



**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

December 1, 2017

"Be alert and watch, for you don't know when the time will come. What I say to you, I say to all. Stay alert." Mark 13:33

When Mark's gospel was recorded, followers of the way fully expected that in the very near future Jesus would return in glory and bring all of creation into the fullness of God's reign. The Apostle Paul held the same understanding when he wrote to the church at Corinth when he urged them to be faithful and continue to develop the gifts they have received, because the Lord was going to return very soon.



About 2,000 years later, and it hasn't quite happened as they expected! We are still waiting. Waiting and watching is what Advent season is all about. Stay vigilant and alert to the coming of Jesus! We, like the early disciples, don't know when that final coming will happen, but there are many ways Jesus comes into our life when we are alert enough to notice.

As we prepare to celebrate that incredible act on the part of God, consider how Jesus came into the midst of the human family - born in a stable, a short time homeless, certainly a refugee. And yet, in our culture the Thanksgiving turkey is barely cold before we feel the pressure to take part in the nearest Black Friday Christmas sale!

It's ironic, since Jesus first came among us as a poor person. When Jesus was tempted later in his life in the desert to change stones into bread, he responded with: *"No, see, I don't accumulate all kinds of material things. I have enough."*

Be alert; and think about how Jesus came, identifying himself with the poor and oppressed. If we really want to welcome Jesus into our midst, we might remember how he showed us the way to the fullness of life by making certain that everyone has enough. May it be so, and may it be soon!
In peace, Pastor Jenn



Stewardship 2018: Journey to Generosity

We hope that you have been as inspired as we have been hearing the powerful stewardship testimonies from Pastor Jenn, Sheri Carrano, David Walker, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon and (this Sunday) Leann McEvoy. If you didn't get a chance to read them yet, they are uploaded on our church's website at <http://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html> . Please consider prayerfully your financial commitment to MCC's ministry and mission and let the generosity of God inspire you to be generous in return.

Christian Education

Advent Table On Sunday, December 3rd, there will be a table set up with materials for Advent wreaths, readings, and Advent Calendars for your use this season. This will be available in Wilton Hall during Coffee Hour.



Senior PF Wreath Fundraiser: It's that time of year where we're getting merry and bright! PF is holding our annual wreath fundraiser. If you would like to purchase a wreath, it's \$14 for 12 inch, \$16 for 16 inch and \$2 a bow. PFers will be at coffee hour the next few weeks taking orders. Thank you for your love, support and for making our 2018 mission trip a special one!

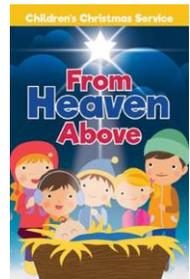


Somethings New This Advent season we are doing two new things, one during Sunday school and one during Jr. PF. On Sunday, December 10th, during regular Sunday school time, all students will be working with wood, hammers, and nails to build mini mangers to prepare for the coming of baby Jesus. Also on December 10th, Jr. PF will be venturing over to Masonicare on Toddy Hill Road in Newtown to participate in a Christmas Program with their residents. **This event will take place from 3:00-4:00 pm. All Jr. PFers please arrive at the church at 2:30 pm so we can depart by 2:45.**

December 9th Enjoy a night out or get some Holiday shopping done while Senior



PF babysits! We have a CPR and first aid certified staff of experienced babysitters, camp counselors, and adults. We will provide pizza, games, movies, and crafts for your little ones while you relax! \$20 a family, December 9th from 3pm-7pm at church. All money goes to our 2018 mission trip! Health concerns? Contact RN Kiersten Rooney at [\(203\) 257-0648](tel:2032570648)



2017 Pageant This year we are having a Worship service based on a hymn written by Martin Luther, "From Heaven Above". This is a whole service experience rather than a Pageant performance. There are opportunities for folks to read dialog, Scripture, or even act in tableau parts. Anyone who wishes to participate is welcome. We are rehearsing on Saturday, December 16th, from 1:00-3:00 pm. If you have any questions or would like to volunteer you can call Debi at 203-444-6760 or email debi@mcc-ucc.org.

Caroling Senior with Senior PF, 5pm December 17! 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. Please remember to dress warmly, bring a flashlight and a \$5 donation to help offset the cost of food



December Sunday school schedule

- 3rd – Class for children in PreK-2nd grade
- 10th – Special class for all ages “building a home for Jesus”
- 17th – Pageant Sunday, no Sunday school
- 24th – No Sunday school

December Jr. PF Schedule

- 3rd – Regular gathering, 6:00-7:30 pm
- 10th – Christmas Program at Masonicare, 3:00-4:00 pm
- 17th – No Jr. PF
- 24th – No Jr. PF

Deacons

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 11th** to ensure delivery by December 24th. 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.



Come talk about life and current events from a spiritual perspective on **Friday, December 1, 7:30 – 9 pm at Monroe Social, 494 Main St, Monroe with Faith on Tap!**

Our topic will be: *A Casino Coming to Bridgeport - Good or Bad Idea, and why?* Some of us play the lottery, just for fun. Or we go to a BINGO night (many churches have them). Others say that they have fun going to places like Foxwoods, and if they budget a certain amount of their discretionary entertainment funds for gambling and don't go beyond that, what's the harm? There has been talk about MGM developing a new casino in downtown Bridgeport. What are the ethical, social, communal ramifications of a casino so close by? Where do you stand?

Mark your calendars and join the conversation! And if you have a friend who may like joining us, please bring them along! Agreement is not required, but civility is essential. Tea-totelers and soda drinkers welcome too! Call/text Clark (203-895-5604) or Rev. Jenn (203-895-5607) Gingras with any questions.

Outreach



The next St. George's supper is December 18th

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 17th 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 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 socks, women and men's gloves and scarves. **Please drop off your donations by December 17th** so the Sunday school kids can assemble a care package for our guests. There is a bin outside of the church office for sock donation.

Help bring peace and cheer this holiday to kids and parents served by Empowering



Children and Families. ECF is a mission supported by MCC's Board of Outreach. Every day in CT, children and families fall through the cracks. ECF is comprised of a caring group of individuals who have experienced all too well the devastation to CT families due to a lack of appropriate services...and have

decided it's time to make a change. We, as a society, can help to fill in the cracks by extending a helping hand out of love, trust, and mutual respect. **ECF is asking for gift cards \$25 or \$50** to help provide a little extra joy this holiday season. There is a poster in Wilton Hall with tags. Contact Leanne McEvoy or Kathy Maiolo with questions.



Heifer International

With your spare change, we can help families support themselves and others through the purchases of livestock and plants that will go to bettering their present situation and then providing for a future that allows them to work on their own. Money will be collected during coffee hour and can be placed in collection jar on the coffee table. By the end of December, Morning Circle will pool the change and send out a check. This is a great way to start off the holiday with a donation to something special with the help of everyone from the congregation. Please contact Susie Cuseo with any questions at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or at thecuseos@yahoo.com

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. 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!



Food Pantry
Donations Needed



Please Help Support A Project From The Heart. It Would Mean So Much For Our Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan To Receive Care Packages From MCC. We need toiletries such as deodorant and shampoo, toothbrushes, and non-perishables items such as cookies (in boxes) beef jerky, puzzle books, playing cards and snack items. If you have any questions please contact Miriam Zalenski at 203-261-8550 or bigred722@sbcglobal.net

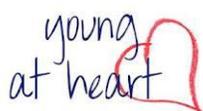
Fellowship



December 3rd at 5pm - Community Tree Lighting on the Green Gather with our friends from St. Peter's to light the Christmas Tree on our shared green. It's a wonderful change to become spiritually grounded during what is often a hectic season. The tree lighting will be followed in Wilton Hall for coffee and cookies. Please bring a flashlight and dress warmly!



Your Board of Christian Fellowship is asking for baked goods for the coffee hour following the tree lighting on December 3rd. Please drop off your goodies in the kitchen and join us in Wilton Hall for fellowship and Holiday cheer.



Date of Young at Heart – 28th of December! A summit meeting was held at the last YAH and the decision was made that since by the 28th, the Christmas shopping and cooking would be completed and the inter-holiday lull would be setting in, we would stick with the 4th Thursday as usual – the 28th (not the date in the Deacons' letter). Location TBA. RSVP to Arlene or Vaughan 203-345-3637

2017 MCC Men's Weekend Retreat ~ Friday, January 12 through Sunday, January 14 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.



Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

- ✚ **December 13th 7:30pm** America's First Daughter by Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie~ Host: Linda Fracassini
- ✚ **January 17th-7:30pm** A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles ~ Host TBD
- ✚ **February 21st-7:30pm** The Women in the Castle by Jessica Shattuck ~ Host TBD
- ✚ **March date TBD** Under Heaven's Shining Stars by Jean Grainger~Host TBD



Rachel's Well Advent Party

Join the ladies of Rachel's Well as we take a deep breath together before the business of the season at our informal Advent party on Monday, December 4th at 7:30 at the Parsonage. Please bring an appetizer or beverage to share. We will make an easy, festive ornament. All are welcome, always!



Morning Circle invites the women of the congregation to their last meeting of the year on Wednesday, December 13. We will meet in the church parking lot at 11:30AM to carpool to My Place in Newtown for our annual Christmas luncheon. You are welcome to meet up there and gather for some yuletide cheer. Please bring in a specialty holiday treat donation for the Food Pantry. Gift tags for the Giving Tree were handed out and all wrapped gifts with attached gift tags need to be brought in by Sunday, December 3rd. Morning Circle wishes everyone a wonderful holiday season and a most productive 2018. We will not meet in January or February. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, March 4, 2018 at 11AM. Please contact Jackie Bleakney with any questions at [203-268-5275](tel:203-268-5275)

Community News

The Coalition Against Casino Expansion will meet at 12pm on Thursday, December 7th for a luncheon at the Catholic Center, 238 Jewett Ave, Bridgeport to discuss the economic and social impact of a proposed casino in Bridgeport. If you would like to attend please RSVP by November 30th to Michele Mudrick michelem@ctuucc.org. For more information www.nomorecasinosinct.org or on Facebook: Nomorecasinosinct



Peace Vigil: The United Methodist Church of Monroe invites us to attend a Peace Vigil on December 14th at 7 p.m. at their church, located at 515 Cutler’s Farm Road in Monroe. All are welcome. Please see Pastor Jenn with any questions.

Thanks to Kelsey Maiolo and her fiancé Rob, who participated in the 2nd Annual REPS4Food fundraiser and raised over \$800 for the Monroe Food Pantry! Kelsey Deadlifted 115 lbs. 16 times and Rob Bench Pressed 150 lbs. 23 times! They also bought and delivered all of the groceries to the Monroe Food Pantry in time for the Thanksgiving holiday! Awesome job!

Thanks to **Peggy Villani** for reminding us in worship on November 19th that the ground for Rexford House was broken 50 years ago! Here is an excerpt from the historical article that she referenced in her announcement:

The Building of Monroe Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

*Member Jean Loveland originally wrote the following history in 1967.
It has been updated to include more recent information.*

... By 1956, the church facilities were outgrown, except for the meeting house itself. In order to accommodate the needs of an expanding membership, a fund drive was conducted. With the monies raised, new school rooms and other facilities were added to Beardsley Hall along Route 111.

Even though there were multiple expansions in the past, the church was in need of additional space. Study groups and building committees worked on a new construction plan to meet those needs. Ground was broken on Thanksgiving Sunday, November 19, 1967 for a new building and in 1968 Rexford House opened.

The town of Monroe continued to grow over the next decade and a half. It became evident the next building that needed expansion was the meeting house. In 1985, worship services were now held in what is known as Wilton Hall and ground was broken to enlarge the meeting house. Additional pews were installed, a handicap entrance provided, the balcony opened and the interior of the building was restored to as near as possible to its original appearance. On March 2, 1986 the meeting house was re-opened and the first worship service was held in the newly renovated building.



Waiting & Watching
 Advent 2017
 at The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC

Date	Event
December 3	10 am Advent Worship <i>"Hope for Those Who Wait"</i> , Advent Calendars available 5 pm Community Tree Lighting with St. Peter's, hot beverages & cookies (Wilton Hall) 5 pm Senior PF 6:00pm Junior PF
December 4	7:30 pm Rachel's Well Advent Party (Parsonage)
December 10	10 am Advent Worship <i>"Peace for Those Who Are Weary"</i> , special Sunday school program 2 – 5 pm Open House Christmas Party at the Parsonage, come share Christmas cheer! 3 – 4 pm Jr. PF Christmas Program at Masonicare in Newtown 5 pm Senior PF
December 13	9:30 am Retired Men's Christmas Breakfast (King's Restaurant, Newtown) 11:30 am Morning Circle Christmas Lunch (My Place, Newtown) 7:30 pm Book Club <i>"America's First Daughter"</i> (Fracassini's home)
December 14	9:30 am Bible Study Christmas Brunch (Parsonage) 7 pm Community Peace Vigil at UMC Monroe, 515 Cutler's Farm Road
December 17	8:45 am Advent Worship Service <i>"Joy for Those Who Are Watching"</i> 9:30 am Christmas Fellowship Hour, on exhibit: <i>The Gratrix Family's Antique Chrismons</i> 10 am Christmas Pageant Worship Service 11 am Pastoral Care Team Christmas Lunch (Dineson) 5 – 8:30 pm Christmas Caroling with Senior PF, all PF'ers (past & present) welcome to join us for pizza (\$5) and singing in the community
December 18	3:45 pm St. George's Supper, Christmas Edition – MCC is collecting socks to give out as gifts for the dinner, please bring to the office by December 17
December 24	10 am Advent Worship Service <i>"Love for Those Who Are Wounded"</i> 7 pm Christmas Eve Family Service <i>"Hope for Those Who Are Willing"</i> 11 pm Lessons & Carols by Candlelight
December 28	12 pm Young Adult Christmas Brunch (Parsonage) 12 pm Young At Heart Lunch (Location TBD)
December 31	10 am Worship
January 6	5-8 pm Epiphany Party – potluck supper and activities; receive Star Word for the year
January 7	10 am Young Adult Sunday

MCC Community Calendar

Fri. Dec. 1st

7:30pm Faith on Tap at Monroe Social

Week of Dec. 3rd

First Sunday in Advent: Hope

10:00am Worship with Communion

5:00pm Tree Lighting on the Green

5:30pm Refreshments in Wilton Hall

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult PF

Mon. Dec. 4th

7:30pm Rachel's Well Advent Party (Parsonage)

Tues. Dec. 5th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Dec. 6th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Dec. 7th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Dec. 10th

Second Sunday in Advent: Peace

10:00am Worship

2-5pm Parsonage Open House

3:00pm Jr PF at Masonic Care

5:00pm Senior PF

Tues. Dec. 12th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Dec. 13th

9:30am Retired Men (King's)

11:00am Morning Circle (My Place)

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

7:30pm MCC Book Club (Fracassini home)

Thurs. Dec. 14th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Dec. 17th

Third Sunday in Advent: Joy

8:45am Worship

9:30am Christmas Coffee Hour

10:00am Pageant

11:15am Outreach Meeting (Kitchen)

12:00pm Pastoral Care Team Luncheon (Wilton)

5:00pm Christmas Caroling

6:00pm Adult PF

Mon. Dec. 18th

3:45pm St. Georg's Supper

Tues. Dec. 19th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

7:00pm Bereavement Group (Dineson)

Thurs. Dec. 21st

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Dec. 24th

Fourth Sunday in Advent: Joy

10:00am Worship

Christmas Eve

7:00pm Traditional Family Worship

11:00pm Lessons & Carols by Candlelight

*The church office will be closed from Monday
December 25th -Tuesday Jan. 2nd*

Thurs. Dec. 28th

12:00pm Young Adult Brunch at the
Parsonage

12:00am Young at Heart (Location TBD)

Week of Dec. 31st

10:00am Worship

Wed. Jan. 3rd

6:30pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Jan. 4th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Sat. Jan. 6th

5:00pm Epiphany Party (Wilton Hall)