

34 Church Street  
Monroe, CT 06468  
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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>



**THE** MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**STEEPLE**

**January 1, 2025**

**Resolutions that Make a Difference**



As we step into the New Year, many of us take time to reflect on the past and make resolutions for the future. These resolutions often focus on personal growth, health, and well-being—goals like getting in better shape, learning a new skill, or spending more time with family. But have you ever considered how your personal resolutions might be used as a pathway to serve others and grow your faith? When we link our personal goals to the needs of those around us, we not only enrich our own lives but also make a positive impact in the community and beyond.

**Spend More Time with Family and Friends** - In our busy lives, it can be difficult to find time to spend with those we love. However, as we set resolutions to be more present for our families, we can also extend that time to others who may be isolated. Consider visiting church folk who are unable to attend services regularly, especially those who are elderly or homebound. A simple visit, a phone call, or even sending a card can be a huge blessing.

**Cultivate a Heart of Gratitude** - Another common resolution is to develop a greater sense of gratitude. Gratitude becomes more than a feeling when it is put into action, and by serving others, we learn to appreciate the many blessings in our lives. Make time to volunteer at local food banks, shelters, or other charities. Even a small act, such as donating clothing or spending an afternoon at a feeding program, can make a significant difference.

**Learn Something New and Share Your Knowledge** - Many people resolve to learn new skills or gain knowledge in the coming year. Whether you've picked up a new language, honed your cooking skills, or become proficient in a craft, consider teaching others. This could be a perfect opportunity to share what you've learned.

**Be More Present in the Community** - If your New Year's resolution includes becoming more involved in your community, consider how this could align with your faith and church. There are countless opportunities to serve. You could join a church committee, assist with planning community events, or help on church work days. MCC offers many

ways to help, and by giving your time, talent, and resources, you'll help build a stronger, more vibrant faith community.

**Exercise for Health and for Others** - One of the most common resolutions is to get in better shape, whether it's through regular exercise, healthy eating, or other wellness activities. This year, think about how this resolution can extend beyond personal health. Consider participating in a charity walk, run, or bike ride. Many of these events raise money for important causes such as supporting those with cancer, homelessness, or hunger. By committing to a fitness goal, you can also contribute to a cause close to your heart.



As we begin this new year, let's remember that our personal resolutions don't need to be isolated goals. And they don't have to be perfect, what works for one person may not work for you! Whenever we align our personal growth with a desire to serve, we can make a lasting impact on those around us. By turning resolutions into service opportunities, we not only fulfill our personal commitments but also honor God by loving our neighbors as ourselves. If you find yourself wondering how you might make a difference in 2025, check in with me or anyone on the board of outreach. May this year be a time of deep growth, both personally and in service to others!

*In Christ, Pastor Jenn*

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Dear MCC,

Thank you for the very thoughtful Christmas gifts, cards and blessings. Each one brought an extra sparkle to our hearts in a busy season. We hope your Christmas is full of love, laughter, holiday cheer, and a bit of magic. Have a Happy New Year!



*Peace to you and your households,  
Pastor Jenn, Diane, Will, Heather & Jeanette*

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**Church Council**



**Call to Annual Congregational Meeting \* January 26, 2025**

The members of Monroe Congregational Church are hereby called to attend the Annual Meeting of the Congregation to be held in the Meeting House at 11:00 am on Sunday, January 26, 2025.

The agenda will include the following: Receiving of Reports; Electing Officers, Board Members and Delegates; Adopting the 2025 budget and any other business that must properly come before the Congregation.

## Trustees

### 2025 Stewardship Campaign: Better Together

We're making progress with **62** pledges received totaling over **\$177,411.57**, but there are still a number of 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](mailto: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!

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

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## 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](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAC2CA5FEC61-flowers-or-MCC-UCC.org)

Have you ever been interested in becoming an MCC deacon? If so, please contact Jessica Pfalzgraf. She would be happy to tell you all about it and welcome you to the team!

**Your service to MCC is needed and appreciated!**

Jessica (203)414-6874 [jspfalzgraf@gmail.com](mailto:jspfalzgraf@gmail.com)





# So you want to join the church?

Join us Jan 19th for a light lunch and get-to-know-you meeting at 11 am in Dineson Parlor.

New Members join on Sunday, Jan 26 (Heritage Sunday/Annual Meeting)

**STAR Words are Coming!** At church on Epiphany Sunday (January 5th), we'll have a basket of STAR words for 2025 for you to choose from. We hope that you find time to marvel at God's spirit working through these paper stars. Like the magi, may these words allow us all to go home by another road, our eyes opened to God's presence in and around us.



## Prayer for Prayer Partners

*Heavenly Father, thank You for making all things new! As another new year begins, help us live each day for You. May we continually have a new song in our hearts to sing to You, no matter what comes our way. We trust in You because we know that Your mercies are new every morning and nothing ahead of us will take You by surprise. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



As a prayer partner, you can keep your partner in your thoughts everyday using the smiley face that came in the mail. You can converse with them during coffee hour. You can seek them out during the passing of the peace. You can send them a card or note in the mail for a special event or just to lift up their spirits. Please sign it "Your Prayer Partner" and use the church's address (34 Church St, Monroe CT 06468) as the return. I look forward to seeing you at the "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon on Sunday, May 18 at 11:15AM in Wilton Hall. Provide a delicious entree, dessert or appetizer of your choice as we come together for conversation, tasty food and find out who's praying for whom. Contact Susie Cuseo at [thecuseos@yahoo.com](mailto:thecuseos@yahoo.com) or 203-268-0280 with any questions or comments.

## Faith Formation



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

1/5	Epiphany/New Year's Celebration
1/12	Mystery Meal
1/19	NO JR PF – MLK Weekend
1/26	JPF at the Movies! (time TBD)



### Weekly Bible Study Thursday 9:30-11am

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

## Snack & Chat with NOOMA

Join us in Dineson Parlor after worship on these dates to enjoy some snacks, a short video and light discussion about life's big questions.

No prep necessary and all are welcome!

Sep 29 - SUNDAY

Oct 27 - YOU

Dec 29 - NOISE

Feb 23 - RAIN

Mar 30 - DUST

Apr 27 - FLAME



## Fellowship

Ever wonder who is behind many of our wonderful fellowship events? Read on and reach out if you would like to become a part in this fun and important mission at MCC!



## Monroe Congregational Church Fellowship



The 2024 Fellowship Committee included: Jenn Gingras, Barbara Pellegrino, Jane Allen, Ann-Marie Campbell, Lisa Bauerle, Kate Briggs, Juliana Defeo, Judy Davis, and Melissa Coleman (Chair)

This year, we enjoyed fellowship with our church community through several events. Easter Sunday and Mother's Day both saw extended coffee hours which included delicious food that was contributed by the congregation. They were both well attended and enjoyed by all.

Over the summer, we invited members of the congregation to partake in informal fellowship by meeting up for the Monroe Concert Series in Wolfe Park, and recommended people wear red.

On Sept 15th, we hosted the Homecoming picnic at Wolfe Park. We grilled burgers and dogs, enjoyed sides and desserts brought by the attendees, got to know each other with a game of "would you rather", played lawn games, and bounced in a bounce house. We had approximately 50 participants, with a mix of young and old!

We encouraged the idea of the Blessing of the Pets, which was held on September 29th.

October 26th we hosted a new event which included Contra Dancing, Pumpkin Decorating and a Potluck Dinner. 50 members of all ages attended. Fun was had by all.

In November, we supported the Outreach committee with the Spaghetti Dinner and Bingo night for the third year. It was a wonderful evening, raising money for a great cause, and was enjoyed by everyone who attended.

On December 22nd, we hosted our Christmas Coffee Hour which included a great number of delicious goodies for the congregation to enjoy while celebrating together. We also got to celebrate the success of our Children's Pageant that day in church.



**Morning Circle will not meet in January or February.** All women are invited to attend the first meeting of the year on **Wednesday, March 12 at 11am** in Dineson Parlor where we will put together birthday bags for the kids who visit the Food Pantry with their parents. These bags contain a box of cake mix, frosting, candles and birthday napkins. Donations both products and monetary are welcome. Please bring products to the meeting or leave in the bin across from the men's room. Please have your check made out to MCC with Birthday Bags Morning Circle on the memo line. Thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity. Contact Shari Carrano with any questions, comments or concerns at 475-342-8145. Mark your calendars for the following 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 January 23<sup>rd</sup> details to follow.



Join us for the monthly Book Club on the **3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month**. 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 [pjsh55@gmail.com](mailto:pjsh55@gmail.com) or home phone or 203-452-0850.

**January 15<sup>th</sup>**  
**February 19<sup>th</sup>**

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride  
The Keeper of Hidden Books by Madeline Martin

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### Outreach



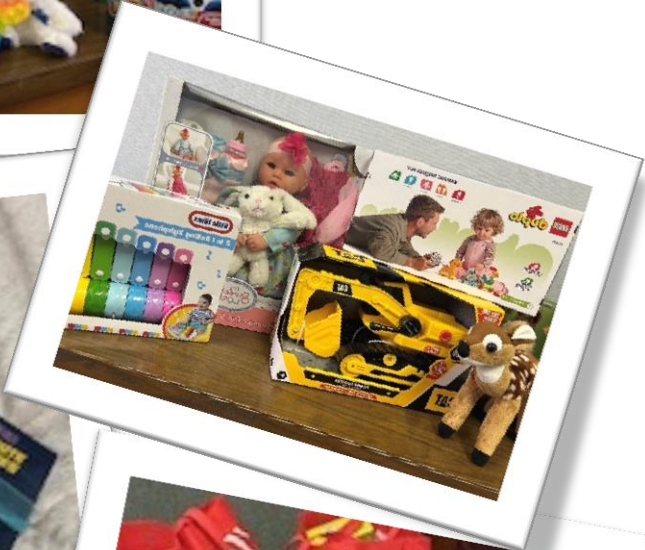
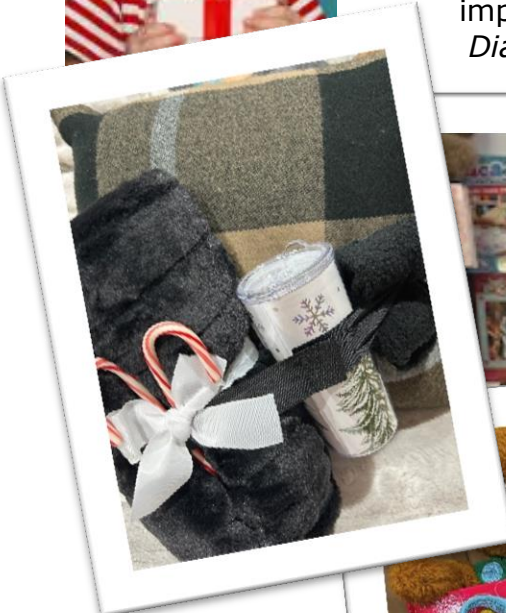
Do you have a couple of hours to spare on Tuesdays, Fridays or Saturdays? We sort, tag and hang donated merchandise in the Shoppe on Tuesdays at 1:30PM while on Fridays we are open from 10-3 and Saturdays from 10-2. It's easy to do. Just pop on over during any of those timeframes and the volunteers(s) 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](mailto:thecuseos@yahoo.com) or 203-268-0280 with any questions.





**The Covenant to Care Christmas Gift Collection** was a MASSIVE success thanks to all of you! Through donations of games, dolls, crafts, sports equipment, trucks and cars, puzzles, books, learning toys, and money, **MCC provided a record breaking 130+ children with a wonderful Christmas gift this year!**

**"THANK YOU so much"** from myself, the social workers and most importantly the children you made happy this Christmas,  
*Diane Prall, MCC Liaison to Covenant to Care*





### **Elisha's Corner**

Have A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.  
Gary Thompson, Church Historian



### **We Appreciate You!**

A BIG "thank you" to **Gloria Ganino**  
for taking over the duties as our MCC holiday flower person-  
the Meeting house looked beautiful!

Also THANK YOU to **Andrew, Kristina & Katherine Logan**  
for their talented decorating of the Meeting house for Christmas again this year  
as well as our Victorian Christmas Fair!



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

Chad	Bauer	01/02	Ann	Zeiner	01/16
John	Hastedt	01/04	Mary Jo	Brett	01/17
Chris	Pearson	01/04	Clark	Gingras	01/18
Ryan	Snyder	01/04	Christine	Williams	01/18
Don	Parker-Burgard	01/06	Nancy	Olofson	01/19
Katerina	Vargovchik	01/07	Rebecca	Williams	01/20
Susan	Granello	01/10	Max	Williams	01/22
Jamie	Correll	01/11	Carmela	Combs	01/23
Christopher	Hisey	01/11	Harper	Matejek	01/23
Danielle	Adams	01/12	Ariana	Moss	01/26
Joanne	Malia	01/14	Marian	Schmitz	01/26
Sara	Alvarez	01/16	Jonathan	Ganino	01/27
Thomas	Culp	01/16	Margaret	Villani	01/27
Braeden	Goyette	01/16			



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

Larry & Jennifer Wissink<sup>(07)</sup> and Mike & Barbara Pellegrino<sup>(24)</sup>

**January, 2025**  
**MCC Community Calendar**

**Wed. Jan 1<sup>st</sup>**

*New Year's Day – Office Closed*

**Thurs. Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir

**Week of Sun. Jan 5<sup>th</sup>**

*Epiphany, Communion, STAR Words*

10:00 am Worship  
11:30 am Trustees  
5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

**Mon. Jan 6<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 pm Outreach

**Tue. Jan 7<sup>th</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

**Thurs. Jan 9<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir  
7:30 pm Confirmation

**Week of Sun. Jan 12<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Mon. Jan 13<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 pm Deacons

**Tue. Jan 14<sup>th</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

**Thurs. Jan 16<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir  
7:30 pm Confirmation

**Week of Sun. Jan 19<sup>th</sup>**

*Heritage Sunday*

10:00 am Worship  
11:00 am New Member Informational  
5:00 pm Senior PF

**Mon. Jan 20<sup>th</sup>**

*Martin Luther King Day – office Closed*

**Tue. Jan 21<sup>st</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

**Thurs. Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
12:00 pm Young @ Heart  
5:45 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir  
7:30 pm Confirmation

**Week of Sun. Jan 26<sup>th</sup>**

*Annual Meeting~New Member~Heritage*

10:00 am Worship  
11:15 am Annual Meeting  
5:00 pm Junior & Senior PF

**Tue. Jan 28<sup>th</sup>**

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

**Thurs. Jan 30<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir  
7:30 pm Confirmation



*The Christmas Flowers  
are given with love from:*



Jane Allen and Chaz Foster

in memory & honor of family and loved ones

Barnhart Family

in memory of loved ones

Briggs Family

in celebration of Adam's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday

Michelle Cardentey

in memory of Eleanor & Joseph LaValla  
and Carmelina & Jose Cardentey

Pastor Jenn

in honor of all Sunday School and PF  
volunteers

John and Cindy O'Rourke

in memory of Jack O'Rourke

Brian and Linda Hare

in celebration of their wedding in the  
meetinghouse on December 14<sup>th</sup>

Mary Unger

in memory of her parents, Peg & Ray  
Candee

Ann Zeiner

in memory of Robert, Carol, and Val





## 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. Josh Post (203-400-0884)– Makes and communicates Sr PF decision
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.*



Holiday Greetings from: Kelsi McCarthy, Sanitarian/Health Program Planner I, Town of Monroe

I hope all is well! This past summer, the Monroe Health Department, as a member of the Health Improvement Alliance (HIA), promoted the Community Based Assessment and Needs Survey (CBANS) throughout the town of Monroe. As a result of Monroe Congregational Church's help promoting and completing that survey, the HIA has gathered a list of the Greater Bridgeport regions' top health and social needs. The next step is for HIA members to select the top issues the community thinks we should focus on when planning future programs and services. This brief **Community Voices** survey includes the top 25 needs identified through the previously collected data and will allow our community members to weigh in on which of these needs are most important to them. This survey should take you less than 5 minutes and responses are anonymous.

*This survey will be open until **Wednesday, January 15, 2025**. For more information about HIA, visit [www.hia-ct.org](http://www.hia-ct.org).*

**English Survey Link:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CommunityVoicesSurvey>

**English QR Code:**

This survey is for anyone who currently lives in the town of Monroe. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at [kmccarthy@monroect.gov](mailto:kmccarthy@monroect.gov).

Best regards,

Kelsi McCarthy