



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

November 1, 2016

On Any Given Sunday

On any given Sunday you make the decision whether or not to leave the to-do list undone, get the family in the car and head off to church. Maybe you carry more prayer requests than you can keep straight in your head. Perhaps the dire predictions you see in the news fills your heart. Like the coffee mug from which you drink, sometimes you come feeling lukewarm and empty.

At some point, you see me stand before you to tell you something like, 'Do not be afraid.' *Really? Don't be afraid?* Here you are, doing everything you can just to keep your head above water, and all you can think is, "how can she dare to say something like that to me?"

Deep down, I think we'd all prefer God's blessings to come in a big-gulp, bottomless cup. But scripture suggests that God prefers to work out of our scarcity. When Elijah needs safety, God sends him to a brook with a flock of ravens. When the brook dries up, God sends him to a widow. When the widow is making her last supper, God won't let the jar of meal hit "E" or the jug of oil run out until there's rain again.

What holds all our sacred stories together is what's at the center of them all. The One who keeps on turning up at the margins of society. The One who makes a way out of no way. The One who would send a messenger to the likes of a starving widow or a pregnant teenager, with a word like 'do not be afraid.' This is the same God who would take the likes of us and make us into a people who would dare to be witnesses of God's love and grace.

I know the message can be hard to hear, especially when grief and current responsibilities weigh your shoulders down. But fear has a way of freezing us in place, and closing us off to each other. That is fear's job: to keep us apart so that we can't recognize others as precious children of God. When we are unable to open our hearts and radically love those with whom we share little in common, the darkness has already won.



So it bears repeating, "Do not be afraid."

You who came to church with your gas gauge on "E." Do not be afraid. Some of us have too.

You who came to Bible study after a week of hearing about a national election gone off the rails. Do not be afraid. We can disagree on politics yet still have enough grace and love for one another to find common ground.

You who stayed home from church because you are wondering how your family is going to hold together and you can't fake happy. Do not be afraid. God is with you where ever you are.

You who have a hard time praying because the news from the doctor still rings in your ear. Do not be afraid. Your community will uphold you as the body of Christ in the world today.

Let me tell you, the cup of God's mercies, the bread of God's goodness, they will not fail you. They won't. God promises you, they won't. So I tell you again, do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. In peace, Pastor Jenn



Go and Do the Same

The theme for this stewardship year is the climactic line from the parable of the Good Samaritan: "Go and Do the Same." (Luke 10:25-37). The implication is that God calls us to "go and do the same" as the Samaritan with all our resources—material, human, and natural.

The Samaritan as Example of Behavior for Stewardship

When I first heard the theme, "God and Do the Same," it sounded like a simple command to follow the example of the behavior of the Samaritan. Jesus used the Samaritan as an illustration of what it means to be faithful to God's purposes. So, at this level, the message of the parable is "Go and do the same kind of things for your neighbor—and your church—that the Good Samaritan did for the person robbed along the road."

In the context of a stewardship campaign, the line includes the meaning, "Go and give the same way the Samaritan gave."

When the Samaritan saw the person who had fallen among thieves at the side of the road, the Samaritan stopped and helped. That earlier traveler was beaten up, bleeding, alone, and abandoned. Today, individuals, households, neighborhoods, and communities are beaten up, bloodied, fallen alongside the road of life, alone, and abandoned. An individual's or household's commitment of time, talent, and money can help the church help them. A pledge can be an act of neighbor-love.

The Samaritan did not have access to a cell phone and EMTs, so the Samaritan took care of the person at the side of the road. Look at what the Samaritan did. The Samaritan personally got involved. The Samaritan took responsibility. And going beyond the moment to a long-term view,

the Samaritan wrote a check to the innkeeper to house and feed the person who fell among thieves while the earlier traveler was regaining strength.

We can easily draw out implications for today. The congregation should go and do the same. The congregation should get personally involved. The congregation should take responsibility. Members of the congregation should write checks that care for our neighbors—for shelters for the homeless, food pantries, and yes, the church.

More than Example of Behavior

At one level, the parable *is* a good example for behavior. That is implied in the last line, “Go and do the same.” But at another level, the parable is more than an illustration for behavior. The parable shows deep response to others and to God’s presence and purposes at the center of the life of the individual and life in community. The parable invokes solidarity based on response to God’s purpose for all in community to experience as much blessing as possible.

God seeks to restore community through a great reunion of the human family so that all might live in solidarity, mutual support, and equality. Those who commit themselves to living according to God’s purposes in community, find that living according to those purposes becomes a blessing for the community as a whole and for the individuals who live according to them. Indeed, the more people live into community life, the more they experience God’s purposes in their immediate worlds.

To go and do the same as the Samaritan is to feel the world from the standpoint of others, and to respond in accord with God’s realm purposes of restoration and renewal.

How can you feel the world from the standpoint of others?

How can you participate with God in helping the world become more like the realm of God?

Peace and blessings to you all!

Debi M-K

OCWM Moment for Mission, from Julie McClenathan

Last Monday night about 15 of us gathered with Rev. Kent Siladi, the Connecticut Conference Minister for the United Church of Christ. He mentioned that among the 253 member churches in CT, our church in particular is known for our vitality, our generosity, our work with youth and faith formation, and our leadership development. One of the ways we have been generous has been through our commitment to Our Church’s Wider Mission (also known as OCWM).

Through our OCWM support, we encourage and uplift local churches where lives are being changed. One example of this is in providing an insurance board that helps local churches like ours in the event something happens to our property – like a few years ago when the beam in the ceiling of this building was found to be cracked and needed repair. Our UCC Insurance Board was there so that we could file a claim and get the work done quickly.

Through our OCWM support, we identify, recruit, educate and support clergy leaders who inspire others, one example of this is found in the expertise of our regional minister, Rev. Dr. Michael Ciba, who has advised us through seven clergy and staff searches within the last 10 years. Without his wisdom, support and coaching, things would have been very different for our church during those transition times.

Through our OCWM support, we change lives through our global partnerships, missionaries and advocacy work, one example of this is the Ecumenical Accompanier program in Israel/Palestine, where Pastor Jenn will serve as a short term missionary during her sabbatical this coming spring.

So, as the chair of Outreach I'm just here to say thank you for making Our Church's Wider Mission such a priority at MCC. You can learn more by visiting our church's website (www.mcc-ucc.org) and clicking on the link right there on our home page for the new Connecticut Conference OCWM video.

2017 Stewardship Campaign "Go and Do the Same"



At one level, we could infer that our "job" as a Christian is to do for others the way that the "good" Samaritan did for the man who fell among robbers. Be kind, compassionate, generous, and concerned for others in need.

Give of yourself. Make a difference.

At another level, our commitment is not just to a particular set of actions or behaviors, but to a total way of being. We are called to be agents of transformation in the unfolding Realm of God around us. Our commitment becomes a response to God's good work in individuals and the church community as a whole.

Recently, letters with pledge forms were sent to all MCC's members and friends. Pledge cards can also be found in the pews. Special speakers will give testimony beginning on November 6th through Commitment Sunday on November 27th. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you for prayerfully considering how to financially support the Monroe Congregational Church in 2017. ~ Your Stewardship Committee, Scott Young (Chair), Roy Nealon, John O'Rourke (Receiver)

Congregational Conversation: Nov 20th

Each fall we enter our church's budgeting season in preparation for the next year of ministry at the Monroe Congregational Church. We hold this informal congregational conversation in November so that everyone has a chance to ask questions about the process, individual board allocations and even make recommendations which help shape our priorities as a plan is developed. No votes are taken, but ideas are shared. Knowing this financial information ahead of time helps us be better informed prior to our Annual Congregational Meeting in January. Please join us in Wilton Hall on Sunday, November 20th, 2016 at 11:15 and join in on the discussion!



Fellowship

Save the Date: Mission Trip Memories Potluck Saturday November 19th, 6pm, Wilton Hall Come and celebrate our mission trip memories at a fabulous pot-luck dinner! Please bring a non-perishable food item for the food pantry. Last names beginning A-G please bring an side dish or salad, H-P an entrée and Q-Z a dessert. Please RSVP to the church office 203-268-9327.

New Photo Directory from LifeTouch!



Our church is getting ready to create a new photo directory and we need you to help make it complete! A professional photographer from LifeTouch will be in Wilton Hall on December 1st, 2nd and 3rd to take pictures for our 2017 Photo Directory. By participating, you will receive a free 8x10 photo (and any extra photos you order) in time for Christmas! Of course, you'll also receive our new 2017 Photo Directory.

Sign up for your professional photography session in one of these three convenient ways:

1. Schedule your appointment online at: appt.lifetouch.com
2. Look for sign-up tables on Sunday, 10/30, 11/06 and 11/13 at coffee hour following worship in Wilton Hall
3. Or for further assistance, call coordinator Judy Coward at [203-881-8562](tel:203-881-8562)

Our new 2017 Photo directory won't be complete without you. Sign up today!

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

🌟 **November 16th-7:30pm** Everything I Never Told You by Celeste Ng
Hosted by Peggy Villani

MORNING CIRCLE will be meeting once again on Wednesday, November 9 in Dineson Parlor at 11am. We will have our Director of Faith Formation, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon speak with the ladies. Please bring a donation specifically for Thanksgiving for the Food Pantry as well as a sandwich for lunch while we have a short business meeting. Gift tags for the Giving Tree will be handed out as soon as we get them. Wrapped gifts with the attached tag can be left in the church office by Sunday, December 4th. Contact Jackie Bleakney with any questions at [203-268-5275](tel:203-268-5275).

Thank you for Giving the Gift of Sight by cleaning out your junk drawers for prescription sunglasses, cases and glasses. They will be cleaned, checked and delivered worldwide to those who will then have a better outlook on life. Deadline for dropping off your donations in the basket located on the table at coffee hour is Sunday, October 30th. Please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions.

Seeking Prayer Partners!!!! Sign up in Wilton Hall and return completed forms in the slot provided. Being a prayer partner is soooooo easy. All you need to do is keep the name of the person (you receive in the mail) in your prayers and thoughts. Find them before service, strike up a short conversation, seek them out while passing the peace, share a cup of coffee or tea with them in Wilton Hall after service. Perhaps you would like to send them a card or note using the church's address as the return. This all culminates to the "big reveal" potluck luncheon in May 2017. It has been a great experience shared by many of our congregation over the last several years. Please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions. Look for your Prayer Partners' name in the mail the first week of November.



Sponsor a Month of Coffee Hours Would you like to help the people who come to worship get to know each other? What if we told you that sponsoring a month of coffee at the low, low price of \$40? Our coffee is fair trade certified through Equal Exchange. You will not only get that warm and fuzzy feeling of doing something generous, but you can use your sponsorship to honor loved ones – a dedication goes on a plaque and in the bulletin. Please make checks payable to MCC with "coffee sponsor" in the memo field. Thank you.



Due to Thanksgiving, the November Young at Heart lunch gathering will be on the 17th, at noon. Location: Outback, 698 Bridgeport Ave, Shelton. Please RSVP to Arlene Redmond or Vaughan Askue ([203-345-3637](tel:203-345-3637); arleneredmond@gmail.com, or at church). Young at Heart was conceived as fellowship for those "who remember WWII" – most/many of us who attend don't – all are welcome. So if you want companions for lunch on the 17th, come join us.



Trustees

Fall Workday Saturday, Nov. 12th at 8:00 am - We have plenty of fall cleanup jobs to tackle so please come out and spend a few hours helping to spruce up our campus. Breakfast will be provided. If you are able to assist, please contact Dave Allen at dallen9457@att.net



Christian Education

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar

November

6th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm

13th – No Jr PF

20th – Church Decoration at 6:00 pm

27th – NO Regular Gathering



Sunday School Calendar

November

6th – Sunday school classes grades K-3

13th – Regular Sunday school classes

20th – Regular Sunday school classes

27th – NO Sunday school



2016 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; PFers will be at coffee hour the next few weeks taking orders. Thank you for your love, support and for making our 2017 mission trip a special one!

12 inch wreaths - \$14

16 inch wreaths - \$16

Bows - \$2

Advent Opportunities

Eco-Advent Wreaths

The First Sunday of Advent is on November 27th, which is also Commitment Sunday! We will be committing our support to MCC for 2017 and we will also be committing ourselves to pause and reflect about what it means to be Disciples of Christ awaiting his birth on Christmas Day.

There will be a Pancake Breakfast after worship to celebrate our commitments and there will be an opportunity to assemble an Eco-Advent Wreath for you to use at home. This wreath is 100% biodegradable and meant to be composted or simply thrown outside!

Items Needed from you are cardboard egg cartons. Just bring your cardboard egg cartons to church and give them to Debi.

Advent Wreath Candle Lighters



During Advent we will light a candle each week symbolizing our patient waiting for the Light of Christ to break forth into our world. We would like for families or other groups within the church to participate – we provide the Liturgy! We are in need of lighters on November 27th and December 11th at 10:00 am, December 18th at 8:15 am and 10:00 am, and on Christmas Eve at 7:00 pm and 11:00 pm.

Please contact Debi at 203-444-6760 or debi@mcc-ucc.org if you'd like to light the candles.

The Christmas Pageant

This year the CE Board will be presenting a Christmas Tableau entitled "The Birth of Christ: as told in Scripture, Carols, and Tableau". The majority of the cast is non-speaking parts, but there will be two Narrators and five Scripture Readers. If you would like to be a Narrator or Scripture Reader, please contact Debi at 203-444-6760 or debi@mcc-ucc.org.



Outreach

Thanksgiving Baskets for Covenant to Care

The board of Christian Outreach has received a request for Thanksgiving Food Baskets again this year from our social workers at DCF. Last year we supplied Thanksgiving Food Baskets for 30 families in the care of the Connecticut Department of Children & Family Services -thanks to all of YOU! We hope everyone will help out again this year! Donations of any amount will be appreciated. A \$30 donation will provide 1 hungry family with a *Covenant to Care Thanksgiving Food "Basket"* which contains:



1 \$10 Gift Card for a turkey (If we raise extra money or I can find extra good deals I can purchase a \$15 gift card!), 2 cans of gravy, 1 cranberry sauce, 1 stuffing, 1 bag of fresh potatoes, 1 can yams, 1 bag of fresh carrots, 1 large can of corn, 1 box of brownie mix, 1 fruit cocktail, 1 Kraft Mac & Cheese (or More), Green Bean Casserole: 2 cans green beans 14.5 oz, 1 French's Fried Onions 2.8 oz, 1 cream of mushroom soup

Please make your check payable to M.C.C, and note: "Covenant to Care -Thanksgiving Baskets" THANK YOU! Please make your donation by Sunday, November 13th. Questions? Call Diane Prall 268-1041 Thank you for your support of Covenant to Care!



Fill a Tent" Coat Drive for Bridgeport Rescue Mission All Scouts associated with The Monroe Congregational Church will be teaming up to help. Bridgeport Rescue Mission's annual Great Thanks Giving Project is widely recognized as our region's most impactful holiday relief outreach effort. Serving more than 3000 families each November, the event distributes frozen turkeys and warm winter coats. The Mission teams up with the Bridgeport Webster Bank Arena, various corporate partners and more than 300 volunteers and over a six day period in 2015 distributed 3200 turkeys and 15,000 coats to our neighbors in need.

We are inviting Scouts from Boy Scout Troop 63, Cub Scout Pack 262, Crew 63 and all Girl Scouts from MCC to help with this project by contributing new or gently used coats. The goal is to stuff a tent full by Thanksgiving. Ask your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers if they would like to donate! Please place your coats in the tent set up in Wilton Hall. Thank you for your help and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. Yours in Scouting and Service, Rich Correll, Troop 63 Service Coordinator



Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity: Please consider volunteering with MCC Habitat

coordinator, John Sekelsky on Nov 5 and Dec 10th for Habitat Work Days.

You can choose one day or all days to work-it's up to you! If you would like to volunteer please contact John at johnsekelsky@gmail.com so he can let the Sound Coalition manager know how many from MCC will attend. Thanks for your support of this special work. You can learn more about Habitat for Humanity by visiting: habitatcfc.org/



The MCC winetasting to benefit Habitat for Humanity is going to be November 5th, 6:30pm at the Jesulaitis home 7 Founders Way, Monroe. This annual event is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship with each other and new friends. Everyone is asked to bring a donation of at least \$10 per person, an appetizer or dessert, and a wine glass. For more information please speak with Julie McClenathan juliemcclenathan@gmail.com



Dress A Girl Around The World Sew-A-Thon Returns November 5th from 10:30am-3:30pm~ Join Liz Skarzyinski from Dress A Girl Around The World on July 16th in Wilton Hall to create dresses for little girls overseas. Thank you for your generous donations of fabric. If you would like to contribute we need small toys that can fit in a 2-3 inch square pocket. Dress A Girl is part of Hope for Women International a non-profit, nondenominational independent Christian organization. If you would like to help or join the team, please call Liz 203-257-7174 or email Liz1202us@yahoo.com.

Community News

Parent's Support Group: We in the Parent's Support Group help parents of pre-teens and teenagers by offering compassion, guidance and suggestions for easing conflict and issues with their children. We are not counselors; just concerned parents who come together to talk with other parents who listen without judgment or blame. Every one of us has faced situations in which we needed some help, we have "been there" and can relate. Facilitated by the Monroe Youth Commission, there are no membership requirements or dues to attend. We are open to the public, and meet every other month on the second Thursday at the Monroe Congregational Church's Dineson Parlor (34 Church Street) from 7:30 – 9:00pm. Please call the church office at 203-268-9327 for more information.

Nov 10 – "I'm Your Parent, Not Your Friend"

Jan 12, Mar 9, May 11 – Topic TBD

Girl Scout Troop 34012 Crayon Initiative : Have you ever wondered what happened to your unwanted crayons? Shockingly, we discovered most unwanted crayons are thrown away, ending up in the landfill. Not only is this a waste of valuable resources, but a detriment to the environment. This inspired us to design a process that recycles used crayons and provides them to hospitals that are caring for kids. The Crayon Initiative was born! Please bring any of your used and broken crayons to Rexford House. There is a box located on top of the bins. Thank you! Learn more at www.crayoninitiative.org



A Note from Marge Fox

Thank you for all of your cards & prayers. I miss seeing everyone at MCC and hope I will be able to come back soon. God Bless my friends at MCC.



2016 Inclement Weather Policy

The safety and well-being of our congregation is one of our most important concerns. Therefore, in the event of extremely bad weather on any given Sunday or church event, the following procedure will be followed:

1. **Sunday Worship Services:** At 7 am, we will decide whether or not to cancel the church service AND all other planned Sunday morning events, including Sunday School, the nursery, and coffee hour.
This decision will be communicated on TV Channel 8, CTWeather.com and WMNR (88.1). In addition, if someone is able, a church-wide e-mail and Facebook post will be done.
 - a. Decision is made by Pastor Jenn (203-895-5607) and Joanne Malia (Chair of Deacons)
 - b. Chair of Deacons notifies CT Weather/IAN Snap and Channel 8 (instructions below) and Jessica Pfalzgraf (ushers)
 - c. Pastor (or in her absence, chair of deacons) notifies Debi Mastroni-Kenyon (who notifies coordinator and teachers), Will Duchon (who notifies musicians), Ann Zeiner (coffee hour), Reader and Trustee of the Day (as found in bulletin)
2. **Sr. and Jr. PF** groups will be notified of any changes or cancellations by e-mail, a phone tree and/or Facebook notifications as appropriate.
 - a. Cheramie Lee – makes and communicates Sr PF decision
 - b. Debi Mastroni-Kenyon – makes and communicates Jr PF decision
3. **Evening Meetings:** It is the responsibility of the convener to notify the meeting participants of changes or cancellations.
4. **Midweek Morning Programs:** If the Monroe School district either delays or cancels school, morning Bible studies and other church-sponsored morning programs are cancelled.
5. **Church Office:** If the Monroe School System is closed, and staff members are able to travel, they may choose to do so if conditions are safe. Otherwise, they may choose to work remotely.

*If you have any questions or concerns,
please call the church office at 203-268-9327*

SAVE

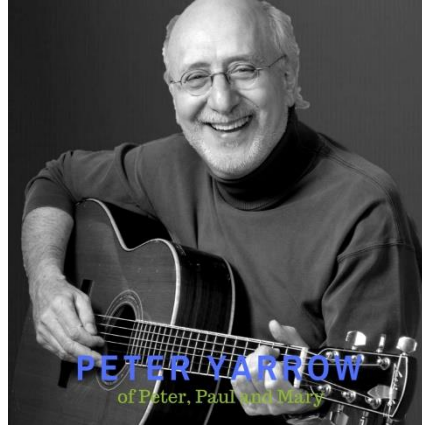
SIMPLY SMILES BENEFIT CONCERT

THE

11.13.2016 | FAIRFIELD, CT

DATE

TICKETS AVAILABLE SOON



Peter Yarrow of *Peter, Paul and Mary* is a friend of Simply Smiles and has been a social activist for

over fifty years. **Frank Waln** is a Lakota Hip Hop artist and activist who was featured on MTV's *Rebel Music*. **Kristen Graves** is a humanitarian who was called "the next generation of folk music" in the *New York Times*.

On **November 13th** (4:00 PM showtime) they will be performing at the **Quick Center in Fairfield, Connecticut** to support the work of Simply Smiles. This is an evening not to be missed. **Save the date!** See Debi M-K for tickets!

See you at the show on November 13th!

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Oct. 30th

Tues. Nov. 1st

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Nov. 2nd

6:30pm Youth Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Nov. 3rd

9:30am Bible Study

7:15 Adult Choir

Sat. Nov. 5th

10:30am Dress A Girl Sew-A-Thon (Wilton)

6:30pm Habitat Wine Tasting (Jesulaitis home)

Week of Nov. 6th

10:00am Worship

11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse),

Lay Pastoral Visitation Training 2 (Dineson)

2-4:30 Sr PF Service Project (off site)

6:00pm Adult & Jr PF

Mon. Nov. 7th

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Nov. 8th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Nov. 9th

9:30am Retired Men's Breakfast

11:00am Morning Circle (Dineson)

6:30pm Adult Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Nov. 10th

9:30am Bible Study

7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri Nov. 11th

Office Closed in Observance of Veteran's Day

Sat. Nov. 12th

8:00am Trustees Fall Clean Up

Week of Nov. 13th

New Member Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)

4:00pm Simply Smiles Benefit Concert (Fairfield)

6:00pm Sr PF

Tues. Nov. 15th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Nov. 16th

6:30pm Adult Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Nov. 17th

9:30am Bible Study

12:00pm Young at Heart at Outback in Shelton

7:15pm Adult Choir

Sat. Nov. 19th

6:00pm Mission Trip Memories Potluck (Wilton Hall)

Week of Nov. 20th

Katrina Manzi, Guest Preacher

10:00am Worship

11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)

11:15am Congregational Conversation (Wilton)

6:00pm Adult, Sr & Jr PF

Mon. Nov. 21st

7:30pm Church Council (Dineson)

Tues. Nov. 22nd

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Nov. 24th & Fri. Nov. 25th

Office Closed in Observance of Thanksgiving

Week of Nov. 27th

First Sunday in Advent

Commitment Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)

11:15am Pancake Breakfast (Wilton)

6:00pm Sr PF

Tues. Nov. 29th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Nov. 30th

6:30pm Youth Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Dec. 1st

Life Touch Photos

9:30am Bible Study

7:15 Adult Choir

Fri. Dec. 2 - Sat. Dec. 3

Life Touch Photos