



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
Music Director: Will Duchon
Director of Faith Formation: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon
Secretary: Melissa Rosenberg
Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

January 15, 2017

In Deep Water?

Luke 5:1-11

I recently learned that the fishing industry in Jesus' time was highly regulated. Instead of just showing up on the shore with your boat and net, you had to purchase an expensive fishing license in advance. So a night of empty nets and no fish wasn't just a disappointment for the average fisherman. It meant that the investment he laid out in advance could just float away, never to be enjoyed by those he loved.

When Peter, James and John left their nets to follow Jesus, they stepped out of a rigidly demanding economic system into a life of more freedom. Jesus offered them not just a change in their vocation, but a change in their very identity. You see, family groups often fished together, and Jesus pulled his followers out of that insular, family based life into a new community. When he told them "*don't be afraid*", he must have meant it! They were leaving their responsibilities and their dear ones for something completely unknown.

Jesus offers a new vision to Simon, James and John – and they accept his offer. The large catch of fish they haul in afterward is more than a just a miraculous display. It is comfort and safety, since it grants the families they left behind a cushion. As Jesus takes the men away from their work, he leaves their loved ones with a very practical gift.

Yes, stepping out of everything familiar into a whole new life can be frightening. But time and time again the gospel story suggests that even the most clueless disciple has the opportunity to show great spiritual courage. May each one of us, in our own way and for our own situations, courageously follow Jesus in 2017 and beyond.

In peace, Pastor Jenn

p.s., Thanks for the many prayers and conversations we've shared as I prepare to leave for Jerusalem. If you are interested in learning more about my service with EAPPI, check out their site: www.eappi.org
I will be blogging weekly at <http://loveshoutngstones.blogspot.com>

Fisherman on the Sea of Galilee



Sabbatical

As you all know Pastor Jenn will be leaving for her sabbatical in two weeks and will not be serving us as our Pastor during that time. This doesn't mean that we are on sabbatical though! In my experience, I have seen churches accomplish great things while their Pastor was on sabbatical. One church I worked with addressed changes that needed to be made in their By-laws. Another used the time to experiment with different worship styles. This is not to say that the Pastor stands in the way of these changes, it is to say that every church is an entity aside from its Pastor.

When we join the church that's exactly what we do. We don't join the Pastor, Music Director, Faith Formation Practitioner, Administrative Assistant, or any other staff member who serves the church. Sure, we form relationships and even friendships with these people, but the church always continues to live when these folks move on.

So, Pastor Jenn gets a much needed break from directly serving MCC, and we get an opportunity to explore and expand all that MCC is to us and our community. Keep coming to church on Sundays and keep serving the church – you never know what we might find during this time of renewal.

Peace and Blessings to you,

Debi M-K

Call to Annual Congregational Meeting * January 29th, 2017

The members of Monroe Congregational Church are hereby called to attend the Annual Meeting of the Congregation to be held in the Meeting House at 11:15am on Sunday, January 29th, 2017. The agenda will include the following: Receiving of Reports; Electing Officers, Board Members and Delegates; Adopting the 2016 budget and any other business that must properly come before the Congregation. Child care will be available.

Deacons

Sabbatical Commissioning Please join us this Sunday, January 22nd as we celebrate Pastor Jenn's 10 year anniversary with us and commission her upcoming sabbatical. The deacons have prepared a special liturgy for this occasion and would welcome your participation. A special cake will be served at coffee hour in Pastor Jenn's honor.

Scout Sunday February 5th





BOY SCOUTS
OF AMERICA

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.

All Cub Scout, Boy Scout, Venturer or Crew members are invited and encouraged to wear their Class A uniform to worship on February 5th. Any who would like to participate in BSA Scout Sunday at MCC, please contact Michelle Correll mgcorrell@yahoo.com by January 30th. Scouts are needed as greeters, reader, offering collection, music...

Christian Education

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar	Sunday School Calendar
January 15th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm 22nd – No Jr. PF 29th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm February 5th – Regular gathering at 6:00pm 12th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm 19th – No Jr. PF 	January 15th - Regular Sunday school classes 22nd - Regular Sunday school classes 29th – Regular Sunday school classes February 5th – Sunday school classes for K-3 rd grades 12th - Regular Sunday school classes 19th –No Sunday school 

Save the Date: Senior PF Chili Cook-off Fundraiser 6pm-9pm on

February 18th! Senior PF is preparing for our big mission trip to Chicago 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...



Are you ready for summer? It's cold outside, but we at Silver Lake are already dreaming of summer 2017. Check out the [2017 Summer Conference Brochure](#) and start dreaming of which conference you will attend. Please share this brochure with your friends! Tell them all about the life-changing ministry of Silver Lake, where we encounter God's love in creation. Download the brochure online at www.silverlakect.org. Registration opens January 15, 2017! Start looking for the brochure in your mailbox the first week of January. Save \$50 if you register by January 31! Use coupon code EARLY17 at check out.

We can't wait to see you back at The Lake! *The Staff of Silver Lake Conference Center*

Thursday Morning Bible Study (9:30-11 am)

2017 Winter/Spring Session

Date	Reading
1/19/17	Fish for People Luke 5:1-11 Great catch of fish, Peter will fish for people.
1/26/17	Healing on the Sabbath Luke 6:1-16 Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, call of disciples <i>Pastor Jenn's last study before sabbatical</i>
2/2/17	Raising the Widow's Son Luke 7:1-17 Healing the centurion's slave by a word and raising Nain widow's son <i>Rev. Susan's first study with group</i>
2/9/17	Are You the One? Luke 7:18-35 Tell John what you see and hear.
2/16/17	Forgiven at Jesus' Feet Luke 7:36-50 Woman weeps at Jesus' feet and is forgiven
2/23/17	Transfiguration Luke 9:28-45 Transfiguration, healing a boy with a demon, passion prediction.
3/2/17	The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-42 Parable
3/9/17	Lament Over Jerusalem Luke 13:1-9, 31-35 Repentance, parable of fig tree
3/16/17	Lost Sheep, Coin, Son Luke 15:1-32 Parables
3/23/17	Rich Man and Lazarus Luke 16:19-31 Parable
3/30/17	Zacchaeus Luke 18:31--19:10 Healing a blind man, meets Zacchaeus.
4/6/17	Triumphal Entry Luke 19:29-44 Palm Sunday
4/13/17	Bible Study Cancelled (Maundy Thursday/Holy Week)
4/20/17	Emmaus Road Luke 24:13-35 Post-Resurrection appearance
4/27/17	Stephen's Witness Acts 6:1—7:2a, 44-60 Controversy in the early church; some set aside for service. Stephen forgives and is martyred. <i>Rev. Susan's last study with group</i>
5/4/17	Ethiopian Eunuch Baptized Acts 8:26-39 Ethiopian reads the Scriptures, baptized by Philip. <i>Pastor Jenn returns from sabbatical</i>
5/11/17	Council at Jerusalem Acts 15:1-18 Council at Jerusalem, Faith gives identity to Jews & Gentiles.
5/18/17	Living By Faith Galatians 1:13-17; 2:11-21 Paul's former life; conflict with Peter at Antioch; justification by faith.
5/25/17	One in Christ Galatians 3:1-9, 23-29 Neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; one in Christ.
6/1/17	Acts 2:1-4; Galatians 4:1-7 Pentecost; God pours the Spirit into our hearts <i>Final Bible Study of Season</i>

Outreach



Pastor Jenn is collecting small trinket type toys and gifts for children and youth to take with her on sabbatical. In Middle Eastern culture (and many others), it is customary to give those you visit a small gift. They must be able to fit inside a pocket. Think tiny stuffed animals, matchbox cars, lip glosses, etc. in new condition. If you can help, please drop items off at the church office by January 31st and thanks for your support!



The Annual MCC Tag Sale is coming! Please mark your calendars for March 11 from 9 am-1 pm (early birds at 8) in Wilton Hall.

2017 Mission Trip I am so excited to be leading a mission trip to the Cheyenne River Reservation in La Plant, South Dakota this summer from June 24th – July 1st. This will be my seventh time traveling out there and I hope some of you will join me. This trip is open to all people age 15 and over.



A representative from Simply Smiles will be coming to meet with church folks some time in February or March and I will also be scheduling a gathering of interested folks in either late January or early February. We will also be doing some fundraising to make this opportunity more affordable for folks!


If you have any questions, would like to participate, or help coordinate, please contact me at debi@mcc-ucc.org or 203-444-6760. Debi Mastroni-Kenyon

Fellowship



Young at Heart will be meeting on Thursday, January 26th for fellowship and fun. We will be meeting at noon at Tavern in Monroe. Please RSVP to Gayle Hammond by January 24th to let her know if you will be able to join us. Hope to see you there.

Please join us for the MCC Book Club!

 **February 15th -7:30pm** The Japanese Lover by Isabel Allende
Location to be determined



Epiphany, 2017

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

About 10 years ago, I attended a lecture at the Chautauqua Institution in which a professor from a nearby college discussed the similarities and differences between the spirituality of Francis of Assisi and Thomas

Merton. I don't remember a thing about the speaker's remarks, but I vividly remember one exchange from the question and answer period that followed the talk. A questioner asked the speaker, "Did Francis of Assisi want to reform the church?" The speaker replied, "No. He wanted to live the Gospel." The questioner then asked, "Did Thomas Merton want to reform the church?" "No," the speaker replied, "he wanted to live the Gospel."

This brief exchange stayed with me long after the other details faded away. When I'm asked, "What is the greatest challenge facing the United Church of Christ?" I always reply, "the greatest challenge facing the United Church of Christ is how do we live Gospel of Jesus Christ." This has been a springboard for many interesting conversations over the years. It is the issue that the church faces in every generation and that we face today.

Last fall, the National Leadership published new purpose, vision, and mission statements for the whole United Church of Christ. They are:

- Purpose: To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.
- Mission: United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.
- And the vision: United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

For at least a generation, members and leaders of the United Church of Christ and its closest sibling denominations have experienced declining membership and participation, scarcity of resources, and reduced impact on the lives of their members and on society as a whole. Our appreciation of the value of religious faith and our love for the Church that has nurtured us have led us to focus much effort, time, resources, and energy on trying to "fix" the church. Based on the ways we measure this decline, our efforts have not been fruitful.

What if, instead of trying to fix the church, we focused our energy on living the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What if "how do we live the Gospel?" became the lens through which we viewed every activity the church undertook? What if, instead of asking, "how can we fill the pews or the offering plate?", we asked, "how can we get better at loving God and our neighbors?" "How can we welcome all?" "How can establish a more just world?"

Epiphany commemorates the ways that Christ is made known to the world. We can make Christ known to the world and to ourselves by committing ourselves to live as God calls us to live, loving God and neighbor ever more fully, welcoming all to God's beloved community, and seeking to establish a just world for all.

May the light of Christ shine in your life and in the life of your church during this season of Epiphany.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Ciba

Senior Regional Minister Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ

MCC Community Calendar

Week of Jan. 15th

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir
11:15am Deacons (Dineson)
6:00pm Junior & Senior PF

Mon. Jan. 16th

Office Closed in Observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day
7:30pm Church Council (Dineson)

Tues. Jan. 17th

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

Wed. Jan. 18th

6:30pm Youth Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Jan. 19th

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

Week of Jan. 22nd

Commissioning Pastor Jenn for Sabbatical
10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir
6:00pm Adult, Junior & Senior PF

Tues. Jan. 24th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Jan. 25th

6:30pm Adult Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Jan. 26th

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

Week of Jan. 29th

Heritage Sunday
10:00am Worship
11:30am Annual Meeting
6:00pm Junior & Senior PF

Tues. Jan. 31st

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Feb. 1st

Pastor Jenn on Sabbatical
6:30pm Youth Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Feb. 2nd

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

Week of Feb. 5th

Welcome Rev. Susan Pfeil
Scout Sunday
10:00am Worship with communion
11:15am Junior Choir
6:00pm Adult, Junior & Senior PF

Tues. Feb. 7th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Feb. 8th

6:30pm Youth Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Feb. 9th

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

Week of Feb. 12th

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir
6:00pm Junior & Senior PF

Wed. Feb. 15th

6:30pm Youth Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Feb. 16th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
6:30pm CE Meeting (Dineson)
7:00pm Adult Choir

Sat. Feb. 18th

6:00pm Sr PF Chili Cook Off (Wilton Hall)

Week of Feb. 19th

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir
6:00pm Adult, Junior & Senior PF

Mon. Feb. 20th

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

Tues. Feb. 21st

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Feb. 22nd

6:30pm Adult Confirmation (Dineson)

Thurs. Feb. 23rd

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
12:00pm Young at Heart location TBD
7:00pm Adult Choir