34 Church Street Monroe, CT 06468

Tel.: (203) 268-9327 Fax: (203) 268-3153

### Office Hours:

Mon. &Wed. 9 am – 5:30 pm Fri. 9am – 5 pm Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras

Director of Faith Formation: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon

Music Director: Will Duchon

Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org



Find us on YouTube <a href="https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc">https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc</a>

## **February 1, 2021**



Well, church, we sure did something new this past weekend! We held our first annual meeting in a hybrid in-person/online format. For some of you, this wasn't a big deal – you have been attending classes, networking, business, therapy/telehealth or local government meetings virtually since the pandemic

began. For others, this was an entirely new experience. I'm grateful to those leaders and volunteers who took the leap, planned and rehearsed their presentations, and generally made it possible to safely conduct the business of the church in such an extraordinary time.

Ironically, later in the evening our Senior PF high school youth group met to discuss the topic of "Change". One of them mentioned that last January felt like it was ten years ago – we've been through a lot of change! It didn't take long for us to start discussing how change affects us in good and bad ways, and how sometimes it is thrust upon us through no fault of our own. We talked about how our reaction to the change is something we're better able to control than the change itself. And we also talked about strategies for self-care – from prayer and meditation, to exercise and playlists.

I wonder... what stories will they tell of us, the people who look back, years from now? What will history books say of this time? Maybe you know that Gary Thompson, our church historian is collecting bits of this year into a file, with the hopes of saving it for posterity.

I hope that, in 20 years, that our children and grandchildren will look back at us and say that we were faithful. I hope that they will say we named our grief and frustration, even as we were still swimming in it. That we named our joy deliberately, and we stuck together, with more care for one another than for our own convenience. As much as much as we would have preferred being physically together (or even better yet - go places) we were cautious and patient enough to plan well and stay home when the risk was too high. I hope they will say that we uncluttered our lives from that which did not serve our relationship with God and each other. And that we never lost sight of the future, even when it felt like it was already cancelled.

As we enter this new season of church, and as our new leaders become more acclimated, may we continue to sharpen our focus and confront the real and enduring changes that have taken place within ourselves and the world around us. May we remember that which never changes, God's promise to walk alongside and partner with us to bring about a renewed sense of clarity and vision. God bless you!

In peace, Pastor Jenn

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Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to thank all of you for allowing me to serve as your Director of Faith Formation. As the years go by, I will look back fondly on our time together; I trust the same will be true for you.

In 4+ years I've watched children grow up and youth move on. I've seen adults grow in faith and interact with younger folk in new ways.

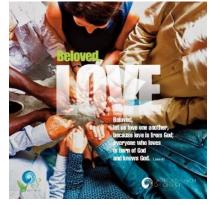
Together, we realized a few dreams, lived through a few trials, and persevered.

While I am leaving you, there is one who remains constant: Jesus Christ. Jesus has been here from the beginning and will be with you for the rest of time. If through the power of the Holy Spirit you allow Jesus to guide (you) Monroe Congregational Church will always have a mission.

I hope you have a wonderful future. I hope that whatever happens with Faith Formation it is rich and fruitful. Finally, I share with you the parting prayer we used to say in Jr. PF: "May the Lord watch between, me and thee, while we are apart, one from the other. Amen."

Debi Mastroni-Kenyon

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## Beloved, Love MCC's 2021 Stewardship Campaign

At the Monroe Congregational Church, we give ourselves to answering God's call to love. Our annual stewardship campaign provides the resources our congregation needs to answer God's call. Generosity towards the annual pledge campaign assures that our congregation can faithfully answer God's call to love, because it enables us to plan for the next year's needs. You should have received our 2021 Stewardship Drive mailer, which includes a pledge card. Our hope is that you can complete and return it by the end of November to the church office, either by mailing it to

MCC at 34 Church Street, Monroe CT 06468 or dropping it in the plate on Sunday. For contact-free submission, go to our church's donate page (www.mcc-ucc.org/donate) and download an editable PDF to e-mail to our Receiver, John O'Rourke e-mail him at <a href="mailto:jorourke224@qmail.com">jorourke224@qmail.com</a>.

### Campaign update:

as of 1/29/2021, 74 pledges have been received for a total of \$176,129.00

Please visit our church's YouTube page to see testimonials from Don Parker-Burgard, Arlene Redmond, and Katherine & Kristina Logan.

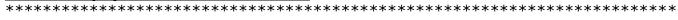
### **Updating Electronic Payments for 2021**

Over the past year, an increasing number of MCC members have switched to electronic payments of their pledges. This has been very helpful in maintaining our cash flow during the pandemic and disruption of in-person services. If you are making electronic payments via Vanco (<a href="www.mcc-ucc.org/donate">www.mcc-ucc.org/donate</a>), or your own bank, please note that if you increased your pledge to MCC for 2021, you'll need to update your Vanco payment information on our web site, or via your bank.

Also, if you are making donations to MCC via Vanco (i.e. the Donate button on our web site), and if the donation is to fulfill a pledge please be sure to select "**Pledge**" for your payment so it will be recorded properly on your Giving Statement and in our records.

Thanks for your support of MCC! John O'Rourke – Receiver

\*\*Please see the last pages of the Steeple for information on how to update or start an electronic payment from our website





#### **Deacons**

**February 17<sup>th</sup> - Ash Wednesday:** Lent begins on February 17th with Ash Wednesday. In the past, our church has observed it with Ashes-to-Go at lunchtime, then a community soup supper followed by an evening in-person worship service with communion, imposition of ashes and burning of confessions. This year, we are concerned about infection

rates spiking here in town and the vulnerability of those who would attend.

So, we pivot. **Ashes-to-Go will be offered from 11 am – 1 pm** in the driveway outside the Meetinghouse, but there will be a pandemic twist. Cotton balls, dipped in a little olive oil and ash and placed in baggies with a prayer card will be offered so that folks can drive up and receive them to do on themselves, no-contact style. Pastor Jenn will still be outside, fully masked and gloved up, to greet people and give them a packet and a long distance blessing.

In lieu of the in-person worship, a **Drop-in Labyrinth Walk will be offered in Wilton Hall from 5 pm – 7 pm**. A station will be set up for individuals to write out their confessions. Folks can take an ash packet if they missed Ashes-to-Go. The fire pit will be going outside (weather pending) so that you may burn your confession. Bring a warm pair of socks to walk the labyrinth (socially distanced, of course!) Everything will be done with current health and safety protocol in place. Please speak with Pastor Jenn if you have any questions.



#### Sad News to Share

We recently learned that Jack Mahard, son of Andy and Thea Mahard, was killed in a car accident on November 24, 2020. The Mahard family moved about ten years ago to Pennsylvania. They were long time, active members of MCC. Please keep their family in your prayers. Should you wish to send a condolence card, their mailing address is 2006 Milta Hill Rd. Romansville, PA 19320-4789.



As the new year begins, we hope that our friends and loved ones listed on our weekly prayer list have found healing of both body and soul. If you or your loved one finds you are no longer in need of our weekly prayer, please let Diane know so we may rejoice in the good news and remove the name making room for those who may need to be added.

secretary@mcc-ucc.org or call the office 203-268-9327

### In Our Prayers

The Mahard Family, on the loss of Jack; Jackie Ajello (Michele Mount's mother); Michael Barresi (Maria's Son); Jennifer Bittar (Loraine Zeiner's friend); Jackie Bleakney; Byron Brown & Bruce Bryant (friends of Will Duchon); Cheryl Ciambriello (Wendy Colegrove's friend); Dot Dralus; Matt Duchon; Dave Fuller (Gail Olson's brother); Meredith Gibson (Paul & Judy Coward's niece); Lily Grace (Maria Barresi's baby cousin); Fern Griffith (Ashley Levin's friend); Karen Guinness (Jennifer Nivison's friend); Rachel Fracassini (Jack & Linda Fracassini's niece); Gary & Julie Hedine (Nancy Hedine's son & daughter-in-law); Mary & Rachel Heerema (Julia Gutierrez's mom and sister); Bob Heffernan (Ann Zeiner's son-in-law); Brian Hopkins (Donna Konkol's cousin); Vera James (Jenn Wissink's mother); Heather Joyce (Paul & Judy Coward's daughter); Kelti (friend of Liska Gutierrez); Walter Lane (Marge Fox's brother-in-law); Mary-Margaret Logan (Andrew's mother); Sophie Long (Masser's granddaughter); Beverly Lowrey (Jackie Bleakney); Jacquie MacLean (Jennifer Nivison's friend); Nicole Malia; Mike (Janie Allen's son); Rev. Jonathan Miller (Paul & Judy Coward's friend); Olivia Morrison (Donna Nickdow's niece); Joe Mumper (Julie McClenathan's friend); Kathy Nivison (Andy's mother); Pat Nugent; Ocampo family (friends of Liska Gutierrez); Olson Family; Ray Osborne (Colegrove's Family friend); Donna Parratt; Dean Perosino (Gayle Hammond's brother); Geno Piacentini (Karen MacDonald's husband); P.T. Philip (Liz Sampson's father); Norman & Jan Ricker (Linda & Jack Fracassini's friend); Barbara Rivel (Judy Coward's friend); Regina Roberts (Kathy Maiolo's niece); Kelly Rodman (Angela Cross' friend); Alfredo Rodriguez (Osirus Gutierrez's cousin); Roshong (Judy Coward's nephew); Noah Santiago (Shari Carrano's great-grandson); Connor Scalia (Jen Nivison's friend); Carlos Serrano (Kathy Maiolo's cousin); Al Shaeffer; Yessika Siccardi (Sampson family friend); Bernie Sippin; John Skarupa (Barb Pellegrino's brother); Christine Stadler; William Stadler (Jessica Pfalzgraf's nephew); Tom & Jane Steen (Jessica Pfalzgraf's father & step-mother); Christian & Dain Steiner (Julie McClenathan's nephews); Claire Stenzel (June & Myron Wininger's granddaughter); Ellie Swindlehurst (Joanne Malia's mother); Olga Terwilliger(Nancy Hedine's sister-in-law); Ian Thompson (Gary's cousin); Dick Thompson (Gary's cousin); Meg Trogolo (Paul & Judy Coward's niece); Richard Turco (Jack Fracassini's cousin); Susan Walker; Myron & June Wininger; Don Whiteley; Margaret Woodruff (Mike Pfalzgraf's mother); Charles L. Wynn, Sr., (and his mother) Alleane Wynn (friends of Will Duchon); Allen Zeiner (Ann Zeiner's son); **Ann Zeiner** 

The concerns of our world: Those who serve or live in war or conflict zones; first responders and those who serve in law enforcement; those who suffer discrimination; those who struggle with mental illness, addiction, divorce or separation; Caregivers; the homeless, homebound and refugees; Our friends living on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation and in Oaxaca, Mexico

Those serving in the military, veterans & their families: South Korea: Zachary Gingras, Washington: Rachel Hoffman (Vaughan Askue's daughter), Virginia: Chris Meneses (Loraine Zeiner's friend), Georgia: Zachary Peters (Jacob Parker-Burgard's cousin), Kuwait: Steven Roshong (the Coward's nephew), South Carolina: Bob Peters (Don Parker-Burgard's brother-in-law), Afghanistan: Samuel Siciliano, North Carolina: Jake Terifay

### **Christian Education**



### **Sunday School**

We will be offering an in person, outdoor gathering on Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, from 10:00-11:00 am for children in K-5<sup>th</sup> Grade. We will have outdoor activities

and an opportunity for the kiddos to see each other. If there is bad weather this event will be canceled.

With safety in mind, we are asking you to:

- make sure your child(ren) is/are masked
- make sure to drop off and pick up your child(ren) at the benches outside of Rexford House (please do not bring them to the Meetinghouse first)
- make sure your child(ren) is/are wearing weather appropriate clothing



# **February PF Service Project**

This month's service project is donating clothes to the Bridgeport Rescue Mission! PF will be collecting clothes until the end of February but try to bring donations in ASAP! Please bring gently used/relatively new clothes (pants, shirts, coats, gloves, hats, shoes, etc.) or new underwear/socks. There is a bin located outside the front doors of Rexford House that is emptied regularly. If you have any questions please reach out to our Minister of Outreach, Vee Sampson.

Thank you for your support!



Adult PF meets via Zoom the first and third Sundays of the month.

(Meeting for February 7 is cancelled)

For information about Adult PF please contact Don Parker-Burgard. dpburgard@sbcglobal.net

# Bible Study Schedule Winter/Spring 2021

Since Monroe Public Schools may or may not be in person, Thursday morning Bible study will not use that as an automatic weather cancellation. Instead, an e-mail or phone call will be sent to regularly attending members. You may call/text Pastor Jenn at any time at 203-895-5607.

Date	Text			
January 7	Luke 3:1-22 Jesus' Baptism, STAR Words			
January 14	Luke 4:14-30 Sermon at Nazareth			
January 21	Luke 5:1-11 Fish for People			
January 28	Luke 6:1-16 Healing on the Sabbath			
February 4	Luke 7:1-17 Raising the Widow's Son			
February 11	Luke 9:28-45 Transfiguration AND Luke 9:51-62 Jesus Turns Towards Jerusalem (Lent Begins)			
February 18	Luke 10:25-42 The Good Samaritan			
February 25	Luke 13:1-9, 31-35 Lament Over Jerusalem			
March 4	Luke 15:1-32 Lost Sheep, Coin, Son			
March 11	Luke 16:19-31 Rich Man and Lazarus			
March 18	Luke 18:31—19:10 Zacchaeus			
March 25	Luke 19:29-44 Triumphal Entry AND Luke 22:1-27 The Last Supper			
April 1	No Bible Study – Maundy Thursday			
April 8	Luke 24:13-35 Emmaus Road			
April 15	Acts 6:1-7:2a, 44-60 Stephen's Witness			
April 22	Acts 8:26-39 Ethiopian Eunuch Baptized			
April 29	Acts 15:1-18 Council at Jerusalem			
May 6	Galatians 1:13-17; 2:11-21 Living by Faith			
May 13	Galatians 3:1-9, 23-29 One in Christ			
May 20	Acts 2:1-4; Galatians 4:1-7 [5:16-26] Pentecost, Fruit of the Spirit			
May 27	Last Bible Study of the Season Brunch			



MCC Book Club Questions -contact Mary Unger (203) 268-5754

**February 10<sup>th</sup>** The Book of Lost Friends by Lisa Wingate.

Host: Peggy Villani

**March 10<sup>th</sup>** The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding by Jennifer Robson.

Host: Trees Whitbeck

**April 14<sup>th</sup>** The Children Act by Ian McEwan.

Host: Arlene Redmond



Morning Circle will not meet during the month of February. We invite all the women of the congregation to attend our **first meeting of 2021 on Wednesday, March 10** at 11AM in Wilton Hall. We will be gathering donations for birthday bags for the Food Pantry. Items include cake mix, frosting, birthday napkins and birthday

candles. The children who visit the Pantry with their parents truly love receiving these items and appreciate our efforts for making it a special time for them. Thank you for your generosity and kindness. A catered luncheon is scheduled to be provided during our short business meeting. More information will be forthcoming.

Morning Circle hopes that you have a wonderful holiday and wishes that 2021 brings you much happiness, health, joy and success.

We invite all the women of the congregation to attend our **first meeting of 2021 on Wednesday, March 10** at 11AM in Wilton Hall.

# **Community News**



### 1B COVID-19 Vaccinations

The Monroe Health Department would like town residents age 75 and over to know that they may now register for the next available vaccine clinic at the Monroe Senior Center. Call and leave a message at the Monroe Health Department at 203-452-2818 and someone will get back to you with an appointment time.



In CT, there are more than 4000 children in foster care, and the need for Foster/Adoptive Families is growing! Older children are especially difficult to place with either foster or adoptive families.

The Annie C Courtney Foundation conducts informational meetings for adults on how you can help by becoming a foster or adoptive parent or mentor. Meetings are held virtually all month long. Reservations are available upon request. To reserve a "seat" at a virtual meeting or to find out more information about becoming a foster or adoptive parent, check out their website at: www.AnnieC.org or call Celeste Burnett at 203-439-1733.

Please remember these children in your prayers in the hopes that they will find the love and support they need in foster, kinship and adoptive homes. Please also pray for the families who come forward to parent these special children, that all will receive the love and support from their communities. Thank you!



# WOULD YOU LIKE TO **GET TO KNOW** SOMEONE OF A DIFFFRENT FAITH?

"We are not meant to go to God alone, no matter who we are. We are meant to go together, enriched by one another's faith and wisdom and insights into the ways of God." ~ Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB

# You Are Invited

- to meet in groups of 4-6 on Zoom with members of other faiths
- to build community by building relationships
- we connect you with each other, and you decide the date, time, and frequency of the meetings
- there is no set agenda, but we will offer some suggested questions and discussion options to get you started



Let's see what we can build over a simple, virtual cup of coffee!

Please call or email Frank Basler and he'll connect you with a group: 203-345-5682 or frank.basler@gmail.com



**Happy February Birthday** to the following people and to anyone we may have missed we will keep you in our prayers.

Harrison	Gilberti	02/02	Talia	Barnhart	02/13
Elayna	Caballero	02/03	Josh	Friend	02/13
John	Sekelsky	02/03	Sheila	Torres	02/13
Paul	Granello	02/04	Stephen	Rice	02/15
Roy	Nealon	02/04	Amanda	Gill	02/16
Leslie	Sekelsky	02/05	Drake	Oatis	02/17
Daniel	Balestriere Sr.	02/06	Jean	Moffat	02/19
Erin	Whiteley	02/06	Ashley	Malia	02/20
Bella	Balestriere	02/07	Nancy	Smith	02/20
Declan	Rifflard	02/07	Casey	McCormick	02/22
Daniel	Balestriere	02/08	Jacob	Parker-Burgard	02/22
John	Fracassini	02/08	Emma	Campbell	02/23
Jay	O'Rourke	02/08	Eric	Grundt	02/24
Carson	Swift	02/09	Barbara	Pellegrino	02/25
Hanna	Andrejczyk	02/10	David	Allen	02/26
Christine	Hare	02/10	Mark	Andrejczyk	02/26
Scott	Provost-Switzer	02/10	Vaughan	Askue	02/26
Cody	Forte	02/11	Gerrit	Wissink	02/26
Madison	McCormick	02/12	55	Fraser	02/28
Ken	Post	02/12	Lucy	Kaminski	02/28

**Happy February Wedding Anniversary** the following couples and to anyone we may have missed, we will keep you in our prayers. (Number is anniversary date)

Joseph & Donna Konkol <sup>(09)</sup>, Suzanne & Paul Adams <sup>(12)</sup>, Angela & John Cross <sup>(14)</sup>, Donna & Pat O'Hara <sup>(15)</sup> and Paul & Marc Cardentey <sup>(28)</sup>

# **2021 Inclement Weather Policy Inclement Weather Policy**

Here in New England we get to enjoy seasonal weather changes. At MCC, we have learned to be flexible and make safe choices about our scheduled plans. The safety and well-being of our people is one of our most important concerns.

This is our inclement weather policy, including who makes decisions about closings and how the decision is spread in the community. If you serve in a position of responsibility, please find your leadership role below.

### **In Person Sunday Worship Services:**

- At 7 am, Pastor (Jenn Gingras, 203-895-5607) and the current Chair of Deacons make the decision whether or not to cancel in-person worship. If in-person worship is cancelled, Jenn will record and upload an abbreviated worship service on <a href="https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc">https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc</a> by noon (sermon, prayer, announcements)
- Jenn notifies staff and key volunteers (who in turn notify those they work with), including Debi Mastroni-Kenyon (203-444-6760), Will Duchon (203-260-1182), Reader, Usher and Trustee of the Day. Jenn sends a church-wide e-mail and posts on FB (MCC-UCC Conversation and Monroe Cong Church Page)
- 3. Chair of Deacons notifies CT Weather/IAN Snap, Channel 8 & Channel 3
- 4. **Committee meetings** are cancelled at the discretion of committee chair, although all are held on Zoom at the moment, so weather shouldn't be a problem!

**Sr. & Jr. PF** groups will be notified of any changes or cancellations by e-mail, phone tree and/or Facebook notifications as appropriate.

- 1. Kelsey Kaminski (203-362-9794) Makes and communicates Sr PF decision
- 2. Debi Mastroni-Kenyon (203-444-6760) Makes and communicates Jr PF decision

**Evening Meetings:** It is the responsibility of the convener to notify the meeting participants of any changes or cancellations.

**Midweek Morning Programs:** If the Monroe School district either delays or cancels school, morning Bible studies and other church-sponsored morning programs are cancelled.

**Church Office:** If the Monroe School System is closed, and staff members are able to travel, they may choose to do so if conditions are safe. Otherwise, they may choose to work remotely.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the church office at 203-268-9327. For info on parking lot conditions, text Clark (203-895-5604) or Jenn (203-895-5607). Our plow guy's name is Adam, his cell is 203-258-8382.

### **MCC February Community Calendar**

Wed. Feb. 3rd

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Feb. 4th

9:30 am Bible Study

### Week of Feb. 7th

10:00 am Worship - Communion 11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour 6-7:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Thurs. Feb. 11th

9:30 am Bible Study

# Week of Feb. 14th

10:00 am Worship 11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour Adult PF -cancelled 6-7:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Mon., Feb 15th

7:30 Church Council via zoom

Wed. Feb. 17th

Ash Wednesday – Lent Begins 11:00 am – 1:00 pm Ashes to Go 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm Labyrinth Open Walk

Thurs. Feb. 18th

9:30 am Bible Study 7:00 pm CE

### Week of Feb. 21st

10:00 am Worship

10:00 am Outdoor Sunday School

11:15 am Outreach

11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

4:00 pm Adult PF

6-7:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Wed. Feb. 24th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Feb. 25th

9:30 am Bible Study

## Week of Feb. 28th

10:00 am Worship

11:00 am Faith, Fellowship & Fun via Zoom

11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

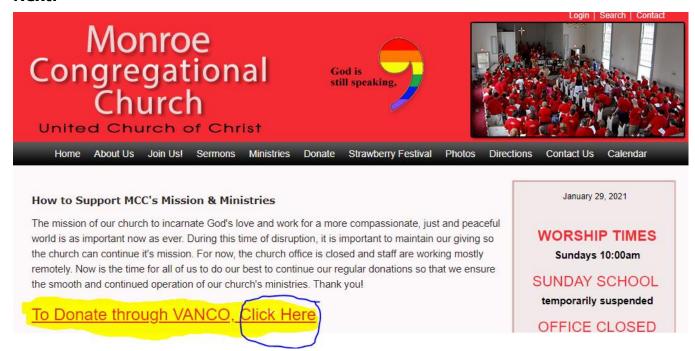
6-7:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

### Here's how to update or start an electronic payment from our MCC website.

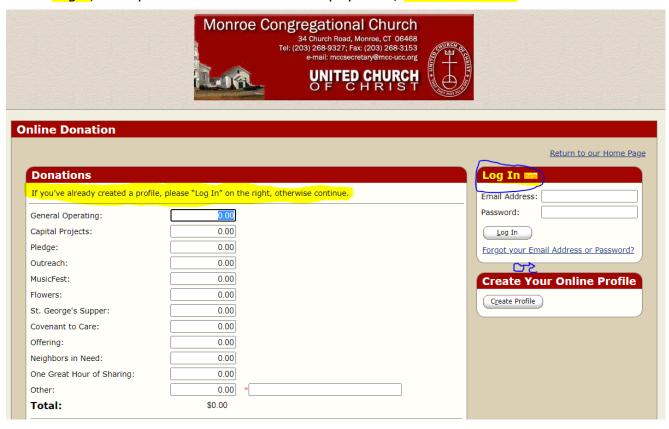
# Log on to <u>www.mcc-ucc.org/donate</u> and click **Donate**



#### **Next:**



**Then** Login, or if you are new to electronic payment, Create a Profile!



Finally select where you want your money to go! If you a <u>fulfilling a pledge</u> be sure to <u>choose <u>Pledge</u> so your gift will be recorded properly on your Giving statement and in our records. Thank you!</u>

