



SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

From the Pastor

Ave Ridgeburians!

Ok, so usually a minister's contribution to the September church newsletter is an upbeat piece describing all the great stuff that is going to happen over the course of the coming program year and encouraging people to take advantage of all the great stuff that will be going on. So let me take care of that responsibility right up front. There is going to be a lot of great stuff going on here at Ridgebury over the course of the coming year and you are hereby encouraged to participate in said great stuff to the fullest of your ability and interest.

Now that that's been taken care of. . .

We can return to the subject I began discussing in my July Cornerstone article; that is, the question of violence. As I suggested last time, the topic is one for Christians to consider seriously, not only because violence is an awful thing in its own right, but also because it is an awful thing for which religion in general (and frequently Christianity in particular, it seems,) is frequently blamed. Yes, if it wasn't for all of those self-righteous, high-handed religious folk, (or so the argument seems to go,) always trying to force others to believe what they believe and trying to force others to live the way they live, the world would be a much more peaceful place. As I tried to suggest last time, while I used to take this sort of argument seriously, I have become convinced that this kind of thinking is simply wrong—religion is no more a cause of violence than, say, politics or economics are. Rather, like politics and economics, religion is not a cause of violence, but an excuse for violence. It is a justification to which violent people resort to legitimate actions they would have taken anyway. The real underlying causes of violence, I suggested last time, are five traits common to humanity: fear, greed, envy, pride, or vengeance. It is one, or more usually, some combination of these five traits that propel people to do violent things to one another, whether those things add up to violence on a big scale (like wars) or on a small scale (like conflicts between individuals).

Now if I'm right and violence is caused by traits that are part of everyone's very being, that poses a problem for all of us. One of the things that makes the conventional explanation for violence so attractive is the notion that it allows all of us, as human beings, to escape the responsibility for our violent actions. After all, if the real cause of my violent behavior isn't the choices I make as an individual but rather larger social forces—like religion—that are beyond my personal control, then the violent things I do aren't really my fault, and I can still cling to the myth that I'm a fundamentally good person. My explanation is troublesome in another way, too. After all, if violence isn't the result of negative passions within the human soul but rather of larger social forces, then it may be possible to solve the problem of violence by eliminating or changing those larger social forces. That's the thinking behind the "eliminate religion in the name of peace" argument. If we could just find some way to get past religion, we would all end up as peaceful little secularists, that things would be just great.

But, as I say, if I am right, then both of those comforting thoughts are forced out the window. If violence is the result of passions within each of us, then the violence we do is our responsibility. We are not the victim of larger social forces beyond our control, but rather of our own failings and weaknesses. It also means that simply changing the social setting in which we live our lives probably won't do much to solve the problem. After all, if violence is the result of passions within our own souls, those passions will still be there no matter what social setting we live in, because violence isn't a social problem.

But if violence isn't a social problem, what sort of problem is it? Well, I would like to suggest that, if I'm right, violence is largely a spiritual problem. It is a problem caused by certain failings or weaknesses within the human spirit, and, as such, is to be dealt with as any other spiritual problem. This suggests to me that not only is religion not one of the sources of the problem of violence, it is rather humanity's principal hope for doing something about it. After all, spiritual matters are the sort of thing with which religion principally deals, and it is spiritual problems that religion is best at solving.

So, the next time one of your secular friends or family members start berating you with the old line that religion is the most important cause of violence, and that as a result we should just be over and done with it altogether, you tell them to take a look in the mirror, because violence is a spiritual problem whose sources of violence lie deep within all of us, and whose solution can be begin to be found as close by as the nearest church.

Cheers,

John



As sad as I am about the summer coming to an end (what there was of it, that is), it always feels like a fresh start in September. Meetings have started up again and your Boards and Committees are working on ideas to enhance the life of Ridgebury Church. We are looking forward to Rally weekend, September 12 and 13 which will give us a wonderful opportunity to gather together again. Sunday School begins on September 13. Sally Miller will be teaching the younger grades and I will be teaching the upper grades again this year. Please let one of us know if you could be available to substitute teach one Sunday. It is pain free and the students would love to meet you.

As we have mentioned in the past, we are coming up on our 250 birthday in 2010. A committee has been formed under the leadership of Sharon Straiton and they will have their first meeting soon. I hope you are all as excited as we are about this historic celebration. Stay tuned for many wonderful events throughout the year to commemorate how special we are.

Ridgebury Church, its members and friends, is nurtured and grows through sharing and doing for each other as Christ has taught. I believe our coffee hours after the service help us along those lines by communicating more of ourselves each week. If you can help provide the coffee and snacks one Sunday morning, it would be immensely appreciated. There is a sign up sheet in Shields Hall that is calling your name. Please give it some thought. Check with any committee member or me if you have any questions as to what is involved.

Sooooooooo, rev up the engines ---- we're off to a terrific Fall!!!!!!!

Christ's love be with you,

Elizabeth Sganga



Our church year begins in September with worship, Sunday school and many plans for more spiritual filled gatherings.

At the August Deacons' meeting, it was decided that the Saturday Night Church Service will be suspended for the time being. We will revisit the idea of having a Saturday church service next year. There will be an Advent Saturday night service beginning in December and running through the Advent season. There will also be a Lenten Saturday night service during the Lent season. There will be more information to follow.

Rally Weekend begins on Saturday, Sept. 12th. There will be a picnic with a cookout at 3pm with Rev. Heeckt manning the grill. Hamburgers and Hot dogs will be provided. Everyone is welcome!! We ask that you bring a dish to go with the hamburgers and hot dogs. It will be a good time with food and fellowship enjoyed by all. At 5pm, there will be an Outdoor Church Service on the lawn at Shields Hall. If it rains, the service will be moved inside to Shield's Hall.

Rally Sunday is the next day, September 13th. This is when we welcome back our Sunday School teachers and our youth from summer vacation. Sally Miller and Liz Sganga will be teaching our Sunday School classes this year. Thanks go out to them for all their dedication in teaching the Sunday school classes. We are lucky to have them. Church will be followed by an ice cream social. Please plan on attending church that day as we celebrate the beginning of our church school year.

Adult discussion groups will be beginning sometime in October. Stay tuned for more information.

Prayer is essential to building and growing a healthy church. Much more than just a building, the church is a place to belong and feel welcome. It's a family of believers, brothers and sisters in the Lord, who, imperfect as they are, seek to love, forgive, connect, and serve together. May we grow together as a "family" of believers. Although we are different, help us to respect each other and seek to build up one another.

"God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

John 4:24

In God's love,

Carole Bishop
Chairman of Deacons

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

This year our all church offering will be Children's Defense Fund. The giving date will be Sunday, October 18th. We will be explaining about the fund during the church's mission moments for the 5 weeks prior and also distributing pamphlets.

Children's Defense Fund (CDF), established 17 years ago, is a nationwide organization whose mission is to ensure every child a HEALTHY START, a HEAD START, a SAFE START, FAIR START and a MORAL START. This fund provides a strong effective voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves, particularly needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities.

Within the CDF, there are many projects and programs that support these goals. They work through research, public education, policy analysis, development, community organization and advocacy activities.

You can find more information online at www.childrensdefense.org.

The Mission Committee

Pastoral Relations Update

The Pastoral Relations Committee is looking forward to our 2009/2010 program year. Participation in this committee is different from others because each member represents a different constituency or function. To support that, the committee's unique structure is defined in the bylaws (Article XVII point 1.), so our members per the bylaws are:

- The Board of Deacons elects one representative: Tod Dickson joins the committee this year.
- The Moderator or Vice Moderator is a member: Elizabeth Sganga serves here. You may remember last year, Elizabeth was a member but then she served as Rev. Heeckt's representative.
- Rev. Heeckt chooses his representative: Nancy Boersma, joins the committee in this function.
- Congregation elects one representative: At the past May congregational meeting, Alice Kenny Lucas was elected. As the elected congregational representative, I'm also the Chair.

This structure was designed to facilitate communication, problem solving, and privacy. Please feel free to talk to any of us about a congregation-related question or issue. We will work with you to understand the situation and seek a resolution.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Kenny Lucas, Chair



Please mark Saturday, October 17th 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!!!!!!



A BIG THANK YOU goes out to Katherine Barry for painting the bench in the mediation garden next to the Church.

No one asked her to do the task. She just did it!!!



Our Clerk and friend, Barbara Kapp has resigned her position. She moved over the summer to Portland, Maine. We sincerely thank her for all she has done for our church community, not only as Clerk, but as a choir member and pianist for the Saturday evening service. She is missed already. We offer our prayers for wonderful adventures in her new home.

P.S. For those of you who are curious, Council will be appointing a Clerk shortly.

GOD POPS RECEIVED

A Chaplain wrote: "Our Chaplain has a saying, 'If your having a bad day, suck it up' then he hands you a sucker. Not very creative, but keeps a smile on your face, and I guess that is all that really matters, right? I'm part of the 9th Engineer Battalion Chaplain Team, and we would really like to thank you for all your support to the troops serving with us. You have no idea what it means to us. People such as yourself are our heroes. We wouldn't be able to keep up good spirits without knowing we have supporters such as yourself back home whom think about us and pray for us. Thank you soooo much." signed The 9th Engineer Battalion Chaplain Team.

I received this letter and wanted to share it with all of you. Again, thank you for your support.


Sharon Straiton



Believe it or not, December is only 3 months away and so is the Ladies' Annual Christmas Dinner.

It will be held at "Chuck's Steak House" on Wednesday, December 2nd at 6:00 pm.

More details to follow,

SEPTEMBER Birthdays	
	5 Heather Stroili Tyler Stroili Jean Early 7 Sue Blaisdell 8 Bruce Weber 9 John Stroili Shannon Dickson 11 Chris Rowe 15 Nancy Boersma Melissa Steidl 17 Evan Juska 18 Cameron Shevlin 20 Courtney Welton 25 Lou Yarrish 26 Karl Steidl Kurt Steidl 28 Sharon Straiton

September 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31 5:30p Pastoral Relations	1 7p Deacons	2 7:30p Choir	3 7:15p AA Meets	4	5
6 Family Sunday 10a Communion	7 <i>Labor Day [USA]</i>	8	9 7:30p Choir	10 7:15p AA Meets	11	12 10a 250 Celebration Committee meet 3p Rally Weekend Cookout 5p Outdoor Service
13 10a Sunday School Starts - Ice Cream Social	14 7p Trustees	15	16 7:30p Choir	17 7:15p AA Meets	18	19
20	21 7p Council Meets	22	23 7:30p Choir	24 7:15p AA Meets	25	26
27 11a Missions	28	29	30 7:30p Choir	1 7:15p AA Meets	2	3