



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
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September 1, 2017



What is **joy**? Distinct from happiness or contentment, joy reflects an emotional reaction that points beyond oneself toward a larger experience of connection and celebration. For people of faith, experiences of joy can direct our attention toward God.

On sabbatical I read a beautiful book addressing the complexity and wonder of joy as a human experience, ***The Book of Joy***, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. This

meditative book gives the reader the experience of listening in on two wise practitioners whose lives are oriented by their generosity toward others, both within their own faith and across their differences. Despite their hardships (or, as they say, because of them) they are believed to be two of the most joyful people on the planet.

Archbishop Tutu suggests that by giving, one is "... *making space for more to be given to you.*" He goes on to say, "*In the end, generosity is the best way of becoming more, more, and more joyful.*" Generosity has a prominent place in almost every religious tradition, because it tends to draw people together. The Dalai Lama believes that in better understanding our practice of giving, we grow in our capacity to experience joy.

These faithful practitioners and teachers helped me consider how joyful it has been to make generosity a regular part of my practice of faith. I love to know that my family's weekly electronic offering is used to cultivate joy for others – both here at MCC and far beyond. Through important mission and outreach, faith formation programs, soul-enriching worship and music, and caring for this lovely historic campus, we cultivate each other's joy.

Generosity is one of the things our faith community is quite good at, actually! You'll see in the following pages invitations to sponsor our upcoming MusicFest or bricks for our campus, or perhaps you'd like to help others by donating food, used cellphones and glasses or a backpack for Covenant to Care. There are so many opportunities to be generous with our time, too, like signing up to be a Prayer Partner. I hope you are inspired by what we can do together as much as I am! See you in church!

In peace, Pastor Jenn

What About Prayer?

During the last few months I have been thinking a lot about prayer. Being in a year of discernment to see where God is calling me it has been suggested that I pray, pray a lot, and pray hard. I am a person who used to pray much more than I do now and at times feel stuck when it come to that aspect of my faith life – there always seems to be something else that gets in the way. Sure, I have a lot of books, articles, and “How to’s” about the subject, but therein lies the problem!

There are many tools that one can engage when praying. Here are some:

- **Prayer Beads** are used by members of various religious traditions such as [Hinduism](#), [Buddhism](#), [Christianity](#), [Islam](#), [Sikhism](#) and the [Bahá'í Faith](#) to mark the repetitions of [prayers](#), [chants](#) or devotions, such as the rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary in [Catholicism](#), and [dhikr](#) (remembrance of God) in Islam.
- **Prayer Shawls** The Jewish prayer shawl is a fringed garment worn by Jewish men on the outside of their regular garments in the synagogue, especially during morning, [Sabbath](#), and other holiday services. The Hebrew name for this prayer shawl is *tallit*, which simply means “a robe,” “a cloak,” or “a sheet.” Other shawls have been made for centuries universal and embracing, symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving, God. They wrap, enfold, comfort, cover, give solace, mother, hug, shelter and beautify. Those who have received these shawls have been uplifted and affirmed, as if given wings to fly above their troubles.
- **Burning of Sage** The ritual burning of herbs and herbal resins is common to many cultures in the world. From the rich frankincense of the Church and the Middle Eastern bazaar, to the heady incenses of Asia, to the raw energy of brush burning in many native cultures. Burning sage is one of the oldest and purest methods of cleansing a person, group of people or space. While Native American sage burning is the most commonly recognized form of it today, it has nevertheless been a shared practice in other cultures too. From the ancient Celtic druids who used sage as a sacred herb alongside Oak Moss for burning as well as medicinal purposes, to the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon whose *Palo Santo* (sacred wood) sage burning ceremonies are still practiced to this day.
- **Lectio Divina** – Scripture - in Christianity, **Lectio Divina** (Latin for "Divine Reading") is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word.

Some of us use these tools or practices some of us use other practices and some stop praying all together because it doesn't seem to make a difference. I think we all feel this way from time to time. We focus too much on the end result and not enough on the act itself. Prayer is an act of humility, of connection reaching out to another and to God. If we stop praying, we sever that connection giving ourselves over to arrogance and we isolate ourselves.

And therein lies my solution. I don't think I need the books or "How to's" what I need is the connection, the humility, the relationship with God – I think this is what we all need. How can you (and I) build that relationship? Strengthen that connection? Grow that humility? Drop that arrogance? I hope you can ask yourself these questions and come on this journey with me!

Peace, Debi M-K

3rd Annual Monroe MusicFest: Sunday, Sept 24, 1-7pm

We hope you will come out and enjoy this great day of music and art at MCC! We are also hoping for your support with a personal donation, purchase of a business advertisement and/or MusicFest tickets. Please note, in order to appear in the program, donations and ads must be turned in by the end of August. Any net "profit" after expenses will be equally divided between MCC's operating budget and Senior Pilgrim Fellowship in support of their next mission trip.



If you **donate**, there are defined levels (Platinum = \$200+; Gold = \$150 – 199; Silver = \$100 – 149; Bronze = \$50 – 99; Other = \$Any). Of course, any level of donation is more than welcome. There are small colorful envelopes in most of the pews. Write how you want your dedication to appear (*in honor of, etc.*), fold your check (payable to MCC with the memo line "MusicFest") and pop it in the collection plate or church office.

If you want to place a **business advertisement**, your company's information will also appear in our very attractive program. To place an ad, please contact Vaughan (vaughanaskue@gmail.com, [203-345-3637](tel:203-345-3637)) or any other member of the team.

And don't forget the most important part... **buy tickets and attend!** Invite your friends, neighbors, family and co-workers; make a night out of it! You'll be glad you did. Tickets will soon be available for purchase at coffee-hour. For information on all the fabulous performers or to buy electronic tickets, visit <http://monroemusicfest.blogspot.com/>.

Thank you! - *Your MusicFest Team*

Christian Education



Come to the Senior PF Car Wash! Come to MCC Saturday, September 9th from 11:00 am - 2:00 pm for a carwash to support the Senior PF on their 2018 Mission trip. Cost is \$7 per car. Pay at the carwash or buy a ticket in advance at coffee hour, August 27th and September 3rd. We hope you can come!

Homecoming Sunday: Please join us next Sunday, September 10th, for our annual Homecoming Sunday Celebration! What an exciting and fulfilling day we have planned!

- Worship at 10:00 am with a special introductory Sunday school class



- Ministry Fair with Sunday school and Youth Group registrations during Coffee Hour
- Parent Orientation for Youth Confirmation meeting at 11:30 am
- Junior PF Kick Off at 6:00 pm in classroom 5, Senior PF meets at 5pm in the parlor

If you have a child under the age of 18, make sure you stop by the Faith Formation table at the Ministry Fair to register for Sunday school and Youth Groups!

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar

September

10th – Kick Off and meeting with parents

Sunday School Calendar

September

10th – Great Gathering

17th – Regular Classes

24th – Regular Classes

****A note regarding Jr. PF. For now we will be gathering on the first Sunday of each month from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm and once a month for service projects. We will end at 7:30 due to the change in Sr. PF schedule to accommodate families with youth in both groups.*

Senior PF Fall Service Project - 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.



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 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

Deacons


Doug Halley, Guest Preacher at MCC to preach on September 3rd Doug is a retired engineer and second-career UCC licensed minister in the Fairfield East Association. He is a member of the First Congregational Church in Stratford where he has served on Stewardship, Benevolence, Deacons and Board of Trustees. He also served as Chair of the Lead Gift Team for the church's capital fund drive. He and his wife, Luci, live in Shelton. He will be preaching and leading worship on September 3rd. Welcome Doug!

Youth Confirmation Informational Meeting September 10!



Confirmation is the act of a young person affirming his/her baptism and formally stating that s/he wishes to be affiliated with this faith tradition. Our confirmation class, open to high school freshman, meets with Pastor Jenn and Debi most Wednesday evenings beginning September 20th from 6:30-7:30 pm. To learn more, please attend a parent/confirmand informational September 10th at 11:30 in Dineson Parlor.

Trustees



Help 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.

Outreach

Hurricane Harvey Relief: The news from the devastation in Texas continues to unfold in tragic ways. Our prayers are with all those who have experienced loss and devastation in this most recent event and we invite your gifts and actions in the days, months and years to come. The impulse to offer help is a critical one.

As members of the United Church of Christ, we have always been committed to providing immediate support to the people living in places affected by natural and human caused disasters. We are committed to long-term relief efforts, long after the news has passed and the attention of the world has shifted.

Your Board of Outreach is sending \$500 from last year's tag sale proceeds to the United Church of Christ's "Emergency USA Fund" which insures that 100% of the funds received will be used in direct emergency relief efforts. It is a great use of our church resources help in this way. If you would like to make an individual donation, you may do by writing a check to MCC with "Hurricane Harvey Relief" in the memo field. Thank you for your support!

Our national disaster ministries will be providing information regularly:
<http://www.ucc.org/disaster/>

Another Way to Help Church World Service is currently sending Clean Up Buckets and Hygiene Kits to Houston and if you recall Hygiene Kits were a service project at VBS this year. We collected enough goods to make 15 complete kits and we have a lot of left over items. We would like to collect some more items so we can assemble and send more kits. We need:

- Combs
- Hand Towels (NOT wash cloths)
- Toothbrushes (singles in their package)
- Nail clippers



Please drop these items off at the church by September 17th so we can assemble and send the kits ASAP. **Please only bring the items mentioned above.**

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?



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

There is a bin located in Rexford Hall to drop off donations. Thank you for your generosity.



Covenant to Care Book Bags Needed

This summer won't you shop for a child in need while you shop for your own child! We have children who need our help to give them a good start to the new school year! If you can't shop, please consider a donation to supply a child in the care of our DCF social workers with much needed school supplies & a book bag. Suggested Donation for Book Bag with Supplies \$25.00 each.

Checks should be made out to M.C.C. and "memo-ed" for Covenant to Care/School. Check for the children's "tags" in Wilton Hall coming soon. Please attach the "tag" to your Book Bag and leave it in/by the blue, collection bins outside the church office by Sunday, September 10th -Thank you!

The children thank you for your support! Sincerely, Diane Prall , MCC Liaison Covenant to Care



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 Around The World Sew-A-Thon Returns Sept 23

from 9am- 3pm~ Join Liz Skarzyinski from Dress A Girl Around The World on September 23 in Wilton Hall to create dresses for little girls overseas. Thank you for your generous donations of fabric. 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.



Have you seen the collection bottle for Heifer International sitting on the serving table during coffee hour?



This is for your spare change that when pooled together is able to purchase livestock and provide training to end poverty and hunger and to care for the Earth around the world. Your monies help families help themselves and others in their community when they receive animals that they grow and use their products and share their offspring allowing families to share the wealth. Your spare change goes a long way. A large donation check is sent to Heifer at the end of the year from Morning Circle. Please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com if you have any questions.

Do you have prescription glasses that you don't use anymore? Have you found some while cleaning out your junk drawers? A collection box for those glasses, cases and prescription sunglasses will be on the serving table during coffee for the month of October. Afterwards they will be dropped off at the appropriate place where volunteers clean, sort by prescription strength and package the glasses. Recycled glasses are distributed to people in need in low and middle income communities where they will have the greatest impact. Your donated glasses will change someone's life. Imagine if you could help a child read, an adult succeed in his job, a senior maintain her independence and provide a community with more opportunities to grow and thrive. Consider donating your used glasses and give the gift of sight to someone who will have a better view of life. Contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions.



Fellowship



Rachel's Well ~ Women's Spirituality Group

Together we explore the issues of our day and live, engage in meditative prayer and practice contemplative faith practices. We gather in Dineson parlor on the first Monday evening of every month from 7:30-9. The group is a no-preparation, come-as-you-are covenantal time of sisterhood and renewal. All are welcome! **Because of the Labor Day Holiday, our first meeting of the season will be held on Monday September 11th**

Morning Circle invites all the women of the congregation to attend our next meeting on Wednesday, September 13 at 11AM in Dineson Parlor. We will have a representative from Union Savings Bank speak about recent scams afflicting our community. Please bring a donation for the Food Pantry as well as a bag luncheon while we have a short business meeting. Morning Circle meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 11AM. If you have any questions, please contact Jackie Bleakney at [203-268-5275](tel:203-268-5275).



Retired Men's Breakfast: Retired Men will meet for breakfast at 9:00am on September 13th in Dineson Parlor. Please call the office by Tuesday if you need a ride.



Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

- ✚ **September 20th-7:30pm** The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane by Lisa See~Host TBD
- ✚ **October 18th-7:30pm** Beneath a Scarlet Sky by Mark T. Sullivan~Host TBD

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Looking for Prayer Partners!! Will you be a prayer partner? You don't know what a prayer partner does? Well, all you need to do is complete an information sheet in Wilton Hall and return it in the slot provided. About a month's time, you will receive a letter and the information sheet of the person who you will pray for while someone else is praying for you. Think of your partner and pray that they have a great day and that they have the strength to work through whatever challenge they may be facing. Seek them out during coffee hour, perhaps strike up a conversation. Offer them your hand while passing the peace during service. Send them a card or note in the mail using the church's address as the return. It all culminates to the "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon held on May 20, 2018 in Wilton Hall at 11:15AM. Childcare will be provided to those 3 years and younger while older children can dine at the table. It doesn't take a lot of time out of your day. I hope that you will consider being a PRAYER PARTNER. Please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or at thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions or comments. Here's a testimonial from last year:



"There were times when I would be stressed out and (get) caught up in the troubles of life, and I would remember that my prayer partner was thinking about me. It motivated me to find a way to find relief and happiness, and provide love and support to others. This also taught me to be more compassionate and thoughtful and prayerful for my prayer partner and others around me. It taught me to look at life through a new perspective."

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Sept. 3rd

Guest Preacher Doug Halley

10:00am Worship with Communion

4-6:30 Sr PF in the Park

Mon. Sept. 4th

Office Closed in Observance of Labor Day

Tues. Sept. 5th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Sept. 7th

7:15pm First Adult Choir Rehearsal

Sat. Sept. 9th

9:00am Senior PF Car Wash

Week of Sept. 10th

Baptism of Burton Francis V

Homecoming Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:15am Confirmation Informational (Dineson)

5:00pm Senior PF (Dineson)

6:00pm Junior PF (Classroom 5)

Mon. Sept. 11th

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Sept. 12th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Sept. 13th

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

11:00am Morning Circle (Dineson)

Thurs. Sept. 14th

9:30am First Bible Study of season (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Sept. 17th

Confirmation Dedication Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:15am Outreach Meeting (Dineson)

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult & Junior PF

Tues. Sept. 19th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Sept. 20th

6:30pm First Confirmation Class (Dineson)

7:30pm MCC Book Club (Location TBD)

Thurs. Sept. 21st

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Sept. 24th

10:00am Worship

1-7pm MusicFest (Everywhere!)

Tues. Sept. 26th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

7:00pm Bereavement Group (Dineson)

Wed. Sept. 27th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Sept. 28th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Friday. Sept 29-Oct 1

Senior PF Retreat at Camp Jewell

Week of Oct. 1st

Neighbors in Need/World Communion Sunday

10:00am Worship

6:00pm Adult & Junior PF

Mon. Oct. 2nd

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues Oct. 3rd

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Oct. 4th

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 5th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Oct. 8th

Guest Preacher Katrina Manzi

3rd Grade Bible Dedication

10:00am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult & Junior 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



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.