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Mon. & Wed. 9 am – 5:30 pm
Fri. 9am – 5 pm

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Music Director: Will Duchon
Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall
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THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

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

March 1, 2021



Vaccines & Visiting

Hi folks! I've been watching the news closely, trying to understand where we are headed in regards to the pandemic and our church life together. The good news is that the vaccine pipeline seems to be opening up, despite the difficult winter weather. I've been celebrating with those of you who have received this life-protecting gift, and giving thanks for those in our community and beyond who are working to bring health to us all. Our state is trending in the top four for vaccinations per capita, and our transmission rate is on the decline. And yet, the tragedy is that so many are grieving the loss of someone they love.

We must continue to protect one another by being responsible about masks, social distancing, and staying home when we're feeling unwell. By the time this Steeple is published, I will have received my second dose of the Moderna vaccine. I'm able to do so because our local health department determined that clergy are eligible because we administer last rites. My hope is that being vaccinated means I will soon be able to visit some folks in the hospital, or in rehab, and shift some office hours from my home to church office.

I found this prayer the other day, that helps me be more mindful of what I am doing as I put on my mask, and I'd like to share it with you – along with my thanks and appreciation of your care for others in wearing yours:

Creator, as I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacrament in the wearing of this cloth, let it be "an outward sign of an inward grace", a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbors, as I love myself.

Christ, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled, help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, As the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully - and full of care - to all those I meet. May this simple piece of cloth be shield and banner, and each breath that it holds, be filled with your love.

In your Name and in that love, I pray. May it be so. May it be so.

(reprinted with Common License permission from Rev. Richard Bott, 43rd Moderator of The United Church of Canada)



A note from your (new) Moderator

As a lifelong Episcopalian prior to 2007, I knew little about the Congregational church. So, I have been reading the constitution of MCC trying to figure out what my new job is. Have you ever seen my (formerly Dave Walker's) job description? Well, here it is:

Section 5. Moderator

The Moderator, who shall serve as President of the corporation, shall have been a member of the church for at least two (2) years and shall have served actively within the church structure. He or she shall be elected by the church for a term of two (2) years and shall be eligible for reelection for one (1) additional term, after which he or she shall not be eligible for election to the office until one (1) year has elapsed since the end of his or her second term. The Moderator shall:

- A. Preside at all congregational and Church Council meetings. In the event of the Moderator's absence a Pastor or the Clerk shall call the meeting to order, and the Moderator Pro Tempore shall be elected for the meeting;
- B. Seek to insure [sic] that the government of the church functions within the structure and intent laid down by this Constitution, including providing oversight to resolving constitutional disputes/clarification as required;
- C. Call meetings of any board or committee which finds itself unable to organize or function. He or she may appoint a chairperson or may serve as temporary chairperson, if necessary.

I should mention I am grateful to Dave and Pastor Jenn who have both been very generous with their time and tutelage! So, I am beginning to figure it all out.

I came to MCC when I moved into Connecticut because my (soon-to-be at that time) husband had been a member of MCC starting in 1969. Clearly, he was committed to MCC. As a side note, Vaughan and I got married at MCC in 2008. And, I felt that going to church as a family was more important than my continuing to follow the Tory way (as some might say) – so I did not even try to negotiate a “mixed marriage” – half Tory, New England Congregationalist. I know some people make decisions that are different from the one I made, and I respect that. This is a very personal choice.

Well, I am glad I made that choice.

You will see in the BRIEF description of qualifications for this job that the Moderator “shall have been a member of the church for at least two (2) years and shall have served actively within the church structure.” Again, I joined in 2007. Check. “Served actively in the church structure” – is the Renovated Ladies' Bathroom part of the church structure? I should think so. Check. Although I do not think that is what the constitution was getting at. I have been MCC Historian, Deacon, Usher, Mustard Seed volunteer, part of the MusicFest team and probably a few other things...e.g., sous chef making sandwiches in concert with husband on Outreach.

I just wanted to say: hello; delighted to be here; and most importantly, if you want to chat about anything.... If you think there is something the Moderator should hear, know, bring up at Council or sit quietly on.... Please get in touch. (203) 345-3647. arlenearedmond@gmail.com. 176 Holmes Street, Stratford, CT 06615.

Peace,

Arlene Redmond



49th Strawberry Festival News!

Many of you have been asking if it is possible to have a Strawberry Festival this year. We believe the answer is YES (with some added precautions), so we are forging ahead for June 19th and 20th! We'll need to gather our community's creativity, ingenuity and patience, but with a good team effort we're eager to start planning for another great event, as we responsibly follow protocols from our Monroe Board of Health, the state of Connecticut and the CDC. More information will be coming out soon on the various ways you can help. For now, here's what we need to begin:

- Join Clark & Jenn on a **'Kick-Off Cleaning & Organizing Dream Team'** on Wednesday, March 3rd, beginning at 9 am until the work is done
- Join Johnny & Clark on a **49th Strawberry Festival Summit** Sunday, March 14th at 4 pm. If you are willing to lend your help and expertise, or are looking for ways to serve, please join us. We need you! ZOOM Meeting ID: 852 9415 8663, Passcode: 401434

Elisha's Corner

By Gary Thompson, Church Historian

From the Historian's Notebook

This month was to be the 50th anniversary of the Mustard Seed Shoppe. The published MCC historical timeline indicated that it was opened in 1971. However, since it is of paramount importance to historians and genealogists to maintain accuracy of date and name, a meticulous search for the exact month and day it was opened was begun in unrest. As a result, it turns out that the actual opening day of the Shoppe was March 1, 1974 and not 1971. Surprise! Sorry, no 50th anniversary this month; we must wait until March 1, 2024. So keep the date open, as an anniversary article will be forthcoming then.

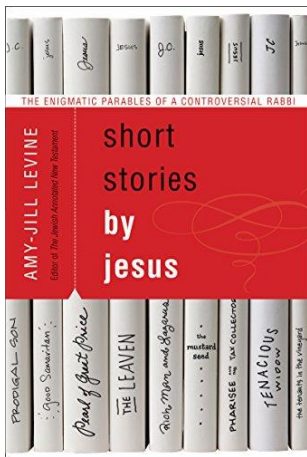


The search through our archived proved to be an auditable exercise in search and find. There was virtually no help in the very sparse file marked, "Mustard Seed Shoppe". The key that opened the search was found in the historian notebook of Paul Jones. An article he wrote for the Steeple in 2005 contained the 1974 opening date. It referenced the Women's Fellowship. Among the many, many documents in those files, "the Mustard Seed Shoppe" was not mentioned until 1975, and with a call for more clothing donations (the shop actually started out as a consignment shop). Sound familiar? Not even among the many newspaper clippings of Jean Loveland's articles, was there confirmation of the shop during between 1971 and 1975. Frustration! Fortunately, confirmation was found in a very faint copy of the Shoppe's annual report published for the Annual Meeting held "..... on Sunday, January 19, 1975, at 7 o'clock P.M.". The Shoppe's treasurer at the time, Sherri Wilhelm, began her report by stating that, "The Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe opened March 1, 1974, with Mary Lou Brigham as chairman. Its purpose is to create additional funds for the church which it has done in the amount of \$1,400 as of December, 1974." Now we

must wait until the March 2024 Steeple for the rest of this interesting story, which is yet to be documented. The published MCC historical timeline has been corrected.

Between now and then the file marked "Mustard Seed Shoppe" must be filled with sufficient and accurate detail to do its 50th anniversary true justice. With that in mind it is requested that anyone, particularly senior women of the congregation, with any personal files, documents, notes, articles, pictures, or even comments and anecdotes, please drop copies of them off or mail them to the church office at Rexford House, Attn: Historian, or E-mail to mailglt@yahoo.com subject: Historian. So much time and dedication by those in the congregation who have created and maintained this seriously important mission effort for the good of our community and elsewhere around the world where a need exists must be honored by preserving and sharing this story of a "little mustard seed" of faith. It personifies who we have been and who we continue to be as a congregation.

Deacons



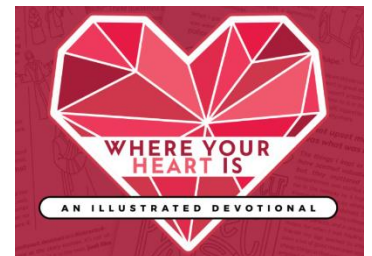
Lenten Zoom Study – "Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi" by Amy Jill Levine. Tuesday nights, 7:30-8:30 pm

Dr. Amy-Jill Levine offers a fresh, timely reinterpretation of Jesus' narratives. Levine reveals the parables' connections to first-century economic and agricultural life, social customs and morality, Jewish scriptures, and Roman culture. With this revitalized understanding, she interprets these moving stories for a contemporary listener, showing how the parables are not just about Jesus, but are also about us - and when understood rightly, still challenge and provoke us 2,000 years later. *Dr. Amy-Jill Levine is University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies and Mary Jane Werthan*

Professor of Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School This will be led by Pastor Jenn with a distanced learning format. You may choose to purchase the book from any preferred seller and read along, or just come as you are.

Zoom Meeting ID: 896 6457 2134 Passcode: 815586

- February 23 - The Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son
- March 2 – The Good Samaritan
- March 9 – The Pearl of Great Price
- March 16 – The Mustard Seed
- March 23 – The Laborers in the Vineyard
- March 30 – The Widow and the Judge



Where Your Heart Is: An Illustrated Ministry Family Prayer Devotional.

An all-ages curriculum resource in which you can work at your own pace. Each week features a short passage of scripture, reflection, coloring pages, and an activity to do with others. You may choose to work on it with the people in your household, extended family that lives far away, or other friends. Perhaps you'd like to plan a weekly Zoom gathering with your siblings who live far away, grandkids, or best friends from college days? Or maybe you'd like to find a couple of friends from our church family you can meet with on a weekly basis? E-mail Pastor Jenn (jenn@mcc-ucc.org) to get a PDF sent to you or arrange to pick up a printout.



Daily Meditations or Devotionals via E-mail or App. For those who love words, deep thoughts, theology and contemplating their faith, sign-up for a daily devotion sent to your e-mail. Use on your own or you might want to find a friend to partner with for discussion.

Recommendations:

- 1) The United Church of Christ offers a daily devotion written by the Still Speaking writers group <https://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional/>
- 2) Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr and friends provide a short, thought-provoking text each day from the Center for Action and Contemplation www.cac.org
- 3) d365.org is a daily devotional technically designed for youth, but it is great for all ages. Access via their website OR you can download a free app on your tablet or phone www.d365.org .

Lenten Photo-A-Day Challenge (with thanks to the UMC) For visual learners and creative types who like to share posts on social media. Take a photo every day in Lent, with a daily prompt according to the list below. Share with the community how you perceive each word of the day by posting that photo on Facebook and Instagram, tag The Monroe Congregational Church, include #MCCUCC and #LentenPhotoADay and #DigDeep

RETHINKCHURCH[®]
Lent 2021
Photo-a-Day Challenge

February	March	
2/17 - Covenant	3/1 - Spoke	3/22 - Given
2/18 - Living	3/2 - Words	3/23 - Sustain
2/19 - Sign	3/3 - Steadfast	3/24 - Weary
2/20 - Remember	3/4 - Labor	3/25 - Wakens
2/21 - Celebrate	3/5 - Rested	3/26 - Gave
2/22 - Walk	3/6 - Honor	3/27 - Together
2/23 - Name	3/7 - Celebrate	3/28 - Celebrate
2/24 - Everlasting	3/8 - Thanks	Holy Week
2/25 - Call	3/9 - Endures	3/29 - Dark
2/26 - Bless	3/10 - Gathered	3/30 - Removed
2/27 - Rise	3/11 - Healed	3/31 - Loved
2/28 - Celebrate	3/12 - Delivered	4/1 - Following
	3/13 - Wonderful	4/2 - Reached
	3/14 - Celebrate	4/3 - Why
	3/15 - Days	4/4 - Celebrate
	3/16 - Coming	
	3/17 - New	
	3/18 - House	
	3/19 - Write	
	3/20 - Teach	
	3/21 - Celebrate	

Each day during Lent , we will post a word of the day. We invite you to pause, reflect and post a response on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. Your post should illustrate how you perceive each word of the day. No explanation needed.
You can share a photo, poem or even a simple thought.

Deacon Flocks
Updated February 3, 2021



Each member of our board of Deacons is assigned a “flock”, a group of people that they care for through regular communication and prayer. If you have requests or concerns that you would like to share, your deacon is available. Such requests or concerns might include:

- a need for prayer
- a request for help (transportation to a doctor’s appointment or church function, etc.)
- a sorrow (illness, accident, death or other crisis)
- a joy (a birth, graduation, upcoming wedding, etc.)
- something that particularly pleases you, or would better meet your needs in the worship service

Naturally, if you are more comfortable with contacting one of the other deacons, or one of your pastors, please do so. If you do not know your Deacon, ask someone to introduce you. He or she looks forward to meeting you and getting to know you better.

A-Ba	Katherine Logan	203-873-1029	Katherinelogan29@gmail.com
Be-Co	Susie Cuseo	203-268-0280	thecuseos@yahoo.com
Cr-E	Vinay Sampson	203-880-9232	evksampson@yahoo.com
F-G	Deborah Vargovchick	203-907-5050	Judyjetson_1@hotmail.com
H	Michael Pfalzgraf	203-496-2083	Mike_pfalzgraf@toyotaofgreenwich.com
J-Ma	Bethany Dupuis	917-991-1864	bethanyldupuis@hotmail.com
Mc-O	Catherine Gingras	203-895-5050	Catherinegingras94@gmail.com
P-Re	Linda Fracassini	203-261-5484	lindafrac@gmail.com
Ri-Sm	Joanne Malia	203-270-6697	Joanne.malia@yahoo.com
Sp-Wa	Don Parker-Burgard	203-261-8781	dpcburgard@sbcglobal.net
We-Z	Nancy Smith	203-417-6800	Nancy.s.smith66@gmail.com



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

Jean Moffat; Amy and family in the loss of Mark (friends of Linda Resnick); **Jackie Ajello** (Michele Mount's mother); **Michael Barresi** (Maria's Son); **Jennifer Bittar** (Lorraine 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); **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); **Beverly Lowrey** (Jackie Bleakney); **Jacque 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); **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 Winger'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 & the Walker family; 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** (Lorraine 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

*Thank
You*

Dear MCC folks,

Today when I retrieved my mail there were two lovely cards which were signed by many of you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, your words of appreciation are much cherished. I wish you well in your future as a congregation and I am sure our paths will cross again.

With love, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon

Prayer Partners - I am very hopeful to have our "Big Reveal" luncheon on Sunday, May 23rd in Wilton Hall. Depending on the CDC guidelines and such, we may need to change this to Pierce Lawn. Please continue to keep your partners in your thoughts and prayers. A note or card in the mail using the church's address picks up anyone's spirits. Keep an eye out for those emails that I send out. I hope that they've brought a smile to your face as well as knowing that I hold each of you dear to my heart. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280.



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

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



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

March 10th

The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding by Jennifer Robson. Host:
Trees Whitbeck

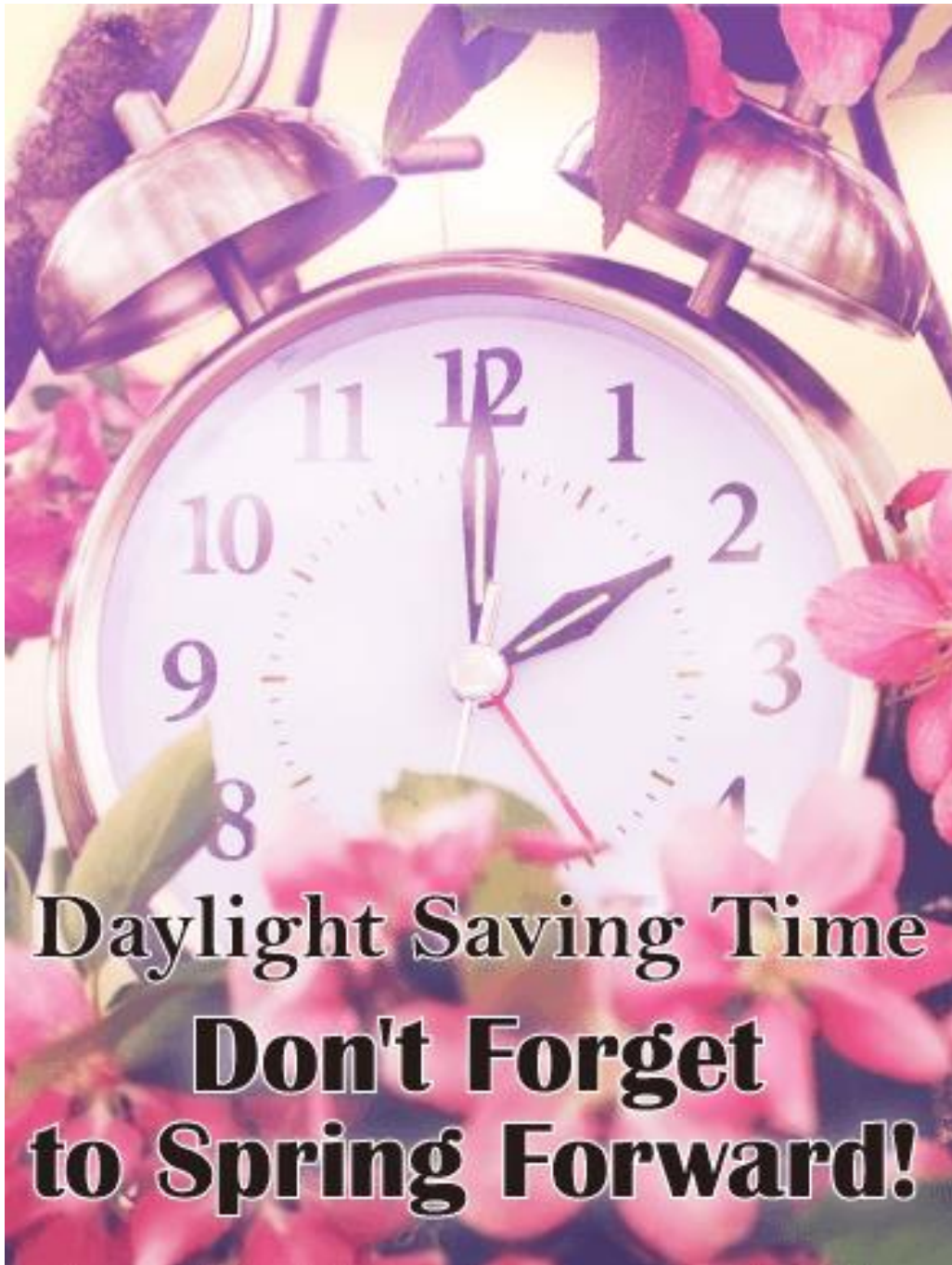
April 14th

The Children Act by Ian McEwan.
Host: Arlene Redmond

**MORNING
CIRCLE**

Morning Circle invites the ladies of the congregation to attend our first meeting of the year on Wednesday, March 10 at 11AM in Wilton Hall. We will be putting together birthday bags for the Food Pantry. Please bring in your donations of cake mix, frosting and birthday candles, as well as any other food items. We will

have a short business meeting so please bring in a sandwich for yourself. Wear your masks and practice safe distancing. Contact Jackie Bleakney with any questions at 203-268-5275. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 14 at 11AM in Wilton Hall.



Daylight Saving Time
**Don't Forget
to Spring Forward!**

Daylight saving time will begin at 2:00 AM on
Sunday, March 14



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

Manaia	Friend	03/01	Michael	Pfalzgraf	03/22
Catherine	Gingras	03/01	Madeline	Colegrove	03/23
Pam	Kelly	03/02	Rachel	Colegrove	03/25
Michael	Mount	03/02	Cliff	Cuseo	03/25
Mike	McEvoy	03/03	Susie	Cuseo	03/25
Michele	Molloy	03/04	Lynn	Draus	03/25
Melissa	Olson	03/04	Dylan	Mount	03/25
Eric	Gerhard	03/06	Jan	Pearson	03/25
Deborah	Vargovchik	03/07	Martha	Black	03/26
Suzanne	Adams	03/14	John	Maiolo	03/26
Cheremie	DiMenna	03/16	Paul	Coward	03/27
Jamie	Dotoratos	03/16	Dana	Jesulaitis	03/28
Jonathan	Stone	03/16	Arlene	Redmond	03/28
Mike	Rifflard	03/18	Bonnie	Schneider	03/29
Pat	O'Hara	03/20			

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

Julie & Robert McClenathan ⁽⁰⁹⁾ and Susan & Steve Grundt ⁽⁰⁹⁾

MCC
March
Community Calendar

Tues. Mar. 2nd

7:30 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Wed. Mar. 3rd

9:00 am SF Kick-off Cleaning Dream
Team (kitchen)

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Mar. 4th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Mar. 7th

10:00 am Worship - Communion

11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

4:00 pm Adult PF

5-7:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Tues. Mar 9th

7:30 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Wed. Mar. 10th

11:00 Morning Circle

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Mar. 11th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Mar. 14th

Day LIGHT SAVINGS

10:00 am Worship

11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

4:00 pm 49th SF Summit,
ZOOM Meeting ID: 852 9415 8663,
Passcode: 401434

5-7:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Tues. Mar 16th

7:30 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Wed. Mar. 17th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Mar. 18th

9:30 am Bible Study

7:00 pm CE

Week of Mar. 21st

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Trustees (zoom)

11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

5:00 pm Adult PF

5-6:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Tues. Mar. 23rd

7:30 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Wed. Mar. 24th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Mar. 25th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Mar. 28th

10:00 am Worship

11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

5-6:30 pm Senior PF (Wilton)

Tues. Mar. 30th

7:30 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Wed. Mar. 31th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Apr. 1st

9:30 am Bible Study