

# TRUTH SPOKEN HERE

Worship That Forms a People  
1776–2026



## The Meetinghouse

Ridgebury Congregational Church

## Before There Was a Nation

*For in the course of human events...*

Before there was a Declaration, there was a Meetinghouse.

Before independence was debated in Philadelphia, conscience was formed in small New England congregations. Before pledges were signed, psalms were sung. Before lives and fortunes were risked, covenant promises were made.

In 1776–1777, Ridgebury wrestled with the question of independence. The vote to support the Revolutionary cause was taken three times in this Meetinghouse. Neighbors debated carefully. Patriot and Loyalist households lived side by side.

When British forces moved inland during the Battle of Ridgefield, fear reached these hills. Yet the Meetinghouse endured. This series explores how worship forms a people capable of living faithfully “in the course of human events.”

### WEEK 1 The Pulpit — Truth in the Course of Human Events

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:1–8; John 8:31–32

**Declaration Echo:** “When in the course of human events...”

In early New England meetinghouses, the pulpit stood high — not to elevate personality, but to elevate the Word.

Here in Ridgebury, difficult questions were weighed beneath Scripture’s authority. The triple vote taken before entering war reveals something essential: discernment takes time.

Truth precedes courage. Conscience precedes commitment. The pulpit forms citizens who reason before they react.

### WEEK 2 The Font — Created Equal

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:26–27; Galatians 3:27–28

**Declaration Echo:** “All men are created equal.”

Infant baptism marked covenant belonging. Worth was declared before achievement. Identity was received before it was earned.

Theological equality helped seed political imagination — though history reminds us that equality unfolded imperfectly and incompletely. At the font we remember: Dignity is gift. Freedom rests on sacred worth.

### **WEEK 3 The Table — Life, Liberty & the Feast of Freedom**

**Scripture:** Luke 22:14–20; 1 Corinthians 10:16–17

**Declaration Echo:** “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” — Declaration of Independence

Communion in early Congregational churches was solemn and covenantal. Preparation mattered. Reconciliation mattered.

Even amid tensions surrounding 1777, neighbors who disagreed politically shared bread at this Table. Liberty without covenant fragments. Liberty within covenant endures. The Feast of Freedom forms humility and gratitude before public action.

### **WEEK 4 The Covenant — We the People Before There Was a People**

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42–47

**Declaration Echo:** “Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Congregational churches required written covenants — voluntary promises to walk together in faithfulness.

Town meetings grew from this pattern of communal discernment. Ridgebury’s triple vote reflects covenant imagination: careful deliberation, shared responsibility, enduring relationship.

Democracy did not emerge from abstraction. It grew from covenant practice.

### **WEEK 5 The Psalm & Prayer — Appeal to the Supreme Judge**

**Scripture:** Psalm 46

**Declaration Echo:** “Appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world...” “With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence.”

The Bay Psalm Book was the first book printed in the colonies. Before laws, prayers.

When fear spread through the region in April 1777 during the Battle of Ridgefield, Psalm 46 was not poetic sentiment. It was lifeline.

Providence does not prevent shaking. It steadies those who trust. Prayer forms courage.

### **WEEK 6 The Door — Mutually Pledged**

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:13–16; Micah 6:8

**Declaration Echo:** “We mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Meetinghouses were built on town greens — visible and central. Worship gathered people; life sent them. After the Revolution, Ridgebury did not dissolve. Patriot and Loyalist families continued farming neighboring lands. They drew from the same wells. They worshiped in the same Meetinghouse. The miracle was not unanimity. It was endurance. The door is threshold — from formation to faithfulness.

### The Arc of Formation

Across six weeks we trace a pattern:

Element	Forms
Pulpit	Conscience
Font	Dignity
Table	Covenant Freedom
Covenant	Shared Responsibility
Psalm	Trust
Door	Public Faithfulness

Worship shapes character. Character shapes community. Community shapes history.

### Yesterday • Today • Tomorrow

**Yesterday** A divided town that chose to remain neighbors.

**Today** A sacred commons where spiritual and civic life still intersect.

**Tomorrow** A community sustained not by uniformity, but by covenant courage.

### A Closing Commitment

The Declaration pledged lives and fortunes. The Meetinghouse pledges something quieter and just as enduring:

To gather.  
To listen.  
To discern carefully.  
To remain neighbors.  
To trust Providence.  
To cross the threshold faithfully.

May truth continue to be spoken here. And may love continue to be lived beyond these doors.