



THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

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<p>Office Hours: Monday – Friday 9:00a.m.- 3:30p.m.</p>
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Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras
Director of Faith Formation: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon
Music Director: Will Duchon
Secretary: Melissa Rosenberg
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November 15, 2017



Security and the Church

Many church-goers around the country are understandably anxious and afraid following the recent shootings at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas that took the lives of 26 people. Once again, the veneer of safety and peace we hold was shattered, this time in a Sunday morning worship service.

Jesus tells us to be "*wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*" And when it comes to security, each congregation will have to decide what works for them. They will have to weigh their values, their tolerance for risk, and their physical campus needs. Just as we take precautions in preventing the sexual exploitation of minors through programs like Safe Church, we may need to take other reasonable and practical security precautions to keep one another safe.

As "a shepherd", I feel responsible for protecting "the sheep". Perhaps that comes from what I learned about safety in Jerusalem, or the fact that our community has suffered violence in neighboring Sandy Hook, or because I live here with my family. When you love something, you want to protect it. Decisions about safety and security in the church are not easy or one-size-fits-all, but they should be made out of discernment and conversation, and I hope to be able to do that with our churches leaders soon.

As we consider our options, we still must weigh them against the values that we profess as Christians, particularly our hospitality and welcome of the stranger. We must be careful not to make an idol out of safety to the point where we abandon the gospel of Jesus Christ. We cannot let our hearts be hardened to the suffering, the outcast, and those who show up to the church looking "different." Taken too far, and our fear and anxiety might turn our church into a bunker for those already here. I don't think we want to risk giving up the mission and ministry of MCC to welcome the downtrodden and the stranger as Jesus taught.

Our world needs the example of our church that proclaims fear can be overcome with love.

In peace, Pastor Jenn

The Wonder of Children



I must confess that when I am in worship and I hear the rustling of children in the Sanctuary, I feel a joy like no other. That might sound a bit extreme or over the top for you, but when I hear this I hear a child who is forming their belief and relationship with God and the church. The wonder with which children approach these things that we sometimes experience as rote ritual is something to indeed look forward to.

With Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays upon us there are a few weeks when Sunday school classes will not be held. I invite to bring your children to worship. I want to list some tips that can be helpful if you are especially nervous about this:

ABCs for Adults Worshipping With (and near) Children

- ◆ **Arrive** in time to find a good place to sit. Children are short and appreciate being able to see. I encourage you to sit up front or near the musicians to allow this.
- ◆ **Bring** something quiet to occupy them in restless moments. "Busy" bags and books are available for children in the narthex ask the greeters or ushers for one.
- ◆ **Calm** them with hugs, sitting in your lap, and backrubs.
- ◆ **Demonstrate** how to sing familiar refrains, fold hands in prayer, stand for the gospel and prayers, and recite familiar parts of the service, such as the Lord's Prayer.
- ◆ **Express** joy at having children worship with you. Smile at them and their parents. Dance with them when the music is lively.
- ◆ **Free** yourself of the expectation to be perfect. None of us would be here if we were!
- ◆ **Give** your child something to put in the offering, and encourage them to give from their own funds as they grow older.
- ◆ **Help** parents of small children.
- ◆ **Invite** children to sit with you so that you may assist with bottles, dropped toys, and teaching kids how to worship.

Peace to all of you - Debi

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, Shari Carrano, David Walker, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon and (this Sunday) Leanne 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.

This **Sunday, November 19th, is Commitment Sunday** and we look forward to celebrating your generosity at a special pancake brunch right



after worship. If you haven't had a chance yet to complete a pledge card, simply and place it in the offering basket on Sunday or drop it off at the church office. Please let us know if you have any questions and thank you for walking alongside us on the journey at the Monroe Congregational Church.

Your Stewardship Committee: Scott Young (Chair), Roy Nealon, John O'Rourke (Receiver)

The following stewardship testimonial was shared by Shari Carrano with the congregation on October 29th.

Why I Give To This Church

My first day attending worship at MCC was one of the joint summer services we hold with St. Peter's. When I walked in from the parking lot I recognized a few people going in so I went in with them. I very much enjoyed the service that Pastor Jenn led.

The following week I attended worship again. Betty Heiney, who had spoken to me the week before, now realized that I was not with St. Peter's. She was very welcoming and asked right away if I wanted to join MCC. She introduced me to Pastor Jenn. I got to meet several of the church members at coffee hour and they made me feel very welcomed.

A few weeks later, Pastor Jenn set up a time to meet me at my home to tell me about the church. She asked me why I decided to come to MCC. I was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. When I was about three years old, my father passed. My single mother worked at Fairfield Hills "state" at this time. She worked the graveyard shift from 11pm to 7am so that she could be home during the day with my sister, brother, and me. On Sundays she could get in a nap if we went to Sunday School at the nearby Trumbull Congregational Church, which is where my first faith lessons began.

Fast forward to 1981, and I was getting ready to marry my second husband living here in Monroe. Both of us were divorced Catholics, and we did not want to confront the church's policies about that. I decided that my experience in Trumbull as a child with the United Church of Christ was so wonderful that I would approach the Reverend at the Monroe Congregational Church, who at the time was Luther Pierce. The one bit of advice Luther gave us was: If your family questions it, tell them "I will not argue the Catholic's theology on divorce being a sin. But in our church, God forgives sin."

In August 2013, my husband of 32 years died suddenly one morning of a stroke followed by a heart attack. Because of this loss, and other personal family issues, I realized I needed a faith community in my life.

Just a few months after my husband's death, a nice group of young people – called Senior PF – came to my house and helped me with my leaves on a recommendation from the Monroe Senior Center. Once I found out what church they had come from – and realized it was MCC – I knew it was a sign that I really had to come to a service. I wound up joining MCC in August 2014, thanks in part to those young people.

Since I have my own home, live on a limited income and try to keep up with bills etc., I knew when I joined that I could not commit to a large financial donation. Pastor Jenn told me that was OK, and I learned that I could get involved with different groups and volunteer

my time – which was something the community really needed too. She told me that there was a place for me here at MCC. This summer I lost my well water. My two grandsons were trying to help me figure this out. We thought we knew what the problem was but couldn't afford a plumber. I knew that I had other big issues with the house that were going to be costly. I decided to wait for a friend of my late husbands who had helped me with other plumbing problems and would only charge me for the parts needed. It would take time to get them, so I would have to be patient.

At the Summer Sunday coffee hours, the ladies would ask me if my water was back on yet. For two weeks my answer was no. My neighbor let me use the hose in the yard to fill a five gallon bucket as needed. One coffee hour in late July, Pastor Jenn sat down with us and heard about my water problem for the first time. She called me aside and asked me if I would like her to help me get it resolved. Later that day we filled out an application that she sent right out to Westbridge, one of the outreach organizations this church supports.

My friend Rob McClenathan, who volunteers with Westbridge, came to my home with another man. They looked at all my other problems too, some of which I didn't realize were so fixable. They set out a plan to help me. And they did so much more than I ever could have imagined. Most importantly, two days after I applied, I once again had running water.

The following Sunday I told Pastor Jenn that it was "Divine Intervention" which brought me to MCC. I am so grateful for everything I have received from the Monroe Congregational Church in the way of friendship, acceptance, and support. I will always make sure I keep up to date with my pledge, as modest as it may be. I know that when it is combined with yours, my gift makes a difference. And I will continue to volunteer as much as I can, whenever I am asked. I hope that you can join me, by making your annual pledge and getting involved in something that will help spread Jesus' love. Thank you MCC! I love you all!



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.

Deacons

Pulpit Swap! Next Sunday (November 26th), Pastor Jenn and the Rev. M. Todd Shipley from Unity Hill UCC in Trumbull will swap pulpits! Pastor Todd brings with him a wealth of experience preaching engaging sermons and a delightful southern drawl. Hope you can join us!



Congratulations to Ryan and Kristina on the **baptism** of their daughter Adelyn. We lift them, their families and friends in our prayers of celebration!

Parents: Ryan & Kristina Kelly Sponsors: Thomas and Sarah Kelly

Big sisters: Annabelle and Emeline



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.



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!

Trustees

Thanks for your help on MCC's Fall Work Day! The campus looks great! See more photos at:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/IAKVxd5zSiz85YjU2>







All Scouts associated with MCC are teaming up to help support Bridgeport Rescue Mission's Coat Drive portion of their "Great Thanksgiving Project". Scouts from Boy Scout Troop 63, Cub Scout Pack 262, Crew 63 and all Girl Scouts from MCC can help with this project by collecting new or gently used coats. The goal is to stuff a tent full of coats by Thanksgiving. Ask your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers if they have any coats they would like to donate! Please place your coats in the tent set up in Wilton Hall at MCC.

Bridgeport Rescue Mission's annual Great Thanksgiving Project is widely recognized as our region's most impactful holiday hunger 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 2016 distributed 3200 turkeys and 15,000 coats to our neighbors in need. 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

Christian Education

Advent Opportunities

Advent Table The First Sunday of Advent is on December 3rd. The Advent table will be set up with Advent wreaths, and calendars.

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 December 3rd, 10th, and 24th at the 10:00 am service, the 17th at the 8:45 service, and Christmas Eve at the 7:00 and 11:00 pm services. Please contact Debi at 203-444-6760 or debi@mcc-ucc.org if you'd like to light the candles.

2017 Christmas Pageant



Sticking with our season of Martin Luther this year's Pageant will be based on a hymn written by him "From Heaven Above"

Nearly 500 years ago Martin Luther wrote the hymn "From Heaven Above" to teach his children the story of Jesus' birth. Recitations by the children in this service carry on that tradition, using the words of the hymn to tell the world the good news of salvation in the Christ Child. We are currently recruiting children and youth for the Pageant. Please contact Debi for more information.

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar

November

- 19th – Halloween Party Redo
- 26th – Decorating the Church

December

- 3rd – Generosity
- 10th – Christmas Program at Masonicare 3-4pm

Sunday School Calendar

November

- 19th – Regular classes
- 26th – NO Sunday school

December

- 3rd – Regular class for PreK-2nd Grade
- 10th – Advent Program for all grades

Fellowship

Fellowship Invites You to **Supper & Song: 6pm Saturday, November 18th in Wilton Hall** - Please bring a favorite entrée, casserole or side dish to share and join your MCC friends in Wilton Hall to enjoy food, fellowship AND a musical treat from our very own Lisa Burke. Dessert and beverages will be provided by the Fellowship Board. Please call the office to sign up – 203-268-9327.

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.



Happy Thanksgiving to my Prayer Partners!! As the holiday of thanks fast approaches, I wanted to take this opportunity to send you my gratitude for signing up to be a prayer partner. Everyone has already received the name of someone they will be keeping in their thoughts. Please consider sending them a note or card in the mail using the church's address as your return. Email me at thecuseos@yahoo.com or call [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) if you have any questions or comments or if you need to identify your prayer partner. Again, have a great holiday and take the time to give thanks that we wake another day, that we can hug our loved ones, smile at our friends, be kind to strangers and hope for the best for our prayer partners. Mark your calendars for our "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon on Sunday, May 20, 2018 at 11:15AM in Wilton Hall. Childcare will be provided while older children can dine with the big kids. Susie Cuseo



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

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 hours 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.



The Ladies of **Morning Circle** would like to thank everyone who helped make bean soup jar kits at their last meeting. They made 28 jars for the Monroe Food Pantry. We appreciate all of your hard work.



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)



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!

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

Please join **Justin Riffard** for his Eagle Scout Ceremony at 8pm on November 20th in the Meeting House.

The church office will be closed for the **Thanksgiving holiday** on Thursday, November 23 & Friday November 24th. Pastor Jenn is on vacation from Wednesday, November 22 through Tuesday, November 28th

Many thanks to those who have given the gift of sight to those who can't afford it. I

*Thank
you*

have collected 23 prescription glasses, sunglasses and cases over the month of October. Thank you for checking your junk drawers and such to provide an older person the ability to see her family clearly, a student to do her homework or a worker do his job properly. Your generosity is most appreciated with helping someone far away see a better future. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) with any questions or comments.

2018 Inclement Weather Policy

Here in New England we get to enjoy seasonal weather changes. At MCC, we have learned to be flexible and make safe choices about our scheduled plans. The safety and well-being of our people is one of our most important concerns. Below is our inclement weather policy, including who makes decisions about closings and how the decision is spread in the community.

1. **Sunday Worship Services:** At 7 am, Pastor Jenn (203-895-5607) and Jessica Pfalzgraf (Chair of Deacons) make the decision whether or not to cancel worship AND all other planned Sunday morning events, including Sunday School, Nursery, and coffee hour.
 - a. Chair of Deacons notifies CT Weather/IAN Snap and Channel 8 and the scheduled usher(s)
 - b. Pastor notifies staff and key volunteers (who in turn notify those they work with), including Debi Mastroni-Kenyon (faith formation), Will Duchon (music ministries), Ann Zeiner (coffee hour), Reader and Trustee of the Day
2. **Senior and Junior 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.

Any decisions to cancel or close will be communicated on: TV Channel 8, Channel 3, CTWeather.com (sign-up for free notifications!), WMNR (88.1), a post on Monroe Congregational Church UCC Facebook page

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the church office at 203-268-9327, or Pastor Jenn's cell at 203-895-5607.

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Nov. 19th

10:00am Worship
11:15am Stewardship Pancake Breakfast
5:00pm Senior PF
6:00pm Adult & Junior PF

Tues. Nov. 21st

7:00pm Bereavement Meeting (Dineson)
7:30pm Council Meeting (Classroom 4)

Thurs. Nov. 23rd & Fri. Nov. 24th

Office Closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday

Week of Nov. 26th

Rev. Dr. M. Todd Shipley preaching
10:00am Worship
5:00pm Senior PF
6:00pm Junior PF

Tues. Nov. 28th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Nov. 29th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Nov. 30th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri. Dec. 1st

7:30pm Faith on Tap (Monroe Social, 494 Main Street, Monroe)

Week of Dec. 3rd

First Sunday in Advent: Hope
10:00am Worship
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 (Location TBD)
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