



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 15, 2017

In one of his many letters, the Apostle Paul says, *"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."* (Hebrews 13:2)

What a strange thing to say! Perhaps he is referring to other times when his ancestors in faith were unaware that they were hosting angelic beings (Abram and Sarai in Genesis 18, Lot in Genesis 19, Gideon in Judges 6, Samson's parents in Judges 1). Or maybe, Paul is giving a word of advice about hospitality or recounting an ancient Jewish proverb which has been lost to time. However this verse came about, it reflects a strong cultural directive that was adhered to in the ancient Hellenic world. Given the harshness of the environment, it would be surprising if the Second-Temple Jews did not, in some way, share a concern for hospitality.

I thought a lot about hospitality this past week in Chicago with the Senior Pilgrim Fellowship. Our hosts, St. Paul's United Church of Christ in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, were so wonderfully accommodating – even in the midst of their VBS week (see an article about that by clicking [here](#).) They provided not only sleeping space but also full access to their kitchen, restroom and shower facilities as well as additional program space for us to have worship, meetings and conversation. Their pastors Matt and Sarah welcomed us with open arms, and when we exhausted our planned worksites in the middle of the week they suggested additional places to serve. I am very grateful for everything they did for us.



There was one member of St Paul's staff who went above and beyond providing our needs. His name is Ed (in the center of the picture to the left) and he is the evening custodian. After coming back and showering on the first day of work, Ed gathered our towels and put them in a dryer. We try to keep our surroundings cleaner than how we found them, but sometimes we forgot and left a phone and charger or a soda can lying around. Ed would gather anything that looked like trash and toss it, and he'd safely lock up any valuable items.

As we enjoyed our final dinner at home base, we had an opportunity to say thank you to Ed and give him a small gift in honor of his service. He choked up a bit when he told us that he asked God to show him a way to serve, and that he was so impressed every night hearing about the

ways we were helping people in the city. He told us that he thought that helping us made him a part of our mission team.

Ed, we found out the day before, lives in one of the nearby city shelters. Although he works nearly full time at 35 hours a week, he is one of the 13.4% of people living in the greater Chicago Metro area that lives with poverty. When we came home in the evening and held group discussions about the realities of poverty and homelessness we encountered in our work, he was listening.

The good news is that Ed wasn't insulted when we voiced some of our stereotypes that didn't fit with his story, and later in the week he was willing to share details about his life that helped us put a human face on an overwhelming issue. The better news is that Ed is moving into a safe and clean apartment this week, and out of the shelter. We sincerely hope that his future remains bright, and may God bless him as he has blessed us.

I'm so grateful for all the people we meet on these mission trip adventures, and the many ways they inspire us. It is so important to connect with and better understand the human beings that live in the places we serve. They are the real angels. Our interactions help us to see how we are all part of wider community that extends far beyond the confines of the area. This helps our young people develop a deeper compassion for others as they learn more about the world and how beautiful and broken it can be. I'm just grateful to be along on their journey.

With much love, *Pastor Jenn*

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 **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!)

Summer Sermon Series



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 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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

Vacation Bible School



“Superheroes of the Bible” Moses? Deborah? David? Jesus? Superheroes? Absolutely! All children age 4 thru 6th grade are invited to participate in Superheroes of the Bible Vacation Bible School at Monroe Congregational Church, 34 Church Street, Monroe, CT, July 31st-August 4th Please register your children now!

VBS Volunteer Training Whether you have signed up to volunteer to help with VBS or not, please stop by at one of our two VBS Training Opportunities this week. Each will be held from 6:30-8:00 on Wednesday, July 19th and Thursday, July 20th. Volunteer whether you have in that past or not – our kids need your help!

VBS Service Opportunity This year at VBS we are going to be focusing on mission and 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 assemble Church World Service Hygiene Kits and we are in need of:

- Hand towels measuring approximately 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

Please bring all donations to the church by Wednesday, August 2nd! 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".



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"

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

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.

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

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



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

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

6:00pm CE Planning Meeting

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

6:00pm Council Planning Meeting @ Kate Parker-Burgard's home

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

Week of Sept. 10th

Homecoming Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:15am Confirmation Informational Meeting (Dineson)

1:00pm MCC Picnic (Wolfe Park)

6:00pm Jr & Sr PF

Wed. Sept. 13th

9:30am Retired Men's Breakfast (Dineson)

11:00am Morning Circle (Dineson)

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Sept. 14th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir