



JANUARY NEWSLETTER

THE CORNERSTONE

Ridgebury Congregational Church
605 Ridgebury Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Ave Ridgeburian

So, here we all are, at the beginning of a bright, shiny new year—so let the new year's resolutions begin!

Ah yes, the new year's resolution: That moment of giddy, unbridled optimism at the start of another year when we promise ourselves that THIS is finally the year when we will really, really, do whatever it is we resolved to do last year, but never quite seemed to get around to doing. Maybe it was something we did get around to doing—for a while—last year but never quite followed through on the way we had hoped to. But all that is in the past, we bravely tell ourselves, and this year we are absolutely, positively, definitely, going to do. . .whatever.

But that brings us up against the problem with resolutions: they're so much easier to make than to keep. We might make them out of sheer optimism, or it might just be the last of the holiday eggnog talking when we make them. Once the new year starts getting old, our resolutions seem to get old with it, until they just seem to fade away—at least until the next new year, when we go through the same process all over again.

So what is it that makes keeping our resolutions so hard? After all, by and large we promise ourselves that we're going to do good things: we might resolve to work out more often, or take up a new activity, or dedicate more time and effort to some good thing we're already trying to do—it just never seems to work.

A big part of the problem, I think, is that when we think about our resolutions, we usually think about things that will make our already overcrowded lives even busier. Then, when our initial enthusiasm runs its course, and the things we have to do compete for attention with the things we merely want to do, the things we want to do—however good they might be—never seem to get done.

So this year, let me propose a radical, new idea. Instead of resolving to do more, why not resolve to do less? Why not resolve to try keeping a personal Sabbath?

The idea of the Sabbath is one that is fundamental to both Judaism and Christianity. It's even in the Bible—remember how Genesis says that after God was finished with the work of creation God took a day and rested? Well, Sabbath keeping isn't just for God, it's for us as well. We can all use a little time to rest and recharge ourselves. Now, I know what you might be thinking: Take a whole day off? What, are you mad! There's no way I could possibly do that! That's just the sort of nonsense you'd expect from a guy who only works on Sunday mornings! Well, all right, then don't take a whole day off. Set aside an hour, or a half hour even, a week and take that as your Sabbath. However much time you give yourself, just make sure it is time you dedicate to rest and reflection. You might read a book, you might just sit quietly, you might—if you want to do something really radical—even pray. Whatever you do, just make sure you do it regularly. Yes, you'll find it a challenge at first. We're all so trained to think that if we're not doing something, we're just wasting time. That's not the case here. In fact, keeping a personal Sabbath might even make you better at the other things you do.

So this year, why not resolve to do a little bit less, rather than a little bit more. Keep a personal Sabbath. Set aside a little time for you to take care of yourself, rather than always being busy taking care of something else. It worked for God, and it will work for you, too.

Cheers
John

And in other news, I want to take a moment to thank the many people in our congregation who have reached out to me in one way or another during the holidays. So, if you sent a card, gave a gift, contributed something to this year's very generous Minister's Purse, or did some combination of the above, thanks so very much for your generosity and your thoughtfulness—because it's the warmth and affection of the people in our congregation that make my job such a joy.



Let the celebration begin!!!! How does it feel to be 250 years old with only a "few" needed repairs? The Ridgebury Church 250- committee has been planning some celebratory events at various times during 2010, so stay tuned for the details.

A Congregational Meeting is scheduled for January 31. The pledge commitments are in and now it is time to finalize our 2010 budget based on "reality". At this meeting we will also be deciding on how the members want the Council and Trustees to proceed with the Meeting House improvements. Please set aside this date, so that your voice can be heard and we move forward in unison.

2010 is certainly an important year for Ridgebury Church in many ways. Let's all enjoy the events as they unfold. The Happiest of New Years to each and every family!!!!

In God's Love,
Elizabeth Sganga



"Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, because it promises life both for the present and for the future."

1 Timothy 4:8

At the start of each new year, I, like many, take inventory of my lifestyle, looking for ways to improve myself. After a holiday season of indulgence, I vow to exercise more and eat healthier foods. A brisk walk around my work building twice a day seems to be an elixir for me.

God's word can also be an elixir for many. His word is worth the time and effort you put into it. Spiritual nourishment gives us a fuller life in Christ.

I would like to thank all the Deacons who were involved during Advent. Thanks to Jessica Juska for organizing the decorating party and for picking up all the decorations. The church looked simply beautiful, inside and out, decorated with the greens and poinsettias. Thanks to all the Deacons who pitched in for both Christmas Eve services. It is these behind-the-scenes people who made both church services run so smoothly.

The Saturday night Advent services went well. We look forward to those services next Advent. While the Saturday night service has ended, the Adult Bible discussion groups continue. The Tuesday afternoon group will resume on January 12th at 1:30. The Saturday night group will resume on Saturday,, January 16th at 5pm.

This Saturday, January 9th, the Church Sunday school will be putting on their Epiphany Pageant. It will be at the church at 5:30 pm with a potluck to follow in Shields Hall. Please come and enjoy this wonderful performance and then enjoy food and fellowship afterwards.

On Sunday, January 24th, there will be a special historic service and potluck brunch to begin our 250th Anniversary celebration. The church service will be inspired by what worship services were like back in 1760. Come on out for this first activity of our special year.

With all these activities planned, could there be a better way to begin the new year?

Happy New Year!!

Carole Bishop, Chairman of Deacons

Elon Homes and Schools for Children

Tracing its roots back to 1907, Elon Homes and Schools for Children (EHSC) began as an orphanage providing a place of care for children. As part of a national trend during the 1980s and 1990s, the organization shifted to helping youth from troubled backgrounds, including abusive homes and substance abuse problems. A primary focus over the past two decades has been the creation and expansion of schools for a diverse population of children. Today, EHSC serves more than 1,200 youth annually through effective programming aimed at strengthening students and families.

EHSC provides much-needed life skills training and education to children in need. Having demonstrated success running the Kennedy Charter Public School (KCPS) for at-risk students in middle and high school for more than a decade, EHSC opened its Francis Elementary School in fall 2009. The addition of an elementary school to its current campus establishes a community-centered continuum of care that fosters parental involvement and whole-family solutions to encouraging academic success.

The impact of early education intervention is profound. Research has found that students who receive such interventions in their elementary years have higher rates of reading and math achievement and lower rates of dropping out, grade retention, and special education placement. KCPS's graduation success rate, which increased 500% between 2005 and 2008, is a testament to the organization's tested approach and the promise of implementing full kindergarten through 12th grade education.

Ridgebury Congregational Church has been involved with Elon Homes for sometime. Have you noticed the can of Campbell soup labels on the shelf below the food pantry collection box in Shields Hall? Well, those labels are for Elon Homes. Elon Homes collects the bar codes (aka UPC , Universal Product Code) from Campbell 's products and redeems them for great educational items offered in the Campbell 's catalogue. Elon Homes also collects the Box Tops from General Mills products which General Mills redeems for CASH ! One year, Elon Homes collected enough Campbell 's labels and General Mills Box Tops to buy a new van.

As we look to 2010, let's make our first New Year's resolution one that will be easy to keep. Let's collect *all* our Campbell' s labels and General Mills Box Tops for Elon Homes. By 2011, maybe they'll have enough for another van- one from Ridgebury! Thanks in advance for your continuing help. Happy New Year!

Respectfully submitted by Dottie Rogers
Missions and Social Action Committee

Mission Committee News

The Mission Committee thanks everyone who made the Fair a success, whether by donating time, baked goods, white elephant items, or money for alternative gifting. \$515 was sent to Heifer, International, \$476 was spent on items to help crafters in third world countries, \$280 was sent to the Imbabazi Orphanage, and \$270 was raised for our own RCC mission projects.

Stewardship Update

The results of the 2009 stewardship campaign are simple. There were 45 pledges made for 2010 producing a total of \$76,396. This is a slight increase from last year and definitely shows a commitment on the part of members and friends of Ridgebury Church. Our church family continues to prove itself a dedicated group of individuals devoted to worship, fellowship and support of the church.

On behalf of the committee, we thank you for your dedication.

Chris Miller

LAST CALL FOR QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION ARCHITECT'S REPORT.

Please email Sue Bankes. Vote will be taken on the recommendations at our January 31st church meeting.



250th Celebration

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

On January 3rd the banner will be raised to celebrate the beginning of a year of festivities to celebrate the 250th year since a group of eighteen people "gathered" to form Ridgebury Congregational Church. Our committee asks that everyone share this day with our Church.

Throughout the year special historical facts will be given to each of you in order that we can all learn and appreciate how our ancestors worked to keep our Church alive and such a part of Ridgefield's history.

The real kick off of our celebrations will be January 24th with a Pot Luck Brunch after church. At this time we will reveal the special dates and activities that are being planned for the coming year.

The 250 Committee looks forward to sharing this special year with all of you.

Sharon Straiton, Chair
250 Celebration Committee



You are invited to the Ridgebury Church Sunday School production
of
SLEEPOVER AT THE STABLE
Saturday, January 9, 2010 (snow date, January 10)
5:30 pm at the Meeting House
followed by a
Potluck Dinner in Shields Hall



On December 4, 2009, a past member of Ridgebury Church, Nicholas Kovarco, 91, died in North Carolina. He and his wife, Evelyn were very active members until they moved out of the area. They both considered Ridgebury Church their true church home. Evelyn's memorial service was held in the Meeting House a few years ago. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Nick's family.

JANUARY Birthdays



- | | |
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| 1 | Sally Yarrish |
| 12 | Stefanie Shevlin |
| 13 | Marsha Albats |
| 16 | Dorothy Crofut |
| 16 | Sue Bankes |
| 19 | Thomas Trolle |
| 28 | Lessley Burke |

January 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29 1:30p Adult Bible Study	30	31 <i>New Year's Eve [USA]</i>	1 <i>New Year's Day [USA]</i> <i>Mary - Mother of God [Christian]</i>	2
3 Family Sunday 10a Communion	4	5 1:30p Adult Bible Study 7p Deacons Meeting	6 <i>Epiphany [Christian]</i>	7 7:15p AA Meets	8	9 5:30p Epiphany Pageant 6:15p Potluck dinner
10 11:30a Missions Meeting 5:30p Snow date for Epiphany Pageant	11 7p Trustees	12 1:30p Adult Bible Study	13	14 7:15p AA Meets	15	16 5p Adult Discussion Group
17	18 <i>Martin Luther King Day [USA]</i>	19 1:30p Adult Bible Study	20	21 7:15p AA Meets	22	23 5p Adult Discussion Group
24 10a 250th Celebration in Church with a Pot Luck Brunch to follow	25 7p Council Meeting	26 1:30p Adult Bible Study	27	28 7:15p AA Meets	29	30 5p Adult Discussion Group
31 11:30a Congregational Meeting	1 7p Deacons Meet	2 1:30p Adult Bible Study <i>Groundhog Day [USA]</i>	3	4 7:15p AA Meets	5	6 5p Adult Discussion Group