



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
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March 1, 2018

Naming Our Blessings



It was just about this time last year. There I was, surrounded by 30+ people who were sending one another off to placements where we would spend three months listening to people suffering from great pain and trauma. We held hands and declared ourselves a family. The synergy and energy that connected us was palpable and our gratitude for one another was clear.

As we shared affirmations, we recognized the innovation that had been created, imagined the creativity yet to bloom and honored both the wisdom of our elders in our midst and the passionate energy of our younger adults. How amazing and humbling it was to be surrounded by a room full of internationals who not only passionately held on to the ideal of changing the world, but who were making conscious choices every day to do that very thing!

Each of us, who came from different contexts and places, deeply believed that the groups, families and systems in which we walk everyday possess the wisdom to embrace peace. The wisdom in our stories contain rich resources which will allow us to transform what was good in the past into what can be great in the future.

Last Spring, as I returned from this time of learning in my EAPPI community, I began to reflect on the changes that lie before us as a faith community. As we who call ourselves 'the church' confront societal and structural shifts, it can be easy to feel like we are becoming unmoored from our identity. As the institutions that once grounded us respond to change we can feel anxiety about how we might ensure that those coming after us are nurtured, disciplined and stewarded well.

No matter how tempting it might be to desire a quick fix, there is no cookie cutter answer. What my experience in Jerusalem reminds me is that in each of our lives and stories, the past can embolden a life-giving future if we recognize that it is in God's abundance that we are sharing. We are called to share that abundance extravagantly, even with abandon! It just takes generosity of heart, deep listening, reaching out and a big dose of hope. Our passion can take us into places unknown. In Christian language, this sometimes is referred to as

'bearing the Cross'. During this Lenten time, when shadows gather, we remember that when sacrifice, loss and sorrow are the places into which we walk, it is love for others - the stranger, refugee, widow and orphan - that carries us through. We are called to be co-creators of God's kingdom, which is constantly coming and which we will never fully see in this mortal journey called life.

In Christ's peace, Pastor Jenn

Welcome TAWFG Intern Adam Shepherd! Thinking About Working for God (TAWFG for short) is a program that mentors youth and young adults from UCC churches all around the state of CT who are considering a religious vocation. The conference does this by sponsoring short term student internships (40 hours total), placing the youth at churches outside their home church to learn by shadowing the pastor, interacting with other staff and of course, engaging in community. This spring, MCC will host Adam Shepherd, member of the Naugatuck Congregational Church. You may see him participating in leading worship, attending a meeting, or otherwise shadowing me during his time with us. Welcome Adam!

Good Friday – What's so Good About It?

It is the day when Christians commemorate Jesus Christ's crucifixion. So why is it called Good Friday? According to the Bible, the son of God was flogged, ordered to carry the cross on which he would be crucified and then put to death. It's difficult to see what is "good" about it. Some sources suggest that the day is "good" in that it is holy, or that the phrase is a corruption of "God's Friday".



However, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the adjective traditionally "designates a day on (or sometimes a season in) which religious observance is held". The OED states that "good" in this context refers to "a day or season observed as holy by the church", hence the greeting "good tide" at Christmas or on Shrove Tuesday. In addition to Good Friday, there is also a less well-known Good Wednesday, namely the Wednesday before Easter.

The earliest known use of "guode friday" is found in The South English Legendary, a text from around 1290, according to the dictionary. According to the Baltimore Catechism - the standard US Catholic school text from 1885 to the 1960s, Good Friday is good because Christ "showed His great love for man, and purchased for him every blessing".

The Catholic Encyclopedia, first published in 1907, states that the term's origins are not clear. It says some sources see its origins in the term "God's Friday" or *Gottes Freitag*, while others maintain that it is from the German *Gute Freitag*. It notes that the day was called Long Friday by the Anglo-Saxons and is referred to as such in modern Danish. It also says that the day is known as "the Holy and Great Friday" in the Greek liturgy, "Holy Friday" in Romance Languages and *Karfreitag* (Sorrowful Friday) in German.

Regardless of its origins we as Christians live with the belief that resurrection happens - we are an Easter people and we worship the God of the second chance (or third or fourth). Perhaps it is for this reason why Good Friday can truly be good for us. Without it there would be no Easter! *Peace, Debi*

Please join me on **Good Friday, March 30th**, for an Observance and Activity for ALL AGES. We will gather in the Meetinghouse at 1:00 pm for and brief Good Friday Observance and then head over to Wilton Hall for a Prayer Pretzel activity.



Spring Forward! Don't forget to turn your clocks forward one hour at 2am on March 11th !

Holy Week at the Monroe Congregational Church

Sunday, March 25th, 10am – Palm Sunday: Join us in our historic Meetinghouse to celebrate Palm Sunday. Our Adult Choir, Junior Choir and several soloists will offer sacred music. After worship, Senior PF will host a brunch for the Young at Heart in Wilton Hall.

Thursday, March 29th, 7:30pm - Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service: A candlelit evening worship service remembering Jesus' mandate to love one another. This service of shadows features sacred readings that anticipate Jesus' Passion and Holy Communion by intinction.

Friday, March 30th, 1:00 pm – Good Friday Observance and Activity: On Good Friday we will have an all ages time of reflection and activity beginning at 1:00 pm. We will gather in the Meetinghouse to reflect and discuss the meaning of Good Friday and we will then head over to Wilton Hall for some refreshment and a Prayer Pretzel activity.

Saturday, March 31st, 11am – Senior PF Easter Egg Hunt: Meet us in Wilton Hall with your little one for a few games followed by an egg hunt. Hop on over and join the fun!

Sunday, April 1st, 8:30 and 10am – Easter Celebration Services: Join us at MCC for the Great Easter Celebration! At 9:30, we will share a festive Easter Coffee Hour. We will also join in singing the Hallelujah Chorus. Christ is Risen indeed AND Everyone is Welcome!



It's Time to Order Easter Flowers! Choose Double Daffodils or Double Tulips. Each plant is \$25.50. Please make checks payable to MCC with "Easter Flowers" in the memo field. Please mail checks to Ann Zeiner, 78 Twinbrook Terrace, Monroe or drop off in the church office. Orders must be placed **by Sunday, March 18th**. Order forms can be found in Wilton Hall, Church Office, this Steeple and in the Narthex.

Trustees

Thanks for your **brick walk** orders! We have gathered in 88, and our hope is that the work will begin soon so that it will be completed by Strawberry Festival Weekend. Our actual start date depends on Mother Nature, so stay tuned for updates!



"The greatest thing
this generation
can do is
lay a few
stepping stones
for the next
generation."
-Charles F. Kettering

Endowments: Leave Your Legacy with MCC

Financial support for our church comes from several sources; regular pledges and contributions from members and friends, fundraising events such as the Strawberry Festival, facility rentals and transfers from our endowments.

Thanks to the generosity of past members of MCC who have gone to glory, we are now blessed to have an endowment fund of more than \$650,000, some of which we have been able to use recently to meet facility and ministry needs.

In order to ensure the long-term survival of our church, we need to strengthen our endowment (in addition to increasing membership and stewardship). To that end, we encourage all members to keep MCC in mind when planning your estate. We realize it's important to take care of your families, but if you can also include MCC in your benevolence it will go a long way towards increasing our church's future stability and viability.

Please contact Pastor Jenn, myself or anyone on the Board of Trustees if you have any questions or need more information about our endowment. Thanks and regards – John O'Rourke, MCC Receiver.

Mind the Gap – Stewardship 2018

Greetings – thanks to everyone who has submitted a pledge for the 2018 MCC Stewardship campaign. We currently have 91 pledges for a total of \$190,208. But there's a gap. While we have made great progress, we are still \$10,000 short of our goal of \$200,000, which is what was assumed in the 2018 budget. If we don't hit this goal, that means we'll have to pull more funds from our investment reserves to fund our operating costs.



If you have not submitted a pledge for 2018, please consider doing so in March. If you have already submitted a pledge, and can consider increasing your pledge to help us fill the gap – that would be appreciated. You can submit your pledge via the pledge cards available in the pews, or by notifying Melissa in the church office.

Thanks for your support – The MCC Stewardship Committee

John O'Rourke (Receiver), Roy Nealon, Scott Young

Outreach



One Great Hour of Sharing: March 11th Each year, people all over the world receive real blessings from this offering: emergency assistance in times of disaster, access to clean water and sanitation, basic health care, and support for sustainable agriculture. Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing make it possible for the United Church of Christ and our ecumenical partners to respond immediately, wherever the need is, and to continue long term recovery work for as long after other organizations have moved on. May God continue to bless each of our churches and the whole United Church of Christ as together we strive to bring God's love to a hurting world.

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.

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 event requires many people to help with set up, sale and clean up, and we have all sorts of shifts to suit all schedules, please consider donating a few hours of your time. 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, 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 event requires many hands to help with set up, sale and clean up. In addition to being a great help for our Outreach programs, it is a fun time of fellowship with each other - don't miss out! A sign up sheet will be posted in Wilton Hall.

3--**Spread the word.** There are always terrific bargains (and we mean BARGAINS) and 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.

Calling All Bakers!! We Need You!! The Senior PF will be selling baked goods at the tag sale to raise money for their mission trip to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Please bring your cookies, breads, cakes, & other goodies to church by Friday, March 23rd. Thank you!



Join the Adult Mission Team for a fundraiser luncheon: **¡Un sabor de Puerto Rico! (A Taste of Puerto Rico!)** after worship on Sunday, April 22nd at 11:15. Enjoy a plate of rice & beans, pork shoulder and a salad for a suggested donation of \$8 (\$4 for children). Bring your dancing shoes, because dance instructor Kristen Prall of Art in Motion will show us some simple Latin dances. You'll also hear about the work our team will be doing in the hurricane ravaged region. Please save the date and sign up today in Wilton Hall.

Christian Education



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...



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. Contact Debi for registration.

Jr. PF Calendar

March

- 4th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 11th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 18th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 25th – Service Day at Locket's Meadow Sanctuary Farm in Bethany



Sunday School Calendar

March

- 4th – Sunday school classes for Grades PreK-2
- 11th – Regular Sunday school classes
- 18th – Regular Sunday school classes
- 25th – Regular Sunday school classes



What is Tres Dias? Tres Dias is an adult weekend that aims to concentrate closely on the person of Jesus Christ and His teachings. While Tres Dias explores basic Christian beliefs, it is best described as a spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ. Many who have attended a weekend have experienced a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Christ as they sense His love in a dynamic way.

What is our purpose? The mission of Tres Dias is to build and strengthen leaders for Christ; and to empower them to become leaders within their families, their small groups, their churches, and their communities. Tres Dias is an inter-denominational weekend encounter with Jesus Christ. Some may want to call it a retreat, but it does not have the solitude of a retreat. The focus of the weekend is "God's unmerited love." The weekend is designed to

show the "agape" type love that God pours out on us. This is love that is unconditional, unmerited, and for which the only true response can be love in return.

Design of the Weekend

The weekend runs from Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon. Those that attend a weekend are called pilgrims. In addition to other pilgrims, the weekend consists of committed Christian volunteers who serve as team members. They will attempt to share "Christ within them" with the pilgrims, while expecting nothing in return.

During the weekend you can expect:

- Group discussion of topics that are of vital interest to the body of Christ
- Times of prayer, sharing and fellowship
- Lots of music and singing
- Lots of fun!
- Lots of good food
- Most importantly, you can expect that God will meet you exactly where you are

Weekends are held at Our Lady of Calvary Retreat Center in Farmington. The next Men’s Weekend is April 19th – 22nd and the next Women’s Weekend is May 3rd – 6th. Please Contact Debi Mastroni-Kenyon at 203-444-6760 or debi@mcc-ucc.org if you would like more information.

Strawberry Festival



JAM SESSIONS-VOLUNTEERS WANTED: Believe it or not, the time is upon us to make JAM for the Strawberry Festival...and we need your help! The dates below for ready for JAM making. If Saturdays are difficult for your schedule, I am open to adding additional JAM sessions on a weekday if there are enough people interested. A JAM session should have at least 4-5 volunteers.

Saturday, March 17th ~ Saturday April 21 ~ Saturday May 19

Anyone interested, please text "MY NAME IS _____, I WANT TO MAKE JAM" to my cell ([917](tel:9172245654)) [224-5654](tel:9172245654). Or Email me johnnymaiolo@gmail.com. I'll be in touch you with to work out the dates & times that work best for you. Let's make the 2018 Strawberry Festival a success for MCC! Thanks in advance for your help!

JAM (John Anthony Maiolo)pure destiny, I guess!

Fellowship

Rachel’s Well, Monday, March 5th at 7:30 in Dineson: Many of us carry ideas and thoughts about who we are, and who we are meant to be. Some of those ideas are healthy

and life-giving, while others may be less so. Since Lent is a good time to talk about temptation, let's talk about the temptation to hold onto the negative things about ourselves, and the freedom to let it go. Come dressed to do a craft.



Talk about life from a spiritual perspective on **Friday, March 9th, from 7:30 – 9 pm (Veracious Brewing in the back room, 246 Main Street, Monroe)** with Faith on Tap! This month's conversation will be on the Sanctuary Movement: What is it? What isn't it? If you have a friend who may like to join 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



Young at Heart / Senior PF Brunch - Sunday, March 25, 11:15 in Wilton Hall: Rise & Shine! The members of the Senior Pilgrim Fellowship cordially invite the Young at Heart to a post-Palm Sunday brunch directly following worship in Wilton Hall! Please RSVP on the sign-up sheet posted in Wilton Hall. Contact Zachary Gingras, [203-895-2871](tel:203-895-2871) with any questions.

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

- + **March 21st -7:30pm** Under Heaven's Shining Stars by Jean Grainger ~Hosted by Arlene Redmond
- + **April 18th -7:30pm** The Chaperone by Laura Moriarty ~Hosted by Sue Smelzer
- + **May 16th -7:30pm** Cowboy and His Elephant by Malcolm MacPherson ~Host TBD
- + **June 20th -7:30pm** The Museum of Extraordinary Things by Alice Hoffman ~Host TBD



Community News

The Monroe Health Department has **free radon test kits**. Drop by the health department for your kit while supplies last. 203-268-2818.



Meals on Wheels Available in Monroe You can get up to 7 lunch or dinner meals per person a week delivered. If you won't be home at the time of delivery, contact CW Resources prior to day of delivery to arrange for the driver to leave food in a cooler. Suggested \$2 donation per meal. **Call CW Resources 203-332-3264**

Easter Flowers Order Form

Quantity	Plant	Cost Each	Total Cost
	Double Daffodils	\$25.50	
	Double Tulips	\$25.50	
Sub total			\$
*Total to be paid			

Given by _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

In Celebration of: _____

*A check for the total amount, made payable to Monroe Congregational Church, may be given or mailed to Ann Zeiner (78 Twinbrook Terrace, Monroe) or placed in the "flower" mailbox in the church office. The **last day** to place an order is **Sunday, March 18th**.



MCC Community Calendar

Mar. 2-4th

Women's Retreat @ Silver Lake

Week of Mar. 4th

10:00am Worship w/Communion, guest preacher
Doug Halley
11:30am Junior Choir Rehearsal (Meetinghouse)
5:00pm Senior PF Parents Meeting, 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, back room)

Sat. Mar.10th

6:00pm Senior PF Chili Cook-off Fundraiser for 2018
Mission Trip (Wilton)

Week of Mar. 11th

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

Tues. Mar. 13th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Mar. 14th

9:30am Retired Men's Breakfast (Dineson)
11:00am Morning Circle (Dineson)
6:30pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Mar. 15th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
7:00pm CE Meeting (Dineson)
7:15pm Adult Choir

Sat. Mar.17th

9:00am Jam Making (Kitchen)

Week of Mar. 18th

One Great Hour of Sharing
8:45am Deacons Meeting (Dineson)
10:00am Worship
11:30am Adult Education (Dineson)
5:00pm Senior PF
6:00pm Junior & Adult PF

Mon. Mar. 19th

7:30pm Council Meeting

Tues. Mar. 20th

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

Wed. Mar. 21st

6:30pm Confirmation Class
7:30pm MCC Book Club @Arlene Redmond's

Thurs. Mar. 22nd

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

Sat. Mar.24th

8:00am Tag Sale (Wilton)

Week of Mar. 25th

Palm Sunday
10:00am Worship
11:15am Young at Heart Brunch (Wilton)
1:00pm Junior PF

Tues. Mar. 27th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Thurs. Mar. 29th

Maundy Thursday
7:30pm Maundy Thursday Worship

Fri. Mar. 30th

Good Friday
1:00pm CE Good Friday Observation and Activity
(Meetinghouse & Wilton Hall)

Sat. Mar. 31st

11:00am Senior PF Easter Egg Hunt (MCC)

Week of Apr. 1st

Easter Sunday
8:30am Worship
9:30am Easter Coffee Hour
10:00am Worship

Mon. Apr. 2nd

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Apr. 3rd

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Apr. 4th

6:30pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Apr. 5th

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

Fri. Apr.6th

7:30pm Faith on Tap at Veracious