



THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

34 Church Street
Monroe, CT 06468

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

Office Hours:
Monday – Friday
9:00a.m.- 3:30p.m.

Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras
Director of Faith Formation: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon
Music Director: Will Duchon
Secretary: Melissa Rosenberg
Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

August 1, 2018

Together As One

Here's a riddle, see if you can solve it...

I am word with six letters.

My motto is together as one.

If you remove my first and second letters, you can wear me.

If you remove my third letter I can be painful.

If you remove my second, third and sixth letters, Adam & Eve did it.

If you remove my second and third letters, you do this using your mouth.

What am I?

Did you figure it out? The answer lies somewhere in this Steeple - happy searching! Now that I've got your attention, I wanted to share with you something that happened last month in the life of our wider church. I've mentioned at Bible study, at the Retired Men's group, at Faith on Tap, in worship and in other leadership meetings that the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ was engaged in a year of discernment about uniting ministries with the Rhode Island and Massachusetts conferences. At the annual "Tri-Conference" meeting in June, the delegates and clergy of these three historic groups decided to do just that! Here's the mission statement that has come out of the time of discernment:

Following Jesus' call to discipleship, and bound by the covenant we share as siblings in Christ, we – the members of the United Church of Christ in southern New England – declare these values essential to our shared ministry together:

- We understand the **local church exists to make disciples of Jesus** and we welcome all people unconditionally to share in this calling.
- We commit to **making God's love and justice real** by loving our neighbors, children, and all of creation through our collective work, such as seeking racial, economic, environmental, and LGBTQ justice.
- We believe God calls us to **bring new life as agents of change** and so we embrace and encourage adaptive and transformative leadership wherever the Body of Christ is gathered.

- We encourage local congregations and varied ministry settings, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, to **form covenant partnerships** with all who work for the common good in their local communities and throughout the world.

I believe there are many compelling reasons to move toward the creation of a new conference. It gives us the opportunity to build on what each legacy conference does well (sharing assets), which can help spark renewal and vitality among the churches. It will increase our local church's access to resources, programs and consultations – there are things that the Massachusetts and Rhode Island conferences do really well that we might learn more about! A new conference will establish a more nimble institutional platform which will be better positioned to support new forms of ministry. Joining together is already leading to a more robust technological capacity. This can help us share our mission, develop new connections and maintain deeper relationships than we already do.

The proposed change still needs the final approval of General Synod in June 2019. The final proposal allows the three historic conferences of the UCC in Southern New England to maintain dedicated financial resources and legacy gifts while conferring flexibility and establishing economies of scale.

It is time for a change in the way we do wider church, and I am ready to embrace the new covenant. I hope that you are too. For more up to date information about the Together As One initiative, please visit: <https://www.ctucc.org/newsdetail/together-as-one-planning-team-9254052>

In peace, *Pastor Jenn*

Heading to the Rez

Greetings all! On Saturday, August 11th, I will be flying out to the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation for an extended stay. I will return on Sunday, September 2nd. This year I have received a grant from the Fairfield East Association to implement a program for the Reservation's Adult Residents that I created. I have felt a call to work more closely with the adults living on the Reservation and have worked with Simply Smiles staff to create a short pilot program that will hopefully be continued and expanded upon. I am excited and grateful to be able to do this for these people that I have grown to respect and love.



That being said I also would like to put together a mission trip out to the Reservation for 2019. I have had conversations with a few of you about the cost of these trips and I hear you! I want you to know that in the 6 years that I have brought groups out, no participant has paid more than a \$200 deposit. Here are some ways that we at MCC can defray costs:

- Book flights early (my flight, booked in April, cost me \$425.00)
- Ask the Outreach Board for a contribution (I have done a soft ask)
- Ask Mustard Seed for a contribution (I have done a soft ask)
- Do a fundraiser at Board and Brush in Monroe
- Do a fundraiser at Chip's Restaurant in Trumbull
- Do an envelope fundraiser (Write dollar amounts from \$1 and higher. Put envelopes on a board or wall. Advertise your fundraiser. People take an envelope and put that amount of money in it to donate)

- Devote one worship service to Simply Smiles (have Bryan Nurnberger come and speak; take a special collection)

This trip is open to anyone age 15 and over. Also, there is a brand new bunkhouse for volunteers so there is no more sleeping on the floor in the Community Center. I hope you will join me on this important mission and if you cannot come on the trip, I hope you will support our endeavor.

Yours in Christ, *Debi*

The Vicksburg Post.

SERVING VICKSBURG AND WARREN COUNTY SINCE 1883

Volunteers assist Habitat for Humanity in Vicksburg

By John Surrat

Last week, Habitat for Humanity and Vicksburg Family Development got some outside help. On July 16, a group of 38 volunteers — 12 adults and 26 teenagers aged 13-18 — from Monroe Congregational Church in Monroe, Connecticut, arrived in Vicksburg to work on two Habitat homes under construction on Roosevelt Street, help with repairs at Vicksburg Family Development and replace a roof at a home on Spring Street.



Monroe Congregational Church volunteers Campbell Halloran, left, and Abby Clausen prepare to cut a board during work on one of two Habitat for Humanity homes on Roosevelt Street. (John Surratt/The Vicksburg Post)

The group also toured the Vicksburg national Military Park and went to eat at Walnut Hills.

"We do a mission trip every summer, and we do a mix of urban and rural," said Jimmy Viglione, one of the adult supervisors working with the group. "This year is a rural trip. I've

been pushing for Vicksburg for about 10 years, now because I knew about the AmeriCorps presence here, but the drive is such a long drive, it's about 24 hours. This year, we decided to make a longer push. I called some individuals who put me in touch with Gertrude Young at the city of Vicksburg Housing Department. She had so much work for us. The more people we spoke to, the more projects that became available."

He said the members of Hawkins United Methodist Church invited them to stay at the church. "They were so welcoming, this trip became obvious," he said. "That's not an affiliate of our church, so it's strange to be so welcomed by a denomination that's not our own, so it was a really special gift for them to open their doors to us."

While one group of volunteers worked on the Habitat homes, another group was at Vicksburg Family Development making repairs to a flood damaged area at the center. "We're painting and doing drywall work over there," Viglione said.

"It was amazing; it was so wonderful" said Leanne Katzenmeyer. "At one point in time, all 38 were in this building doing something during that week." Katzenmeyer said Home Depot donated the materials for the repairs at the Family Development office on Monroe Street. "We were blessed beyond measure. They came from so far just to help us get into this building. We can never repay them, and (director) Kay (Lee) feels the same way."

Habitat director Abraham Green said the group's work "is a big help; it makes us feel better. It helps us know that our work is not in vain. We've made some progress. The big thing about it is gives them (the students) a really good opportunity to learn about community involvement, giving back spiritually, serving and helping others." Green worked with the teens to show them some of the basic skills to work on the house. "They catch on fast," he said. "They know they're helping out and they want to be good. Just knowing the desire to help is there; that means a lot. It encourages us to continue."

Viglione said the group raised funds to buy the materials to roof the home on Spring Street, which was to have been done Friday. He said the homeowner on Spring has had the leak for three years, but was unable pay to have the problem fixed. He said there was more than the need and AmeriCorps that brought the group south. "There's so much history here dating back obviously to the Civil War," he said. "It's important for us to try and expose our youth group to different cultures and environments that they're not accustomed to, and we thought of Vicksburg having so much history and such a racially diverse area. "Where they (the students) are in Connecticut is not nearly as diverse as it is here in Vicksburg."

The group left early Saturday morning for Roanoke, Virginia, the first leg of their return home. "We feel so grateful to be invited to your city and we get so much more out of this trip than the work that we're doing," Viglione said. "We feel so indebted to Vicksburg and all the people we worked with. Everybody in the city are really special to us, so we want to say thank you to every body we've met."

Answer to the Riddle on Page 1: String. A string ties objects together. You wear a ring, a sting hurts, according to traditional Christian Theology, Adam & Eve committed a sin and you sing with your mouth.

"..... And So They Built



The "dream build" conceived by a few would be a reality for the good of the current church children and those of the future. The records show that acceptance of the building plan for the new education build, to be called Rexford House, was nearly unanimous (2 not in favor out of 60 at a special congregation meeting March 13, 1967). The records also show that the survey of the congregation of 1966 – 67 and subsequent committee reports did reflected the needs, desires, and expectations of the congregation.

The detail of these surveys was translated into the descriptions and requirements of the new building; the original thought of a stage in fellowship hall gave way to more general space for large classroom space. And the contract called for two regulation shuffle board courts to be inlaid in the fellowship hall flooring. The courts disappeared years later when new flooring had to be installed.

A town wide questionnaire was sent to "73 organizations ... as to probable usage of our new building". The Building Fund Campaign had exceeded the goal of \$60,000 over a period of three years, providing \$60,638 in cash and pledges, as of July 25, 1967. These included large pledges and cash donations from local businesses and foundations. Half way through the first three years, however, pledges were behind, large pledges moved away, and some were not kept at all. That sounds somewhat familiar fifty years later. Yet it was this very situation that caused the creation of the Mustard Seed Shop and the Strawberry Festival. God does work in unperceivable ways to perfect His will.

The building contractor was Bryan Hodges of Walcott. The contract was signed December 20, 1967, and excavation began before the year ended, almost four months after the planned start date. Cost of the "Proposed New Church Facility", including renovations to Beardsley Hall, was \$159,764 of the total project cost of \$185,000. A mortgage of \$170,000 was entered into with the Peoples Savings Bank. Excluded from the contract was all the required plumbing and plumbing materials, installation of "all kitchen equipment, cabinets, and built-ins". This work was donated by members of the congregation, like Dick Whitcher who provided the plumbing materials and installations. Also excluded from the contract was the planned 600 square foot addition to the parsonage.

Renovations to Beardsley Hall included removing the kitchen, converting the main hall where the Mustard Seed Shop is presently into a large kindergarten classroom, and providing a nursery room in back of the kindergarten where a Gingerbread Preschool classroom now resides. The additional two large classrooms for primary grades were also provided and currently exist for the Gingerbread use.

The planners for the Rexford House project expected the 366 active members in 165 families, and 270 enrolled children through grade 12, including nursery children in 1967, to more than double in ensuing years. These projections were extrapolations based on the growth projections for the Town of Monroe. While over the course of fifty years, which we celebrate this year, Monroe has most certainly doubled in population. Our church growth, on the other hand has grown to our current 485 active members in 174 families, and 59 enrolled children through grade 12, excluding nursery children. While this may seem falling far short

of the 60's congregation expectations, it can be considered much better than most; much, much, better. If nothing else, Rexford House provides us with the intended capacity to grow without limited constraints; "..... thy will be done" It is this 60's congregation that we owe a debt of gratitude for not only their thoughtful vision, but their faith to have made it a reality.

MusicFest News

We have all probably been to school or community musical or theater productions where we have seen VISUAL (block) ads that say something like: "Break a leg, Johnny! Or, "Congratulations, Rydell High, on what is sure to be another great production!" See below for samples. This year the Monroe MusicFest committee is offering two ways to support MusicFest. One is the donor list with simple text dedications we have done for the past 3 years and the other is a visual ad. All the details will be spelled out in the form to fill out – forms will be placed in the pews in colorful envelopes. Donation period will be from August 19 to September 16. So start thinking about your creative ad!



Have a wonderful Monroe MusicFest!

*Best wishes,
The Shaffers*

*I hear music in the air!
Betty Heiney*



***MusicFest is OCTOBER 7
(Sunday) 1 to 7 p.m.***

WHAT TO DO WITH THE ADS & CHECKS:

- Make check out to **Monroe Congregational Church** (or MCC)
- In memo line: "MusicFest Ad"
- If sending an electronic ad, send to: musicfestmonroe@gmail.com or arleneredmond@gmail.com
- Or put in collection plate
- Or give to Arlene/Vaughan

Deacons

Mission Possible Summer Photo Challenge: This summer, look for those places where God's kingdom is sneaking in, or spreading out, or taking over little corners of our world. Take some pictures of those places, people or moments and send them to Pastor Jenn via text (203-895-5607) or e-mail (Jenn@mcc-ucc.org). Please include a few words of why the scene gives you HOPE. We'll have an opportunity to share all pics and stories in September.



Summer Worship with St. Peter's Episcopal Church! One of the highlights of every summer is joining in worship with our friends from St. Peter's in an outdoor setting. Please bring a lawn chair.

- On **August 12th at 9AM** St. Peter's will host us on their side of the green



Stewardship

Summer is here. While you may be on vacation, MCC will continue to need funds to support our ongoing operations. Please make sure to stay current on your pledge payments over the summer months. You can make your payment via the weekly Sunday collections, via electronic payment from your bank, or via the "Donate" section of our web site. Thanks for your support of MCC and enjoy your summer! In Christ's Service - MCC Stewardship Committee

Outreach

It's that time again...the next St. George's supper is August 20th Please look for the poster in Wilton Hall to sign up to help. We have a variety of needs, including shoppers, and servers. Simply take a tag (or two!) and you will be making a difference for those in need. Please bring all food & monetary donations to the church by the morning of August 19th. If you take a tag and are unable to fulfill your commitment please contact the church office 203-268-9327. If you would like a tag but cannot make it to church please call Melissa in the office.



Help Needed! The Bridgeport Rescue Mission fights poverty from the inside out as they embrace the urban poor and addicted with the compassion of Christ, offering hope and healing for a changed life. **During the summer months, donations slow down** but we still provide more than 450,000 meals each year through our dining room, food pantry, and mobile kitchens. Can you help? There is a bin located in Rexford Hall to drop off donations. Thank you for your generosity.



We are in immediate need of:

Canned beans, peas, & corn
Canned sweet and white potatoes
Canned tuna & chicken & ham
Peanut Butter
Jelly in plastic jars

Boxed cold cereal
Pasta and sauce
Ramen noodles
Diapers
Wipes
Pull-Ups

Boxed macaroni & cheese
Boxed rice

Toothpaste
Toothbrushes



Food Pantry
Donations Needed

Donations needed for the Monroe Food Pantry-Food donations tend to run low- We have almost 300 registered Monroe families who are eligible to receive assistance from the Monroe Food Pantry. Non-perishable food items and pet supplies can be left in the bins in front of the church office. To donate perishable items such as eggs or milk please call 452-3770 to arrange a drop off time. Thank you for your generosity!



Help is needed at the Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe - If you are free on Thursdays between 12-3, Fridays from 10-12:30 or 12:30-3 or on Saturdays between 10-12 or 12-2, I need your help manning the counter. If you are interested, come during one of these shifts and someone will show you what to do. You can also reply to me and I'll give you a tour and put you on the schedule. Please email Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or call 203-268-0280 with any interest or questions.

Have you come across used prescription glasses or sunglasses while cleaning out your drawers and wondered what you can do with them? Well, you can drop them off in the kitchen and I will pick them up and bring them to the appropriate collection place. They will be cleaned and checked for their strength and then sent to low and middle income communities where they will go to someone who will be given the gift of sight. Please contact Susie Cuseo at 203-268-0280 or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions.

Christian Education



Vacation Bible School On Sunday, August 5th, we will be setting up our spaces for VBS and we could always use an extra hand or two to help out. If you can stay after worship to help out it would be very helpful to help us be ready to welcome our participants. Also if you have the following items we can borrow for decorating we would appreciate it as well (just bring them to church on the 5th):

- Artificial Christmas Tree
- Artificial Fichus or other Tree
- Sleeping Bags



Thanks to our wonderful volunteers we have three more weeks of Summer Sunday school this year! Summer Sunday school is available to children in PreK-3rd Grade on **August 5th, 19th, and 26th.**

Fellowship

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

 **August 22nd -7:30pm** The Avalon Ladies Scrapbooking Society by Darien Gee~ Host TBD



Morning Circle will not meet in August but mark your calendars for our next meetings and special events on Wednesdays at 11AM in Dineson Parlor on September 12 (speaker on current local scams), October 10 (Trick-or-Treat bags for Food Pantry), November 14 (bean soup jars for Pantry) and December 12 (Christmas Luncheon - location TBD). All women of the congregation and their friends may attend. Donations for the Trick-or-Treat bags can be anything small: coins, individually wrapped candies, erasers, small toys or stickers. You can place your generous donations in the Morning Circle bin located across from the Men's room and thank you for thinking of those children while you shop. Please contact Jackie Bleakney at 203-268-5275 with any questions or comments.



The time to sign up for Prayer Partners will be coming before you know it. But there's plenty of time to consider what a small amount of effort it takes to keep someone in your prayers. Here's a testimonial from a previous prayer partner: "It's a very positive experience. It helps to focus at certain times of the day to be calm and think positively." Look for the sign up sheet in September in Dineson Parlor. I hope that my partners from this year will continue to keep theirs in their thoughts throughout the summer and so on. Please contact Susie Cuseo at 203-268-0280 or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions.

Note from Pastor Jenn Some of you have asked me if you can send a card or write a letter to our son Zachary while he is in the Army's Basic Training at Fort Jackson. His last date for receiving mail at this address is 8/17/18. Thank you so much!

PVT Gingras, Zachary
2nd Platoon, (SAVAGES)
Charlie Company, 1-61 INF
REGT 165th IN BDE
11903 Golden Arrow Rd, Fort Jackson, SC 29207-6821

MCC Community Calendar

Fri. Aug. 3rd

7:30pm Faith on Tap: Game Night!

Week of Aug. 5th

10:00am Worship with Communion

5:00pm Senior PF

Mon. Aug. 5th-Fri. Aug. 10th

9:00am Vacation Bible School

August 5 – 12 *Pastor Jenn on vacation*

Week of Aug. 12th

9:00am Worship with St. Peter's on their side of the green. Please bring a blanket or lawn chair!

Week of Aug. 19th

Baptism of Brady Bleakney

10:00am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Mon. Aug. 20th

3:45pm St. George's Supper

Wed. Aug. 22nd

7:30pm MCC Book Club (location TBD)

Fri. Aug. 24th

3:30 Wedding of Kelsey Maiolo & Rob Kaminski (Meetinghouse)

Week of Aug. 26th

10:00am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Week of Sep. 2nd

Labor Day Weekend

Guest Preacher – Rev. Dr. Sheldon Smith

10:00am Worship w/ Communion

5:00pm Senior PF

September 2 – 8 *Pastor Jenn on vacation*

Week of Sep. 9th

Homecoming Sunday: Mission Possible!

10:00am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Tues. Sept. 11th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Sep. 12th

9:30am Retired Men (Dineson)

11:00am Morning Circle

Thurs. Sep. 13th

9:30am Bible Study

Sat. Sep. 14th

10:00am Dress A Girl (Wilton Hall)

Week of Sep. 16th

10:00am Worship

11:15am Confirmation Informational for Parents & Confirmands (Dineson)

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult PF

Tues. Sep. 18th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

7:00pm Bereavement Group (Dineson)

Wed. Sep. 19th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Sep. 20th

9:30am Bible Study

Week of Sep. 23rd

Confirmation Dedication

10:00am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Tues. Sept. 25th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Sep. 26th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Sep. 27th

9:30am Bible Study