

THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

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Monroe, CT 06468

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Office Hours:

Mon. & Wed. 9 am – 5:30 pm
Fri. 9am – 5 pm

Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras
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Music Director: Will Duchon
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April 1, 2020



Postponing Easter?

One of the things that has always been key for my faith, and one of the reasons Holy Week is my favorite, is that none of it depends on my attitude. Like it or not, on Palm Sunday I will get caught up in the joy and pageantry – no matter what else is going on in my personal life. Each year on Maundy Thursday I will be swept up in the grief of loss and betrayal, even when the rest of my life is going pretty well.

Easter morning is always a cause for joy, but it begins out of grief, and it is a surprise every time. There have been many years where the joy of Easter doesn't really arrive for me until well after Easter Sunday, but I have always found the promise that joy and resurrection are real and will not be kept down forever. It just might not happen according to our calendars and human timing.

One of the early conversations I had with colleagues and church leaders as we were trying to wrap our heads around closing our buildings and shifting our activities during this public health crisis was: Can we just postpone Easter? You know, put it off a few weeks until it's safe? Believe me, I fully understand the sentiment that goes along with that wish.

We can't postpone Easter. Set aside the bunnies, and the chocolates, the brunches, the new spring dresses and the egg hunts for just a moment and hear me out...Resurrection came when all hope was lost and death had taken its toll. And when it happened for those earliest followers of Jesus, they were all closed off in their homes, afraid for their lives. Easter - for us - is simply where we are now. What we fear, of course, is quite different this time, but perhaps that allows us to embody a different part of the story.

Remember that Easter is the story of everything falling apart, even to death, and then something completely unanticipated came out on the other side. There's the big trajectory to glean from this year's Holy Week.

So, church... we will still celebrate Easter, albeit differently this year - in our homes, connecting with one another as best we can. Hopefully, we will celebrate again in person when we can gather on Sunday, May 10th - Mother's Day (at least, that's the current CDC guidelines).



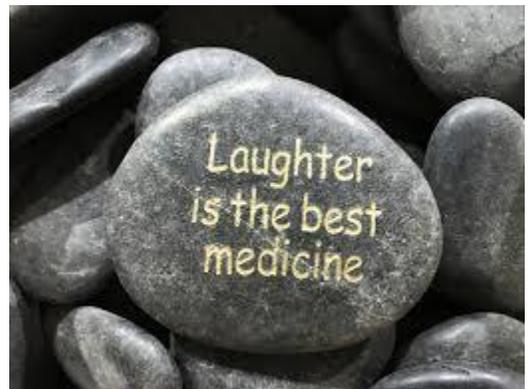
In the meantime: **Stay Connected** to church news, to your deacon, to each other, and to me – remember that we are carrying each other in this time.

Stay Grounded in hope and prayer that we will see a lifting of the disease in not only our community but around the world.

Stay Safe and pay heed to our public health officials who are managing this crisis as best they are able. God bless you, and God bless us all.

In peace, Pastor Jenn

“Don’t let the world defeat your laughter and song.” This quote by Keren Dibbens-Wyatt has held my attention this week as I, like all of us, have grappled with the seriousness of what COVID-19 has imposed upon us. It is so easy to forget that in the midst of dealing with the fears and anxieties of possibly getting sick and even the busyness of moving so much of what we do online, we also need fun and laughter. So this week, I did a little research on the impact of laughter and thought that you would like to see the stunning results of my investigations. We really do need laughter. It’s good for us physically, emotionally and I think, spiritually too.



The joy that laughter brings can impact our creativity and our perspective on life. Babies laugh on average **400 times a day**. Yet adults over 35 on average laugh only 15 times a day. So get out there; play, have some fun, laugh and enjoy yourself.

I have adapted the rest of this from the article *Stress Relief from Laughter* posted by The Mayo Clinic.

Short-term benefits

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn’t just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. And laughter is contagious.

Laughter can:

- **Stimulate heart, lungs and muscles.** It enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain. Laughter reduces your blood pressure, improves your muscle tone (especially your abs) and increases your tolerance for pain.
- **Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response, and it can increase and then decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling. Even a smile can help. It, like laughter, is contagious and often leads to a good laugh too. This not only improves your mood, but has the added benefit of improving the quality of your relationships with those around you. It can even help create new relationships. And at a time like this, these are all things that we need.

- **Soothe tension.** Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress and improve the quality of your sleep.



Long-term effects

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long term. Laughter may:

- **Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. By contrast, positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.
- **Relieve pain.** Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers.
- **Increase personal satisfaction.** Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.
- **Improve your mood.** Many people experience depression, sometimes due to chronic illnesses. Laughter can help lessen your depression and anxiety and may make you feel happier.
- **Creates hope.** Laughter changes your perspectives and helps you to see difficult circumstances as a challenge rather than a threat. It is hard to feel anxious, sad or angry when you are laughing.
- **Promotes creativity.** Humor reduces tension and causes you to relax, and relaxation is an important component of creativity.

Improve Your Sense of Humor

So I think that one of our goals for this season should be to improve our sense of humor. Here are some suggestions on how to do this:

- **Add a daily dose of humor to your schedule.** What makes you laugh? Is it photos, greeting cards, or comic strips that make you chuckle. I know I have a collection of each and am pulling them out this week to help me get my daily dose. I might even hang a few of them around the house for when I need an extra boost.
- **Laugh and the world laughs with you.** What about the current situation makes you laugh? Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away. Even if it feels forced at first, practice laughing. It does your body good.

Laughing with you,

Debi



Communion Bread Recipe

I have shared this Communion Bread Recipe with you all before, but I thought it would be great if you could make some with your household members and use it for our Maundy Thursday Service! Debi

For use in your household for Maundy Thursday, I would suggest making only half of this recipe. (dividing each measure by half)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Bake 12-15 minutes

Mix Together:

3 cups flour - plus ¼ cup for kneading (I use my dough hook so I don't knead)

2 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. salt

½ cup vegetable oil

½ cup honey

½ cup milk

½ cup water

Warm honey (microwave 30 seconds on high). Mix honey, oil, milk and water together. Add to flour mixture a small amount at a time, mixing after each addition. Dough may be a bit sticky. Turn dough onto lightly floured surface (using small part of ¼ cup flour) knead and add flour as needed to have smooth, soft dough. Take approximately 1/3 of the dough and roll out to ½ inch thickness. Use pan cover approximately 7 inches in diameter to cut circle. Place cut circle on cookie sheet. Repeat with remaining two thirds of dough. Score each circle to form small squares with knife with serrated edge. Bake and then let cool about one hour. Place in plastic bag once the bread is cool to retain freshness.

This is the beloved, traditional Communion Bread which is used at Woodmont United Church of Christ in Milford, CT.



With the Monroe Congregational Church

All services available on Pastor Jenn's Youtube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/JennPastor/>

Sunday, April 5th at 10am

Palm Sunday

There are eco-friendly palms available for pickup near the front door of Rexford House first come, first served (but please, do not make a special trip to get them, and wash your hands when you get back home). For worship, please have some communion elements available with something green to wave.

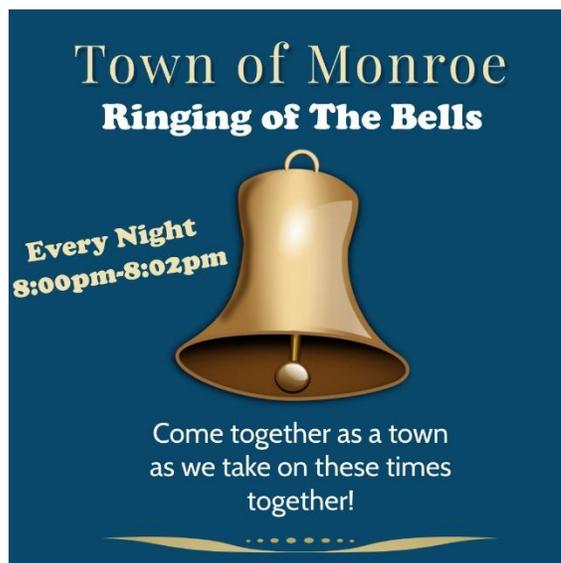
Thursday, April 9th at 7:30pm Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service

A candlelit evening worship service featuring readings that remember Jesus' mandate to love one another. At the conclusion of the service, the church enters a time of mourning. Please have some communion elements available.

Sunday, April 12th beginning at 6 am, and beyond!

Easter Sunday

Join us at MCC for the Great Easter Celebration! It is the resurrection that informs our understanding of Jesus' life, work, birth, and all that comes before. We are a resurrection people. Everyone is encouraged to wear their Easter Bonnets.



Elisha's Corner

By Gary Thompson, Church Historian

Our Pandemic, 2020

It has long been recognized that history has a way of repeating itself. Our current encounters with the corona virus are no exception. It has disrupted the daily routines of all of us, including our genre for worship, and threatened our basic wellbeing. It has even given cause for the postponement of the start of a three part series that revisits the Centre Green here in Elisha's Corner. Instead, it is noteworthy to illustrate just how far back history has repeated itself in our current dilemma.

A few weeks before the virus entered our shores, I began reading the Book of Jeremiah. You will remember that my friend, the bullfrog, was named after him. It is probably not the best Book to read during a pandemic, especially if you are looking for comfort or encouragement, particularly chapter 25, verse 32:

Thus says the Lord of hosts: See disaster is spreading from nation to nation, and a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth.

In our current confrontation with an invisible enemy, it may be taken out of context, because Jeremiah was speaking above the Babylonian invasions back in 605 BC. But it was an enemy, albeit visible.

Unfortunately, infectious pandemics have repeated itself in the United States since its beginnings as a nation. In 1793, yellow fever hit the city of Philadelphia and five thousand died and seventeen thousand fled the city. A reliable vaccine was not available until 1953, 160 years later. In 1858, New England fought with scarlet fever, and in 1906 – 1907, New York state battled typhoid fever at the cost of 10,770 lives. Our worst pandemic prior our current one occurred in 1918 when influenza spread across the country and 67,500 died. It was not until 1942 when a reliable vaccine was available. This is the epidemic that Dr. Fauci of the CDC frequently refers to when comparing data to now. There was diphtheria in the 1920's, polio from 1916 to 1955, and HIV and AIDS in the 1980's. The most reliable protection used in all of these occurrences was "social distancing". Now, how is that for historical repetitiveness?

They probably did not have slogans to go by prior to the 20th century; no principles of marketing technology developed yet. We do today, though. So "stay safe, stay home." Participate in our on-line worship until it is no longer necessary. And listen to Jeremiah, who finally gave us some hope in chapter 30, verse 3:

For the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will restore the fortunes of my people ...

May it be so! Amen.



in a Time of Disruption:

The mission of our church to incarnate God’s love and work for a more compassionate, just and peaceful world is as important as ever. During this time of disruption of Sunday church services, it will be important to maintain our giving so the church can continue to operate. For now, the church office is closed and our staff is working remotely to continue the church's mission. Now is the time for all of us to do our best to continue our donations so that we ensure the smooth operation of our church’s ministries.

The good news is that heading into this time we have received over \$202,000 in pledges for 2020, a goal we have been trying to reach for several years. And collections on pledges have been strong from January to March - thank you! There are several ways you can continue giving to MCC, including:

- Mail or drop off your donations to the church office mailbox at 34 Church Street, Monroe CT 06468, attention MCC Receiver. Mail is being collected on a daily basis, and checks are being counted and deposited on a weekly basis.
- Arrange for electronic automatic payment to MCC via your bank
- Make electronic payments via Vanco, by clicking on the “Donate” link on our [web site, http://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html](http://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html)

I hope to see you all soon. In the meantime, thanks for your support of MCC and feel free to contact me if you have any questions at jorourke224@gmail.com .

John O’Rourke – MCC Receiver.

Faith Formation

Want to give the young people in your life the opportunity to learn more about loving God, their neighbors, themselves, and creation? Send them to a week of summer camp at **Silver Lake Conference Center**! Find session information and registration at www.silverlakeect.org Once you register, contact Pastor Jenn for an FEA Scholarship application.



Outreach

St George’s Supper

Hi folks, in this difficult time of uncertainty I'm happy to report that we will still be able to provide a meal to our friends at St. George's Supper, but in a slightly different way. For everyone's safety (and per the protocol from Guy Love, the pastor that manages St. George's Supper) for our April 20th meal we will be providing *Bag Lunches* consisting of a sandwich, apple, chips, small bottle of water, and a napkin for the folks at SGS. We will deliver the completed lunches to Guy and he will distribute.

Here's how you can help:

1. **Donate \$10 to purchase food.** You drop off a check in the mailbox or mail a check to MCC, 34 Church Street, Monroe, CT 06468. Please put St. George's Supper in the memo line.

2a. **Make 10 sandwiches and buy 10 apples;** provide either Turkey & Amer. Cheese, or Roast Beef & Amer. Cheese, on wheat/white bread in a sandwich bag. No condiments (we will provide packets of mustard and mayonnaise). Please contact Kathy if you are going to make sandwiches, so that we know if we have enough.

2b. **Drop off** the sandwiches and apples to MCC on Monday, April between 11 and 1 pm on the table set up in Wilton Hall. Wilton Hall door will be open.

With the monetary donations we will purchase lunch bags, chips, small water bottle and napkins. Stacy and I will combine the lunches and deliver them to SGS on Monday afternoon. Thanks so much and if you have any questions, feel free to email me at kmaiolo@gmail.com or call my cell at 203-260-0292.

Stay safe, (virtual hug) *Kathy*



Donations to the **Monroe Food Pantry** are way down. How about showing our town that at MCC we're about sharing not hoarding? Here's a list of needed items posted on the pantry's Facebook page:

- canned fruit - mandarin oranges, peaches
- canned vegetables - low sodium corn, carrots, beets, Sauerkraut, spinach
- canned beans - low sodium black beans, cannellini, pinto, chickpeas, and kidney beans, refried beans
- baked beans - pork baked beans, chili with beans, chili without beans, vegetarian chili
- canned pasta - Beefaroni, Beef Ravioli, Spaghetti O's
- canned meat - solid white tuna in water, chicken
- jarred pasta sauce - regular and low sodium
- broth - vegetable, chicken, beef
- canned tomatoes - (regular and low sodium) tomato puree, diced, crushed, whole, paste
- pasta - egg noodles, elbows, linguine, etc.
- Ramen - beef, shrimp
- baking supplies - bread crumbs, brownie and cake mix, flour, sugar, pancake mix
- packaged meals - Hamburger Helper, Knorr pasta and rice sides, Pasta-roni, Rice-a-roni
- salad dressing - balsamic, blue cheese, French, Italian, ranch
- -condiments - ketchup, mayo, yellow mustard, pancake syrup, sugar free pancake syrup
- crunchy peanut butter
- strawberry preserves/jelly
- ground coffee - regular, decaf
- raisins
- HOUSEHOLD CLEANING PRODUCTS
- LAUNDRY DETERGENT
- paper towels

HOW TO DONATE TO THE MONROE FOOD PANTRY

- Bring food directly to the Monroe Food Pantry at 980 Monroe Turnpike, Monroe. Drop non-perishable food in the beige donation box on the left side of the house.
- Participate in the Postal Workers' food drive (held the third Saturday in May) by putting unexpired, non-perishable foods in plastic bags by your mailbox for the Postal Workers to pick up.
- Purchase extra food at Big Y and drop it in the box located at the service desk.
- Purchase gift cards at Big Y, Stop & Shop, or other area grocery stores and donate them to the Food Pantry.
- If you wish to make a monetary donation (which will be used to purchase fresh foods, meat, eggs, paper products, and extras like coffee and tea, flour, sugar, or laundry detergent) please make your check out to "Monroe Food Pantry" and mail to: Department of Community and Social Services, Monroe Food Pantry, 7 Fan Hill Road, Monroe, CT 06468

Hours: Monday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm; Wednesday 9:30 am - 1:00 pm; & Thursday 9:30 am - 1:00 pm & 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm Please call for Saturday hours

Kathleen Turner Food Pantry Coordinator Phone: (203) 452-2817

Email: foodpantry@monroect.org or kturner@monroect.org

HOW TO GET HELP FROM THE FOOD PANTRY

ELIGIBILITY

Monroe residents who have been determined eligible by the Director of Community & Social Services, the Social Services Coordinator or the Food Pantry Coordinator are eligible to access food at the Food Pantry either one time a month at our regular distribution times, or in an emergency if they call to make an appointment. Priority will be given to households that are having difficulty meeting their necessary living expenses and medical bills with the income available to them. Eligibility will be re-determined each year. Proof of income and expenses for household will be required.

HOW TO APPLY

Call and make an appointment with any of the following Social Services employees:

Food Pantry: Kathleen Turner: (203) 452-2817

Senior Center: Kim Cassia: (203) 452-2815

Town Hall: Mary Ann Kalm: (203) 452-2813

They will be happy to meet with you to discuss Food Pantry eligibility and other programs that may benefit you.

FURTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

We are happy to deliver food to residents who are unable to drive, are not feeling well, have difficulty finding transportation or are unable to manage the ramp. Please call us ahead of time so we can plan our delivery schedule.

Information we have on file for you and your household is kept confidential within the Monroe Department of Social and Senior Services.

We ask that you give us updated household and financial information once a year. We expect that you will also seek other assistance that is available, such as Energy Assistance. If you apply for Energy Assistance at Town Hall or through the Monroe Senior Center, that is adequate for "re-registration" and we will update your information at that time.



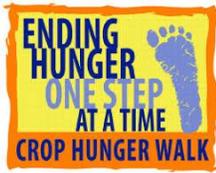
**Dress A Girl Around The World Sew-A-Thon
Saturday May 2nd is cancelled**

Questions please call Liz 203-257-7174 or email Liz1202us@yahoo.com



**Sadly, we will not be providing Easter Baskets for Covenant to Care
this year –a heart felt thank you for your past and future support.**

Diane Prall~ Monroe Congregational Church Liaison Covenant to Care for
Children



It has been decided that the **CROP WALK and rally will be delayed.** Applying a cautionary approach and adherence to state guidelines regarding gatherings. Although this situation is temporary, we the CROP organizational committee, will postpone the walk to **late October** (~18th-25th). We are looking at having the rally on September 13th, 2 P.M., at Unity Hill UCC, 364 White Plains Rd, Trumbull. In the time being C.W.S. websites will be updated to reflect the finalized dates. Please be safe. Care for family, the community, and yourself. Thank you for your patience. Quintin Brantley, Town of Monroe Recruiter, gibb@sbcglobal.net 203-258-3101



The Annual MCC Tag Sale is RESCHEDULED– So, hang on to your donations! Please mark your calendars for **May 16th 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 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 Sunday, May 10th until 6 pm on Thursday, May 14th.** 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 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 Young at Heart, Book Club & Morning Circle will not be meeting in April. Future events will be determined and communicated when we are able.



Ladies Room Renovation Capital Campaign Project

Our church enjoys a vibrancy that is the envy of many others. That takes passion, dedication, faith, fellowship, vision and... money. As you know, MCC depends on church members' pledges and donations to fund the majority of its operations. From time to time, MCC also depends on the congregation to fund capital projects.

You should have received a letter in the mail last month that describes the work in detail, and that we are trying to raise \$16,300 in funds so that we can get the work done as soon as possible. Please consider if you can provide financial support for this renovation by filling out the form at the bottom of the letter and returning it to the MCC Receiver either as a pledge or with a check in the plate on Sunday. Thank you for your consideration!

Respectfully, Your Ladies' Room Repair & Improvement Team (Dave Allen, Kyla Allen, Julie McClenathan and Arlene Redmond)

MCC Community Calendar

**Until further notice, all worship may be found on YouTube at Pastor Jenn's channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/JennPastor/>*

Wed. April 1st

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

<https://zoom.us/j/313580499?pwd=STAxdkFOZDI4bVIGd2s0TWsyVDdjdZ09>

Week of April 5th

10 am Communion & Palm Sunday*

10:30 am virtual coffee hour <https://zoom.us/j/460134127>

11:30 am Fruit of the Spirit Gathering

<https://zoom.us/j/665124307?pwd=Z2IINDZqZys4NTVTM0VRUFFnVWhhdz09>

5 pm Senior PF <https://zoom.us/j/700088164>

5 pm Adult PF <https://zoom.us/j/527377480>

8 pm Junior PF <https://zoom.us/j/747690439?pwd=ekxzTXJtSG8rVkwrci9ScDJzMTZvZz09>

Tues. April 7th

7:30 pm Weekly Social <https://zoom.us/j/377990591>

Thurs. April 9th

7:30 pm Maundy Thursday Tenebrae & Communion Service*

Week of April 12th

Easter Celebration Service*

10:30 am virtual coffee hour <https://zoom.us/j/460134127>

Tues. April 14th

7:30 pm Weekly Social <https://zoom.us/j/377990591>

Wed. April 15th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

<https://zoom.us/j/313580499?pwd=STAxdkFOZDI4bVIGd2s0TWsyVDdjdZ09>

Thurs. April 16th

7:00 pm CE

<https://zoom.us/j/947635172?pwd=WkdsMkFWQ1FJdTmMdkU3NXNuU09pUT09>

Week of April 19th

10 am Worship*

10:30 am virtual coffee hour <https://zoom.us/j/460134127>

11:30 am Fruit of the Spirit Gathering

<https://zoom.us/j/665124307?pwd=Z2lINDZqZys4NTVTM0VRUFFnVWhhdz09>

11:15 am Trustees Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/591991278?pwd=SVlkazlRNUdhWmpGN01CTytNSjJWZz09>

11:15 am Deacons Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/883550827?pwd=NVIaT0d5dGJRM0NUdUIvbWx0RWxpZz09>

11:15 am Outreach Meeting –On Line?

5:00 pm Senior PF <https://zoom.us/j/700088164>

8:00 pm Jr. PF Gathering

<https://zoom.us/j/747690439?pwd=ekxzTXJtSG8rVkwrci9ScDJzMTZvZz09>

Mon. April 20th

St George's Bagged Supper

Tues. April 21th

7:30 pm Weekly Social <https://zoom.us/j/377990591>

Wed. April 22nd

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

<https://zoom.us/j/313580499?pwd=STAxdkFOZDI4bVIGd2s0TWsyVDdjdZ09>

Week of April 26th

10 am Worship*

10:30 am virtual coffee hour <https://zoom.us/j/460134127>

11:30 am Fruit of the Spirit Gathering

<https://zoom.us/j/665124307?pwd=Z2IINDZqZys4NTVTM0VRUFFnVWhhdz09>

5:00 pm Senior PF <https://zoom.us/j/700088164>

8:00 pm Jr. PF Gathering

<https://zoom.us/j/747690439?pwd=ekxzTXJtSG8rVkwrci9ScDJzMTZvZz09>

Mon. April 27th

7:30 Council –On Line!

Tues. April 28th

7:30 pm Weekly Social <https://zoom.us/j/377990591>

Wed. April 29th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

<https://zoom.us/j/313580499?pwd=STAxdkFOZDI4bVIGd2s0TWsyVDdjdz09>

