34 Church Street Monroe, CT 06468 Tel.: (203) 268-9327

Fax: (203) 268-3153

www.mcc-ucc.org

Office Hours:

Mon. 9am – 5:30pm Wed. (remotely) 8am - 6pm Fri. 9am – 3:30pm

Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras Music Director: Will Duchon Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall Asst Music Director: Heather Hisey Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

Find us on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc



February 1, 2025



Navigating Grief with Love & Hope

In just over a year, I've had the solemn honor of serving 10 families who have lost a loved one, including my own. Some of these individuals were members or relatives of our congregation, while others were not.

As February approaches, we are met with the inevitable influx of Valentine's Day advertisements and store displays. For many, this season, centered on love, becomes a poignant reminder of those we have lost, stirring feelings of grief and longing.

In such moments, scripture offers us profound comfort. One passage that resonates deeply is John 16:22: "So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." Here, Jesus speaks to his disciples as he prepares to return to his Father's house. He

acknowledges the sorrow they will face but assures them of the joy that will come when they reunite. As Christians, we hold fast to the belief that death is not the end. We trust that we will one day be reunited with those we love. While this belief brings us hope for the future, it doesn't necessarily ease the immediate burden of grief we carry today.

Reflecting on grief, I've come to realize that we sometimes view it as something to be overcome or dismissed, as if it were an unwelcome intruder. Yet, grief is a witness to the depth of our love. It will be painful and challenging, but it also signifies the profound connection we had with someone special. Without love, grief would not exist. The greater the love, the deeper the grief.

Even Jesus, in his humanity, experienced grief and loss. He wept for those he loved. I've heard it said that grief is love with no place to go. In this light, grief becomes a continuous expression of our love, a love that does not fade even when the person is no longer physically with us. If love is eternal, perhaps it is a reminder that our loved ones are always with us, in ways we may not fully understand until we are reunited.

As we approach Valentine's Day, a time traditionally associated with joy and celebration of love, we may also encounter waves of grief. Yet, both joy and grief stem from the same place.... love—God's most enduring and beautiful gift. Let us embrace this season with hearts that acknowledge the fullness of our experiences, trusting in the eternal love that binds us to those we cherish.

In peace, Pastor Jenn

Trustees



2025 Stewardship Campaign: Better Together We're making progress with 76 pledges received totaling \$199,311 but there are still a few members who we haven't heard from yet regarding their donation plans for 2025. If you have pledged in prior years, we're counting on your pledge for 2025 and hope you will consider increasing your pledge to help us achieve our goals.

If you have not pledged before, but contribute to the church, please consider making a pledge for 2025, as this will help the church maintain our outstanding programs and meet our budget goals. And if you provide a recurring donation via Vanco, we still need confirmation of your donation plans for next year.

Please fill out your pledge card and bring it to worship this Sunday or return it via mail to the church office Attention: Receiver. Alternatively, you can email your pledge commitment to me at jorourke224@gmail.com Thank you for considering a financial commitment to MCC for 2025 and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for prayerfully considering how to financially support the Monroe Congregational Church in 2025!

 \sim Your Stewardship Committee, John O'Rourke (Receiver), Diane Prall, Rev. Jenn Gingras

Deacons



Flowers for Worship: Would you like to honor or remember a loved one, or celebrate a milestone? You can do so, while also helping Monroe Congregational Church continue its tradition of fresh **flowers** on the communion table. You can sign-up in Wilton Hall or online! You may choose to arrange flowers from your garden, purchase an arrangement, or send a

check (\$25) to Monroe Congregational Church (memo: "flowers" & the date) or use our website to pay online, and we will order for you. If you are supplying the flowers yourself, please set them up between 9:30am and 9:45am, before worship. Thank you! https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAC2CA5FEC61-flowers or MCC-UCC.org

Prayer Partners



Hear ye! Hear ye! Prayer Partners will meet on Sunday, May 18th at 11:15AM in Wilton Hall for the "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon. Since October we've been praying for someone anonymously, secretly sending them notes or cards in the mail signed "Your Prayer Partner" and using the church's address (34 Church St. Monroe CT 06468) as the return, or

striking up a conversation during coffee hour just to get to them better or making eye

contact and showing them the sign of peace or shaking their hand. Whatever you do, just take a moment out of your day to think about them and wish them a beautiful day. I look forward to seeing everyone at the luncheon where we find out who's praying for whom. Remember to bring a dish to share; doesn't matter what it is, we like variety and who doesn't love potluck?!!! Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions, comments or concerns.

I leave you with this prayer:

Just for today, help us, God, to remember that our lives are a gift, that our health is a blessing, that this new day is filled with awesome potential, that we have the capacity to bring something wholly new and unique and good into this world.

Just for today, help us, God, to remember to be kind and patient to the people who love us, and to those who work with us too. Teach us to see all the beauty that we so often ignore, and to listen to the silent longing of our own soul.

Just for today, help us, God, to remember You. Let this be a good day, God, full of joy and love. Amen!





SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22

5:30-7:30 PM

The Monroe Congregational Church
Rexford House
34 Church St. Monroe CT

Live Music!

\$8/person Kids Under 5 Free!!

Between the Keys

Playing Live!

- 12 Contestants
- · Raffle baskets
- Bake sale
- Band Between the Keys playing Live!

All Proceeds benefit our 2025 youth mission trip! ?'s - mccuccseniorpf@gmail.com



All women are welcomed to Morning Circle's **first meeting of the year on Wednesday, March 12th at 11AM in Dineson Parlor** where we will put together birthday bags for the Food Pantry when kids come with their parents to pick up donated items from the town. You can bring in donations of cake mixes, frosting, birthday candles and napkins. Monetary donations are greatly appreciated by putting "*Morning Circle - Birthday Bags*" on the memo line. Please bring a sandwich lunch for the short business meeting.

Mark your calendars for future meetings:

Wednesday, April 8 at 11am in Dineson Parlor - CWS hygiene kits Wednesday, May 14 at 11am in Dineson Parlor - Women's hygiene products Wednesday, June 11 at 12pm - June Picnic - Location TBD



Silver Lake Retreat Center - weekend of May 2-4, 2025

Young At Heart will meet at noon on February 27th at TBD





Join us for the monthly Book Club on the **3**rd **Wednesday of the month at 7pm**. We will continue to meet via zoom so that all members can join from wherever they may be. Questions can be sent to Paula via email <u>pjsh55@gmail.com</u> or home phone or 203-452-0850.

February 19th March 19th The Keeper of Hidden Books by Madeline Martin Host: Gayle Hammond Lady Tan's Circle of Women by Lisa See Host: TBD

Outreach



St George's Supper -Sunday, February 9th

Please join us for sandwich making in the kitchen following worship. Please consider a cash donation this month to help us feed our neighbors, look for the basket at coffee hour to contribute. Any amount would be gratefully received. Please memo on checks: "St George's Supper". Questions- contact Stacy at 203-500-1279



Join the fun group of women that keep the Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe open and thriving! Do you have a couple of hours to spare on Tuesdays, Fridays or Saturdays? We sort, tag and hang donated merchandise in the Shoppe on Tuesdays at 1:30PM while on Fridays we are open from 10-3 and Saturdays from 10-2. It's easy to do. Just pop on over during any of those time frames and the volunteers(s) would gladly show you the ropes for opening or closing the Shoppe, a list of responsibilities can be emailed to you for your perusal. You can always shadow a volunteer for a couple of shifts until you get the hang of it and

then when you're ready, you will be put on the schedule. Monies collected from shoppers' purchases go to mission trips, outreach programs and many more. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions.



Our 3rd Annual **MCC Spaghetti/Bingo fundraiser**, held back in November, was a fun and successful event! A huge "THANK YOU" to everyone who came out to participate, and for the support of our local community businesses who donated gift cards, and items for our bingo prizes and raffles! The proceeds of **\$2,020.98** have been split between **Project Warmth** and **Church World Service**. Below is the list of businesses that

made donations. We hope that you will visit their establishments, and while you're there thank them for their generous support of MCC and our Outreach Missions.

Baskets - Raffle

Doggie Care - \$50 Gourmet Snacks - \$40 Craft & Family Game Night - \$30 Coffee Basket - \$44 Candles & Lighters Basket - \$22 Blanket & Moose Munch Basket - \$23 Bath & Hair Products - \$80 Skin & Hair Care - \$100 Yankee Candle Winter Spa - \$90 Candy Basket - \$55 Cozv Basket - \$40 Starbucks GC & Cup - \$35 Pampering Basket - \$40 Warehouse Wine & Spirits - \$50 PF - Gift Basket Other MCC Group - Gift Basket

MeatMe - \$50 Gift Card & Wine

Baskets - Silent Auction

Glen Ro - Box of 5 Wines - \$50 Board & Brush - \$78 Monroe Car Wash - 4 Free Best Car Washes - \$100 The Healing Touch - \$150 Wander w/Jeanette Vacation Planning Voucher - \$200 Row House Basket - \$215

Bingo Prizes

Country Pizza - 1 Large Pizza (Any Kind) Monroe Car Wash - 8 \$25 Gift Cards Vazzy's Restaurant - \$25 Flames Restaurant - \$25 Natural Pet Outlet - \$20 Card Smart - \$20 SHe SHed - \$25 Home Plate Deli - \$15 Thai Mi Noodle - \$25 123 Pronto - \$25 Stop & Shop - \$25 Dunkin - 3 \$10 Gift Cards Starbucks - 2 \$10 Gift Cards Manny's - \$30 A.S. Fine Italian Foods - \$20 Capital Spirits - \$20 Wayback Burger - \$15 Bill's Drive In - \$25 Aldini's - \$25 Amazon - \$15 Jennies Pizza - \$25 Big Y - \$25 Terra Care - \$25



Let's feed hungry neighbors!

The **Feel The Warmth mobile community hot supper** needs 6-8 volunteers to cook a delicious and nutritious meal for 250 hungry neighbors on <u>Thursday</u>, <u>February 20th</u>.

Prep time in the kitchen is at **nOURish's** main headquarters, 2200 North Avenue, Bridgeport from 3 to 5:30 pm.

It's then transported to the Harrison Apartments on 651 State Street, Bridgeport and served to the displaced and homeless population from 6 to 7 pm.

Please join us! Sign up in Wilton Hall







It may be February, but the **start of Strawberry Festival prep is just around the corner** in the form of JAM MAKING!! That's right!!!! Last year we made over 1,300 jars of 10 varieties of jam that were all sold. There's nothing left in storage this year. Can you believe that? We'll start jam production in mid-February with **signup sheets posted in Wilton Hall as well as online.** Want to be Jam Leader who's in charge of a jam session? Sign up with a veteran jam maker and learn the ropes. It's fun and you get to chat while stirring the jam, and stirring the jam.

This year the festival will take place on Saturday, June 14 and Sunday, June 15. We'll need everyone's help to make it as

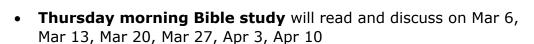
successful as last year's. There's plenty to do: strawberry picking at Jones, prep/setup on Friday on campus and kitchen, hulling strawberries, sorting, dipping, children's games, crafter hospitality, face painting, kitchen help, smoothies, meetinghouse greeters, PF food tent, country store, shortcake assembly, order runners, bounce house, prize table, Berry Mascot, table clean up and trash collection. Every part of the Strawberry Festival is important and every volunteer's time is greatly appreciated. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions, comments or concerns.

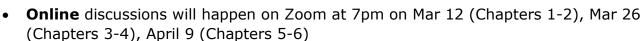


Christian Education

Lenten Study: Plenty Good Room

This unique short-term Bible study combines an in-depth look at Scripture, American history, and the music and lyrics of six African American spirituals. The six-session study provides biblical, social, and historical analyses of the spirituals: 'Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit," "This Lonesome Valley," "Bow Down on Your Knees," "Plenty Good Room," "Ain't Dat Good News," and "Were You There?". Purchase a paperback or download from Amazon. There will be two ways to participate:





https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2038955607?pwd=bWxMMDRXN3d6emJNZ2JsVzlsTFp3dz0 9&omn=88010082173 Meeting ID: 203 895 5607 Passcode: MeetMe



JR PF Schedule Our junior-high youth group (grades 6-8) meets most Sundays from 5-6:30 in classroom 5, join us!

2/2	Game Night
2/9	NO JR PF (Super bowl)
2/16	NO JR PF (February Break)
2/23	TBD



Weekly Bible Study Thursday 9:30-11am

We cordially invite you to join us each week in Dineson Parlor.

	Text
February 6	Luke 7:1-17
February 13	Luke 7:18-35
February 20	Luke 7:36-50
February 27	Luke 9:28-45

New Members at MCC * January 26, 2025

Please join us in welcoming the newest members of our church community. These short introductions will help you to learn a little more about our new members. We hope you'll take the time to get to know them and their families personally.



Jeffrey and Meghan Cooper 23 Pilgrim Lane, Monroe CT 06468 Anniversary: June 9

Jeff Cooper

Cell: (203)650-3054

Email: jcyankees320@gmail.com

Meghan Cooper Cell: (203)610-2513

Email: meghancooper910@gmail.com

Birthdates:

March 20 (Jeff), Sept. 10 (Meghan), May 10 (Nathan), March 20 (Evelyn)

We are delighted to introduce the Cooper family! Jeffrey "Jeff" Cooper is the Managing Director of Accenture. His interests include technology and carpentry. He is eager to get involved in various volunteer activities, including St. George's Supper, Habitat for Humanity, preparing meals during times of need, and providing snacks for children during coffee hour. Additionally, Jeff has a truck and is willing to help move items for MCC.

Meghan Cooper, who you can call Meghan or Meg, is the Senior Director of Research Engagement Services at Gartner. Meghan enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, skiing, swimming, and running. She looks forward to volunteering with Outreach as her schedule allows.

Jeff and Meghan have two children. Their son, Nate, is 6 years old, and their daughter, Evelyn, is 2 years old. Evelyn and her daddy share a birthdate!

Molly Kinahan

Molly is a junior at Masuk. She is the former Minister of Outreach and current Treasurer for Senior PF, charged with leading her fundraising team to raise money for their 2025 summer mission trip. Welcome to the MCC family Molly!



Mary & Richard Erdmann

2 Southridge Road, Prospect, CT

Anniversary: July 8 **Mary Erdmann**Cell: (203) 982-4132

Email: Maryerdmann@yahoo.com

Rick Erdmann

Cell: (203) 233-5401

Email: <u>rickerdmann55@yahoo.com</u>

Birthdates: April 22 (Mary), April 23 (Rick), Jan. 26 (Ariana)

Rick and Mary Erdmann are joining us from Prospect. Rick and Mary bring with them a wealth of experiences and a deep commitment to family. Rick, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, has a rich history of service to our nation, shaped by his upbringing as a military child who moved frequently. Mary, a retired registered nurse, has dedicated her life to caring for others and now finds joy in nurturing their grandchildren, including their granddaughter, Ari. The Erdmanns are looking forward to participating in the upcoming Strawberry Festival. Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Rick, Mary and Ari, as well as a very "happy birthday" to Ari!



Matt & Amy Matejek

10 Spinning Wheel Road, Monroe, CT 06468

Anniversary: Sept. 10

Amy Matejek

Cell: (203) 243-7033

Email: amytm92@gmail.com

Birthdays: July 10 (Amy), April 10 (Matt), Jan. 23

(Harper), Nov. 12 (Delilah & Ramona)

Amy is the daughter of Rick and Mary Erdmann. She and Matt, a police officer in Fairfield, and T-ball coach who also enjoys golf, have 3 children, Harper (6) and twins Delilah and Ramona (4). You may remember their Christmas pageant debut last year! Amy expressed an interest in helping in the MCC nursery, with holiday projects and serving at St. George's Supper. Welcome Matejek family, we are thrilled to have you join us!





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

Robert	Gauthier	02/01	Jean	Moffat	02/19
Harrison	Gilberti	02/02	Ashley	Malia	02/20
Paul	Granello	02/04	Nancy	Smith	02/20
Roy	Nealon	02/04	Emma	Campbell	02/23
Jack	Fracassini	02/08	Barbara	Pellegrino	02/25
Jay	O'Rourke	02/08	David	Allen	02/26
Hannah	Andrejczyk	02/10	Mark	Andrejczyk	02/26
Ken	Post	02/12	Vaughan	Askue	02/26
Talia	Barnhart	02/13	Gerrit	Wissink	02/26
Julio	Morales	02/15	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 ⁽⁰⁹⁾
Suzanne & Paul Adams ⁽¹²⁾
and Paul & Marc Cardentey ⁽²⁸⁾

In Our Prayers

Ken Post; Marge Fox and family on the passing of her mother age 105; Alison Abrams (Jessica Pfalzgraf's sister); Allie (Colegrove's friend); Jennifer Bittar (Loraine Zeiner's friend); Jackie Bleakney; Kevin Daly (Gary Thompson's friend); Dealmira (Jonathan Ganino's grandmother); Dan & Laura Dimauro (Cuseo friends); Dot Dralus, Matt Duchon; Elaine (Wendy Colegrove's Aunt); Bruno Forte (Nancy Hedine's friend); David Fischman (Sue Granello's Friend); Dave Fuller (Gail Olson's brother); Lehre Fuller (Gail Olson's sister-in-law); Holly Hallgren; Mary & Rachel Heerema (Julia Gutierrez's mom & sister); Brad Heines (Susie Cuseo's friend); Bob Heffernan (Ann Zeiner's son-in-law); Heather Henning; Brian Hopkins (Donna Konkol's cousin); Vera James (Jenn Wissink's mother); Jonathan (Matt Colegrove's brother); Kelti (friend of Liska Gutierrez), Samia Khoury (Will Duchon's friend); Cindy Kovacs; Monica Lynch (Bethany Dupuis' friend); Jonathan Malia; Nicole Malia; the Manuzzi Family; Mary (Kate Brigg's Mother); **Betty McKeown** (Donna Konkol's mother); **Meghan** (Mary Unger's niece); Mike (Janie Allen's son); Jean Moffat; Olivia Morrison (Donna Nickdow's niece); Pat Nugent; Ocampo family (friends of Liska Gutierrez); Nancy Olofson; Missy & Gail Olson; Dean Perosino (Gayle Hammond's brother); P.T. Philip (Liz Sampson's father); Regina Roberts (Kathy Maiolo's niece); Alfredo Rodriguez (Osirus Gutierrez's cousin); Noah Santiago (Shari Carrano's great-grandson); Carlos Serrano (Kathy Maiolo's cousin); Yessika Siccardi (Sampson family friend); Ed Simonovich (Nancy Hedine's friend); Bernie, Lori & Gary Sippin; John Skarupa (Barb Pellegrino's brother); Sheldon & Nancy Smith; Christine Stadler; Claire Stenzel (June & Myron Wininger's granddaughter); **Timara** (Mary Unger's friend); **Tom** (Wendy Colegrove's dad); Wayne Thompson (Gary Thompson's brother); Richard Turco (Jack Fracassini's cousin); June Wilkes; Natica Williams (Will Duchon's friend); Don Whiteley; Allen Zeiner (Ann Zeiner's son); Ann Zeiner

The concerns of our world: The people of Gaza & the West Bank; Israeli hostages and their families, the people of Ukraine, Sudan, Syria and the Middle East; LGBTQ+ children and their families facing discrimination; those who serve or live in war or conflict zones around the world; 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.

Those serving in the military, veterans & their families: Lt. Col. Rachel Hoffman, Tacoma, Washington (Vaughan Askue's daughter), Zachary Gingras, 395th Combat Sustainability Support, Joel Smith, 250th Engineering Company, Chris Meneses (Loraine Zeiner's friend), Lance Corporal Taylor Smith (Cheri Irwin's Nephew)

February 2025 MCC Community Calendar

Week of Sun. Feb 2nd

10:00 am Communion Worship11:30 am Trustees5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

Mon. Feb 3rd

7:30 pm Outreach

Tue. Feb 4th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Feb 6th

9:30 am Bible Study6:00 pm Bell Choir7:00 pm Chancel Choir7:30 pm Confirmation

Week of Sun. Feb 9th

10:00 am Worship 5:00 pm Sr. PF

Mon. Feb 10th

3 pm St. George's Supper 7:30 pm Deacons

Tue. Feb 11th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Feb 13th

9:30 am Bible Study6:00 pm Bell Choir7:00 pm Chancel Choir

Week of Sun. Feb 16th

10:00 am Worship 11:15 am NOOMA 5:00 pm Sr. PF

Mon. Feb 17th

Presidents Day – Office Closed 7:30 pm Council

Tue. Feb 18th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Feb 19th

7 pm Book Club

Thurs. Feb 20th

9:30 am Bible Study6:00 pm Bell Choir7:00 pm Chancel Choir7:30 pm Confirmation

Sat. Feb 22th

5:30-7:30 pm Chili Cook Off

Week of Sun. Feb 23rd

10:00 am Worship11:00 am Victorian Xmas Check-in5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

Tue. Feb 25th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Feb 27th

9:30 am Bible Study12:00 pm Young at Heart6:00 pm Bell Choir7:00 pm Chancel Choir7:30 pm Confirmation



2025 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:

- 1. **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 https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc by noon (sermon, prayer, announcements)
- 2. **Jenn** notifies staff and key volunteers (who in turn notify those they work with), including Will Duchon (203-615-3908), 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 many 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. The Sr. PF Adult Advisors make the Sr. PF decision Youth leadership communicates the decision via Facebook and Snapchat. For questions, contact Kate Goyette (203-913-4222) or Michelle Correll (203-394-8415)
 - 2. Rev. Jennifer Gingras (203-895-5607) 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, our plow guy's name is Adam, his cell is 203-258-8382.