



**THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

STEEPLE

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Monday – Friday
9:00a.m. - 3:30p.m.

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July 1, 2019

Great Job, Everyone!



Wow! You really outdid yourself on Father’s Day Weekend. I wish there was a way to count how many guests and visitors we served at the 48th Annual Strawberry Festival, but it had to be in the thousands. The kitchen pumped out delicious pies and biscuits, while the berries from the fields kept on coming – eventually winding up in delicious smoothies, dipped berries, carefully sorted quarts, and even on a spicy grilled tortilla!

The youth of PF worked as hard as our saints, our kids were kind and gracious waiters and s, everyone contributed in some way, shape or form. So many hands, working behind the scenes all year – stirring bubbling pots of jam, calling vendors, painting yellow strips on sidewalks – there are a lot of folks behind the scenes making it all happen.

And it showed. From the happy faces of the people after they enjoyed a delicious shortcake, to the laughter of children in Game Alley, to the meandering crowds finding the perfect Father’s Day gift at a crafter’s table – people were having so much fun! And there’s nothing quite like the taste of that shortcake at the volunteer dinner or the sound of the choir singing “River in Judea” on Sunday morning.

One thing I consistently hear from visitors is how impressed they are by “Team Red”. Honestly, I think doing an event like the Strawberry Festival takes just as much heart as it does muscle. Yes, we get tired. Sometimes we get great ideas on how to make it better and more successful next year (make sure to write those down!). John and Clark (or whoever is co-chair of the Festival) are always eager to lend an ear about how we can tweak and adapt. We also need area chairs – both new and experienced - so if you feel a pull towards leading an area, please do not hesitate to let them know.

For now, it’s time to take a deep breath. Let’s consider all the blessings we have to share with each other – the time, the love and the laughter – and give thanks. You did that. I hope you are proud of your work at the 48th Annual Strawberry Festival, because you should be!

Have a blessed summer, *Pastor Jenn*

Intergenerational and the Church's Future

I am currently sitting at Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT as I write this article. We just finished worship which was led by 4th and 5th graders at the waterfront. Their interpretation of the Exodus story was AMAZING – the best I have seen in a long time!

To worship WITH children – to learn WITH children – to bask in God's light and love WITH children is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves as adults. One of the things I enjoy most about coming to Clergy Camp is being WITH the children.

To grow up healthy, our children and youth need to be supported and known by at least five adults in addition to their parents or caregivers who are willing to invest time with them personally and spiritually. To maintain youth and vibrancy adults should be known to at least five children and/or youth who are willing to spend time with them.

Being intergenerational is not separating each other by age groups, it is experiential offerings where we are together side by side. These relationships are not only important for children and adults, they are vital to the future of the church.

With this in mind we are offering "God's People at Play: too cool for school" this summer. On Wednesday evenings on July 24th & 31st and August 7th & 14th we will gather for dinner and then have some fun with Jesus' Parables. This is for ALL people of ALL ages! If you haven't signed up yet, please do in Wilton Hall.

"Children are ~~the future of~~ the church."

Peace, Debi

32nd General Synod Approves Replacing Three Southern New England Conferences with One

6/24/2019 By Tiffany Vail

Delegates to the United Church of Christ's national meeting on Monday overwhelmingly approved a request by its three conferences in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island to dissolve and join together to form a new conference.

The vote was 601 to 90, with four delegates abstaining. The new conference, not yet named, will officially come into being on Jan. 1. "I believe that the Holy Spirit is doing a new thing in our midst – provoking us into new forms of church for such a time as this," said the Rev. Jocelyn Gardner Spencer, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, Conn., and moderator of the newly forming conference.

"Building this new institution is an opportunity to reexamine the patterns and practices that hold us back from fully embodying the gospel. We are shifting from independence to interdependence, from ownership to stewardship, from competition to collaboration," Gardner Spencer said.

Two delegates – one from Massachusetts and one from Connecticut – questioned the need for the merger during the floor debate. But others, including two youth from Massachusetts, called the step a necessary adaptation to change. In the days leading up to the vote, staff and board members of the three conferences met with other conference caucuses, spoke at a hearing attended by 70 people, and held countless one-on-one conversations with delegates about the proposal.

One concern repeatedly raised was the concentration of resources, wealth and power in the new southern New England conference, which will comprise approximately 625 churches and 138,000 members and have

about 100 General Synod delegates. Gardner Spencer, presenting the resolution in behalf of its proponents, said this concern had been heard. She assured delegates that internal structures of accountability are being built into the new conference's systems, and that she will seek out relationships to assure external accountability as well.

"We will be dedicated to right and faithful relationship with you as covenant partners. We will use our resources missionally, sharing openly our experiments, mistakes, and learnings," she said. "We will hold power faithfully, not as power over, but as power with — not the power of domination, but the power of solidarity — the power that brings us all together to be a stronger voice for justice, a more whole Body of Christ, more faithful disciples of the Living God."

On Friday morning, the Rev. John Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President, told delegates of the three conferences at their caucus that there were two reasons he was a big fan of the initiative. First, he said, "you declared as part of your missional undertaking that you could do what the Holy Spirit had called you to do better together than apart from one another. And, you believe you have created a greater capacity collectively ... I love that." The second reason, Dorhauer said, is that the three conferences are demonstrating good stewardship in a denomination that is a third of the size it was when it formed in 1957. "I really think what the church has been telling us is that we don't have the resources to fund 38 middle judicatories," he said. "Every level of this denomination — local church, conference, national — we're all trying to right-size our investment in the structure and infrastructure that supports the mission."

The Synod vote has been a long time in the making for the three conferences. "After years of prayers, deliberation and dialogue and, most importantly of all, collaboration among partners, today was a moment of affirmation from the delegates of General Synod," said Connecticut Conference Minister the Rev. Kent Siladi. "We arrived at this moment led by the Spirit of God and convinced that our 'why' as a new Conference is to live the love and justice of Jesus. We move onward together with God's help and our common ministry to make disciples, share God's love and justice; innovate and adapt and build covenant partnerships. Praise God from whom all blessings flow," he said.

Rhode Island Interim Conference Minister the Rev. Marilyn Kendrix said, "We are overjoyed by the positive affirmation of our siblings in Christ and we feel the heavy weight of responsibility to live into our dreams for the UCC in southern New England."

Massachusetts Conference Interim Transitional Conference Minister the Rev. Don Remick said he was "grateful to our UCC family for their support. As we experiment with living together into our 'why' with each other and the Holy Spirit, we are moved even as we are moving. And we commit to our covenant journey as explorers in that uncharted territory of the ever-changing landscape of ministry," he said.

Teaser Alert from Pastor Jenn: There's more to share from Synod! Look for the August Steeple for a reflection and some news about our resolution.

Outreach

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 macaroni & cheese
Boxed rice

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



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!



If you'd like to **give online** during worship (or anytime), simply scan this QR code, which will take you to our VANCO electronic giving page. Thank you so much for your support!

Deacons

We are pleased to welcome back to the pulpit, guest preacher **Rev. Susan M. Pfeil**, on July 14 & 21 and August 18.

Since 1998, Susan has completed five interim pastorates, a specialization that has become more and more vital for churches in transition. Susan was Stated Supply Pastor at First United Church of Christ, Bridgeport 2010-2016. After 122 years of ministry, the Church closed its doors at the end of December 2016. She has just published an article about this closing in Christianity Today, CT Pastors Special Issue April, entitled "*Laying My Church to Rest: How I Learned to Process the Unique Grief of Closing a Church.*" The seeds of ideas for the article were sown in her work at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, from which she graduated in 2017 with a second STM.

In addition to serving in congregations as guest preacher for over two years, including pulpit supply at United Congregational Church, Richards Ave., Norwalk, since January 2019, Susan makes weekly visits her grandchildren in New York City.

The Gospel Goes to Broadway: Summer Sermon Series

Life is full of big questions, and people trying to find their answers. This summer, we will be exploring some of them by listening to some of musical theater's greatest hits and contemplating what the Spirit has to tell us through music, story, prayer and connections. Hope to see you there!



July 7 - Who Am I?

1 Peter 1:3-7
Tomorrow (Annie), featuring vocalists Kate & Carrie Wittenauer

July 28 - What's my purpose?

Psalm 139:1-18
Corner of the Sky (Pippin), featuring vocalist Kristina Logan

August 4 - What's good?

Philippians 4:1-9, Matthew 5:38-48

The Impossible Dream (Man of La Mancha), featuring vocalist Harrison Gilberti

August 11 - Why do bad things happen to good people?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Ephesians 5:15-17

Sunrise, Sunset (Fiddler on the Roof), featuring Jack Campbell on cello and vocalist Mike Pfalzgraf

August 25 - What really matters?

Mark 12:28-34

You Will Be Found (Dear Evan Hansen), featuring vocalist Kelsey Kaminsky

September 1 - Is anybody out there?

I Corinthians 13:1-8a; I John 4:7-12,19

Where is Love? (Oliver), featuring vocalist Jake Minsch

Christian Education



The Board of Christian Education is looking for people to teach Summer Sunday School! There is a Signup sheet in Wilton Hall and the dates available are **July 14th, July 21st, July 28th, August 11th, August 18th**

God's People @ Play: Too Cool for School! During this Lenten season we went on a journey to learn more about Communion in our Cross Generation "Come to the Table".



This has been a wonderful and meaningful time and we have decided to continue this by trying something different in place of our traditional Vacation Bible School. We will meet over four

Wednesday evenings in July and August for a time of dinner, faith filled activities, fellowship, and lots of fun! Dates are July 24th and 31st and August 7th and 14th from 6:00 PM to 8pm are open to anyone that wants to attend. Whether you are 4 or 84 (or older or younger) this is for you! We will be having a fun and faith filled time with Jesus and some of his parables! Sign up in Wilton Hall. If you have any questions, please contact Debi at debi@mcc-ucc.org or 203-444-6760.

WANTED



One of the fastest selling JAMs in the EAST.

Better known as “Rhubarb”, “The Red Bandit” or “Sweet Lady Celery”.

This vegetable is wanted by the JAM committee so that they can be prepared for early spring JAM sessions when Rhubarb is in hiding..

Have Rhubarb to spare? Clean it, chop it, add a little sugar, low boil for 45 mins, cool.

Keep frozen until the Jam trials next year.

MCC Community Calendar

Week of June 30th

Guest Preacher: Rev. Susan Pfiel

10:00 am Worship

5:00 pm Senior PF

Tues. July 2nd

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. July 4th

*Office Closed in Observance of
Independence Day*

Week of July 7th

Communion

*The Gospel Goes to Broadway! Featuring
Annie*

10:00 am Worship

5:00 pm Senior PF

Tues. July 8th

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Sat. July 13th through Sun. July 21st

Senior PF Mission Trip to Indianapolis

Week of July 14th

Guest Preacher: Rev. Susan Pfiel

10:00 am Worship

Mon. July 15th

7:30pm MCC Book Club (Dineson Parlor)

Tues. July 16th

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Week of July 21st

Guest Preacher: Rev. Susan Pfiel

10:00 am Worship

Tues. July 23rd

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. July 24th

6:00pm God's People at Play/VBS

Week of July 28th

The Gospel Goes to Broadway! Featuring Pippin

10:00 am Worship

Tues. July 30th

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. July 31st

6:00pm God's People at Play/VBS

Week of Aug. 4th

Communion

*The Gospel Goes to Broadway! Featuring Man of La
Mancha*

10:00 am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Tues. Aug. 5th

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Aug. 7th

6:00pm God's People at Play/VBS

Week of Aug. 11th

The Gospel Goes to Broadway! Fiddler on the Roof

10:00 am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Tues. Aug. 13th

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Aug. 14th

6:00pm God's People at Play/VBS

Week of Aug. 18th

Guest Preacher: Rev. Susan Pfeil

10:00 am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

Mon. Aug. 19th

7:30pm MCC Book Club (Dineson)

Tues. Aug. 20th

9:30 am Mustard Seed Sort & Tag