



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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October 1, 2017



Fostering Stewardship

When I returned from sabbatical last year, Clark and I finally got the opportunity to serve as licensed therapeutic foster parents – something we had been working towards for years. Right around Strawberry Festival time, we welcomed our first long-term foster child.

I've realized lately that there are many things church stewardship and foster parenting have in common. Stewardship, after all, is the work, joy, art, and responsibility of nurturing what belongs first to another. Had you asked us before we became foster parents whether we thought raising our children was an act of stewardship, we'd have likely agreed that it was. In some abstract sense, we know that we are nurturing exquisite gifts from God that don't really "belong" to us.

But there is something about being entrusted with someone else's children -- especially in those moments that illuminate how vulnerable these children and their families may be -- that makes our act of stewardship all the more clear.

We are accountable to other people for the health and well-being of our foster children in a way that we are not for our own kids. To imagine harm coming to either of our biological children is frightening, yet to think of harm coming to someone else's child when that child has been given into our care? That's deeply terrifying.

In a more mundane way, foster care often means doing things that are uncomfortable or difficult or tedious -- keeping records, justifying our parenting choices, following stricter guidelines for health and safety than we might otherwise, and in general doing a fair number of things that it would just be easier not to do. But we do it, for love's sake.

Serving as a foster parent means making decisions with someone else's hopes and desires in mind. More pointedly, it sometimes calls upon us to make choices we wouldn't necessarily

make for ourselves or our own children because we have the hopes and desires of someone else's loved one in mind.

But Clark and I have accepted this accountability, and we tend to difficult tasks, and we make thoughtful decisions because these things are all part of the responsibility we owe to those who have entrusted us with the gift of their child.

Let me tell you, it is totally worth it. As we watch this young man grow and begin to flourish, we share in the joy of his thriving. The community has embraced him. For our family, thinking of foster care as an act of stewardship -- and thinking of stewardship as an act of foster care -- has helped us understand both a little better.

For just as with the children we foster, in the stewardship of other precious resources, we have learned:

- We are entrusted with gifts that are precious and vulnerable
- Those gifts carry with them great potential
- We are accountable to One beyond ourselves, for the good of those we serve
- The best decisions may be those which keeps the hopes and desires of another in mind

So we have chosen to live in the promise, to witness the flourishing and share in the joy resulting in what we intentionally share. If you find the interconnection between stewardship and foster care to be an interesting one, I encourage you to seek out others who are doing this work and hear their stories. They will surely have something thoughtful and meaningful ones to tell you!

In love, hope and faith, Pastor Jenn

What the heck is the Reformation anyway?



One of the most influential men in all of history was Martin Luther, an Augustine monk whose search for peace and righteousness in his own soul led him on a spiritual journey and adventure which brought Europe to a crucial turning point in its history. The seeming unity of the medieval church was shattered, but the truth of the gospel shone brighter than ever before.

John Wycliffe and John Hus were important forerunners of the Reformation. They spoke out against weaknesses and errors they perceived in both the doctrines and hierarchy of the medieval church. They also emphasized the importance of Scripture and the invisible church as the true, universal church of Christ, rather than the temporal, earthly church. One hundred years later Martin Luther echoed many of the Wycliffe and Hussite themes, and the church and society were never the same. The Reformation truly exploded!

Undoubtedly one of the reasons Luther's teachings spread throughout Europe more quickly than the ideas of Wycliffe and Hus a century before was the development of the printing

press around 1450. In his own lifetime there were 4,000 editions of Luther's works published and one third of the German literature of the day were the writings of Martin Luther.

Some of the results of the Reformation to consider are:

1. Worship in the common language of the people.
2. Justification by faith alone led to a de-emphasis of external rituals and focused on the inner spiritual life.
3. Authority of Scripture replaced the authority of the pope and medieval traditions.
4. Preaching, even by lay preachers, became more important.
5. Monasticism as the ideal of holiness was replaced by the priesthood of all believers. Each person's calling was considered an area of divine service.
6. The significance of the sacraments was re-evaluated, and the sacraments were now considered only two: baptism and communion.
7. The liturgy was redesigned to accord with the Scriptures.
8. The family began to be seen as the household of faith. Martin and Katherine Luther became an example of the Protestant home.

This is just a small fragment of the scope and weight of the Reformation as a whole. On October 31st we celebrate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's 95 Theses which reignited and gave legs to the Reformation. Please see other articles in this edition of the Steeple for MCC activities about Reformation 500!

Peace, Debi

Deacons



New Member Informational Luncheon, October 15th ~Join the deacons and Pastor Jenn for an informational luncheon at 11:15 in Dineson Parlor. Find out more about the history (how we got here), theology (what we believe) and ways you might connect with others and learn more about faith doing so. Prospective Members will join the church during worship on October 29th.

Please contact Pastor Jenn at jenn@mcc-ucc.org with any questions.



Faith on Tap: Come talk about life and current events from a spiritual perspective at a local pub. We meet on the first Fridays of the month (starting October 6th) from 7:30 - 9pm at VERACIOUS BREWING COMPANY! No formal presentations - just people kicking around a topic, sharing honestly what really matters to them. Anyone is welcome at the table. No topics are off limits. Agreement is not required, but civility is essential. Tea-totelers and soda drinkers welcome too! Call/text Clark ([203-895-5604](tel:203-895-5604)) or Rev. Jenn ([203-895-5607](tel:203-895-5607)) Gingras with any questions.

People who study religious trends say that 60% of all Americans and 92% of those who attend church every week believe in hell. **Join us on October 6th for a conversation called "What the... HELL?"**

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.

A PDF Order form is available on our church's home page, www.mcc-ucc.org . For further information, please contact the church office or Mark Barnhart at msbarnhart515@gmail.com.

A Note from the Receiver



We all miss a church service from time to time. Scheduling routine, automated weekly or monthly contributions online is a good 24/7 alternative for those who are unable to give in person. Most importantly, electronic giving supports a consistent giving pattern, which helps our church better plan our ministry financial plan (budget) by providing steadier funding over time. Electronic giving to MCC is easy to set-up, just go to the "Donate" page on our web site (www.mcc-ucc.org/donate) or arrange for electronic payment from your bank. In worship, simply place a recyclable "Alternative Giving Card" in the offering plate. As always, thank you for your support of the Monroe Congregational Church! Sincerely, John O'Rourke - Receiver

Outreach

Neighbors in Need (NIN) October 1st is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through NIN grants which are awarded to churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. Projects range from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. Funding for grants is provided through donations to the Neighbors in Need offering. We will receive the NIN offering October 1st as part of our World Communion Sunday observance.





The Wine & Craft Beer Tasting to benefit Westbridge & Harvey Relief, Saturday, October 14th 6:30pm at the Fracassini's house. 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 \$20 per person, an appetizer or dessert, and a wine glass. For more information please speak with Kathy Maiolo. kmaiolo@gmail.com

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. We 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 need of:

Canned green beans, peas, & corn
Canned sweet and white potatoes
Canned tuna & chicken

Boxed macaroni & cheese
Boxed rice
Boxed cold cereal
Pasta and sauce



Please Help Support A Project From The Heart. It Would Mean So Much For Our Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan To Receive Care Packages From MCC. We need toiletries such as deodorant and shampoo, toothbrushes, and non-perishables items such as cookies (in boxes) beef jerky, puzzle books, playing cards and snack items. If you have any questions please contact Miriam Zalenski at 203-261-8550 or bigred722@sbcglobal.net

Dress A Girl

I just wanted to thank every one who participated (including behind the scenes people) in the Sew-A-Thon for Dress A Girl Around The World on Saturday, September 23rd. We had a record number of dresses, a total of 78 were made either on site or at home. Year to date we've made 241! THANK YOU!!!!

I've packed out 20 tee shirt dresses for Guatemala, 75 sundresses for Jamaica, and 25 tee shirt dresses for Uganda. Sacred Heart Nursing students will be taking these dresses with them when they travel to these countries to provide medical care. They are going to Guatemala next week, Jamaica in mid October and Uganda in 2018. They have several other trips planned, so please keep sewing. There are sun dress kits in the church office and I will try to keep making some to replenish the supply. If anyone needs fabric or other materials just let me know.

Our next session will be October 11th in Wilton Hall.

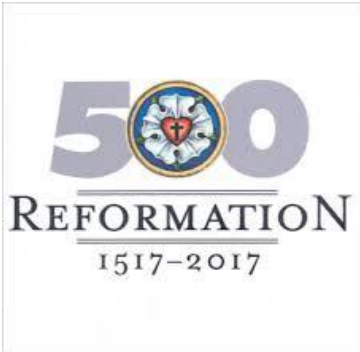
Liz Skarzynski [203-257-7174](tel:203-257-7174)

Dress A Girl Around The World

Christian Education

Reformation 500!

On October 31, 1517, a monk named Martin Luther nailed Ninety-Five Theses or arguments on his church door with the intention of having a discussion with church leaders. Unbeknownst to him these Theses got publicized and a movement was born!

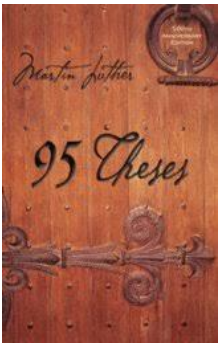


The Reformation was a powerful movement of church reform and renewal – and a whole lot more. It was both cause and effect of sweeping changes in European culture and society. These changes shaped modern Europe and America and influenced the entire world. (You can take this out if needed)

MCC will be celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation throughout the month of October. There will be special moments in worship, an adult study, and a special Anniversary Party on Sunday, October 29th. You never know, Martin Luther himself might even show up! The Adult Study will be held on Sundays October 1st, 8th, and 22nd beginning at 11:30. Please let Debi know if you are planning to attend.

The 95 Theses of Martin Luther:

From the Introductory Letter to the Theses:



"Papal indulgences are being carried about, under your most distinguished authority, for the building of St. Peter's. In respect of these I do not so much accuse the extravagant sayings of the preachers, which I have not heard, but I grieve at the very false ideas which the people conceive from them, and which are spread abroad in common talk on every side – namely, that unhappy souls believe that, if they buy letters of indulgences, they are sure of their salvation; also, that, as soon as they have thrown their contribution into the chest, souls forthwith fly out of purgatory; and furthermore, that so great is the grace thus conferred, that there is no sin so great – even, as they say, if, by an impossibility, any one had violated the Mother of God – but they may be pardoned; and again, that by these indulgences a man is freed from all punishment and guilt."

Thesis 1

Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, in saying "Repent ye," etc., intended that the whole life of believers should be marked by repentance.

Thesis 43

Christians should be taught that he who gives to a poor man, or lends to a needy man, does better than if he bought pardons.

Thesis 45

Christians should be taught that he who sees any one in need, and passing him by, gives money for pardons, is not purchasing for himself the indulgences of the Pope, but the anger of God.

Thesis 84

As for instance: Why does not the Pope empty purgatory for the sake of most holy charity and of the supreme necessity of souls – this being the most just of all reasons – if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of that most fatal thing, money, to be spent on a basilica – this being a very slight reason?

Rachel's Well Women's Spirituality Group – 1st Mondays, 7:30-9pm



Are you a teacher, a healer, a writer, a mother, an artist, a businesswoman, an activist, a civic leader? What is your contribution, your voice? The speaking, the listening, the ritual, the intimate relationships with women so alike and yet different brings us closer to our true selves. Don't miss the opportunity! **Our next gathering is October 2nd in Dineson Parlor, our topic is Self Care.** All are welcome, always!



Cell Phones for Soldiers Latest census numbers say that around 2,000,000 US soldiers are actively serving in today's military around the world. Many don't have a lot of time to spend with their family and loved ones. Cell Phones for Soldiers (<https://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com/>) is a nonprofit that has provided over 300 million minutes of free talk time by recycling more than 15 million used cell phones. Their "Minutes that Matter" program has one simple mission: to help soldiers call home with absolutely no charge. Each contribution of a used cell phone offers 2.5 hours of free talk time to our nation's bravest servicemen and women.

As a fall service project, **Senior PF is collecting used phones** for this worthy cause. To donate, place your used cell phones in the decorated box at coffee hour or anytime during the week in the church office. Our goal is to collect 250 used phones by October 31st. Your contribution matters because every one of these precious minutes is only made possible through your help. If you have any questions, please call or text me at [203-895-2871](tel:203-895-2871). Thank you, Zach Gingras - Senior PF Minister of Outreach

Fellowship

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

- 🚩 **October 18th-7:30pm** Beneath a Scarlet Sky by Mark T. Sullivan~Hosted by Gayle Hammond
- 🚩 **November 15th-7:30pm** The Other Einstein by Marie Benedict~Host TBD
- 🚩 **December-date TDB**-The Book That Matters Most by Ann Hood~Host TBD

- ✚ **January 17th-7:30pm** A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles~Hosted by Sue Smelzer
- ✚ **February 21st-7:30pm** The Women in the Castle by Jessica Shattuck~Host TBD

Pumpkin Carving Party

Please join the Christian Education Board on Saturday, October 28th, for a Pumpkin Carving Party! We will gather at 5:00 pm and have pizza and other goodies. We will be taking an offering for the pizza. After we dinner we will carve pumpkins in preparation for Halloween festivities and decorations.



This is a BYOP – Bring Your Own Pumpkin – event. We have patterns and tools, but if you have your own tools, feel free to bring them. After carving we can take our works of art outside, light them up, and see how they glow!

Please bring a pumpkin to carve and a dessert to share!!! ALL are welcome to join in the fun and fellowship!



Prayer Partners Wanted!!! "What is a Prayer Partner?" you may be asking yourself. When you sign up in Wilton Hall and return the information sheet, you will receive another person's name and information who you will keep in your thoughts and prayers. You can send them a card or note in the mail using the church's address as the return. You may choose to seek them out during the passing of the peace or find them during coffee hour and strike up a conversation. It all culminates to the "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon in May 2018 where we dine in Wilton Hall while children under 2 can stay in the nursery. It's very easy and does not require even 5 seconds out of your day to wonder if your prayer partner is having a great day or to wish them support at that moment. Please consider signing up!! If you have any questions, please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Monroe Domestic Violence Awareness Vigil will be held on Tuesday, October 3rd at 6:00 pm at the Town Hall Green Gazebo.



MCC Community Calendar

Week of Oct. 1st

Neighbors in Need/World Communion Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:30am Reformation 500 Adult Study

(Dineson)

6:00pm Adult PF & Junior PF

Mon. Oct. 2nd

7:30pm Rachel's Well – Topic: Self Care

(Dineson)

Tues Oct. 3rd

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

6:00pm Domestic Violence Vigil (Town Green)

Wed. Oct. 4th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 5th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri. Oct. 6th

7:30pm Faith on Tap (Veracious, 246 Main St)

Week of Oct. 8th

Guest Preacher Katrina Manzi

10:00am Worship with 3rd Grade Bible Dedicatio

11:30am Reformation 500 Adult Study (Dineso)

11:30am Trustees Meeting (Classroom 4)

5:00pm Senior PF

Mon. Oct. 9th

Office Closed-Columbus Day

Tues Oct. 10th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Oct. 11th

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

11:00am Morning Circle (Dineson)

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 12th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Sat. Oct. 14th

6:30pm Wine Tasting (Fracassini Home)

Week of Oct. 15th

10:00am Worship

11:15am New Member Informational Lunch (Dineson)

11:15am Outreach Meeting (Kitchen)

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult PF

Mon. Oct. 16th

3:45pm St. George's Supper

Tues Oct. 17th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

7:00pm Bereavement Group (Dineson)

Wed. Oct. 18th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

7:30pm MCC Book Club (Gayle Hammond's home)

Thurs. Oct. 19th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Christian Ed Meeting (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri. Oct.20th-Sun. Oct. 22nd

5:30pm Junior PF Retreat (Silver Lake)

Week of Oct. 22nd

10:00am Worship

11:30am Reformation 500 Adult Study (Dineson)

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult PF

Tues Oct. 24th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Oct. 25th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 26th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Sat. Oct. 28th

5:00pm Pumpkin Carving Party (Wilton Hall)



MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Help MCC Pave Its Way to a Brighter Future! "BUY A BRICK" CAMPAIGN

The MCC Board of Trustees is pleased to extend this unique opportunity to help upgrade the MCC campus and 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. To sponsor a commemorative brick, please complete the following information and return to the address provided below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address: _____

Each commemorative brick measures a standard 4" x 8" and allows up to 3 lines of 18 characters per line (including spaces) of engraved type. Each brick is \$125.00.

Examples:

*In Loving Memory
Of Our Parents
Jones Family*

*Best Friends
Forever
Kathy & Jodi*

In the space provided below, indicate the wording of your inscription as you would like it to read on your personalized brick. Please print clearly and use block letters, one letter per block. (For additional bricks, please use multiple forms).

Hand-deliver or mail in this form with a check made payable to Monroe Congregational Church to: "MCC Campus Buy a Brick Campaign" c/o Monroe Congregational Church, 34 Church Street, Monroe, CT 06468. Please contact the church office at (203) 268-9327 or secretary@mcc-ucc.org with any questions.