



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

December 1, 2016

Why Welcome?

Imagine someone you never met was coming to your house for dinner. That would be pretty awkward, right? You don't know what they do for a living, if they have kids or are in a committed relationship. Maybe you have something in common, but you're not sure.



On the first Sunday we visited our former church, my family arrived slightly late to worship. As we opened the sanctuary door, we were told by the usher to wait until the opening prayer was over before we entered. Later, at coffee hour, we stood in a corner and sipped our coffee, wondering why no one approached to say "hi" or "welcome", but stood in tight little circles talking amongst themselves. We learned that we liked the Sunday school, so we gave it three more tries. On the fourth Sunday, someone finally spoke to us to ask if we were interested in joining the church because they "*need people on boards and committees*".

Now... think about it. Why commit to a bunch of people who seemed to think we were invisible? We didn't join right away; but waited a few months and eventually made some friends. Eventually, we became members. We even tithed (a pattern of committed giving that Clark and I continue to do today). I'm so incredibly grateful to the people of that church. They were the ones who helped turn my life around and find my call. Because of them, I went to seminary. But given our first impressions of their church, the transformation was kind of miraculous!

As we enter Advent, I hope that you will think about how you would like to be welcomed at someone else's table. When you see someone you don't know in church, take a chance saying "hi", don't wait for them to approach you. Learn people's names and remember them. Be curious and learn what makes them unique. Introduce them to a friend who may have something in common with them. Be their tour guide, help them find their place in worship, physically and liturgically. Invite them to join you at an upcoming fellowship or Christian Education event,

or even just coffee hour (oh, and help them find where it is). Oh! And let their children be children. Yes, families love Sunday school and the nursery, but they also appreciate when they are given the choice to keep their children at their side.

Remember that the most important person for a visitor to meet in order to feel at home is **you**. Not the pastor (whose attention is spread thin on Sunday morning), or the greeter (who gives a warm yet quick welcome), but a regular attender. One of the most impressive gestures we can extend to first time guests is for a "regular" to take the initiative to welcome them.

Most importantly, be yourself! You are so good at loving each other. The commandment to love is the most repeated directive in the New Testament, appearing at least 55 times. You get that. You know how to be God's love. The folks coming through the door need to feel it, and you've got lots to share.

God bless you, Pastor Jenn

I'm Rich!

Perhaps you've seen the TV ad in which a person answers the door and finds someone who hands over a check for an enormous amount of money. Then the amazed recipient begins shouting, dancing, jumping, and hugging everyone in sight. "I won! I'm rich! I can't believe it! My problems are solved!" Striking it rich evokes a great emotional response.

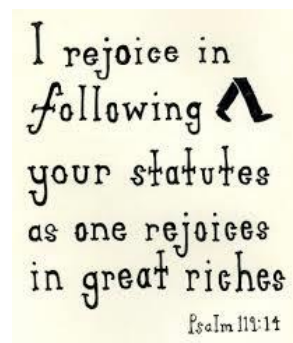
In Psalm 119 we find this remarkable statement: "I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches" (v. 14). What a comparison! Following God's instructions for living can be just as exhilarating as receiving a fortune! Verse 16 repeats this refrain as the psalmist expresses grateful gladness for the God's proclamations: "I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."

But what if we don't feel that way? How can delighting in God's instructions for living be just as exhilarating as receiving a fortune? It all begins with gratitude, which is both an attitude and a choice. We pay attention to what we value, so we begin by expressing our gratitude for those gifts of God that nourish our souls. We ask God to open our eyes to see the storehouse of wisdom, knowledge, and peace that has already been given to us. We ask God to give us willing and generous hearts to share those gifts with the church and with others.

As our love for Jesus grows each day, we indeed strike it rich!

Let's strike it rich together,

Debi Mastroni-Kenyon



2017 Advent, Christmas & Epiphany “Dreams & Visions”

Sunday, December 4th - *Second Sunday in Advent (Peace)*

- 10 am **Advent Worship with Communion**, featuring worship drama “God’s Hopeful Vision”
- 5 pm **Community Tree Lighting** on the Monroe Center Green with our friends from St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, enjoy cookies and cocoa at St. Peter’s directly following.

Sunday, December 11th - *Third Sunday in Advent (Joy)*

- 10 am **Advent Worship**, featuring the Adult Choir singing “The Shepherd”, a **Christmas Cantata** by John Ness Beck, Commissioning of Lay Pastoral Visitation Team
- 2-5 pm **Pastor’s Open House** at the Parsonage, come share time with friends old and new!
- 3-4 pm Monroe Clergy Association’s “**Blue Christmas**”, 515 Cutlers Farm Road

Sunday, December 18th - *Fourth Sunday in Advent (Love)*

- 8:15 am **Traditional Advent Worship**, featuring worship drama “Mary’s Dream of Love Fulfilled”
- 9 am **Special Christmas Coffee Hour** in Wilton Hall: Please bring a baked good, fruit or other item to share!
- 10 am **Christmas Pageant Service**
- 5-8:30 pm **Community Christmas Caroling** with Junior & Senior PF, we gather at 5pm in Wilton Hall for pizza (\$5/per caroler), then go bring some musical joy to those in our community! Dress warmly.

December 19th at 3:45, St. George’s Supper

Saturday, December 24th - *Christmas Eve*

- 4:00 pm **Quiet Christmas Service**, a contemplative, prayerful service
- 7:00 pm **Family Christmas Service**, a service for all ages, come 20 minutes early to enjoy all the opening music
- 11:00 pm **Lessons & Carols by Candlelight** with traditional readings, candlelight and special music. Arrive 20 mins early to enjoy all the opening music

Sunday, December 25th - *Christmas Day*

- 10:00 am **Christmas Casual Service**, featuring worship drama “Bartholomew’s Visit”, come as you are to sing and rejoice!

Friday, December 30th at 1 pm, **Christmas Brunch for College Students/Young Adults** at the Parsonage

Sunday, January 1st - **New Year’s Day Communion Service**

Sunday, January 8th – Epiphany, **Young Adult/College Student Service**, worship led by members of our congregation who are older than high school (18+), yet still in their 20’s. They might be undergrad or graduate students, or starting a career or family.

Moderator

Annual Reports Due December 30th

Please submit your annual report to the church office by Friday, December 30th. Please call the church office with any questions. 203-268-9327 or email mccsecretary@sbcglobal.net

2017 Stewardship Campaign "Go and Do the Same"



and do the same.
Late 19:07

It's time for each of us to make a difference for our church and the broader community through our pledged financial support! We are off to a good start and have received 60 pledges for a totally of roughly \$135,000 towards our goal of \$250,000 for a fully-funded 2017 operating budget.

Together, we can support MCC's ministries and programs, care for our staff, keep our facilities pristine and be generous in our mission and outreach. Please take some time to reflect on God's blessings in your life and what MCC means to you and consider making a pledge commitment for 2017 if you haven't already. Thank you and please contact any one of us if you have questions.

~ Your Stewardship Committee, Scott Young (Chair), Roy Nealon, John O'Rourke (Receiver)

The **Christmas Poinsettias** are ready to order! All poinsettias are red double plants. The cost is \$25.00. **All orders must be received no later than December 16th** to ensure delivery by December 23rd. Please make your check payable to Monroe Congregational Church with "poinsettia" in the memo line. The check may be dropped off in the church office, left in the offering plate or given to Ann Zeiner. Questions? 268-5302



Outreach



The next St. George's supper is December 19th

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 to the church by**

December 18th at 11am. If you take a tag and are unable to fulfill your commitment please contact the church office 203-268-9327 Or if you would like a tag but cannot make it to church please call Melissa in the office



Socks, Gloves, and Scarves for St. George's We will serve a special Christmas dinner at St. George's on December 19th and we will be collecting new men's and women's socks, gloves, and scarves. **Please drop off your donations by December 16th** so the girl scouts can assemble a care package for our guests. There is a bin outside of the church office for sock donation.

A HUGE THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to the Scout Coat Drive for **Bridgeport Rescue Mission**. The official drive has ended (although you can always drop off coats at MCC) and the totals are amazing! 161 coats + 18 hats + 3 scarves + 14 pair of mittens/gloves! Please know that with your donation you've made someone on the street a lot warmer this winter season. Thank you again! *Rich Correll, BSA Troop 63 Service Coordinator*



Donations needed for the Monroe Food Pantry With the colder weather upon us the demand for food is greater than ever. We have almost 300 registered Monroe families who are eligible to receive assistance from the Monroe Food Pantry.

Canned fruit: peaches, pineapple etc.	Canned beans: black, pinto etc.	Cake mixes, brownie mix, cookie mix
Pumpkin pie filling	Canned chili	Tea & Coffee
Condiments: mayo, mustard, ketchup, syrup	Spaghetti O's: meat & plain	Peanut butter & jelly
Cooking oil	Dry pasta and sauce	Stuffing
Salad dressing-any kind	Noodles and rice	Jar gravy
Canned vegetables: corn, mixed, peas etc.	Canned potatoes	Individual snacks: chips, pretzels, etc.
Canned tuna or chicken	Canned soup: assorted	Pet supplies: cat food, dog food, litter

To donate perishable items such as eggs or milk please call 452-3770 to arrange a drop off time. For nonperishable items please place in the bin in the Rexford House-Thank you for your generosity!

Christian Education

The Birth of Christ – As Told in Scripture, Carols, and Tableau

This year's Christmas Pageant will be a retelling of the Birth of Christ through a series of readings, song, and action.



We are currently recruiting folks to be readers so if that is something you would like to do, just contact Debi at debi@mcc-ucc.org and let her know. There will be a rehearsal on Saturday, December 17th.

No production is complete without people there to watch so plan to attend church on December 18th at 10:00 am!

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar



December

- 4th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 11th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 18th – Pizza Caroling - meet at 5:00 pm
- 25th – NO Regular Gathering – Merry Christmas

Sunday School Calendar

December

- 4th – Sunday school classes grades K-3
- 11th – Regular Sunday school classes
- 18th – Pageant Sunday – NO Sunday school
- 25th – NO Sunday school – Merry Christmas

Fellowship



December 4th at 5pm - Community Tree Lighting on the Green Gather with friends from St. Peter's Episcopal Church to light the Christmas Tree on our shared green. It's a wonderful chance to become more spiritually grounded during what is often a hectic season. Join us afterwards in the undercroft at St. Peter's for coffee and cookies. Please bring a flashlight and dress warmly!

Christmas Open House at the Parsonage, December 11th 2pm-5pm!

The Gingras family would like to invite all church members and friends to the parsonage for a Christmas Open House. As a token of our appreciation, we would like to invite all of you to a time of fellowship, laughter and joy. We hope that you can make it, and we look forward to welcoming you to our home



Your Board of Christian Fellowship is asking for baked goods for the special 9am Christmas coffee hour between worship services on December 18th. Please drop off your goodies in the kitchen and join us in Wilton Hall for fellowship and Holiday cheer.





Caroling with Junior & Senior PF, 5pm December 18!

Bring some joy into the lives of others by singing Christmas Carols at their doorsteps! Pizza and drinks will be served at 5pm in Wilton Hall, caroling caravans will leave promptly at 6pm. But first, we'll sing a warm-up song around the new outdoor nativity set! Please remember to dress warmly, bring a flashlight and a \$5 donation to

help offset the cost of food



Retired Men's Breakfast will be held Wednesday, December 7th at 9:30am at King's Restaurant. Please call Gary Thompson to RSVP 203-261-4699

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

- + **December 12th – 7:30pm** Book Club Movie Night~Location to be determined
- + **January 18th -7:30pm** The Book of Speculation by Erika Swyler
Hosted by Sue Smelzer
- + **February 15th -7:30pm** The Japanese Lover by Isabel Allende
Location to be determined



Young at Heart will meet on Thursday, December 15th (the third Thursday this month) as we join together in fellowship and fun and memories. We will be meeting at noon at the Valley Diner on Route 34 in Derby. Please call, text, or e-mail Donna Parratt at [203-258-4210](tel:203-258-4210) or at mommabird12@yahoo.com (my son decided on that name!) to let me know if you will be able to join us. Hope to see you there.



2017 MCC Men's Weekend Retreat ~ Friday, January 13 through Sunday, January 15 Silver Lake Conference Center, Sharon CT. Registration is \$140, checks can be made out to MCC with Men's Retreat in the memo section. Scholarship help is available. Please sign up in Wilton Hall or contact the church office.

MCC Community Calendar

Thurs. Dec. 1st

Life Touch Photos
9:30am Bible Study
7:00pm Adult Choir

Fri. Dec. 2-Sat. Dec.3

Life Touch Photos

Week of Dec. 4th

Second Sunday in Advent "Peace"
10:00am Worship with Communion
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)
Lay Pastoral Visitation Training 3
(Dineson)
5:00pm Community Christmas Tree Lighting
St. Peter's to host
6:00pm Adult, Sr & Jr PF

Mon. Dec. 5th

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Dec. 6th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Dec. 7th

9:30am Retired Men's Breakfast at King's
7:00pm Adult Choir

Thurs. Dec. 8th

9:30am Bible Study
7:00pm Adult Choir

Week of Dec. 11th

Third Sunday in Advent "Joy"
10:00am Worship with Christmas Cantata
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)
11:15am Trustees (Classroom 4)
2-5pm Parsonage Open House
6:00pm Sr & Jr PF

Tues. Dec. 13th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Dec. 14th

11:00am Morning Circle
6:30pm Adult Confirmation Class (Dineson)
7:00pm Adult Choir

Thurs. Dec. 15th

9:30am Bible Study
12:00pm Young at Heart @ Valley Diner Derby
7:00pm Adult Choir

Week of Dec. 18th

Fourth Sunday in Advent "Love"
8:15am Worship
9:00m Special Christmas Coffee Hour
10:00am Christmas Pageant
5:00pm Christmas Caroling with Jr & Sr PF
6:00pm Adult PF

Mon. Dec. 19th

3:45pm St. George's Supper
7:30pm Church Council (Dineson)

Tues. Dec. 20th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Dec. 22nd

7:00pm Adult Choir

Sat. Dec. 24th Christmas Eve

4:00pm Quiet Christmas Service
7:00pm Family Christmas Service
11:00pm Lessons & Carols by Candlelight

Week of Dec. 25th

Christmas Sunday
10:00am Christmas Casual Worship

Tues. Dec. 27th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Fri. Dec. 30th

1pm Christmas Brunch for Young Adults (Parsonage)

Week of Jan. 1st

Happy New Year!
10:00am Worship with Communion

Mon. Jan. 2nd

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Jan. 3rd

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Jan. 4th

6:30pm Youth Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Jan. 5th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:00pm Adult Choir

Sat. Jan. 7th

Epiphany Party (Wilton Hall~time tbd)

Week of Jan. 8th

Epiphany
10:00am Young Adult Worship