



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
Director of Faith Formation: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon
Music Director: Will Duchon
Secretary: Melissa Rosenberg
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February 1, 2018

Bringing Stories & Food to Share

Prepare to enter the experience: Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14 and extends until East Sunday on April 1. I think it's kind of cool this year that this meaningful season begins with a day that is set aside to remember love, and ends on a day when we are free to laugh heartily with resurrection joy. After all, the Apostle Paul wrote in his 1st letter to the Corinthians *"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* (chapter 1, verse 18)

For Christ-followers, Lent is a time to focus on the life of Jesus and our lives as disciples, exploring the ways we give and receive hospitality. When Jesus washed the disciple's feet, he showed them that they need to be able to receive as well as give hospitality. Lent is also a season of telling stories of faith. From the days of the earliest church, this time focused on mentoring those who were new to following "the way" in order to prepare them for baptism at the Easter vigil.

How do we relate to these two themes: hospitality and testimony? Quite simply. At the same time as we live out our lives as disciples, giving and receiving hospitality, we also review our theology, beliefs and the covenants we have made with God. We not only affirm them, but we focus on our roles as teachers and mentors for those who are eager to learn the faith. A tall order? Perhaps. Some of our best teaching is done by example. What better way to spend Lent than by extending real hospitality and telling stories?



We hope that you will join us at the Ash Wednesday Soup Supper on February 14th at 6:30pm in Wilton Hall. The meal this year is "pot-luck" style, so if you are able to come we hope that you can bring a pot of soup or some bread to share. Please sign up in Wilton Hall. We'll share a prayer and engage in some guided conversation before we head into the meetinghouse for an Ash Wednesday service at 7:30, with the

imposition of ashes and ending with an opportunity to burn a confession in a bonfire.

In this Steeple, you will see that we are offering many opportunities for everyone – of all ages – to take part in a meaningful Lenten journey. I hope that you will consider taking part in some (or all!) of them. May this be a time of deepening faith and hospitality for us all!

In peace, Pastor Jenn

Courageous Faith and the Journey to Easter



I was recently reading a Midrash about the story of the Parting of the Red Sea. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, a Midrash is an ancient commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures or what we call the Old Testament. This particular commentary mentioned that the way the Parting happened was not how we envision it or how it is portrayed in Hollywood – you know Moses looks up to the sky, drives his staff into the sea, and then miraculously the waters separate – but rather the waters parted as a response to the courageous steps of a freed slave named Nachshon. Standing on the edge of the sea in the midst of fear and doubt it was Nachshon who did the miraculous. He stepped in, one foot in front of the other, deciding to have faith. First the water was up to his ankles, then his knees, then his chest until he was almost swallowed whole when he stepped once more and then another miracle. The waters parted.

I mention this because I feel like Nachshon these days. Egyptians behind me in hot pursuit and an impassable sea in front of me. Of course there aren't real Egyptians behind me or a sea in front, but I read the news of the day and it feels that way. Whether it's neighbors being deported, children being abused and neglected, or world leaders behaving like children sometimes it all just feels too big for me, just like those Egyptians and seas. What will it take?

It takes faith. Courageous Faith. It takes living into our baptismal vows and boldly following Jesus. In the United Church of Christ we have baptismal vows and then we reaffirm those vows typically during Confirmation. These are vows and this is what they say:

We teach to lead to profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

We promise to be Christ's disciples, to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice, and to witness to the work and the word of Jesus Christ.

We promise to grow in the Christian faith, to be the church of Jesus Christ by celebrating Christ's presence, by furthering Christ's mission in all the world.

How do we keep these vows when it is so difficult at times? We keep these vows by having faith, courageous faith, in God. In some of these vows we promise with the help of God, some we do the best we are able, and others we need grace to fulfill them. To follow in the way of Jesus takes the help of God, even he had that help.

This Lenten season we are asking you to have some courageous faith. We will be having an Adult study using Rev. Emily C. Heath's new book, Courageous Faith, How to Rise and Resist in a Time of Fear, we will be asking people to give faith witness testimonies during worship, and we will be running a "Journey to Easter" Passport program to encourage you to participate.

Please join us on the journey, Debi

Deacons



BOY SCOUTS
OF AMERICA

Scout Sunday February 4th: The Boy Scouts of America is one of the nation's largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness. For over a century, the BSA has helped build the future leaders of this country by combining educational activities and lifelong values with fun. The Boy Scouts of America believes — and, through over a century of experience, knows — that helping youth is a key to building a more conscientious, responsible, and productive society. Please join us in worship!

Pastoral Caregivers Luncheon Feb 4th: The Lay Pastoral Ministry team will meet for some soup, strengthening and mutual support this Sunday (Feb 4) following church in Dineson Parlor. We will update each other on our ministries, talk about our challenges and engage in a case study for deeper understanding.

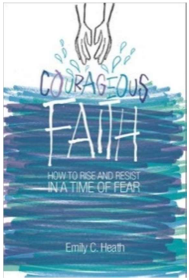


February 14th Ash Wednesday Soup Supper and Service: Join us as we begin our Lenten journey towards Holy Week for a light meal of soup and conversation at 6:30pm. At 7:30 we will have a worship service in the meetinghouse with imposition of ashes, ending with a bonfire in front of the church. A sign-up sheet is posted in Wilton Hall to bring a pot of soup or bread.

What do you think of when you hear the expression, "drive-through service"? Burgers and fries? A car wash? Ashes? Hang on, did you say ashes? What's all that about? February 14th is Ash Wednesday, and the start of Lent. In order to help those in the community who would like to receive ashes but are unable to attend our 7:30 pm worship service because they may be sick, find it difficult to walk, are not already connected with a faith home (or for any other reason), Pastor Jenn will be offering a drive-through imposition of ashes in the driveway next to the meetinghouse from 11:30 am - 1:00 pm.



Christian Education



Lenten Adult Study: Please join us for four Sundays during Lent following Worship to study Rev. Emily C. Heath's new book Courageous Faith: How to Rise and Resist in a Time of Fear. We will gather on the following dates at 11:30am in Dineson Parlor:

- February 18th
- February 25th
- March 11th
- March 18th

About the book - "For Christians, resistance is written right into our baptismal vows. Following Christ means resisting oppression and evil wherever we might find it. Doing that work requires us to first rise up, face our fears, and cultivate courage that can sustain us for the journey. Weaving together wisdom from sources as diverse as Reformed theology, recovery communities, social justice visionaries, and Twentieth Century history, Heath creates a way forward for those who wish to live lives of faithful, sustained, courageous resistance." If you have the capacity, please purchase the book on Amazon or download it to your Kindle. If you would like us to purchase a copy for you, please speak with Debi. **Please sign up in Wilton Hall or see Debi for more information.**



Journey to Easter: Passports: Lent is my favorite part of the church year. For some reason, the idea of stripping things down, reflecting on life, finding ways to reconnect with self, others, Spirit, is something I look forward to every year. It's like spring cleaning for the soul.

I want to help you experience Lent and Easter in meaningful ways every year. This year, especially, we are really being very intentional about engaging EVERYONE from Ash Wednesday's Supper to a "What

Next" celebration on the Sunday AFTER Easter.

Beginning with our Ash Wednesday Supper and Worship on February 14th, and running through the Lenten Season, Sunday mornings, weekly at-home activities, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Easter Sunday, folks will earn "passport stickers" for various activities. Passports will be available on February 11th, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. (we even have an app created with "YAPP" so we can all share at home activities and photos)

On April 8th, the Sunday after Easter, We will be having a celebration (with cake) after worship. We'll recognize folks for earning various numbers of stickers in their passports (and yes, everyone will earn some type of recognition.)

I am hoping that this experience will help boost attendance and create some momentum as we head into summer, but more importantly, we are doing this because it's important. It's important that our children begin to understand at a young age what Easter means—sure, the Easter eggs and bunnies are fun and good, but more importantly, I want children to be able to tell others about the events of holy week. I hope you all will participate! Debi

Thank You Mustard Seed!

For safety reasons, the CE Board has decided to follow the recommendation of the newly formed Safety Committee to move all of our Sunday school classes to Rexford House on Sundays. To properly accomplish this task we needed to purchase tables and chairs for our youngest learners and The Mustard Seed Team graciously agreed to pay for this purchase. We are so grateful that they could be so generous to help our learners!!! (We even purchased them in red)





Save the Date: March 10th Senior PF Chili Cook-off Fundraiser 6-9pm! Senior PF is preparing for our big mission trip to Vicksburg, Mississippi this July! We are excited and looking forward to new experiences, hard work, helping others and being in community with one another. Please join us for a chili cook off where we will have several contestants competing for the title of Chili Master! There will be music and raffles. We are also working on sharing several past mission trips so people can get a glimpse into our week and how important these trips are to our evolving spiritual growth and being of service to others. Please join us and see who should be crowned the Chili Master...

Senior PF Mission Trip Informational for Parents: Please join the adult advisors on Sunday, February 25th at 5pm in Wilton Hall to discuss plans for the SR PF Mission trip this summer to Vicksburg, Mississippi on July 14-22nd.



Jr. PF Calendar

February

- 4th – NO Jr. PF
- 11th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 18th – NO Jr. PF
- 25th – Special Gathering farewell to Maya TBD

Sunday School Calendar

February

- 4th – Sunday school classes for Grades PreK-2
- 11th – Regular Sunday school classes
- 18th – Regular Sunday school classes, gr 6-8 help prepare St. George's Supper
- 25th – Regular Sunday school classes



Save the Date for VBS Vacation Bible School will be here before you know it! The theme is "God's Big Backyard"; the dates are August 6th-10th; open to all children age 4 thru 5th grade.

Trustees

Helping 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.

The Deadline to Order a Brick is FEB 14 so that we can place the order!!!

Outreach

Interfaith Partnership for Refugee Resettlement (IPRR) The Interfaith Partnership for Refugee Resettlement (IPRR) has been given the green light by IRIS, the Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, to accept a second refugee family. A family has not been identified yet but the group needs to be ready for two (2) week notice. Members of MCC assisted when IPRR sponsored their first family and found the experience very educational and rewarding. Now IPRR is looking for volunteers to assist in the areas of employment, transportation, translation and cultural education. Additionally, they are seeking donations of housing items such as furniture and gift cards for clothing, food and cleaning needs. Further information may be found on the IPRR website, <http://www.iprefugeer.org/> or by contacting the church office or Joanne Malia.



It's that time again...the next St. George's supper is February 19th! Please look for the poster in Wilton Hall to sign up to help. We have a variety of needs, including shoppers, and servers. Simply take a tag (or two!) and you will be making a difference for those in need. **Please bring all food to the church by February 18th at 11am. If you take a tag and are unable to fulfill your commitment please contact the church office 203-268-9327 Or if you would like a tag but cannot make it to church please call Melissa in the office.**

The Annual MCC Tag Sale is coming! Please mark your calendars for March 24 from 9 am-1 pm (early birds at 8) in Wilton Hall. This is an enormous event, requiring many people to help with set up, sale and clean up. There are will be all sorts of shifts to suit all schedules, so please consider donating a few hours of your time that week. How you can help:



1--Donate your gently used items. Please do not donate anything broken or old TVs, computer monitors, large upholstered furniture or clothing. All other donations can be dropped off at the church starting after noon on Sunday 3/18 and continuing until Thursday 3/22. Drop off during the week is during office hours, and then on Thursday we will have extended drop off hours until 9 pm. Please do not drop off items on Friday.

2--PLEASE sign up to help. This is an enormous event, requiring many help with set up, sale and clean up. There are all sorts of shifts to suit all schedules, so please donate a few hours of your time that week. In addition to being a great help for us, it is a wonderful time for fellowship and fun with each other, so don't miss out. A signup sheet will be posted in Wilton Hall.

3--Spread the word. There are always terrific bargains (and we mean BARGAINS) at this tag sale, so the more people that come, the more successful we will be. 100% of the money earned that day goes to support mission, so everyone benefits from this event.

Fellowship



The February Young at Heart luncheon will be Thursday, February 22nd at noon at The Tavern, [262 Main Street, Monroe](#). Come all to enjoy the lively conversations and good food. Contact Betty Heiney by Monday, February 20th, to make reservations - [203 268-9576](#), haarald@aol.com or by smoke signals.

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

✚ **February 21st-7:30pm** The Women in the Castle by Jessica Shattuck ~In Dineson Parlor



Come talk about life and current events from a spiritual perspective on **Friday, February 2nd, 7:30 – 9 pm at Veracious Brewing with Faith on Tap!** Our past few gatherings have been spent talking about very deep topics. This month, we're going to spend time getting to know each other better with **"My Top Five"**. Bring a list of the five things you love the most, as well as your top five pet peeves [limit of one political, please] We'll share them with each other and tabulate the votes to see what we hold in common. If you have a friend who may like joining us, please bring them along! Agreement is not required, but civility is essential. Tea-totelers and soda drinkers welcome too! Call/text Clark (203-895-5604) or Rev. Jenn (203-895-5607) Gingras with any questions. Please note: our March Meeting will be held on the 9th due to Women's Retreat.



Rachel's Well – Monday, February 5th at 7:30 in Dineson: It's been a year since we received our STAR word; let's take some time to share with one another what we learned from them in 2017! If you haven't had a chance to select a 2018 word, this is an opportunity to do so. Meet us in Dineson Parlor, Monday, Feb 5th at 7:30 pm.

Hygge Women's Retreat: March 2-4, Silver Lake Conference Center

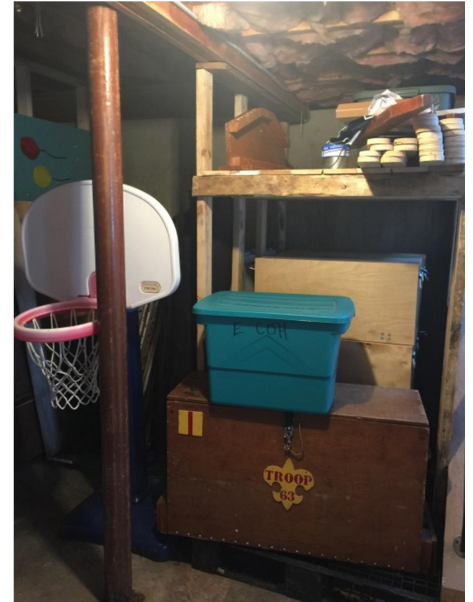


For over 40 years in a row, Denmark has been voted as one of the happiest countries in the world. What is the secret to the emotional success of this small Northern European country? At least part of the answer lies with the Danish way of "hygge"—pronounced "hooga." Hygge is drama-free togetherness time. If you'd like to come away with some of the women of MCC and engage in some good hygge, please sign up in Wilton Hall. Cost is \$140, but please speak up if you need scholarship assistance. Questions? Speak with Pastor Jenn.

Community News

Allen Crosnier Eagle Project

During the Christmas vacation week, Eagle Scout candidate Allen Crosnier completed his project of renovating a portion of the Meetinghouse basement. First, he and his team emptied and cleaned the area next to the SF freezers, sorting the various materials in Wilton Hall for careful inspection. Next, they treated the walls and floor and built a 4x4 foot framed section with a top shelf for scout stuff next to the stairs, which



should allow easier storage. Next, they put a second framed wall halfway between the scout section and the furnace room which comes out just 4ft from the back wall and should make organizing games and signage much easier. They also found that the sheet rock on the outside of furnace room was wet, so they replaced the bottom 4 inches with azek board. Finally, Scouts transferred all the materials back into place. Thanks, Allen and Troop 63 Scouts for your hard work!

Thanks & Viana Chocolates

Thank you to the trustees and the Mustard Seed Shop for the new side door to the meeting house. Nice job. Thank you to the deacons for standing up to hate groups. Nice attitude and approach. On another note, some of you may have been wondering where the Viana chocolates are this year. There was a slight change in the production schedule. The current plan is for delivery on Sunday, February 11th. Please make a note of it. Regards, Trees Whitbeck

IN MEMORIAM



Richard Kraus, a longtime church member, passed away peacefully on Christmas Day. A memorial service was held on Friday, December 29th at 1 pm in the Meetinghouse. Please keep his wife Julie, his daughters Debbie and Donna, and the entire Kraus family in your prayers for comfort and support.

Betty Cunningham Morvec passed away peacefully on Christmas morning of 2017. She is survived by her 2 loving children, Curt Morvec and Lisa DeVeux, 4 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. Condolence messages may be sent to her daughter Lisa DeVeux, [6201 W 93rd Ave. Westminster, CO 80031](#). Betty will be interred at a later date at Cave Hill in Louisville, Ky.

May their memories be eternal. Thank you for keeping Richard and Betty's loved ones in your prayers.

MCC Community Calendar

Thurs. Feb 1st

9:30am Bible Study
7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri. Feb. 2nd

7:30p Faith on Tap (Veracious Brewing)

Week of Feb. 4th

Scout Sunday

10:00am Worship w/Communion
11:15am Lay Pastoral Visitor Team Luncheon (Dineson)
6:15pm Senior PF @ Gilberti home 33 Fieldcrest, Trumbull
6:00pm Adult PF

Mon. Feb. 5th

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Feb. 6th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Feb. 7th

6:30pm Confirmation Class at Spadaccino's

Thurs. Feb. 8th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:15pm Adult Choir

Sat. Feb. 10th

7:00pm Project Warmth Fundraiser (Waterview)

Week of Feb. 11th

10:00am Worship
5:00pm Senior PF
6:00pm Junior PF

Mon. Feb. 12th

7:30pm Council Meeting (Dineson)

Tues. Feb. 13th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Feb. 14th

Ash Wednesday

11:30-1pm Ashes to Go (outside Meeting House)
6:30pm Ash Wednesday Meal (Wilton)
7:30pm Worship

Thurs. Feb. 15th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Feb. 18th

10:00am Worship (Preacher, Will Duchon)
11:15am Outreach Meeting (Kitchen)
11:30am Lenten Adult Education (Dineson)
5:00pm Senior PF Lock In
6:00pm Adult PF

Mon. Feb 19th

Office Closed in Observance of President's Day
3:45pm St. George's Supper

Tues. Feb. 20th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag
7:00pm Bereavement Group (Dineson)

Wed. Feb. 21st

6:30pm Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Feb. 22nd

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
12:00pm Young at Heart @ Tavern
7:15pm Adult Choir

Week of Feb. 25th

10:00am Worship
11:30am Lenten Adult Education (Dineson)
5:00pm Senior PF
6:00pm Junior PF

Tues. Feb. 27th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Mar. 1

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri. Mar. 2-Su. Mar. 4

5:00pm Women's Hygge Retreat at Silver Lake

Week of Mar. 4th

10:00am Worship w/Communion
5:00pm Senior PF
6:00pm Junior & Adult PF

Mon. Mar. 5th

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Mar. 6th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Mar. 7th

6:30pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Mar. 8th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:15pm Adult Choir

Fri. Mar. 9th

7:30pm Faith on Tap (Veracious Brewing)

Sat. Mar. 10th

6:00pm Senior PF Chili Cookoff Fundraiser for 2018 Mission Trip (Wilton)