

March 23, 2025

Third Sunday of Lent

10:00 am

*Monroe Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming congregation.
Our deacons and pastors hope you will feel at home here. No matter who you are or
where you are on life's journey, we welcome you in Christ's name.*

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Gathering Music Come, O Creator Spirit *Latin plainsong, 9th Century*

Welcome & Announcements

Moment of Quiet & Lighting of the Candles

Call to Worship

Leader: Wherever we have wandered, God gathers us together

People: And we will rejoice!

Leader: However we have wandered, God gathers us together

People: And we will rejoice!

Leader: Whoever we are and whatever others think about us, God gathers us together

All: And we will rejoice!

Opening Prayer

Vinay Sampson, Deacon of the Day

***Our Church's Covenant**

inside front cover of hymnal

Children's Message

Students may transition to Sunday School with their teachers.

***Hymn**

I Look to You in Every Need

NCH #463

Call to Confession – Unison Prayer - Silent Prayer

*Loving God, your gifts overflow with generosity, and yet we occasionally overlook the amazing blessings we've been given. Instead of cherishing what we have, we find ourselves wanting more and neglecting your wonderful provisions. Please forgive us for not fully appreciating the treasures you've shared with us. When we struggle to embrace your offerings or to care for those gifts, gently remind us to reconnect with you. Amen.
(silence)*

Words of Assurance

***Passing of the Peace**

*In order for those tuning in from home to feel included,
please turn and greet the webcam as you share signs of peace with one another.*

Pastoral Prayer – Silent Prayer -- Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Time for Giving

Invitation

Offertory

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Ryan Murphy, 2016

*Our offering plate will be passed among us today.
You may give online at www.mcc-ucc/donate.*

*Doxology and Presentation

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Christ, the Word in flesh, born low,
Praise Holy Spirit, evermore,
One God, triune, whom we adore. Amen!*

*Prayer of Dedication

Scripture

Luke 15:1–32, pg. 952

If you would like to read along, Bibles may be found underneath the pew in front of you.

Sermon

Come for the Food, Stay for the Forgiveness

Rev. Jennifer Gingras

*Closing Hymn

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

NCH #190

Benediction

Postlude

Thankful Praise

Lamonte Johnson, 1972

God is still speaking, welcome to all who are worshipping with us today, in-person and online! Worship is live streamed on church's You Tube Channel under CCLI Streaming License #2169137 on: <https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc>, as well as on our Facebook page "Monroe Congregational Church, UCC"

We are an **Open & Affirming** congregation of the United Church of Christ, and we invite everyone to join in the full life and ministry of this church. We strive in word and deed to be faithful to Jesus' model of loving acceptance and welcome to all persons, inclusive of every age, race, ability, economic and social status, nationality, faith background, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital standing and family structure.

In a public church setting, sharing **prayer concerns** is a deeply spiritual practice rooted in love, mutual support, and faith. When we lift up the needs of others, we acknowledge our dependence on God and our responsibility to care for one another. At MCC, the prayer concerns we share each Sunday may include personal struggles, community hardships, or global issues, all brought before God and one another with humility and trust. Unlike partisan political speeches, which often seek to persuade or promote a particular ideology, our time of community prayer is meant to foster unity—bringing neighbors and friends together in compassion and intercession for the good of all.

Please join us for a time of **fellowship** following the service in Wilton Hall.



Assisted Listening Devices: As part of the ongoing Homeland Security grant project, we added four wireless assisted listening units to our sound system in the Meetinghouse. We are thrilled to be able to enhance the experience of those needing greater accessibility. If you are interested in trying one out, asking Scott Young or an usher is a perfect way to get started!



Worship Bags! Do you have a Sunday School student who would like to have quiet activities to do in church? We've got a worship bag they can use! Simply ask an usher and return the bag on your way to coffee hour.



If you'd like to **give online** during worship (or anytime), simply scan this QR code, which will take you to our VANCO electronic giving page. Thank you so much for your support.

Thank you for assisting in this morning's worship!

Deacon: Vinay Sampson **Usher:** Susie Cuseo **Lay Reader:** David Walker
Trustee: Dave Allen **Counter:** John O'Rourke **Web Steward:** Scott Young
Coffee Host: Ann-Marie Campbell



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](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAC2CA5FEC61-flowers)



to the following people and to anyone we may have missed, we will keep you in our prayers. (Number is birth date)

Madeline Colegrove ⁽²³⁾	Jan Pearson ⁽²⁵⁾	Dana Jesulaitis ⁽²⁸⁾
Rachel Colegrove ⁽²⁵⁾	Judy Davis ⁽²⁶⁾	Arlene Redmond ⁽²⁸⁾
Cliff Cuseo ⁽²⁵⁾	John Maiolo ⁽²⁶⁾	Bonnie Schneider ⁽²⁹⁾
Susie Cuseo ⁽²⁵⁾		



Special Congregational Meeting TODAY, March 23, 2025, 11:15 Meetinghouse

The members of Monroe Congregational Church are hereby called to attend a special meeting of the Congregation to discuss a newly discovered financial liability. It has come to our attention that funds withheld from Rev. Jennifer

Gingras' salary over the past ten years were mistakenly not remitted to the appropriate recipient, and the church also appears to have underpaid its share of retirement contributions.

This meeting will provide an overview of the situation, outline a plan to address it, and present recommended enhancements to our internal controls and procedures to prevent similar issues in the future. A vote will be required, and attendance of a quorum of 44 is needed. Please check your mailbox for a letter with further details.

The meeting will be held in a hybrid format, with both in-person and Zoom attendance options available.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2038955607?pwd=bWxMMDRXN3d6emJNZ2JsVzlsTFp3dz09&omn=87543114324> Meeting ID: 203 895 5607 Passcode: MeetMe



Holy Week at the Monroe Congregational Church

Palm Sunday, April 13th, 10 am –Join us in our historic Meetinghouse to celebrate Palm Sunday. We will begin with a festive procession around the green.

Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service, April 17th, 7:30 pm: A candlelit evening worship service remembering Jesus' mandate to love one another.

Easter Sunday, April 20th - 6am Sunrise Service on Pierce Lawn: Dress warmly and join us outside at the fire pit to welcome the resurrection! 10am Easter Celebration Service: Join us at MCC for the Great Easter Celebration! We will also join in singing the Hallelujah Chorus. After worship we will share a festive Easter Coffee Hour. Christ is Risen indeed AND Everyone is Welcome!



Close the Gap 5k Challenge

Exciting news! We are about 5k away from reaching our 2025 Stewardship Campaign, *Better Together* goal of \$210,000. And we are grateful for everyone's pledge of support!

Knowing that we are so close, in appreciation of our church's ministries (and Senior PF especially) an anonymous donor family has posed a challenge to our pledging members and friends.

From now until Strawberry Festival Sunday, anything donated by an individual or household *above and beyond their current pledge* will be matched by the anonymous donor family and given to Senior PF – **up to \$5,000.**

To participate in the challenge, submit a gift with the notation "**Close the Gap**" so we can keep track. This could have a huge impact on our youth's summer mission trip, not to mention our ministries here at MCC! Thanks for your consideration.

Loaves & Fishes FryDays!

Join The Monroe Congregational Church & St. Peter's Grace Episcopal Church Fridays in Lent from 4:30-7:30 pm, as Dave Kuban's Planet Pizza food truck serves up hot fried fish, shrimp, french fries, chicken fingers and pizza (GF available) from the church's parking lot! Either grab & go or stay & enjoy with neighbors and friends. This is a shared fundraiser for BOTH our communities, so the locations will vary.

- April 11: MCC hosts
- March 28, April 4: St. Peter's Grace hosts



Save time and pre-order online at <https://loaves-fishes-frydays.square.site/>

We are seeking **volunteers**! As a volunteer, you will help people get their pre-ordered food, clean up tables and be hospitable! This is a joint fundraiser for both our church communities, so it doesn't matter which site you serve. Please wear your Strawberry or Apple Festival T-shirt :) and sign up online at

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0D44A8AC22A2FB6-55203832-loaves#/>

Outreach

MCC Outreach Tag Sale, April 5, 2025, 9 am – 1 pm (early birds at 8 am)

WE NEED YOUR TREASURES!



It's time to gather your donations for the Annual Outreach Charity Tag Sale on Apr 5! To donate, please bring your items to Wilton Hall on either Apr 1, 2 or 3 from 9 am until 5 pm. We would really appreciate if, when dropping off your items, you could stay and help volunteers sort.

All items must be clean and in good condition.

Thank you for your generous donations! Items we cannot accept include:

- Electronics, including old computers, monitors, boom boxes or phones (of any type)
- Coffee mugs (travel and ceramic), plastic water bottles, Plastic food storage items
- Stuffed toys
- Cribs, car seats or pack and plays
- Encyclopedias, textbooks or VHS tapes
- Bicycles that are not complete and rideable
- Blankets, comforters, or linens that have holes or are not clean
- Anything that is broken or chipped
- Large furniture items like dining room sets, particle board furniture, bookcases, upholstered chairs or couches.

*Please email Julie McClenathan pictures of small furniture items before donating. juliemcclenathan@gmail.com



MARCH 30th One Great Hour of Sharing® stands as a cornerstone of the United Church of Christ's special mission offerings. This Lenten initiative provides vital support for disaster relief, refugee care, and development work through Love of Neighbor ministries.

Coin collection boxes are available in the Narthex for children, adults, or families who would like to save their change for the One Great Hour of Sharing!



Prayer Partners will meet on
Sunday, May 18th at 11:15AM in Wilton Hall
for the "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon.

Fellowship

Young At Heart will meet at **noon on March 27th**
Vazzy's Osteria at 415 Main Street.

RSVP to Cheri Irwin. 817-682-0274 or cdirwin2@msn.com





Morning Circle invites the women of the congregation to join them every second Wednesday of the month (except January, February, July and August). Please contact Shari Carrano at 475-342-8145 with any questions, comments or concerns. Mark your calendars for the following:
 Wed., Apr 9, 11AM Dineson Parlor - CWS hygiene kits
 Wed., May 14 11AM Dineson Parlor - Women's hygiene products collection
 Wed., Jun 11 12PM - June Picnic Luncheon - Location TBD



Join us for the monthly Book Club on the **3rd 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 or home phone or 203-452-0850

April 16th The Glass Maker by Tracy Chevalier Host: TBD
May 21st The God of the Woods by Liz Moore Host: TBD
June 18th The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters Host: TBD
July 16th Brave New World by Aldous Huxley Host: TBD



2005 Women's Retreat - Silver Lake Retreat Center May 2-4, 2025

Sign up in Wilton Hall or call the office and Diane will sign up for you! The cost this year is \$195 (scholarships available). Soon a team will be organized to plan the retreat. We hope you'll join in and add your thoughts and ideas! See Pastor Jenn or e-mail her at jenn.gingras@gmail.com

This year the Strawberry Festival will take place on Sat., June 14 & Sun, June 15.



We'll need everyone's help to make it as successful as last year's. There's plenty to do: strawberry picking at Jones, prep/setup on Friday on campus and in the kitchen, hulling strawberries, sorting, dipping, children's games, crafter hospitality, face painting, kitchen help, smoothies, meetinghouse greeters, PF bounce house, prize table, Berry Mascot, table clean up and trash collection. Every part of the Strawberry Festival is important and every volunteer's time is greatly appreciated. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions, comments or concerns.

It's Time to Make the Jam!!



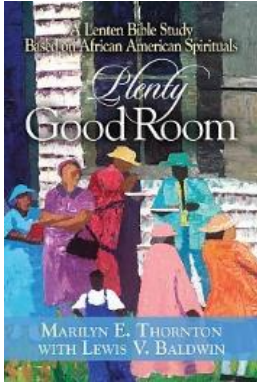
Jam Sessions are led by those experienced in making jam in previous years. Our goal this year is to make about 1,600 jars of jam in 10 different flavors. Can you name all of them? They are strawberry, blueberry, very berry, lemonade, rhubarb, jalapeno, cherry, pineapple, Satan's Delight and vegan. Every last jar was taken within two weeks of the festival ending. Let's start this year's jam supply strong by signing up to make jam!

Sign-up sheets will be posted in Wilton Hall as well as thru the Sign Up Genius

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E094CAEAA22A4FB6-54954856-jamsession#/>

Sessions last approximately two and half hours. Your help will be greatly appreciated when you literally see the fruits of your labor. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions or to sign up.

Christian Education



Lenten Study: Plenty Good Room

This unique short-term Bible study combines an in-depth look at Scripture, American history, and the music and lyrics of six African American spirituals. The six-session study provides biblical, social, and historical analyses of the spirituals: "Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit," "This Lonesome Valley," "Bow Down on Your Knees," "Plenty Good Room," "Ain't Dat Good News," and "Were You There?". Purchase a paperback or download from Amazon.

There will be two ways to participate:

- **Thursday morning Bible study** (Thursday 9:30-11am in Dineson Parlor) will read and discuss on Mar 27, Apr 3, Apr 10
- Mar 26 (Chapters 3-4), April 9 (Chapters 5-6)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2038955607?pwd=bWxMMDRXN3d6emJNZ2JsVzlsTFp3dz09&omn=88010082173> Meeting ID: 203 895 5607 Passcode: MeetMe



Snack & Chat with NOOMA The name NOOMA comes from a phonetic spelling of the Greek word πνευμα (pneuma), meaning "wind or spirit". Join us in Dineson Parlor after worship for a series of short films (less than 14 minutes each), snacks and a light discussion about life's big questions – no prep necessary and all are welcome! Mar 30 – Dust, Apr 27 – Flame



Sr PF will be selling treat-filled plastic eggs in preparation for Easter again this year.



\$25 for 25 eggs; preorder or grab-and-go at coffee hour! Be on the look out for details in early April! Any questions, contact mccuccseniorpf@gmail.com

Thank you for supporting Sr PF!

Easter Flowers Order Form

Monroe Congregational Church
34 Church Street, Monroe, CT 06468

Help us beautify the church for Easter Sunday
in memory, honor, or celebration of a loved one!

Plant	Cost Each	Quantity	Total Cost
Daffodils	\$20.00		
Lilies	\$20.00		
Hyacinth	\$20.00		
Tulips	\$20.00		
Check Total			\$

Given by _____

In Memory, Honor or Celebration of (**circle one**):

*Please send the office **this form** (mail, scan & email, or put into the brass mailbox outside of the Rexford House front doors) with a **check** for the total amount, made payable to Monroe Congregational Church.
Memo: Easter flowers

You can also pay online: <https://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html>
(choose flowers & note Easter) Please be sure the office still receives this form.

****The last day to place an order is Wednesday, April 2nd**

In Our Prayers

Alison Abrams (Jessica Pfalzgraf's sister); **Allie** (Colegrove's friend); **Jennifer Bittar** (Loraine Zeiner's friend); **Jackie Bleakney**; **Joel Bowie** (Frank Wittenauer's uncle); **Kevin Daly** (Gary Thompson's friend); **Dealmira** (Jonathan Ganino's grandmother); **Dan & Laura Dimauro** (Cuseo friends); **Dot Dralus, Matt Duchon**; **Elaine** (Wendy Colegrove's Aunt); **Bruno Forte** (Nancy Hedine's friend); **David Fischman** (Sue Granello's Friend); **Dave Fuller** (Gail Olson's brother); **Lehre Fuller** (Gail Olson's sister-in-law); **Mary & Rachel Heerema** (Julia Gutierrez's mom & sister); **Brad Heines** (Susie Cuseo's friend); **Bob Heffernan** (Ann Zeiner's son-in-law); **Heather Henning**; **Brian Hopkins** (Donna Konkol's cousin); **Vera James** (Jenn Wissink's mother); **Jonathan** (Matt Colegrove's brother); **Kelti** (friend of Liska Gutierrez), **Samia Khoury** (Will Duchon's friend); **Cindy Kovacs**; **Monica Lynch** (Bethany Dupuis' friend); **Jonathan Malia**; **Nicole Malia**; **the Manuzzi Family**; **Mary** (Kate Brigg's Mother); **Betty McKeown** (Donna Konkol's mother); **Meghan** (Mary Unger's niece); **Mike** (Janie Allen's son); **Olivia Morrison** (Donna Nickdow's niece); **Pat Nugent**; **Ocampo family** (friends of Liska Gutierrez); **Nancy Olofson**; **Missy & Gail Olson**; **Dean Perosino** (Gayle Hammond's brother); **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**; **Carlos Serrano** (Kathy Maiolo's cousin); **Yessika Siccardi** (Sampson family friend); **Ed Simonovich** (Nancy Hedine's friend); **Bernie, Lori & Gary Sippin**; **John Skarupa** (Barb Pellegrino's brother); **Sheldon & Nancy Smith**; **Christine Stadler**; **Claire Stenzel** (June & Myron Wininger's granddaughter); **Timara** (Mary Unger's friend); **Tom** (Wendy Colegrove's dad); **Wayne Thompson** (Gary Thompson's brother); family & friends of **Don Whiteley**; **Richard Turco** (Jack Fracassini's cousin); **June Wilkes**; **Natica Williams** (Will Duchon's friend); **Allen & Ann Zeiner**

The concerns of our world: The people of **Gaza & the West Bank**; **Israeli hostages** and their families, the people of **Ukraine, Sudan, Syria** and the **Middle East**; **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**.

Those serving in the military, veterans & their families: **Lt. Col. Rachel Hoffman**, Tacoma, Washington (Vaughan Askue's daughter), **Zachary Gingras**, 395th Combat Sustainability Support, **Joel Smith**, 250th Engineering Company, **Chris Meneses** (Loraine Zeiner's friend), **Lance Corporal Taylor Smith** (Cheri Irwin's Nephew)

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Sun. March 23rd

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Special Congregational Meeting

2:30 pm Sr. PF Jam Session

5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

Tue. March 25th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. March 26th

7:00 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Thurs. March 27th

9:30 am Bible Study

12:00 pm Young at Heart

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation

Fri. March 28th

1:00 pm Jam Session

4:30–7:30 Loaves & Fishes FryDay (St. Peter's Grace)

Sat. March 29th

12:30 pm Jam Session

Week of Sun. March 30th

10:00 am Worship

11:15 NOOMA – DUST (Dineson Parlor)

5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

Mon. March 31st

7:30 pm Outreach

Tue. April 1st

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. April 3

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation

Fri. April 4th

4:30–7:30 Loaves & Fishes FryDay (St. Peter's Grace)

Sat. April 5th

8am -1pm Outreach Tag Sale

Week of Sun. April 6th

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Trustees

12:30 pm Jam Making

5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

Mon. April 7th

7:30 pm Outreach

Tue. April 8th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag