34 Church Street Monroe, CT 06468 Tel.: (203) 268-9327

Fax: (203) 268-3153 www.mcc-ucc.org

Office Hours:

Mon. 9am – 5:30pm Wed. (remotely) 8am - 6pm Fri. 9am – 3:30pm Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras Music Director: Will Duchon Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall CE Coordinator: Jeanette Cardentey-Morales

Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

Find us on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc



May 1, 2024



2024 Summer Preaching Series: Bible Stories to Love & Remember

What stories from the Bible do you remember learning as a kid in Sunday school? The Garden of Eden? Noah and the Flood? Joseph and his amazing technicolor Dreamcoat? We might think of these stories as Biblical children's stories. There is no good reason for this, other than the fact that we first heard them as kids. Not all of them show up in the regular scripture rotation for weekend worship, so it might have been a while since we last considered them.



Sometimes when we return to the story at an older age, they can take on a different meaning. This is because there are subtleties and nuances to be found that we might not have picked up as a ten-year-old! Beginning on May 26th and continuing through the summer, we are going to offer a new sermon series: **Bible Stories to Love & Remember.**

<u>But I'm going to need your help.</u> What Bible stories should we focus on? What are your favorites? What are the ones that confuse you – even now? We have space to cover 12. Please let me know what you'd like to hear, so we can take a fresh look at them together. In these stories we might discover wisdom, love and grace. We'll likely see a little more clearly how God has worked in the past, and we'll discover how God connects with us today.

My nomination is:		

Trustees

JOIN US!



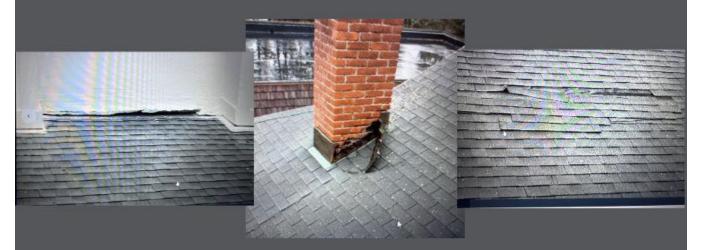
WHETHER YOU CAN GIVE AN HOUR OR A MORNING, PLEASE COME HELP MAINTAIN OUR CAMPUS!

Rake, install new mulch, trim shrubs, clean windows, replace lightbulbs, etc.

Trustee Spring Work Day Saturday, May 18, 8:30-noon



REPLACING THE MEETINGHOUSE ROOF

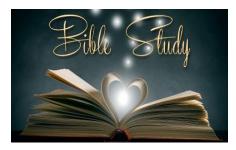


Our historic campus requires regular maintenance, inside and out. The roof of the Meeting House has been leaking due to recent wind and weather damage. The estimated cost for repairs is \$30,000, and we plan to do the work done ASAP.

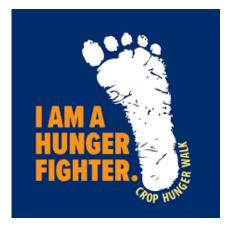
Thanks for your support!

To contribute, send a check with the memo: Capital Campaign or donate on our website (choosing Capital Projects) https://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html

Deacons



Weekly Bible Study We cordially invite you to join us each week as we gather together to learn with and through one another. All are welcome in Dineson Parlor, from **9:30-11 am**. After a time of fellowship and prayer concerns, we read and discuss upcoming scripture texts or other faith-related topics. Bring your favorite Bible (whatever version you prefer) and a small notebook.



CROP Hunger Walk – Sunday, May 5th

No one in this world should be hungry. That's why the CROP Hunger Walk is more than just a yearly gathering or event for me. It is my chance to help families who are struggling with hunger and concerned about where they'll find their next meal. The Walk is how I take action to make sure that one more person has enough to eat.

I want to help as many people as I can in my community and around the world and would love your support. Please join me in the fight against hunger by making a donation! The steps we take - and the funds we raise - support programs that provide meals and other immediate support, as well as long-lasting

solutions to hunger.

This year's Bridgeport, CT Crop Hunger Walk will take place Sunday May 5, 2024. Money raised will benefit people locally and around the globe. Your tax-deductible donation helps us as individuals make a difference. You can **see me or another member of the team at coffee hour to donate. If you would like to join this year's walking team, please let me know.** - Julie McClenathan

Follow this link to support Team MCC!

https://events.crophungerwalk.org/cropwalks/julie-mcclenathan?login=true



Help Needed for the **Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe**! Do you have spare time on Tuesdays at 1pm? Volunteers come to the back entrance of the Shoppe to help sort, hang and tag merchandise that have been donated. It's easy to do and any of the ladies can help you figure it out. Donations of gently-used clothing, toys, shoes, book and small household products can be left in the collection box just outside the Shoppe, brought in on Tuesdays while the ladies are sorting or during business hours: Fridays

10-3 or Saturdays 10-2. Sales associates are also needed during two-hour shifts when the Shoppe is open. You can either open or close and it's easy to do. Come visit the volunteer and she'll gladly show you what needs to be done. A procedure list can be sent to you via email by contacting Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280, if you need more information or have questions or comments.



Heifer International is a group that partners with smallholder farmers – especially women farmers – to improve their families' food security and increase their incomes. They offer tools, training and resources that help farmers work together to build profitable, sustainable businesses with strong market linkages. They are partnership-driven in the countries where they work with farmer groups, businesses, governments and move to strengthen local ownership and improve the lives of farming families. You can help out by dropping your spare change into the collection jar that can be

found on the serving table during coffee hour. At the end of the year Morning Circle will send out a check that will provide livestock and plants to those in need around the world. Please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280 for more information or comments about how you too can help.

Fellowship



Please join us for Adult PF the 1st Saturday of the month in Dineson Parlor from 5:30 to 8pm!

Bring your own beverage and a snack to share. We are excited to bring Adult PF back to MCC in a new format! Each month will be led by different members of the group. It could be a discussion of an article or movie, a game night or a service project for MCC or the greater community, or an outing etc. Your presence and ideas are wanted and welcome. All adults young and old are encouraged to attend. Please reach out to Janie Allen via phone/text/email at 203-522-3686 or janeEallen@sbcglobal.net with any thoughts or questions.

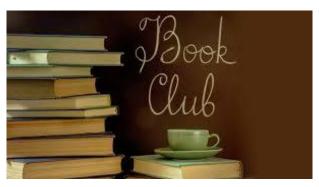
Our next meeting will be Saturday, 5/4. Come check it out!



Morning Circle invites the women of the congregation to their next meeting on Wednesday, May 8th at 11AM in Dineson Parlor. We will be collecting women's hygiene products to be delivered to the Food Pantry. Please bring a sandwich luncheon while we hold a short business meeting. Thank you in advance for your generosity. Please contact Shari Carrano at 475-342-8145 for more information or comments. Mark your calendars for the last meeting before the summer that will be held on Wednesday, June 12th at a location to be determined.



Young at Heart will meet Thursday, May 23 at noon Details to Follow



The book club selections for upcoming months:

May 15th 7 pm

Master Slave Husband Wife by Ilyan Woo Host: TBD

June 19th 7 pm

Horse by Geraldine Brooks Host: TBA

As Always, we encourage anyone to join us 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 <u>pjsh55@gmail.com</u> or home phone or 203-452-0850



Prayer Partner Unite! We will meet on Sunday, May 19th at 11:15AM in Wilton Hall for our "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon where we will find out who's been praying for whom. In the meantime, we will continue to keep that special person in our thoughts. Perhaps send out a note or card in the mail using the church's address (34 Church St Monroe, CT 06468) as the return. Don't forget to sign it "From your Prayer Partner". Can you believe that it's only 3 weeks away? Time flies when you're having so much fun praying for your partner for just a few moments out of your Contact Susie day. at thecuseos@vahoo.com or 203-268-0280 with any questions, concerns or comments.

52nd Strawberry Festival 2024 will be held on Saturday, June 15 (10am-5pm) & Sunday, June 16 (11am-5pm).



Strawberry Festival Signup sheets will be posted on May 12th in Wilton Hall. There are so many things you can do during this fantastic weekend of comradery and friendship. You can help man the bouncy house, make smoothies, pick strawberries, hull them, put together shortcake, run orders, assist with the Country Store, use



your artistic talent to face paint, be a cheerleader and help kids play games or just show up and be ready to serve.

Thank you for offering your time and effort in making the festival a huge success. Don't forget that the kickoff day is Sunday, June 2 where we will have communion with biscuits used for the shortcake. Let's make this another off-the-charts event!!! Please speak to our





We've made over 1,000 jars of jam already thanks to our wonderful jam leaders and volunteers. Our last jam session will be on Saturday, May 11 from 10:30-1:30. You can sign up using this link:

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E094CAEAA22A4FB6-48041861-jamsessions



MCC would like to send a big **THANK YOU** to Mike Ganino and the Monroe Playground Foundation for the very generous

donation of half of the profits from their Super Bowl Pretzels and Popcorn Fundraiser!

MCC received a check for \$320.00!

Also, thank you to everyone who supported this delicious "win-win" fundraiser!



Elisha's Corner

By Gary Thompson, Church Historian
The Mustard Seed Shoppe



"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there', and it will move." (Mathew 17.20)

And they had faith, the women of this congregation back then, 50 years ago. It is written in our *Annual Reports of 1974*:

"The Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe opened on March 1, 1974, with Mary Lou Brigham as chairman [chairwoman]. Its purpose is to create additional funds for the church which it has done in the amount of \$1,400 as of December, 1974. Inventory for the store includes donated and consignment items. Consignment items profit is split 60% to the donor and 40% to the shop.....

The success of this venture is due mainly to Mary Lou Brigham and a small group of women who staff the shop which is open every Thursday, Friday and Saturday

from 10am to 4pm. Future success, however, depends on us all to contribute or consign our clothing items that we no longer have a need for and to help with the work. ..." [Cherie Wilhelm, Treasurer].

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Mustard Seed Shoppe. The support and sponsorship was given by the Women's Fellowship as an independent enterprise. The idea of a thrift shop to raise funds in support of the church's mortgage payments for Rexford House was, like the Strawberry Festival, the brainchild of Connie Keeling, the wife of our 46th Pastor, Rev. Robert Keeling. And like the Strawberry Festival idea, it left some in the congregation skeptical. However, it was embraced by Mary Lou Brigham, who in turn inspired a group of Women's Fellowship ladies to embrace it as well; and so, it became a special project of that group. By the end of the first five years the Shoppe provided almost double the \$1,400 of the first year. Its contribution of \$2,550 to the church's income exceeded the \$2,353 provided by the Strawberry Festival that year. Its largest contribution came in 1990 in the amount of \$13,895. By 2001, Women's Fellowship noted in their Annual Report that, "Mustard Seed [was] Women's Fellowship's sole source of revenue." In addition to their yearly pledge to the church budget revenue they have served many short-term needs of the church; a Pastor's Purse, a Sunshine fund, the cleaning of the carpet in Dineson Parlor and the purchase of dividers used in the classrooms.

But income revenue was not all that they produced. In concert with the Board of Outreach, they supplied excess in-season clothing to Church World Service, starting in 1977 with 925 lbs. of cloths. Over the next three years they donated between 191 lbs. and 346 lbs. Other welfare organizations that they donated either money or excess inseason clothing to include Operation Heat and Habitat for Humanity, Community Closet at Family Services Woodfield, Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Battered Women's and Children's Shelter, Veteran's Home in Bridgeport, Hosanna House, Taste and See Ministries, West Bridge, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Camp HOPE Connecticut, Center for Family Justice, and Project Warmth. They opened their doors to needy locals and to Covenant to Care. Then there was the "Midnight Run" reported in the in 1996 Annual Report, when they, "collected 16 bags of clothing and participated in [a delivery] to NYC [where] the items are distributed to the needy." In 2020, their Annual Report noted that "they packed up ten boxes of cloths (157 lbs.) and shipped them to a [Cheyenne Sioux Indian] South Dakota Reservation."



In 1992, the Women's Fellowship reported that better displays and better quality items were put out, which enhanced their sales volume. This led to their largest income totaling \$15,882.89, the following year. "Of that, \$6,500 was pledged to the church fund [for 1994], and [they] bought new signs for the front of the building The remainder of the monies [was to have been] distributed according to the results of their January '93 Women's Fellowship surveys. From their previous year's

savings account, \$5,250 paid for replacement of the roof over the Mustard Seed Shop and the balance of \$3,939 was given to the Trustees to pay for the painting of Beardsley Hall and the Meeting House." However, it was not long after that, in 1997, that the women felt the need to "brainstorm over the shop during a biannual soup and muffin lunch in the hope of continued health and well being to [their] main source of income." Two years later in 1999, their Annual Report noted that a "survey was sent to the entire congregation requesting input regarding the continuing need and operation of the shop. Ideas were

suggested, some new people offered to volunteer their time, and the overall consensus was to keep the shop open. Hard work and dedication of many people, men and women alike, has enabled us to reach out and touch the lives of others, donate endless car loads of clothing to shelters, work with social workers and other organizations as well as raise revenue." It is still open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.



In 2005, the Women's Fellowship was dissolved, merged into the Board of Christian Fellowship, but the Mustard Seed Shoppe remained. It was separated as a committee and created by a Charter that was accepted by its committee members; Bob Martin, Bruce Gran, Ann Wallace, Peggy Villani, and Lois Spence.

It remains still today. The inspirational leadership of Mary Lou Brigham was ably carried forward over these past 50 years by devoted and dedicated women of our congregation recorded in our annual reports; names like Elsy Van de Weerdt, Barbara Reynolds, Liz Scrofani, Lois Spence, Sheryl DiMauro, Linda Taylor, Gretchen Davison, Ann Wallace, Nancy Olofson, Ann Zeiner, Jackie Bleakney, Peggy Villani, Kate Parker-Burgard, Jan Pearson, Sue Crea, Sue Cuseo, and Joyce Zaleha Rousseau. The men involved need recognition, too; Myron Wininger, Bob Martin, Jim Davison, Bruce Gran, and Dave Spence. From 2001 to 2004 the reports recorded that from thirty to forty volunteers were available to empty the donation box, sort and tag, work the counter, run advertisements, and put on sales.

In addition to its fund-generating role, Mustard Seed provides a very valuable service to the community by giving frequent support to families and groups seeking help from our town's social service system. So much time and dedication by those in our congregation who have created and maintained this seriously important mission effort for the good of our community and elsewhere around the world where a need exists must be honored by preserving and sharing this story of a "little mustard seed" of faith. It personifies who we have been and who we continue to be as a congregation. Celebrate and give thanks.

Historically Faithful, Gary Thompson, Church Historian



Historian's Notebook:

On May 16th, from noon to 1:00 p.m. the Southern New England Conference UCC (SNECUCC) will hold a zoom presentation on "Archiving Your Church Records". If anyone is interested in joining me for this informative presentation, please contact me for the network link that will allow you to register.

Gary Thompson, Church Historian mailglt@yahoo.com



STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL CRAFT & FINE ART SHOW CELEBRATING SINCE 1972!

Join us Father's Day Weekend Saturday, June 15th, 10 am - 5 pm Sunday, June 16th, 12 pm - 5 pm

Over 100 Juried Crafters & Artisans, plus Homemade Strawberry Shortcakes, Pies, Jams & Dipped Berries, Food Tent, Kid's Games, Face-Painting, Country Store, Smoothies and so much more!

Featuring Live Entertainment by:

Saturday: Gunsmoke 11-1, Stratford Community Concert Band 1-2:30 Sunday: Silver Steel Band 1-3

34 Church Street * Monroe, CT 203-268-9327 * mcc-ucc.org www.facebook.com/MCCSF1972

Free admission and parking at Fireman's Field



The need is constant.
The gratification is instant.
Give blood.





Monroe Lions Club's Spring Blood Drive

Monroe Congregational Church, 34 Church St. - Monroe, CT

Wednesday, May 1

8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

How to donate? https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/find-drive

Fairfield East Association Southern New England Conference UCC Invites you to a Concert

featuring Ellis Paul

Sunday, June 2nd, 2024 4:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church Danbury UCC 164 Deer Hill Avenue, Danbury CT

A musical event open to all in celebration of the faithful ministry of the Churches of the Fairfield East Association!

Reception to follow in the Church Hall



Ellis Paul is one of those gifted singer/songwriters. Though some may refer to him as a folk singer, he is more, for lack of a better word, a singular storyteller, a musician whose words reach out from inside and yet also express the feelings, thoughts and sensibilities that most people can relate to in one way or another, regardless of age or upbringing. The exhilaration of the open road. A celebration of heroes. The hope for redemption. Descriptions of those things that are both near and dear. The sharing of love..., intimate, passionate and enduring.

"Despite his success and sense of history, [Ellis] remains an artist with his eye on the future and an interest in discovering the transformative potential of his music."

-The New York Times

"...one of the defining voices of American songwriting." -Direct Current

In Our Prayers

Alison Abrams (Jessica Pfalzgraf's sister); Allie (Colegrove's friend); Jennifer Bittar (Loraine Zeiner's friend); Jackie Bleakney; Byron Brown & Bruce Bryant (friends of Will Duchon); Lori Cimeno (Peggy & Ron Villani's Daughter); Dave Coffey; Kevin Daly (Gary Thompson's friend); Dawn (Donna Konkol's Friend); 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); Clark Gingras; Peter Hallgren; 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); Cheri Irwin & family; Vera James (Jenn Wissink's mother); Joey (Calvert Locks); Jonathan (Matt Colegrove's brother); Kelti (friend of Liska Gutierrez); Walter Lane (Marge Fox's brother-in-law); Monica Lynch (Bethany Dupuis' friend); Nicole Malia; Betty McKeown (Donna Konkol's mother); Mike (Janie Allen's son); Jean Moffat; Olivia Morrison (Donna Nickdow's niece); Bert Muizulis; Joe Mumper (Julie McClenathan's friend); Pat Nugent; Ocampo family (friends of Liska Gutierrez); Nancy Olofson; Missy & Gail Olson; Dean Perosino (Gayle Hammond's brother); Geno Piacentini (Karen MacDonald's husband); 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 Sippin; Gary Sippin (Lori Sippin's son); John Skarupa (Barb Pellegrino's brother); Christine Stadler; Christian & Dain Steiner (Julie McClenathan's nephews); Claire Stenzel (June & Myron Wininger's granddaughter); Wayne Thompson (Gary Thompson's brother); Richard Turco (Jack Fracassini's cousin); Charles L. Wynn, Sr., (and his mother) Alleane (friend of Will Duchon); Allen Zeiner (Ann Zeiner's son); Ann Zeiner

The concerns of our world: The people of Ukraine; 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; Our friends living on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation and in Oaxaca, Mexico

Those serving in the military, veterans & their families: Stateside: Justin Rifflard, Pensacola Naval Air Station, Zachary Gingras, 395th Combat Sustainability Support, Joel Smith, 250th Engineering Company Germany: Rachel Hoffman (Vaughan Askue's daughter), Chicago: Chris Meneses (Loraine Zeiner's friend), Kuwait: Jon Sanchez (Don Whiteley's grandson-in-law)



Happy Birthday to the following people and to anyone we may have missed we will keep you in our prayers.

Alexa	Adams	05/01	Jonathan	Hyde	05/12
Steven	Andrejczyk	05/01	Cindy	O'Rourke	05/13
Chuck	Schneider	05/01	David	Spence	05/13
Allen	Crosnier	05/02	Nicole	Williams	05/14
Joyce	Rousseau	05/03	Mark	Barnhart	05/15
Jenna	Rice	05/05	Marissa	Maiolo	05/18
Hank	Allen	05/06	Linda	Caballero	05/20
Kristina	Logan	05/06	Emily	Coleman	05/22
Gay	Muizulis	05/06	Bethany	Dupuis	05/24
Gilles	Rousseau	05/06	Linda	Rooney	05/24
Gary	Thompson	05/06	Stacy	Andrejczyk	05/25
Will	Duchon	05/07	Debra	Hansen	05/26
Alexa	Unger	05/07	Justin	Rifflard	05/27
Tyler	Vaglivelo	05/07	Muriel	Hastedt	05/28
Corey	Schneider	05/08	Rebecca	Young	05/28
Kelly	Halloran	05/09	Kaelyn	McEvoy	05/30
Megan James	Molloy Hisey	05/11 05/12	Scott	Whiteley	05/30
			Melissa	Coleman	05/31



Happy Wedding Anniversary to the following couples and to anyone we may have missed, we will keep you in our prayers. (Number is anniversary date)

Gayle & Bob Hammond⁽⁰⁴⁾ Kathy & John Maiolo⁽¹⁴⁾
Lorrie & Bernard Sippin⁽¹⁴⁾ Brian & Ann-Marie

Campbell⁽¹⁷⁾ Myron & June Wininger⁽²⁴⁾

and Sheldon & Nancy Smith ⁽²⁸⁾

May 2024 MCC Community Calendar

Wed. May 1st

7:30-2:30 Monroe Line's Club Blood Drive

Thurs. May 2nd

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Confirmation Class

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

Sat. May 4th

5:30 pm Adult PF

Week of Sun. May 5th

Communion

10:00 am Worship

11:30 am Trustees

1:30 pm Crop Walk

5:00 pm Junior, Senior PF

Mon. May 6th

7:00 pm Outreach

Tue. May 7th

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

Wed. May 8th

11:00 am Morning Circle

Thurs. May 9th

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Confirmation Class

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

Sat. May 11th

10:30 am Jam Session

Week of Sun. May 12th

Mother's Day

10:00 am Worship

Mon. May 13th

7:30 pm Deacons

Tue. May 14th

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

Tue. May 14th

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

Wed. May 15th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

7:00 pm Book Club

Thurs. May 16th

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Confirmation Class

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

Sat. May 18th

Church Work Day

Week of Sun. May 19th

Confirmation ~ Pentecost Sunday

10:00 am Worship

11:00 am Prayer Partner's Potluck

5:00 pm Junior, Senior PF

Mon. May 20th

7:30 pm Council

Tue. May 21st

1:00 pm Mustard Seed Sort and Tag

Thurs. May 23rd

9:30 am Bible Study

12:00 pm Young at Heart

6:00 pm Confirmation Class

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

Week of Sun. May 26th

10:00 am Worship

11:00 am Lincoln at Coffee Hour

5:00 pm Junior, Senior PF

Mon. May 27th

Memorial Day ~ Office Closed

Thurs. May 30th

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir