



THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE

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Monroe, CT 06468

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Office Hours:
Monday – Friday
9:00a.m. - 3:30p.m.

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

October 1, 2016

May We BE the Love

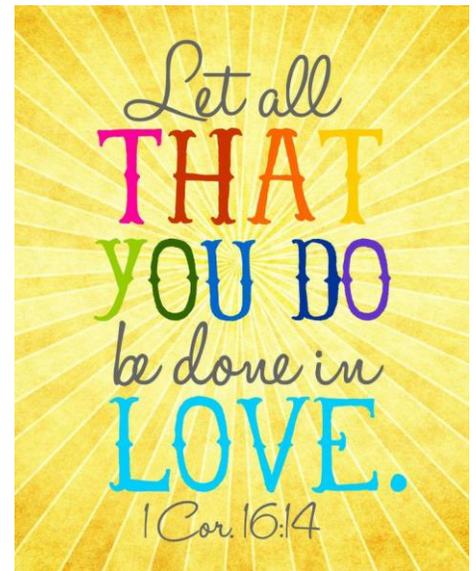
We all have to answer crucial questions in life. When we're young, our parents might ask us, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and we can say "A fireman" or "A princess" without any hesitation. Years later, that shifts to "what are your plans after high school?" As we get older, the questions get more difficult and our answers become more mature and nuanced. The questions help to build our sense of identity, which is the essence of who we are and who we are becoming.

When Jesus asked his followers "*But who do you say I am?*", he was speaking to them near the northern city of Caesarea Philippi, a place where many different religions of the Roman world were celebrated. The disciples offered various answers, "*[S]ome say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other prophets*" (Mark 8:27). Not satisfied with any of these answers, Jesus turned to his closest followers and asked them a second time, "*But who do you say I am?*" (8:29).

How we answer the question today has the potential to change us. If we acknowledge Jesus to be an inspired teacher, then maybe we will pay closer attention to what he says so that we might actually live his vision. If we see Jesus as the Messiah, then we recognize him as the one who ushers in the peaceable kingdom. How does who you think Jesus was reflect in who you believe yourself to be? What difference does it make in how you live each day? Jesus called and empowered his disciples to serve and to love, even those (especially those) in the crowd who were considered the most difficult to love. Sounds pretty revolutionary to me.

In this season of divisive political rhetoric, may our words, actions and priorities live into our individual identities as children of God, but may they also reflect who we might come to believe Christ to actually be: Love Incarnate.

In peace, Pastor Jenn





Lay Pastoral Visitation Ministry at MCC

The Lay Pastoral Visitation Ministry is a team of folks at MCC who provide spiritual care, attention and support to individuals in our church, especially seniors and those with special needs. Volunteers train and serve under the supervision of an ordained clergyperson. Pastor Jenn and Rev. Dr. Sheldon

Smith will begin training a group of lay visitors soon.

Generally, if you are a 'people person' and have good listening skills you can do pastoral ministry. The gifts of patience, faithfulness and the ability to hold confidences are also crucial. A sense of 'call' to this ministry is also important. You may have experience as a caregiver that is pushing you towards this ministry, or you are just grateful for what you have and are able to serve. Either way, it may be the stirring of a call!

There are four parts to the training:

- A thorough understanding of the training manual
- Attendance at the three training events following worship on October 9, November 6 and December 4, 2016.
- A trial visit with an ordained clergyperson to an individual in need of care.
- Participation in a commissioning during the December 11th Sunday morning service.

Typically, the time commitment involves the following:

- A once-per-month support group meeting with other lay visitation ministers. These meetings involve hearing and discussing verbatims (narratives of visits), training in specific skills, and practice in problem-solving.
- At least one monthly visit to the lay minister's assigned person. Typically, this person is a senior and is a shut-in living in his/her home or an elder care facility. It might also be a younger person with special needs. The standard visit lasts about an hour.

Do I HAVE to attend the monthly support group? Yes! The give and take with other pastoral visitors is vital. Ongoing training is refreshing and helps you be more effective. Obviously, there will be times when your schedule will not permit attendance. That's okay, but each pastoral visitor should make the support group a real priority.

Will my interests and skills be matched to an individual to be visited? Yes! Great care will be taken to make sure your gifts and graces match the person you will visit. You will be consulted before a person is assigned to you. If the match doesn't work, we can make changes.

If you feel called to this ministry, give Pastor Jenn a call in the office at 203-268-9327 to set up an appointment for coffee and a chat. Thanks for considering this vital church ministry!

Pastor Jenn's Sabbatical - February, March & April, 2017

The word "sabbatical" has its roots in the Biblical concept of Sabbath. Sabbath keeping is setting aside time that God consecrates and makes holy. Sabbatical Leave is a time for our pastor to shift gears in order to return and minister among us refreshed and renewed in body, mind and spirit. UCC guidelines recommend a sabbatical every five years and MCC leaders have been committed to providing this refreshment for her and for the congregation. Sabbatical is meant to be a time of rejuvenation for everyone, so that we may hear a new voice in the pulpit and so that laypeople find new opportunities to grow in faith and leadership.

Pastor Jenn is due to take her sabbatical in 2017. It is hard to believe that it has been 5 years since she took her last sabbatical, and this will be the second Pastor Jenn has taken in the 10 years she has served our church. When she returns, as she did after her first sabbatical, she will share with us what she did and learned while she was away. Currently, a team of deacons is actively working with our regional minister, Rev. Michael Ciba, and various church boards, to find a full time sabbatical support pastor to cover and serve while Pastor Jenn is away. Stay tuned for updates.

What will she be doing during her sabbatical?



**Ecumenical
Accompaniment
Programme
in Palestine
and Israel**

On February 1st, Pastor Jenn will travel to Israel/Palestine and begin a three month term as an Ecumenical Accompanier with EAPPI (a joint project of Church World Service, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

and United Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Methodist Church). She is doing so at the invitation of the World Council of Churches, and had to pass a rigorous application, health screen and interview process to be accepted to this program.

As an Ecumenical Accompanier (EA for short), she will serve with a small international team in a designated area of the West Bank or East Jerusalem (exact location to be determined). More than 20 countries send EAs to operate in one of 7 placements across the West Bank and East Jerusalem where they live and work in teams alongside local people for a three month term. These international teams provide presence to vulnerable individuals and communities by monitoring and reporting human rights abuses at checkpoints and non-violent demonstrations. You can learn more about the program here: <https://www.eappi.org/en>

Although there is some personal risk involved, Pastor Jenn will be trained in Washington D.C. prior to her assignment by CWS/EAPPI staff in best practices in safety and conflict resolution. In

its 14 years of existence, over 600 EA's have safely completed their assignment without major injury. She will also be expected to complete a lengthy reading list on the history and culture of the region and current issues, which she will share with the congregation.

How can this possibly be restful for our pastor? Sometimes, rest can be found in doing something completely outside one's normal daily routine. As a pastor who lives 200 feet from the church she serves, she acknowledges that it would be very difficult to focus on sabbatical in the shadow of our Steeple. Although she will be engaged physically in a challenging part of the world, Pastor Jenn will be on duty no more than 40 hours a week, allowing much more time for rest and travel than a typical ministry week of 60-75 hours.

Since 2012, our pastor has been looking for a way to return to Israel/Palestine and become more actively engaged in peacemaking. She has been selected for a unique service and learning opportunity, and we hope that you join us in celebrating her news. We will be planning a range of special activities once she returns to us so that she can share her experiences and learn about what the church has been up to during her time away.

What does her family think? Ask them. They will tell you that they are proud of her and support her fully. They will remain in their family home (the parsonage) and be as engaged with the congregation as is normal for them. They will remain in contact with her via regular e-mail and facetime dates. Although her communications on social media will be monitored for the safety of the program and its participants, Pastor Jenn will be submitting approved stories of personal encounters on a blog, which she will share with the congregation.

What will change while Pastor Jenn is gone? All of our ministries will continue while Pastor Jenn is away on sabbatical, and perhaps new ones will be formed. Church business will be handled by the leadership of the congregation, in cooperation with our regular staff and a sabbatical supply pastor. As soon as more details on the pastor are available, these will be communicated to the church.

In order to continue with our common life, we urge you to continue attending worship on Sunday mornings, participating in learning and serving opportunities, and engaging in conversation on social media. Please also make sure you're on the church mailing list to stay informed! We hope you will join the congregation at the service on January 29 to wish Pastor Jenn well and bless her on her journey.

In Peace, *Joanne Malia, Chair of Deacons*

"People Helping People" All-Church Day of Service

One thing I would like to tell you about myself is that I am very passionate about the Church being "One Body". What I mean by that is that I believe the more we do together, across the generations, the more vibrant and alive we become. The more we learn from each other and the more we are in relationship and covenant with each other. On Sunday, October 30th we will be having a special service day together.



On the People Helping People Service Day, worship will be abbreviated to 45 minutes, so that we can assemble and work together on the following service projects:

- **Making Christmas Cards for the children living at Casa Hogar:** The people of Oaxaca (pronounced Wa-Ha-Ka) inspired the creation of Simply Smiles when its founder, Bryan Nurnberger, first volunteered at the Casa Hogar Children's Home in 2003. Making Christmas cards for the children living there is one way MCC can keep our connection with them and bring some smiles to their faces!
- **Decorating Pieces of Ben's Bells:** The mission of Ben's Bells is to inspire, educate, and motivate each other to realize the impact of intentional kindness and to empower individuals to act according to that awareness, thereby strengthening ourselves, our relationships and our communities. Ben's Bells are beautiful, handmade ceramic wind chimes. By the time one Ben's Bell is complete, at least 10 people have been involved in its creation. Ben's Bells are hung randomly throughout the community, in public spaces, for people to find and take home as a reminder to practice intentional kindness.
- **Making and Decorating Birdhouses for Habitat for Humanity:** At the Habitat ReStore facility, gently used furniture and surplus building supplies are sold to benefit Habitat's projects throughout Bridgeport. We'll make Birdhouses and give them to Habitat to sell at the ReStore shop.
- **Winterizing the Giving Garden:** We celebrate all the sustainable, organic produce that was grown this summer, but it is now time to prepare the beds for winter. Come ready to get your hands dirty and help us turn the soil to prepare for next year's growing season.

I hope you will join us for this exciting day of fellowship and service. Blessings and peace to you,
Debi Mastroni-Kenyon

Volunteers Needed

Please contact Debi at debi@mcc-ucc.org or 203-444-6760 if you can lend a hand on any of these various projects:

- A few people to help manage the service projects on October 30th
- Spanish speakers to help make Christmas cards for the children at Casa Hogar (*they do not speak English*)
- A person (or two) to organize the Dineson Library and get it functional again



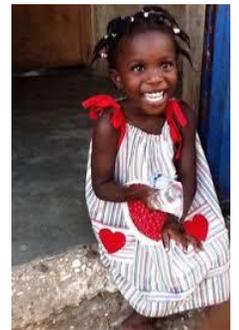
Neighbors in Need (NIN) October 2th is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through NIN grants which are awarded to churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. Projects range from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. Funding for grants is provided through donations to the Neighbors in Need offering. We will receive the NIN offering on October 2, 2016 as part of our World Communion Sunday observance.



The MCC winetasting to benefit Habitat for Humanity is going to be November 5th, 6:30pm at the Jesulaitis home 7 Founders Way, Monroe. This annual event is a wonderful opportunity for fellowship with each other and new friends. Everyone is asked to bring a donation of at least \$10 per person, an appetizer or dessert, and a wine glass. For more information please speak with Julie McClenathan juliemcclenathan@gmail.com

Dress A Girl Around The World Sew-A-Thon Returns November 5th from 10am-3pm~

Join Liz Skarzyński from Dress A Girl Around The World on July 16th in Wilton Hall to create dresses for little girls overseas. There has been a request from India for dresses for girls there. Our goal will be to make 50 T-shirt dresses, a different style than the sun-dresses but in some ways is a little easier to make. Thank you for your generous donations of fabric. If you would like to contribute we need small toys that can fit in a 2-3 inch square pocket. Dress A Girl is part of Hope for Women International a non-profit, nondenominational independent Christian organization. If you would like to help or join the team, please call Liz 203-257-7174 or email Liz1202us@yahoo.com.



It's that time again...the next St. George's supper is October 17.

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 October 16th 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**

Give the Gift of Sight - A collection basket can be found on the table during coffee hour until the end of October. So clean out your junk drawer and find these old prescription glasses, cases and sunglasses. They will be cleaned, checked and donated to people of all ages around the world. They will help many to have brighter futures. Please contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions.

Christian Education

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Retreat

The Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship will be going on a retreat to Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT from October 14th – 16th. If you have a child in 6th – 8th grade they are welcome to come on this weekend. The cost for the weekend is \$140.00 per person. If there is a financial hardship there are scholarships available. For more information, please contact Debi at debi@mcc-ucc.org.

Jr. Pilgrim Fellowship Calendar

October

- 2nd – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 9th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 16th – Retreat Weekend – NO Regular Gathering
- 23rd – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm
- 30th – Regular Gathering at 6:00 pm (Halloween Party)

Sunday School Calendar

October

- 2nd – Communion Sunday; classes for 3rd grade and under
- 9th - Regular Sunday school classes
- 16th - Regular Sunday school classes
- 23rd - Regular Sunday school classes
- 30th – NO Sunday school; Worship and Service for All Ages

Pumpkin Carving Party

Please join the Christian Education Board on Saturday, October 29th, for a Pumpkin Carving Party! We will gather at 5:00 pm and have pizza and other goodies. We will be taking an offering for the pizza. After we dine we will carve pumpkins in preparation for Halloween festivities and decorations.



This is a BYOP – Bring Your Own Pumpkin – event. We have patterns and tools, but if you have your own tools, feel free to bring them. After carving we can take our works of art outside, light them up, and see how they glow!

ALL are welcome to join in the fun and fellowship!

Fellowship



Prayer Partner signups are in full swing. However, I only have six volunteers who will spend a little bit of their time during the day to think and pray for their partner when they receive their name in the mail next month. Partners can find each other during the passing of the peace or at coffee hour and strike up a conversation. They can also send each other notes or cards in the mail using the church's address as the return. We continue to keep them in our thoughts until the mystery is revealed during our potluck luncheon in May 2017 after coffee hour in Wilton Hall. Childcare

can be provided for those 2 years and under. Contact Susie Cuseo at [203-268-0280](tel:203-268-0280) or thecuseos@yahoo.com with any questions.

Please consider being a prayer partner when reading the following testimonials:

- *"I hope that my prayers helped in their daily life to keep them safe and well."*
- *"I didn't know my partner before but knew she was involved in PF and was a student at Masuk. It helped me to prayer for a young person."*
- *"Having a prayer partner has been a blessing. I've thought of her often and prayed for good things in her life, especially in this very precious senior year of high school, as she makes her transition from home to college."*



Morning Circle invites all the women of the congregation to their next meeting on Wednesday, October 12th at 11:00AM in Dineson Parlor. Please bring a sandwich for lunch as well as a donation for the Food Pantry. Contact Jackie Bleakney at [203-268-5275](tel:203-268-5275) with any questions.

Church Council

SAVE THE DATE! Lifetouch is coming to MCC on December 1, 2, and 3 to take pictures of our members and friends for an updated photo directory! Everyone who participates get a FREE professional 8x10 portrait (one per sitting) and a FREE photo directory, with an opportunity to purchase additional photos. More info to come out soon from our Photoshoot Coordinator Judy Coward (including how to reserve your session)!

A Visit from Kent Siladi, Monday, October 17th at 6:30pm

MCC has been selected for a visit from members of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Conference and the CT Conference Minister, the Rev. Kent Siladi! The purpose of the visit is to connect with lay leaders and members of larger membership churches so that they can hear about our ministry and we can learn more about how the CT Conference supports us. Everyone in the congregation is welcome, so if you know anyone who might be interested, please help us spread the word. We want the CT Conference leaders to experience the commitment, leadership and spirit of our terrific congregation! The Church Council is very excited about this visit and we're hopeful that you will be able to join us!

Community News

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month! The Monroe Domestic Violence Awareness Vigil will be held on Thursday, October 6 at 6:00 pm at the Town Hall Green Gazebo.



MCC Community Calendar

Week of Oct. 2nd

World Communion Sunday

10:00am Worship with Communion
11:15am Celebrating Will's 10th Anniversary!
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)
4:00pm Sr. PF Nature Walk (Webb Mountain)
6:00pm Jr. PF
6:00pm Adult PF at the Parker-Burgard home

Mon. Oct. 3rd

7:30pm Rachel's Well (Dineson)

Tues. Oct. 4th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Oct. 5th

3:00pm Church Staff Meeting (office)
6:30pm Youth Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 6th

9:30am Bible Study (Dineson)
5 – 8pm DMHAS Mental Health Training (Chalk Hill)
7:15pm Adult Choir (Meetinghouse)

Week of Oct. 9th

Baptisms of Lina & Braeden Birn,

Jaymie & Jade Stec

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse),
Lay Pastoral Visitation Training 1 (Dineson)
6:00pm Jr & Sr. PF

Mon. Oct 10th

Office Closed - Columbus Day

Tues. Oct. 11th

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Oct. 12th

9:30am Retired Men's Breakfast (Dineson)
11:00am Morning Circle (Dineson)
3:00pm Church Staff Meeting (office)
6:30pm Youth Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 13th

9:30am Bible Study
5 – 8pm DMHAS Mental Health Training (Chalk Hill)
7:15 Adult Choir

Fri. Oct. 14th-Sun. Oct. 16th

Senior PF Retreat to Silver Lake - Cedars

Junior PF Retreat to Silver Lake - Pines

Week of Oct. 16th

Guest Preacher, Will Duchon

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)
6:00pm Adult PF at the Parker-Burgard home

Mon. Oct 17th

3:45pm St. George's Supper
6:30pm Leaders meet with CT Conf Kent Siladi (Dineson)
7:30pm Church Council (Dineson)

Tues. Oct. 18th

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

Wed. Oct. 19th

3:00pm Church Staff Meeting (office)
6:30pm Adult Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 20th

9:30am Bible Study
5 – 8pm Wellness Fair (Chalk Hill)
7:15 Adult Choir

Week of Oct. 23rd

Baptism of Logan & Katlyn Perachio

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)
6:00pm Sr & Jr PF

Tues. Oct. 25

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Oct. 26th

3:00pm Church Staff Meeting (office)
6:30pm Youth Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Oct. 27th

9:30am Bible Study
12:00pm Young at Heart Location TBD
7:15 Adult Choir

Sat. Oct. 29th

5:00pm Pumpkin Carving Party (Wilton Hall)

Week of Oct. 30th

People Helping People All-Church Day of Service

10:00am Worship
11:15am Junior Choir (Meetinghouse)
6:00pm Sr & Jr PF

Tues. Nov. 1st

1:30pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

Wed. Nov. 2nd

6:30pm Youth Confirmation Class (Dineson)

Thurs. Nov. 3rd

9:30am Bible Study
7:15 Adult Choir

Sat. Nov. 5th

10:00am Dress A Girl Sew-A-Thon (Wilton)
6:30pm Habitat Wine Tasting (Jesulaitis home)