

34 Church Street  
Monroe, CT 06468  
Tel.: (203) 268-9327  
Fax: (203) 268-3153  
www.mcc-ucc.org

**Office Hours:**  
Mon. 9am – 5:30pm  
Wed. (remotely) 8am - 6pm  
Fri. 9am – 3:30pm

Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras  
Music Director: Will Duchon  
Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall  
CE Coordinator: Jeanette Cardentey-Morales  
Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

**Find us on YouTube** <https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc>



**THE** MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**STEEPLE**

**January 1, 2024**



**Arise, Shine!**  
***How to Face the Winter Blues***

After Christmas I often feel deflated, how about you? Putting away the decorations I spent weeks carefully crafting at home is exhausting work (and yet, there's a comfort in decluttering!). The joy of the season lessens as social engagements decrease. Most of the long and dreary winter is still

ahead, and I'm never sure if the weather will play a part in cancelling things I look forward to. To be honest, I'd love to just hibernate the next 3-4 months or so and wake up to the fragrance of daffodils and Easter music.

During this cold season, with long dark nights and little daylight, many will be struggling with Seasonal Affective Disorder, a kind of depression in which life can feel flat as one's energy is zapped. It has also been called "*the mid-winter blues.*" Millions of people struggle with anxiety, depression, and chronic mental illness. If you do not, chances are you are close to someone who does. The pandemic exacerbated the situation. What can we do about it? The immediate answer is to always seek help from professionals, there's no shame in that!

In addition, one may try adopting a new spiritual practice. These can be everyday activities to boost and lighten up our mood. I am looking forward to a class I am taking on Meditation and Centering Prayer this winter/spring because my hope is to utilize it more in my ministry. What are you looking forward to learning more about or trying in your spiritual life this New Year?

This season we are about to enter is called Epiphany for a good reason. It is a time that can be used to help us gain insight and move us toward meaningful practices, things you and I can do, that make a difference in how we live and experience life and connect with others.

The promise of our sacred scriptures is that God will carry us through, that God's light shines into the darkness, and that the darkness cannot snuff out that light. I hope and pray that you will join us for worship, service and fellowship in person or online in the New Year. The gifts we offer one another in community will help you rise and shine. Have a blessed and bright New Year!

*In Peace, Pastor Jenn*

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**STAR Words are Here!**



At church on New Year's Eve (December 31st) and Epiphany (January 7<sup>th</sup>), we'll have a basket of STAR words for 2024 for you to choose from. We hope that you find time to marvel at God's spirit working through these paper stars. Like the magi, may these words allow us all to go home by another road, our eyes opened to God's presence in and around us. Unable to pick a STAR word for yourself this year? Reach out to Pastor Jenn, she'd be happy to select one for you.

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**Church Council**



**Call to Annual Congregational Meeting \* January 28, 2024**

The members of Monroe Congregational Church are hereby called to attend the Annual Meeting of the Congregation to be held in the Meeting House at 11:15 am on Sunday, January 28, 2024.

The agenda will include the following: Receiving of Reports; Electing Officers, Board Members and Delegates; Adopting the 2024 budget and any other business that must properly come before the Congregation.

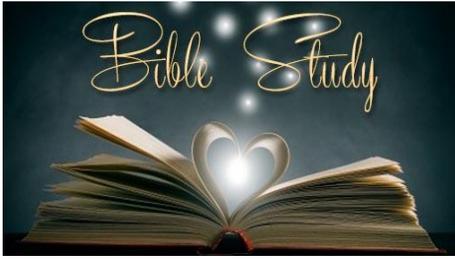
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**Deacons**



**Flowers for Worship:** Would you like to honor or remember a loved one, or celebrate a milestone? You can do so, while also helping Monroe Congregational Church continue its tradition of fresh flowers on the communion table. You can sign-up in Wilton Hall or online! You may choose to arrange flowers from your garden, purchase an arrangement, or send a check (\$25) to Monroe Congregational Church (memo: "flowers" & the date) or use our website to pay online, and we will order for you. If you are supplying the flowers yourself, please set them up between 9:30am and 9:45am, before worship. Thank you!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAC2CA5FEC61-flowers> or [MCC-UCC.org](http://MCC-UCC.org)



**Weekly Bible Study, Thursdays 9:30-11 am:** We cordially invite you to join us each week as we gather in together in Dineson Parlor to learn with and through one another. After a time of fellowship and prayer concerns, we read and discuss upcoming scripture texts or other faith-related topics. Bring your favorite Bible (whatever version you prefer) and a small notebook. Let Pastor Jenn know if you have any questions!



**Snack & Chat with NOOMA:** NOOMA is a series of 24 short films (less than 14 minutes each) that "blend [events of] everyday with discussion about God". Each short story covers a specific topic on a real-life situation, usually by relating the various experiences from a Christian perspective. The series features Rob Bell, the author of Love Wins. The name NOOMA comes from a phonetic spelling of the Greek word πνευμα (pneuma), meaning "wind or spirit". Join us in Dineson Parlor to enjoy

some snacks, a video and light discussion – no prep necessary and all are welcome!

**Jan 14 – TREES, Feb 11 – LUGGAGE, Mar 17 – OPEN, Apr 21 – STORE**

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**Faith Formation**

**Sr PF Coat Drive**

Let's Help Our Neighbors at the Bridgeport Rescue Mission!

Please bring your gently used coats to Wilton Hall by Monday, January 31st

## News from the Moderator



I just wanted to let you know that you have not missed the opportunity to show your appreciation for Pastor Jenn, Will, Jeanette and Diane through a year-end monetary gift. **You have until 1/15/24.** Little known fact: Those cards dispensed at the special Christmas coffee hour are not stuffed with cash--the donations must go through payroll in January (tax laws). Instructions are below.

1. **Online is the best way**, because it's hassle-free and it's done right away!
  - a. Go to the MCC website "Donate" page (<http://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html>)
  - b. Click To Donate through VANCO, Click Here.
    - i. If you don't have a login and profile set up already, it's easy and you can use it for your pledge or other donations to MCC.
    - ii. Scroll down to the "Other" block and then follow the prompts.
  - c. Write **2023 STAFF GIFT** in the **Notes** box so we know what it's for.
2. **By check:** Write your check to MCC and write **2023 Staff Gift** in the memo
  - a. You can *mail* that to Receiver, MCC, 34 Church St., Monroe, CT, 06468,
  - b. Or *drop it off* in the office in the Receiver mailbox.
  - c. Or *put it in the collection plate* on Sunday (be sure to indicate "**2023 Staff Gift**").

*May the peace of the Christmas season be with you,  
Arlene Redmond, Moderator*

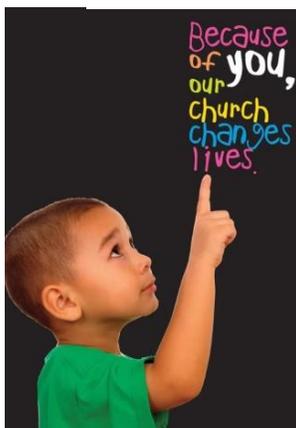
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**To All Members and Friends of the Monroe Congregational Church** - Thank you so much for the many gifts, cards, and warm wishes you have given to us. We hope your Christmas was both merry and blessed!- *Jenn, Will, Diane and Jeanette*

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### 2024 MCC Stewardship Campaign



In the fall we began our annual pledge drive, an intentional period of stewardship commitment entitled "Because of YOU, our church changes lives".

**To date we have received 72 pledge cards totaling \$179,930 -Thank you!**

We hope that if you haven't responded yet you will complete and return your 2024 pledge card as soon as possible, either by mail, in the giving plate on Sunday, or by e-mailing your intentions to John O'Rourke at [jorourke224@gmail.com](mailto:jorourke224@gmail.com). Thank you for prayerfully considering how to financially support the Monroe Congregational Church in 2024!

Your Stewardship Committee, John O'Rourke (Receiver), Diane Prall, Rev. Jenn Gingras

## Outreach



**Thank you** to everyone that contributed gifts and cash to our Covenant to Care Adopt A Social Worker program!

Pictured are just some of the gifts the children of CAFAF (Connecticut Alliance of Foster & Adoptive Families) received from MCC at their annual Christmas party!

Thank you for making so many children joyful this year!

Diane Prall - Covenant to Care Liaison

Check out CAFAF <https://cafafct.org/>

# SAVE THE DATE

**Sunday May 5, 2024**

**1:30 pm ~ rain or shine**

starts from United Congregational Church in Bpt.

## Greater Bridgeport Area 50th Hunger Walk

**CROP  
HUNGER WALK**  
ENDING HUNGER **ONE STEP AT A TIME**

BY  **CWS**

**CROP WALK RALLY 2pm March 10, 2024**  
**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Trumbull**

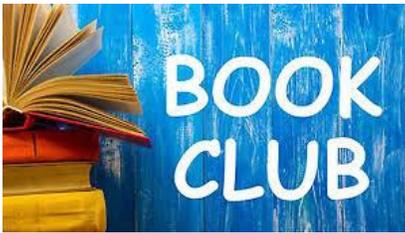


**The Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe welcomes and encourages new volunteers** to help sort, tag and hang donated merchandise on Tuesdays at 1:15 PM. Sales associates are needed on Fridays for shifts from 10-12:30 and 12:30-3 and on Saturdays from 10-12 and 12-2. It's easy to do with a list of procedures that you can read over or visit a volunteer during business hours and they'd be glad to help you with any questions regarding opening or closing. Please contact Susie Cuseo with any questions at [thecuseos@yahoo.com](mailto:thecuseos@yahoo.com) or 203-268-0280.

## Fellowship



**Young at Heart will meet Thursday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at noon.**  
Details to be announced.



**We encourage anyone to join us on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month.** We will continue to meet via zoom so that all members can join from wherever they may be. Questions can be sent to Paula via email [pjsh55@gmail.com](mailto:pjsh55@gmail.com) or home phone or 203-452-0850

The book club selections for upcoming months:

**January 17<sup>th</sup>** - 7 pm - The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post by Allison Pataki

February 21<sup>st</sup> - 7 pm - This Tender Land by William Kent Kreuger

March 20<sup>th</sup> - 7 pm- Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver



**Morning Circle** meets on the second Wednesday of the month with the exception of January and February. We work in collaboration with the Food Pantry providing bean soup jars for Thanksgiving, birthday bags for children who visit with their families, collect women's hygiene products and make trick-or-treat bags in October. We put together Church World Service hygiene kits for international families in crisis and collect spare change for Heifer International. Please contact Shari Carrano with any questions or comments at 203-400-3563.

### **Our calendar of meetings**

Wednesday, March 13 - Birthday bags for Food Pantry

Wednesday, April 10 - Church World Service hygiene kits

Wednesday, May 8 - Collection of Women's hygiene products

Wednesday, June 12 - Annual June picnic - Location TBD

**Please join us for Adult PF which will now meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month in Dineson Parlor from 5:30 to 8pm!**

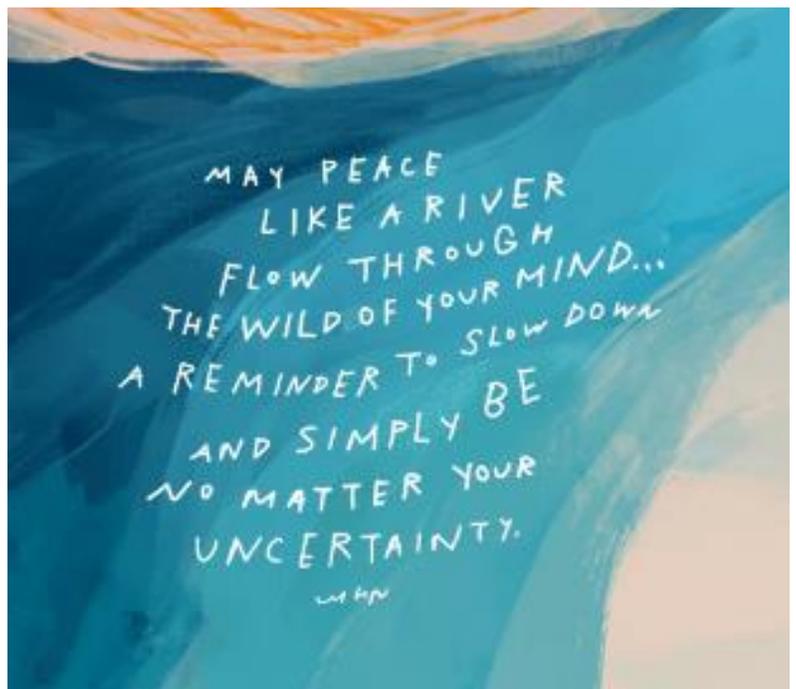


Bring your own beverage and a snack to share. We are excited to bring Adult PF back to MCC in a new format! Each month will be led by different members of the group. It could be a discussion of an article or movie, a game night or a service project for MCC or the greater community, or an outing etc. Your presence and ideas are wanted and welcome. All adults young and old are encouraged to attend. Please reach out to Janie Allen via phone/text/email at 203-522-3686 or [janeFallen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janeFallen@sbcglobal.net) with any thoughts or questions. **Our next meeting will be Saturday, 1/6. Come check it out!**

**Sign up for MCC Women's  
Retreat  
at Silver Lake Conference Center  
"Peace Like A River"**

Leaving Friday Evening, **April 5** and  
Returning Sunday afternoon, **April 7**

**Sign up** in Wilton Hall  
or call the office 203-268-9327





*The Christmas Flowers  
are given with love from:*



Vaughan Askue &  
Arlene Redmond

Michelle Cardentey

Rev. Jennifer & Clark Gingras

Cheri Irwin

The Prall family

Nancy & Sheldon Smith

in memory of Elizabeth & Bill Askue and  
Dot & Fred Redmond

in memory of Eleanor & Joseph LaValla and  
Carmelina & Jose Cardentey

in celebration of our children and their  
partners

in memory of Neil & Dorothea Stearns

in memory of Diane's father, Norman  
Stickney, Jr., Tony's Parents, Harold &  
Betsy Prall, & our beloved friend, Susan  
Walker

In memory of Donald A. Spargo, Elsie F.  
Hedges, Horace S. Smith and Marjorie H.  
Smith

Ann Zeiner

in memory of Bob, Carol, John, and Val





## 2024 Inclement Weather Policy 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.

This is our inclement weather policy, including who makes decisions about closings and how the decision is spread in the community. If you serve in a position of responsibility, please find your leadership role below.

### **In Person Sunday Worship Services:**

1. **At 7 am**, Pastor (Jenn Gingras, 203-895-5607) and the current Chair of Deacons make the decision whether or not to cancel in-person worship. If in-person worship is cancelled, Jenn will record and upload an abbreviated worship service on <https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc> by noon (sermon, prayer, announcements)
2. **Jenn** notifies staff and key volunteers (who in turn notify those they work with), including Jeanette Cardentey-Morales (203-257-9637), Will Duchon (203-615-3908), Reader, Usher and Trustee of the Day. Jenn sends a church-wide e-mail and posts on FB (MCC-UCC Conversation and Monroe Cong Church Page)
3. **Chair of Deacons** notifies CT Weather/IAN Snap, Channel 8 & Channel 3
4. **Committee meetings** are cancelled at the discretion of committee chair, although many are held on Zoom at the moment, so weather shouldn't be a problem!

**Sr. & Jr. PF** groups will be notified of any changes or cancellations by e-mail, phone tree and/or Facebook notifications as appropriate.

1. Josh Post (203-400-0884)– Makes and communicates Sr PF decision
2. Jeanette Cardentey-Morales (203-257-9637) – Makes and communicates Jr PF decision

**Evening Meetings:** It is the responsibility of the convener to notify the meeting participants of any changes or cancellations.

**Midweek Morning Programs:** If the Monroe School district either delays or cancels school, morning Bible studies and other church-sponsored morning programs are cancelled.

**Church Office:** If the Monroe School System is closed, and staff members are able to travel, they may choose to do so if conditions are safe. Otherwise, they may choose to work remotely.

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

*For info on parking lot*

## In Our Prayers

**Alison Abrams** (Jessica Pfalzgraf's sister); **Allie** (Colegrove's friend); **Jennifer Bittar** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend); **Jackie Bleakney; Byron Brown & Bruce Bryant** (friends of Will Duchon); **Lori Cimeno** (Peggy & Ron Villani's Daughter); **Kevin Daly** (Gary Thompson's friend); **Dawn** (Donna Konkol's Friend); **Dot Dralus; Matt Duchon; Elaine** (Wendy Colegrove's Aunt); **Bruno Forte** (Nancy Hedine's friend); **David Fischman** (Sue Granello's Friend); **Giovanni J. Fracassini** (Jack's Uncle); **Dave Fuller** (Gail Olson's brother); **Lehre Fuller** (Gail Olson's sister-in-law); **Clark Gingras; Heather Henning; Mary & Rachel Heerema** (Julia Gutierrez's mom & sister); **Heidi** (Diane Prall's sister); **Brad Heines** (Susie Cuseo's friend); **Bob Heffernan** (Ann Zeiner's son-in-law); **Brian Hopkins** (Donna Konkol's cousin); **Vera James** (Jenn Wissink's mother); **Joey** (Calvert Locks); **Jonathan** (Matt Colegrove's brother); **Kelti** (friend of Liska Gutierrez); **Walter Lane** (Marge Fox's brother-in-law); **Monica Lynch** (Bethany Dupuis' friend); **Nicole Malia; Ron McGlinchey** (Pastor Jenn's dad); **Betty McKeown** (Donna Konkol's mother); **Mike** (Janie Allen's son); **Jean Moffat; Olivia Morrison** (Donna Nickdow's niece); **Bert Muizulis; Joe Mumper** (Julie McClenathan's friend); **Pat Nugent; Ocampo family** (friends of Liska Gutierrez); **Nancy Olofson; Missy Olson; Jack O'Rourke** (John's dad); **Osborne** (Colegrove's Family friend); **Dean Perosino** (Gayle Hammond's brother); **Geno Piacentini** (Karen MacDonald's husband); **P.T. Philip** (Liz Sampson's father); **Regina Roberts** (Kathy Maiolo's niece); **Alfredo Rodriguez** (Osirus Gutierrez's cousin); **Noah Santiago** (Shari Carrano's great-grandson); **Jill Sapak; Marian Schmitz; Carlos Serrano** (Kathy Maiolo's cousin); **Yessika Siccardi** (Sampson family friend); **Bernie Sippin; Gary Sippin** (Lori Sippin's son); **John Skarupa** (Barb Pellegrino's brother); **Christine Stadler; Tom Steen** (Jessica Pfalzgraf's dad); **Rev. Dr. Sheldon Smith; Christian & Dain Steiner** (Julie McClenathan's nephews); **Claire Stenzel** (June & Myron Winger's granddaughter); **Olga Terwilliger** (Nancy Hedine's sister-in-law); **Richard Turco** (Jack Fracassini's cousin); **Ruth Wakeley; Charles L. Wynn, Sr.,** (and his mother) **Alleane** (friend of Will Duchon); **Allen Zeiner** (Ann Zeiner's son); **Ann Zeiner**

**The concerns of our world:** The people of **Ukraine; LGBTQ+ children and their families** facing discrimination; those who serve or live in **war or conflict zones** around the world; **first responders** and those who serve in **law enforcement**; those who suffer **discrimination**; those who struggle with **mental illness, addiction, divorce or separation; Caregivers;** the **homeless, homebound and refugees;** Our friends living on the **Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation** and in **Oaxaca, Mexico**

**Those serving in the military, veterans & their families:** Stateside: **Justin Riffard,** Pennsicola Naval Air Station, **Zachary Gingras,** 395th Combat Sustainability Support, **Joel Smith,** 250th Engineering Company Germany: **Rachel Hoffman** (Vaughan Askue's daughter), Chicago: **Chris Meneses** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend), Kuwait: **Jon Sanchez** (Don Whiteley's grandson-in-law)



**Happy January Birthday** to the following people  
and to anyone we may have missed we will keep you in our prayers.

Chad	Bauer	01/02	Braeden	Goyette	01/16
John	Hastedt	01/04	Ann	Zeiner	01/16
Chris	Pearson	01/04	Mary Jo	Brett	01/17
Ryan	Snyder	01/04	Clark	Gingras	01/18
Don	Parker-Burgard	01/06	Christine	Williams	01/18
Susan	Granello	01/10	Nancy	Olofson	01/19
Alia	Aguilar	01/11	Rebecca	Williams	01/20
Jamie	Correll	01/11	Max	Williams	01/22
Christopher	Hisey	01/11	Gabriela	Gerhard	01/22
Danielle	Adams	01/12	Carmela	Combs	01/23
Joanne	Malia	01/14	Marian	Schmitz	01/26
David	Coffey	01/15	Jonathan	Ganino	01/27
Thomas	Culp	01/16	Margaret	Villani	01/27



**Happy January Wedding Anniversary** the following couples and to anyone we may have missed, we will keep you in our prayers. (Number is anniversary date)

Karen & David Coffey<sup>(01)</sup> Larry & Jennifer Wissink<sup>(07)</sup> and Mike & Barbara Pellegrino<sup>(24)</sup>

**January**  
**MCC Community Calendar**

**Mon. Jan 1<sup>st</sup>**

*New Year's Day -office Closed*

**Tue. Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>**

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

**Thurs. Jan 4<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Confirmation Class  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir

**Sat. Jan 6<sup>th</sup>**

5:30 pm Adult PF

**Week of Sun. Jan 7<sup>th</sup>**

*Epiphany Sunday*  
10:00 am Worship  
11:30 am Trustees  
5:00 pm Junior PF  
5:00 pm Senior PF

**Mon. Jan 8<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 pm Deacons

**Tue. Jan 9<sup>th</sup>**

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

**Thurs. Jan 11<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Confirmation Class  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir

**Week of Sun. Jan 14<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 am Worship  
11:15 am Snack & Chat NOOMA  
5:00 pm Junior PF  
5:00 pm Senior PF

**Mon. Jan 15<sup>th</sup>**

*Martin Luther King Day - Office Closed*

**Tue. Jan 16<sup>th</sup>**

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

**Wed. Jan 17<sup>th</sup>**

7 pm Book Club Zoom

**Thurs. Jan 18<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
6:00 pm Confirmation Class  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir

**Week of Sun. Jan 21<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 am Worship  
5:00 pm Junior PF  
5:00 pm Senior PF

**Tue. Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>**

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

**Thurs. Jan 25<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study  
12:00 pm Young at Heart  
6:00 pm Confirmation Class  
6:00 pm Bell Choir  
7:00 pm Chancel Choir

**Week of Sun. Jan 28<sup>th</sup>**

*Heritage Sunday*  
10:00 am Worship  
11:00 am Annual Meeting  
5:00 pm Junior PF  
5:00 pm Senior PF

**Tue. Jan 30<sup>th</sup>**

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag