



THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

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Monroe, CT 06468

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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
Secretary: Melissa Rosenberg
Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

September 15, 2017



You know that great feeling when you've had a bite to eat and maybe a beer or glass of wine with friends and suddenly you find yourself getting into deep conversations about life, and love, and faith? It's a moment that is sacred enough that you

know it's something special but also casual enough that you look forward to it at the end of a long day.

A wise person once said that you discover yourself through discovering others. One of the things that I cherish about MCC is our small groups that meet on a regular basis, and September always fills me with anticipation of their return. So many great conversations and connections have been made throughout the years between people who care for one another! But I also have been thinking lately that there is a large segment of our congregation for whom participation is difficult, due to work schedules or family commitments.

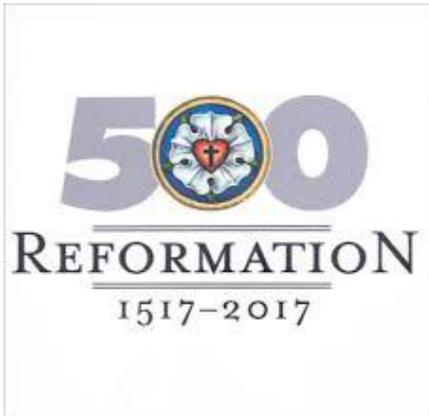
We live in polarizing times. Too many people find it difficult to have conversations with family and friends with differing political, religious, or cultural points of view. Relationships are being strained and tested. But if we are to bring more healing, understanding, and love into the world we must be able to speak with each other with respect. I believe in the power of direct, in-person conversation to learn, grow, and bring people together. Every time we engage one another, we have the opportunity to gain more and better tools to connect with the other people in our lives.

With that in mind, let's try a new thing! Come and join Clark and I on the first Friday of the month (starting October 6th) from 7:30 until 9:00 for a group we're calling "Faith on Tap", at a local pub whose name we will disclose very soon! We will sit together and talk about life and current events from a spiritual perspective. Let's come together and talk about matters of faith, spirituality and meaning. No formal presentations - just people kicking around a topic, sharing honestly what really matters to them.

Good ol' Martin Luther is reported to have said, "God is at work, even when we are drinking beer" (or your favorite beverage, because tea-totelers and soda drinkers are welcome too!) Anyone is welcome at the table. No topics are off limits. Agreement is not required, but civility is essential. Just place an order, draw up a seat and join the conversation.

In Peace, Pastor Jenn

What lengths would you go to?



Now that the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation is upon us, I have been thinking a lot about Christian history and what it means to be a Christian today. When I was in college, which was only three years ago, a fire was lit under me when we got to learning about Christian history. My confession is that I am a bit of a Christian history nut!

In the early church, and I mean REALLY early, like the second and third century after Jesus' physical presence among his people, early Christians began to distinguish themselves from Jews and thus Christianity was no longer tolerated by the Roman Empire.

Christianity was an illicit, underground, and illegal religion.

People worshipped in neighboring homes essentially hiding themselves and going to great lengths not to draw attention to their worship. "Behold how they love each other" was the hallmark of the early Christians, and yet they were the object of repeated persecution and oppression. These people also went to great lengths to follow Jesus and his message of "Loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself."

In the current century we are free to worship as we please and most of us do come to church each week. But do we follow Jesus? What happens if we start to take Jesus seriously? I recently read an article by Rev. Brian Zahnd, a Pastor in St. Joseph, MO that addressed the issue of what can happen when we're asked to take Jesus seriously.

Christianity and the life of the church have become a lot of different things, but it seems that feathers always get ruffled when we actually start taking seriously the example and teachings of the guy supposedly at the center of it all. Especially when there's cultural debate around a particular issue. Jesus is fine as a name, but if we create an encounter between Jesus and the personal lives or politics of Christians, we might have trouble.

We can read Jesus' words declaring blessed the "peacemakers," "the meek," and "the merciful" (Matt. 5:3-10), and we might nod with approval, but if we start talking about actually being merciful towards the desperate or peaceful towards the violent, we might be called foolish.

We can read Jesus' words about turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:39) and we won't be chased out, but if we insert this into real life situations where people want revenge, we might be berated as weak, perhaps even unpatriotic, if we don't go back to "eye for an eye."

Surrounded by glimmering Christmas lights and angelic choruses, we read the story of a young Jesus' family having to flee a violent ruler (Matt. 2:13-18). But bring up that this made Jesus' family refugees and ask how this should inform our approach to the millions in similar situations today, and we might be told to get politics out of church. (Zahnd)

I personally don't believe that Jesus came to make us comfortable. Jesus himself did not have a very comfortable existence. I as a church leader ask you to "uncomfort" yourselves. Come out of the shelter of your cocoon and start taking Jesus seriously. MCC gets maybe two hours of your time each week while the news of the world and other factions get much more, but what would your life look like if Jesus got most of your time? What would our world look like if Jesus got most of your time? What lengths would you go to?

Peace, Debi M-K

*I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.
Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep,
but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk
or a snooze in the sunshine.
I don't want enough of God to make me love a black man
or pick beets with a migrant.
I want ecstasy, not transformation.
I want warmth of the womb, not a new birth.
I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.
I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please. - Wilbur Rees*

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



MusicFest is getting close! We are getting excited! We hope you will come out and enjoy this great day of music and art at MCC!

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all of you who have donated/sponsored MusicFest. Your help makes a huge difference.

We are welcoming back seven performers/groups who are crowd favorites including Will Duchon, Silver Threads (Julie, Rob, Bonnie S, Pam J, John O, Don P-B, et al), Larry Wissink, and Just Voices (Mike Pfalzgraf, Mike and Barbara Pellegrino, et al). And we are looking forward to having five new acts -- a harpist, a jazz group, a men's vocal sextet, a three-women acoustic, rock, folk and blues group, and a classic pop/rock group. We are happy that the incomparable Silver Steel Band (which includes some friends you will recognize) is returning as is Goldrush (Mary Beth and Gary Sippin, et al). We are also pleased to have Donald Alfano, classical pianist with us again, accompanying Larry. Great line-up!

This year we are expanding our visual arts offerings beyond what they have been in the past. And, happily, Burrito Shack will be with us again.

We have pulled the event back into September (24th) and a couple of hours earlier (1 to 7) in hopes of capturing more warmth and light. Also it is a Sunday.

We will be selling tickets again at coffee hour on Sunday the 17th in Wilton. Of course they are also available at the door and online :

<http://monroemusicfest.tix.com/Event.aspx?EventCode=943117>.

Invite your friends, neighbors, family and co-workers; make a fun day of it! You'll be glad you did. For information on all the fabulous performers, visit

<http://monroemusicfest.blogspot.com/>

Listen to the interview on WMNR with Larry, Will, et al Sunday, the 17th at 5 pm.

Hope to see you Sunday, September 24th at this wonderful event! - Your MusicFest Team

Christian Education

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar

September

17th – Meet and Greet Christine Hare/Elections

24th – NO Jr. PF

Sunday School Calendar

September

17th – Regular Classes

24th – Regular Classes

October

1st – Class for PreK-2nd Grade



A note regarding Jr. PF for now we are rotating Advisers and parents will receive an email by Thursday during the week saying whether or not there will be Jr. PF. We will also 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

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.

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

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 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

Dress A Girl Around The World Sew-A-Thon Returns Sept 23 from 10am- 3pm I



have exciting news! We have gotten distribution of the dresses through Sacred Heart University's Nursing program. They have several mission trips schedule in the next 4-5 months. They have requested 75 dresses for an October mission trip to Jamaica. There is a trip planned for Uganda in early January, and they need 25 tee-shirt dresses (their culture prohibits exposed shoulders). Listed below are the dates and locations of planned mission trips, some I'm waiting to hear what they will need.

Mission Trips-Dress A Girl	
9/30 – 10/7 Guatemala	12/30 – 1/15 India - no dresses needed strictly use traditional dress
10/7 – 10/14 Guatemala	1/15 – 2/15 (approx.) Uganda 25 tee-shirt dress only in large & extra large
10/7 – 10/14 Haiti	2/3 – 2/10 Guatemala
10/14 – 10/21 Jamaica - need 75 dress, sun dress is ok	3/4 - 3/11 Guatemala

I'm hoping any "non" sewers can help put together dress kits for those who want to sew at home. There are several other projects for "non" sewers, so all are welcome. If you can't make it to this DAG Sew-A-Thon, there are two more scheduled for this calendar year, and all are welcome to both.

September 23, 2017, 10am-3pm 10am - 3pm at Monroe Congregational Church 34 Church Street, Monroe, CT email liz1202us@yahoo.com or call/text 203257-7174 to register for this event

November 11, 2017, 10am - 3pm at Monroe Congregational Church 34 Church Street, Monroe, CT email liz1202us@yahoo.com or call/text 203257-7174 to register for this event

One other note, I will be bringing lunch and will be asking for a small donation to help cover materials costs, so we can continue to deliver quality dresses to Girls Around The World.

Thank you for your past and future participation. Liz Skarzynski

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 on October 1st as part of our World Communion Sunday observance.



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



Have you checked your junk drawers lately? Have you recently cleaned out an older person's belongings and found prescription glasses or sunglasses that are not being used? You can donate them so that they can be cleaned and given to someone in need around the country and worldwide. A collection basket will be on the coffee hour table in late September to mid-October. Please consider

giving the gift of sight to someone who'll see the world more clearly with these glasses. Please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions or comments.

Fellowship

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

Prayer Partners Needed and Wanted!! So far I have 9 participants signed up to be Prayer Partners. Being a part of this group does not require a lot of your time. All you need to do is sign up in Wilton Hall. In October you will receive information about the person you will keep in your thoughts and prayers along with a letter indicating that we will have a "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon in May 2018 that will include childcare for those 2 years and under. Older kids can dine with us. In the meantime, you can send your partner a card or note in the mail using the church's address as the return. You can seek them out during the passing of the peace or start up a conversation with them at coffee hour. Just a few minutes out of your day wondering if they're doing well or hoping that they have a great day is all that it takes. Please consider signing up. Contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or at thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions or comments. Here is a testimonial from a participant from last year's group:



"It was nice to remember someone to send positive energy. I am reminded that there are other people with other problems which helped you to give gratitude. It was a good experience."

Community News



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.



With gratitude and thanksgiving for the prayers of this congregation, we have removed the names of Evelyn (Pat) Provost and June Thompson from our Prayer List. Your powerful and dedicated prayers have cured and strengthened a heart and beaten a cancer. Our families are very grateful. Thank you. Gary and Gail Thompson

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Sept. 17th

Confirmation Dedication Sunday

10:00am Worship

11:15am Outreach Meeting (Dineson)

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Junior Pf and Adult 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)

12:00pm Young at Heart (Jennie's Pizza)

7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Oct. 1st

Neighbors in Need/World Communion Sunday

10:00am Worship

5:00pm Senior PF

6:00pm Adult PF & Junior PF

Mon. Oct. 2nd

7:30pm Rachel's Well (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 (Location TBD)

Week of Oct. 8th

Guest Preacher Katrina Manzi

3rd Grade Bible Dedication

10:00am Worship

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 Luncheon (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)

Thurs. Oct. 19th

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.