking forward to taking accounting at the high school next year. When not playing sports or studying, he also likes to fish and golf.

A BIG THANK YOU

I want to thank my church family for their wonderful cards, visits, and affection that they gave me during my 'mishaps.' Please know that the lovely flowers lasted a full week. I hope to paint them from the pictures I took of them.

Sincerely, Jean Stouter

JULY Birthdays



- 11 Taylor-Ann Stroili
- 20 Marissa Puglia
- 23 Carole Bishop
- 27 Paula Wray
- 28 Ryan Clark
- 30 Drew Cochrane
- 30 Jessica Esposito
- 30 John Hislop
- 30 Bonnie Weber

July 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 10a Guest Minister	29 St. Peter & St. Paul [Christian]	30	1 5:30p Pastoral Relations Meeting	2 7:15p AA Meets	3	4 Independence Day [USA]
5 Family Sunday 10a Communion	6	7	8	9 7:15p AA Meets	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 7:15p AA Meets	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 7:15p AA Meets	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 7:15p AA Meets	31	1

AUGUST Birthdays



- 3 Barbara Earle
- 8 John Burke
- 10 Robert Burke
- 12 Mary Jane Scott
- 13 Tara Kenny
- 15 Katherine Dickson
- 16 Joy Manger
- 21 Elizabeth Sganga
- 21 John Heeckt
- 23 Martin Ollinger
- 29 Bill Lucas
- 30 Kim Welton

August 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	27	28	29	30 7:15p AA Meets	31	1
2 Family Sunday	3 7p Deacons Meet	4	5	6 7:15p AA Meets	7	8
9	10 10a Service with Communion	11	12	13 7:15p AA Meets	14	15 <i>Assumption [Christian]</i>
16	17 7p Trustees Meeting	18	19	20 7:15p AA Meets	21	22
23	24 7p Council Meeting	25	26	27 7:15p AA Meets	28	29
30	31	1	2	3 7:15p AA Meets	4	5