

March 9, 2025

First 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

Gather Us In

Welcome & Announcements

Moment of Quiet & Lighting of the Candles

Call to Worship (Inspired by Psalm 91)

Leader: Are you restless and unsettled? This place is for you.

People: Let us worship God!

Leader: Are you hungry for love and hope? This place is for you.

People: Let us worship God!

Leader: Are you searching for direction? This place is for you.

People: Let us worship God!

Leader: Do you have love to share? This place is for you.

All: Let us worship God together!

Opening Prayer

Arlene Redmond, 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**

God Loved the World

NCH #208

Call to Confession – Unison Prayer - Silent Prayer

You say, O God, that the way to abundant life is to live it: to love with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, without asking who deserves it. But who, exactly, is our neighbor, and how will we know if someone is or isn't? What is the appropriate level of attention, care and effort? Forgive us when we draw the circle so tightly that we neglect to do mercy. Forgive us when we get caught up justifying ourselves and our activities, and miss your call to a new way of life. Lead us back to your way. 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

Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley

Spiritual

*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 10:25–42, pg. 946

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

Sermon

Friends in Low Places

Rev. Jennifer Gingras

*Closing Hymn

“Take Up Your Cross,” the Savior Said

NCH #204

Benediction

Postlude

The Spirit Sends Us Forth To Serve

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.



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!



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: Arlene Redmond **Usher:** Arlene Redmond **Lay Reader:** Frank Wittenauer
Trustee: Jill Sapak **Counter:** Bill Stadler **Web Steward:** Scott Young
Coffee Host: Megan Wissink & Ann-Marie Campbell

The flowers this morning are given by *Dave and Kathy Allen* in honor of grandkids!



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.mcc-ucc.org)



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

Ryan Andrejczyk ⁽¹³⁾ Suzanne Adams ⁽¹⁴⁾

**Special Congregational Meeting
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 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

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.



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!

Development Team

Our church thrives because of the generosity and dedication of our community.

We're forming a team to explore **new ways to generate revenue** for Monroe Congregational Church, ensuring we continue our mission for years to come. We'd love for you to join us for a **brainstorming session on March 16th** after worship and coffee.

If you're interested in lending a hand please reach out to me at mganino@pkfod.com or call/text me at **203-257-3619**. Thank you for being a vital part of our church family!

- Mike Ganino, MCC Treasurer

Since 1792, transforming the lives of people who will in turn transform the world.



The Monroe Congregational Church, Inc.



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 nuggets 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.



- March 21, April 11: MCC hosts
- March 14, 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



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!



Do you have a couple of hours to spare on Tuesdays, Fridays or Saturdays? We sort, tag and hang donated merchandise in the Shoppe on Tuesdays at 1:30PM while on Fridays we are open from 10-3 and Saturdays from 10-2. It's easy to do. Just pop on over during any of those time frames and the volunteers(s) would gladly show you the ropes for opening or closing the Shoppe, a list of responsibilities can be emailed to you for your perusal. You can always shadow a volunteer for a couple of shifts until you get the hang

of it and then when you're ready, you will be put on the schedule. Monies collected from shoppers' purchases go to mission trips, outreach programs and many more. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions.

WE NEED YOUR TREASURES!

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

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



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



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

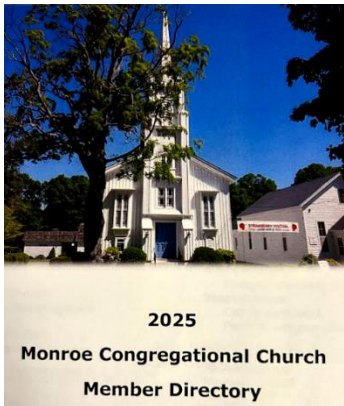


Morning Circle invites the women of the congregation to join them every second Wednesday of the month (except January, February, July and August). Please contact Shari Carrano at 475-342-8145 with any questions, comments or concerns. Mark your calendars for the following:
 Wed., Mar 12, 11AM Dineson Parlor - Birthday bags
 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



- March 19th** Lady Tan's Circle of Women by Lisa See Host: TBD
- 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



2025 Member Directories are available!

You may pick up a copy in the Narthex on Sunday morning. Large print directories are also available.

Call 203-268-9327 or email secretary@mcc-ucc.org and Diane will email a directory to you!

This year the Strawberry Festival will take place on Saturday, June 14 and Sunday, 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 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.





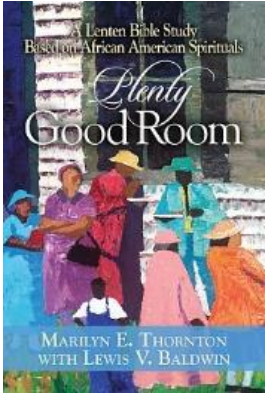
It's Time to Make the Jam!!

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 in the

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#/
/](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 13, Mar 20, Mar 27, Apr 3, Apr 10
- **Online** discussions will happen on Zoom at 7pm on Mar 12 (Chapters 1-2), 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

In Our Prayers

Allen Zeiner; Joel Bowie (Frank Wittenauer's uncle); Alison **Abrams** (Jessica Pfalzgraf's sister); **Allie** (Colegrove's friend); **Jennifer Bittar** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend); **Jackie Bleakney; 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); **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 Winger's granddaughter); **Timara** (Mary Unger's friend); **Tom** (Wendy Colegrove's dad); **Wayne Thompson** (Gary Thompson's brother); **Richard Turco** (Jack Fracassini's cousin); **June Wilkes; Natica Williams** (Will Duchon's friend); **Don Whiteley; 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** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend), **Lance Corporal Taylor Smith** (Cheri Irwin's Nephew)

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Sun. March 9th

Daylight Savings – Spring Ahead!

10:00 am Worship

1:30 pm Jam Session

5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

Tue. March 11th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

7:30 pm Deacons (Zoom)

Wed. March 12th

11:00 am Morning Circle

7:00 pm Lenten Zoom Study

Thurs. March 13th

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation

Fri. March 14th

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

Sat. March 15th

11:30 am Jam Session

Week of Sun. March 16th

10:00 am Worship

11:15 am Development Team (Parlor)

2:30 pm Sr. PF Jam Session

5:00 pm Sr. PF

Mon. March 17th

7:30 pm Council (Zoom)

Tue. March 18th

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. March 19th

7:00 pm Book Club

Thurs. March 20th

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation

Fri. March 21st

4:30–7:30 Loaves & Fishes FryDay (MCC)

Sat. March 22nd

2:00 pm Jam Session