



THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

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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
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July 1, 2017

Child Development MCC Style

Our church recently celebrated our 46th Annual Strawberry Festival. This event is a cornerstone event for our community, not only for the families and friends of the Monroe Congregational Church, but for the town of Monroe itself. Over 100 vendors pack the green, bringing handmade crafts to sell. Over 3,000 visitors spend time with us, in an amazing 17 hour shortcake extravaganza, complete with music, games and delicious food (strawberries and otherwise).



The Strawberry Festival is nothing less than a marathon faith formation – trust building – community strengthening – holy season. The welcome we provide to our guests defines who we are as a people of faith. It’s like a booster shot of vitality. And we can only pull it off because most of the ‘people in the steeple’ make it a priority. All of us are pulled in so many directions this time of year, but last weekend proves that together, we can work miracles.

Proceeds from the Strawberry Festival allow us to be bold and generous givers in our wider community. Meet Debra, who recently graduated a Bridgeport high school and received an academic award. What an amazing accomplishment. Who knows what lies ahead for her? Will she become a doctor, or a lawyer? Or perhaps she will train to be a teacher, or maybe an engineer.

According to a 2016 CT Post [Article](#); *"Bridgeport’s 63.6 percent graduation rate for the Class of 2015 – a sharp drop from the 71.5 for the Class of 2014 – appears to give it the lowest four-year graduation rate among school districts in the state."*

Poverty affects children under the age of 18 especially hard. Kids from poorer neighborhoods are more likely to struggle academically. Perhaps this is because their parents are out of the home working a couple of minimum wage jobs just to get by. Or their electricity was cut off. Or they have to move from cheap apartment to cheap apartment to make ends meet. Maybe one of their

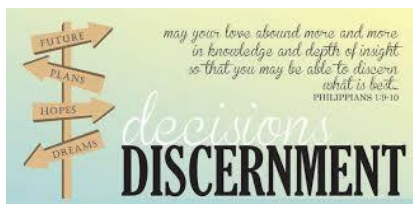
parents is incarcerated. Or they went to bed hungry and taking tests on an empty stomach is really distracting.

Our church has sponsored Debra's family over the years through our ties with **Covenant to Care**, a program that connects faith organizations with a social worker working in Bridgeport. The generosity of those who give their time and efforts to our Strawberry Festival, and give money to the church through their gifts and pledges of financial support, allows our community to directly impact children like Debra enough to curtail the obstacles that systemic poverty might place in their way.

So the next time you savor the sweet taste of a fresh picked strawberry, think of the sweetness of what has and can be done through your faith community, and give thanks.

Peace, Pastor Jenn

So, Debi's a Member in Discernment..... What does that Mean?



ALL of us in the Christian church are called by God to live and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are all called to direct our time, talents, treasure, and thoughts toward God and the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. In 1 Corinthians 12 we are told that *"God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful and all gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God who decides who gets what, and when."*

For a few years now, I have felt a deeper call or a nudge if you will. I know God is calling me, but I don't know to what or where so now I am in a partnership with MCC and the Fairfield East Association to discern this call, a Member in Discernment or MiD. Over the next year, with the help of a Spiritual Director, MCC, and a Mentor, I will be asking God and myself these questions: "How am I called to be Christ's servant to the service of others?"; "What does the church need from me in order to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil?"; "Am I called to authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ?".

There are currently three forms of authorized ministry in the United Church of Christ: commissioned ministry, licensed ministry and ordained ministry:

- A **commissioned minister** is authorized by an Association of the United Church of Christ to perform "specific church-related ministry which is recognized by that Association but does not require ordination or licensure." Typically, commissioned ministers do not perform

sacramental ministry but are engaged in ministries (e.g. education, music, nursing) that the denomination values as part of its mission and ministry.

- A **licensed minister** is authorized by an Association of the United Church of Christ "to perform specific duties in a designated local church or within that Association, mainly preaching and conducting services of worship for a designated time." Licensed ministry is frequently authorized, for example, when a local church needs pastoral and sacramental leadership but an ordained minister is not available.
- An **ordained minister** is authorized by an Association of the United Church of Christ to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership.

I am focusing on either commissioned or ordained ministry, but in the end of this discernment I very well might find that I am not being called to authorized ministry. I am excited for this time, both for myself and for you – the great people of MCC as we get to be on this journey together! So I ask of you all to pray for this time of discernment and blessings on the outcome – I’ll keep you posted. If you have any questions or if you’d just like to chat just let me know. Your sister in Christ, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon

Senior Pilgrim Fellowship Mission Trip News!

Senior PF is going on our mission trip to Chicago on July 8th! We’re really looking forward to partnering with H.O.M.E.(Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for the Elderly, www.homeseniors.org), an organization that assists low-income seniors in Chicago. We will be painting interior rooms for homeowners, and we’ve recently learned that we need to supply the paint and materials to get the job done. If you are able to help by loaning (mark clearly) or giving us the following, we would be very grateful!

- Canvas drop cloths (to protect from splatter)
- Brushes (interior, all types)
- Rollers, roller inserts, trays
- Gift Cards to Home Depot, so we can buy the paint!

Donations can be left in the Church office. Please message me if you have any questions, or call Pastor Jenn at 203-268-9327. Many thanks for supporting us as we help our soon-to-be friends in Chicago!

Deacons



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 **July 9th at 9AM** St. Peter’s will host us on their side of the green
- On **August 6th at 10AM** We will host St. Peter’s on our side of the green, with an ice cream social following service (thanks, Fellowship!)

2017 Summer Sermon Series, "Our UCC Faith" explores in depth the UCC Statement of Faith's seven theological statements that every UCC church holds in common. Included are some scripture texts, which can be used for advance study and reflection.



July 2 - Heaven on Earth AND Eternal Life

You promise to all who trust your forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

- Texts: Matthew 20:1-16; Colossians 3:12-17

July 23 - Called to Community

You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

- Texts: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-16

July 30 - Guided & Bound by the Spirit (w/St. Peter's on the Green)

You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

- Texts: John 20:19-23; Galatians 5:13-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Aug 6 - Jesus Christ, Human + Divine

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

- Texts: John 1:1-18; Mark 6:30-32; John 2:1-11, 13-16

Aug 20 - God Loves, Pushes (and Judges?)

You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

- Texts: Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 130; Matthew 25:31-40

Aug 27 - A Seeking, Saving, Still-Speaking God

You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

- Texts: Romans 5:12-21; Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75; Jeremiah 2:4-13

Sep 10 - Created in the Image of God

You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

- Texts: Genesis 1:1-2:4a; Genesis 2:4b-25; Deuteronomy 30:11-20

Join the MCC Scripture Reading Team!



Would you like to read the weekly scripture at church on Sunday for the congregation? Making a commitment to read scripture aloud is one way of growing in faith. Not everyone is able to commit to an in-person group Bible study, so by learning more about the text you will be reading helps keep skills sharp! You will be scheduled to read every few months, and if something comes up you will have a list of people to call to switch weeks. You will receive the scripture reading prior to your scheduled date along with a copy of the corresponding bulletin. If you are interested in joining the team, please contact Melissa at secretary@mcc-ucc.org or 203-268-9327 By July 30. A new fall schedule will be sent mid-August. Thank you!

Christian Education

“Superheroes of the Bible”



Moses? Deborah? David? Jesus? Superheroes? Absolutely! All children age 4-6th grade are invited to Vacation Bible School at Monroe Congregational Church July 31st-August 4th to participate in Superheroes of the Bible – a sort of Justice League of our own. Please register your children now! We are also in need of volunteers of all ages.

This year we are also going to be focusing on mission, after all, every Superhero has their mission, right? The kids will have two primary mission foci, the Refugee crisis and Hunger in our own backyard. On Thursday, the children will tour our Giving Garden and maybe pick some veggies or water. They will also have a produce drive on that day for donations to be given to Bridgeport Rescue Mission. To address the Refugee crisis on our final day of VBS we will be assembling Church World Service Hygiene Kits so we are asking the congregation for donations for the kits. Please bring all donations to the church **by Wednesday, August 2nd!**

We are collecting:

- Hand towels measuring approx 15" x 28" to 16" x 32" (no fingertip, bath, dish towel or microfiber)
- Washcloths
- Wide-tooth combs
- Fingernail or toenail clippers
- Bath-size bar of soap in the wrapper
- Toothbrushes in the package

If you have any questions, please contact Debi Mastroni-Kenyon at debi@mcc-ucc.org.

Summer Sunday School at MCC



We once again will be having Summer Sunday School for children in Pre-K thru 3rd grade. This will be a one room Sunday School set up so all of the children will be together. Our theme this year is “Do What Matters – the United Church of Christ” and the children will be learning about six core values of the UCC! Here is the Schedule:

July 2nd – “We Are People of Extravagant Welcome”

July 9th – NO Summer Sunday School, worship on the Green with St. Peter’s

July 16th – “We Belong to Christ”

July 23rd – “We Are One at Baptism and Table”

July 30th – “We Are a People of Covenant”

August 6th – “Learning with St. Peter’s”

August 13th – “All Ages Extravaganza”

August 20th – “We Give Thanks by Working for a Just and Loving World”

August 27th – “We Listen for a Still-speaking God”

Trustees



Help MCC Pave Its Way to a Brighter Future!

Here is your opportunity to help us upgrade the MCC campus and ALSO honor a local business, friend, colleague, family member, or loved one by sponsoring the installation of a personalized, engraved brick! The Trustees are launching a "buy a brick campaign" to help finance the cost of replacing



a deteriorated walkway running alongside Rexford House. Each standard-size, 4" x 8" brick is \$125, and allows three lines of text comprised of eighteen characters each. Order forms (and an online option) will be available soon. For further information, please contact the church office or Mark Barnhart at msbarnhart515@gmail.com.



It's summertime, and while many of you will be enjoying summer vacations, the work of MCC continues. Please do what you can to stay current on your pledge payments over the summer months, even though you might not be able to attend Sunday services. You can arrange for electronic payment from your bank, or via the "Donate" page on our web site: <http://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html>

Thanks for your support of MCC and have a great Summer! Sincerely – John O'Rourke, Receiver

Outreach



It's that time again...the next St. George's supper is July 3rd Please look for the poster in Wilton Hall to sign up to help. **Please bring all food to the church by July 2nd 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

Fellowship

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

- ✚ **July 19th-7:30pm** Small Great Things by Jodi Picoult~Hosted by Sue Smelzer
- ✚ **August 16th- 7:30pm** Victoria by Daisy Goodwin~Hosted by Peggy Villani

Young at Heart will gather at Valley Diner, 636 New Haven Ave, Derby CT 06418 for food and fellowship on Thursday, July 27 at 12 noon. If you are retired or otherwise have the free time, please come and join us. All are welcome. Please RSVP by July 25th to Marian Schmitz 203-929-4802



Back By Popular Demand: MCC MidSummer Movies!



On Sunday, August 6th at 7:00pm we invite you, your kids, your family and friends to a fun & free night at the MCC Midsummer Movies! We will be showing two films simultaneously in two locations on our church's campus.

The Color of Friendship by Disney is a G-rated family friendly film. In 1977, two girls from opposite sides of the world come together and change each other's lives as a white South African girl finds herself spending a term with a black family in America. Each girl questions the assumptions she had as a friendship is built between them.

Disturbing the Peace by Reconsider Films follows the journey of former enemy combatants; Israeli soldiers from elite units and Palestinian fighters who have joined together to say "Enough". This documentary follows their transformational path to becoming active participants in the Middle East non-violent peace movement.

Popcorn and beverages will be served. All are welcome, always!

Musicfest Committee



Save the date! The 3rd Annual Monroe MusicFest is in a new month at a new time on a new day. This year, MusicFest is on SUNDAY, September 24, 2017 from 1 to 7. As before, keep in touch through: <http://monroemusicfest.blogspot.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/MonroeMusicFest/> . This year in addition to talented musicians, MusicFest will have local artists and artisans displaying and selling their art. Mark your calendars and come enjoy this fun event

Town of Monroe Bible Reading Marathon

Dear Monroe Congregational Church,

I again have the privilege of coordinating the 2017 Bible Reading Marathon, August 10 – 12th from 8am to 8pm at the Monroe Town Gazebo. Last year we were blessed to have several of your members participate. A sign-up sheet has been posted in Wilton Hall with the reserved time slots for MCC: Thursday, August 10, 10-12 noon and Saturday, August 12, 12 – 2 pm. Please feel free to invite others you know would have interest. God's blessings always, Betty Anne Casaretti, bacasaretti@att.net or [203-339-5687](tel:203-339-5687)

MCC Community Calendar

Week of July 2nd

Emilia Lynne Manley's Baptism
10:00am Worship with Communion
6:00pm Senior PF (Scavenger Hunt)

Mon. July 3rd

3:45pm St. George's Supper

Tues. July 4th

Office Closed - Independence Day

Fri. July 8th-16th

Senior PF Mission Trip to Chicago

Week of July 9th

9:00am Worship on the Green
St. Peter's to Host

Tues. July 11th

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of July 16th

Guest Preacher: Will Duchon
10:00am Worship

Tues. July 18th

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. July 19th

7:30pm MCC Book Club at Sue Smelzer's home

Week of July 23rd

10:00am Worship

Tues. July 25th

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of July 30th

10:00am Worship

Mon. July 31-Aug. 4th

9:00am Vacation Bible School

Tues. Aug. 1st

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of Aug. 6th

MCC Hosts Worship with St. Peter's
10:00am Worship with Communion
11:00am Ice Cream Social
7:00pm MCC MidSummer Movies

Tues. Aug. 8th

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Aug. 10th

10:00am Bible Reading Marathon

Pastor Jenn and her family will be on vacation from August 11-19

Sat. Aug. 12th

12:00pm Bible Reading Marathon

Week of Aug. 13th

Guest Preacher: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon
10:00am Worship

Tues. Aug. 15th

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of Aug. 20th

10:00am Worship

Mon. Aug. 21st

3:45pm St. George's Supper

Tues. Aug. 22nd

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of Aug. 27th

10:00am Worship

Tues. Aug. 29th

9:30am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of Sept. 3rd

10:00am Worship with Communion

Mon. Sept. 4th

Office Closed in Observance of Labor Day

Thurs. Sept. 7th

7:15pm Adult Choir