

34 Church Street
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
Director of Faith Formation: Debi Mastroni-Kenyon
Music Director: Will Duchon
Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall
Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org



THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST STEEPLE

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

January 1, 2021



Turning the Page on 2020...

As I sit here in my home office in the downstairs hallway of the parsonage on Christmas Eve-Eve, I'm kind of overwhelmed thinking about the year we've had together. In the life of our church, things have not been easy. I remember that scary moment in March when we were told to stay home for 2 weeks, and the sadness we experienced when we realized it would be much longer. We've had to cancel or postpone or re-design so many things that define us as a vital, active member of our community because our ability to be with one another has been compromised.

On the other hand, there have also been amazing moments of grace. Our ability to reach people beyond our walls has dramatically increased as we've learned about technology. We've been outside more, enjoying the blessings of creation. Our concern for our neighbors has led us to reach out in ways that have strengthened our community ties.

I believe that when we turn a corner on the corona virus, sometime in 2021, we'll appreciate some of the changes this time has imposed, even as we grieve our losses. But as we get to that place of reflection, it is still necessary to do our due diligence and keep church as safe as possible. Which means, this year, we need to **re-imagine Annual Meeting**.

You can see from the note later in this Steeple, Council decided this year to have our annual meeting primarily virtually. We will have a **church-wide zoom call**, which all members may participate in from the safety of their homes, either on their computer or audibly through their cell. We will make accommodations for those who are unable to do so, or who would prefer to attend in person. More details will be forthcoming, as we carefully work out the details.

As responsible Congregationalists, this decision was made by the Church Council with the following in mind:

- **Our MCC Constitution** does *not* explicitly require that our Congregational Meetings or Board meetings be held in person. All of the stated requirements for communication of the Call to Meeting, establishment of a quorum, and member

participation can be met by a virtual meeting. There is also direct precedent for this in the Boards and the Church Council, which have been meeting virtually since March 2020.

- **The UCC** has held virtual board meetings, General Synod 2020, and various conferences have met their meeting requirements this way as well. Articles on the UCC website advise careful planning and communication as well as conformance to local rules and laws.
- **The State of Connecticut** has issued guidance on this: "Governor Lamont issued an emergency Executive Order on Wednesday May 13 (2020), giving Connecticut nonprofits the authority to conduct member meetings, including annual meetings, by entirely remote means."

As we move forward with the planning and implementation, please keep your church's leadership in your prayers. I'm so grateful to each one of you for your patience and encouragement as we've navigated through this difficult time. Together, let us look towards the new year with hope, mercy and grace.

In hope and peace, Pastor Jenn



A new year begins

For those of us who live in the northern part of the country, a bright shiny new year arrives in the dead of winter. Many like to "sit out" winter. I cannot imagine living in a place without four seasons. I love winter. I like to see icicles shining in the bright winter sun, to bundle up and walk in the snow. Consider snow for a moment. No two flakes are alike as no two people are alike. God

has given all of us something special to individualize us. I miss being with members and friends of our church. Within our church family we may have older friends, younger friends, short friends, tall friends, friends that are cooks, nurses, teachers, finance managers, or retired. We celebrate our diversity as we take comfort in the knowledge that Jesus loves us all. We yearn to be together again. While I certainly understand the need for separation, I sometimes cannot bear the loneliness of this time. I am sure I'm not alone in this feeling. Let us continue to reach out to others, share a story or a joke. Through the cold winter, let us bask in the warmth of God's love. Let's celebrate friends and family despite our isolation. We are all individual beauties, like each flake of snow. Many we each find joy and comfort in this New Year. Peace to all. *Debi*

Church Council



Call to Annual Congregational Meeting * January 24th, 2021

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 11:00 am on Sunday, January 24th, 2021. On December 22, 2020, Council voted unanimously the following stipulation for the meeting:

Due to continuing risk of COVID-19 and prohibition on large gatherings, and on advice of the UCC and the State of Connecticut, that the MCC Annual Congregational Meeting on January 24, 2021 shall be conducted as a virtual meeting open to participation of all members, with provisions to attend in-person for members unable to join online.

The agenda will include the following: Receiving of Reports; Electing Officers, Board Members and Delegates; Adopting the 2021 budget and any other business that must properly come before the Congregation.

Annual Reports Due: January 6th

Please submit your annual report to the church office by **Wednesday, January 6th**. Please call the church office with any questions. 203-268-9327 or email secretary@mcc-ucc.org

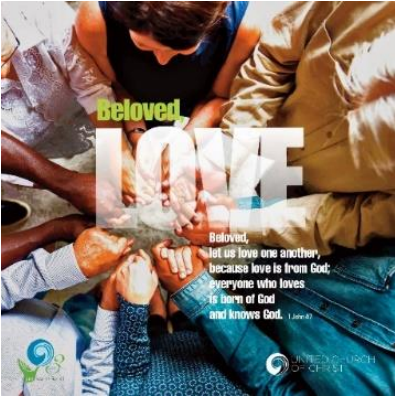


Special Thanks to Our MCC Staff

One of our year-end holiday traditions is a personal acknowledgement of appreciation for our professional staff. In this extraordinary year, they have responded to the unprecedented challenges of pandemic and social distancing with flexibility, resourcefulness, and dedicated commitment to pastoral leadership, faith formation, musical worship, and the smooth, efficient operation of our church. While we cannot make our usual coffee-hour presentation, we have been able to gather contributions from our members to extend to

our staff a small year-end gift as a token of our appreciation. To Jenn, Debi, Will, and Diane, on behalf of your MCC family, I offer our heartfelt thanks for all you do for us at MCC.

- Dave Walker, MCC Moderator



Beloved, Love MCC's 2021 Stewardship Campaign

At the Monroe Congregational Church, we give ourselves to answering God's call to love. Our annual stewardship campaign provides the resources our congregation needs to answer God's call. Generosity towards the annual pledge campaign assures that our congregation can faithfully answer God's call to love, because it enables us to plan for the next year's needs. You should have received our 2021 Stewardship Drive mailer, which includes a pledge card. Our hope is that you can complete and return it by the end of November to the church office, either by mailing it to MCC at 34 Church Street, Monroe CT 06468 or dropping it in the plate on Sunday. For contact-free submission, go to our church's donate page (www.mcc-ucc.org/donate) and download an editable PDF to e-mail to our Receiver, John O'Rourke e-mail him at jorourke224@gmail.com.

Campaign update:

as of 12/23/20, 48 pledges have been received for a total of \$132,135.00

Please visit our church's YouTube page to see testimonials from Don Parker-Burgard, Arlene Redmond, and Katherine & Kristina Logan.

Elisha's Corner

By Gary Thompson, Church Historian

A Tale of Two Pictures

Each year our church secretary receives requests for information on the persons, events, or things recorded in our archives. Most often they are for persons. This past year there has been more than a few. Perhaps the most interesting one evolved into all three. It was received in October from Richard P. Plumber, who was finishing the writing of an historical novel based on the life and family of his great, great, great, great grandmother. The novel will contain an Epilogue at the end of the book, which will include, along with other ancestors, information on his grandfather, the Reverend Joseph Vectis Harrison; the same Rev. Harrison who was our 40th minister, from 1931 to 1936. He requested confirmation that our records did indicate that his grandfather was our minister and for what years. This confirmation was provided to him. He also indicated that his grandfather was the pastor at the First Congregational Church in Buckland, MA from 1927 to 1932 just prior to being called by our congregation, but it was in 1931 by our records. The copy of the Epilogue he provided contained the picture, below, which is the same picture Ken Post used in the biography sketch for Rev. Joseph Vectis Harrison, standing second from left, that hangs on the Wall of Ministers in Rexford House.



It is a family picture taken in 1929 for the 50th anniversary of the two seated in front row center; Rev. Joseph East Harrison and his wife Elisa Louise Shrewsbury Harrison. They are the parents of our 40th minister Joseph Vectis Harrison. The celebration was held at Mount Hermon School in Northfield, MA, where Joseph East Harrison was head of the Bible Department for twenty-three years, starting in 1912. His wife was born in Sidney, Australia, but grew up in London, as did her husband. Following their marriage on September 17, 1879, the newlyweds' first parish was the Nodehill Congregational Church, in Newport, Isle of Wight, off the coast of Portsmouth, England in the English Channel. It was there that Joseph Vectis became their first child, born October 17, 1880. Their daughter, Irene, seated second from the right, was born two years later. There, also, Rev. Joseph East Harrison met and became close friends with an evangelical minister from the United States, Rev. Dwight L. Moody. Greatly influenced by Moody he and his family removed to Australia in June 1884. He accepted a position at the Baptist Church in Melbourne where he became an evangelical preacher in 1888. It was there that the couple had two more sons; Edward Stacey and Percy Charles, standing at the far left and right in the picture. The Rev. Joseph Vectis Harrison's wife, Violet Elisa, is seated in front of him. His six children; Whitney Vectis and Violet Irene, who are standing fourth and fifth from the left, Edward and Richard who is standing to the right and left of their grandparents, and Frank and William who are seated on the floor to the left in front of their mother.

Joseph Vectis met his wife, Violet Elisa Whitney in Australia in 1904 when he was twenty four. A year later he proposed to her, but she turned him down. He left Australia for the United States that same year, and without her. Moving directly across the country to New York City, he found employment first as a cigar salesman, and later in a more lucrative position as a salesman for Benson and Hedges cigarettes. Feeling established, he asked for Violet's hand again in a letter. This time she accepted and joined him in New York in July of 1908. They were married at the Port of New York, honeymooned at Coney Island, and took up residency in a boarding house in Brooklyn. As our biographical sketch indicates, Joseph Vectis joined the Canadian Army in early 1917 because he could not wait for the United States to enter World War I in April, 1917. Richard Plumber told us that Joseph Vectis had the unenviable distinction of being among the combat soldiers exposed to chlorine gas and was physically weakened by the time of his return in 1918. This was also the year the influenza pandemic started and lasted until 1921. After

recovery in 1920 Joseph Vectis moved his family to Rochester, New York where he worked as a stock broker until 1927 when he took on his father's mantle and became an ordained minister. His first calling was to the first Congregational Church in Buckland, Massachusetts. Joseph Vectis remained there until 1931, when he was called to our Monroe Congregational Church. He did not leave until 1936 when he was called to a church in Vermont.

But that is not the best part of the story. The only item in our archives currently is a newspaper clipping from The Bridgeport Times Star, dated June 18, 1936, which reported that Rev. Joseph East Harrison and his wife Elisa were guests of his son, Rev. Joseph Vectis Harrison and his family in Monroe and would remain for the wedding of their granddaughter, Violet Harrison on June 30th. As one would guess, her father performed the wedding ceremony, and maybe her grandfather escorted her down the aisle. The Epilogue Richard Plumber provided reveals that Violet was eighteen and had recently graduated from Gordon College of Theology and Missions. That is where she met her classmate and husband to be, Stanley Thomson Plumber, a native of Somerville, Massachusetts. He had already accepted a call to the United Congregational Church in Little Compton, Rhode Island in 1935, before he and Violet graduated in 1936. A three generation family of ministers.

When the newspaper clipping information was provided to Richard Plumber, he responded by providing the wedding picture, below. This was when the country was just starting to recover from the Great Depression and the couple had little money. Yet the altar was well decorated with floral arrangements and the wedding gown was elaborate for the time and their financial situation. According to Richard Plumber, his mother, Violet, had said that her gown was provided by one of the ladies in the church. This was fodder for a research. Had the ladies of the church decorated the altar for the wedding and who provided the wedding dress? Minutes from the Ladies Improvement League of the Monroe Congregational Church (a very influential group) dated June 3, 1936, recorded [Page 6]: *"A motion was made and seconded to give a wedding reception for Violet Harrison. Carried."* The June 18th minutes recorded [Page 13]: *"New Business: The President appointed Mrs. Hans Denison (Bessie) to take charge of the wedding reception for Violet Harrison. A motion was made and seconded to have Mrs. Damm (Ebbe) make the wedding cake and present her bill. Carried"*. A bill for \$1.75 was later recorded in the July 2nd minutes for the cake. Besse Denison submitted a bill for \$3.11 for the rest. The July 2nd minutes [Page 16] recorded: *"A report was given on the wedding reception. A motion was made and seconded that the committees who decorated the church and prepared the reception be given a vote of thanks. Carried"* and *"Communications: ... A letter was read from Rev. J. V. Harrison thanking the Society for all that was done for his daughter's wedding and reception."* From other and earlier minutes in the League's log, it is obvious that the seamstress of the group was Miss Rose Sinclair. Although the minutes do not say she was the one who provided Violet's wedding gown, one can speculate that she may very well have. Although the minutes indicate that it was filed, the thank you letter from Rev. V.J. Harrison has not yet been found.

Thanks to the information received from Richard Plumber some changes to our biological sketch for Rev. Joseph Vectis Harrison will be made. Seems we gained more information than we provided. Sometimes that happens. Great!



Outreach



Socks & Scarves for St. George's:

Dinners and Christmas gifts were delivered to our friends at St. George's Supper on December 21st! Thanks to everyone who contributed over 150 pairs of socks, 50 scarves, and quite a few hats/gloves and a new winter coat, and to all the Outreach volunteers that organized and packaged it all up! Pictured here, from left to right are:

Julie McClenathan, Kathy Maiolo, Linda Resnick, Kathy Allen, Donna Konkol, Lois Spence, Rob McClenathan (Vaughan Askue, Arlene Redmond and Pastor Jenn were there too, just not in the group pic!) Thanks for spreading the joy!



STAR Words are Coming! At church on Epiphany Sunday (January 10th), we'll have a table spread with STAR words for 2021 for you to choose from. Acknowledging that many of our folks are remaining safe at home, should you want a STAR word to reflect upon for the coming year, please let Pastor Jenn know and she will draw one for you. We hope that you find time to marvel at God's spirit working through these paper stars. Like the magi, may these words allow us all to go home by another road, our eyes opened to God's presence in and around us.

Christian Education

Faith Formation Schedule:



Fruit of the Spirit Sunday School: Faith, Fellowship and Fun will not be gathering in person through the end of January. Out of concerns for safety we are pivoting Sunday school to a Zoom format with gatherings from 11:00 am - 11:30 am on January 3rd, 17th, and 31st. If you would like to volunteer to read or help with Zoom lessons or have any questions, please contact Debi



Jr. PF

01/10 Gathering from 3:00-4:00 pm

01/24 Gathering from 3:00-4:00 pm

01/31 Gathering from 3:00-4:00 pm



Adult PF meets via Zoom the first and third Sundays of the month.

For information about Adult PF please contact Don Parker-Burgard.

dpburgard@sbcglobal.net

Fellowship



Prayer Partner Update - My prayer partners have been keeping their other half in their thoughts throughout the holiday season. Your random acts of kindness during that time are appreciated. I'm sure that it made someone happy as well as yourself. Please continue show that kindness every day.

We will come together on Sunday, May 23 at 11:15AM in Wilton Hall for our "Big Reveal" luncheon. Emails and Steeple articles will notify you of any changes for this event.

So give your Prayer Partner a moment of your time during your busy day and hope that they are have a great moment and wish them a fantastic day. There's plenty of time to send them a card offering well-wishes for 2021 using the church's address as the return (34 Church St., Monroe, CT 06468).

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-0280. I look forward to seeing all of you in May.

Yours in Prayer, Susie Cuseo



MCC Book Club

January 13th The Accidental Empress by Allison Pitaki. Host: Linda Fracassini
February 10th The Book of Lost Friends by Lisa Wingate. Host: Peggy Villani
March 10th The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding by Jennifer Robson.
Host: Trees Whitbeck
April 14th The Children Act by Ian McEwan. Host: Arlene Redmond

Questions -contact Mary Unger (203) 268-5754



Morning Circle will not meet during the months of January and February. We invite all the women of the congregation to attend our **first meeting of 2021 on Wednesday, March 10** at 11AM in Wilton Hall. We will be gathering donations for birthday bags for the Food Pantry. Items include cake mix, frosting, birthday napkins and birthday

candles. The children who visit the Pantry with their parents truly love receiving these items and appreciate our efforts for making it a special time for them. Thank you for your generosity and kindness. A catered luncheon is scheduled to be provided during our short business meeting. More information will be forthcoming.

Morning Circle hopes that you have a wonderful holiday and wishes that 2021 brings you much happiness, health, joy and success.

Just for Fun – Jigsaw Puzzle Exchange

Jigsaw puzzle consumption has increased wildly during the pandemic. People have turned to tiny, brightly colored, irregularly shaped slices of cardboard to provide them with a sense of control over a chaotic world. Retailers can't keep puzzles in stock, manufacturers can't keep up with increased orders. Ravensburger isn't even *taking* orders. So, let's help each other out by having a jigsaw puzzle exchange.



Do you have a jigsaw puzzle that you no longer need, and does it have all its pieces? Do you want to exchange it for one you haven't tried yet? Bring it to MCC. We've set aside a corner of Wilton Hall as a place to find your next diversion. When you've completed your puzzle, take a picture and post it on our facebook page, MCC-UCC Conversation. Contact Pastor Jenn with any questions, or to coordinate a time to browse. Happy Puzzling!



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

Marty	LaRoche	01/01	Christine	Williams	01/18
Chad	Bauer	01/02	Nancy	Olofson	01/19
John	Hastedt	01/04	Susan	Grundt	01/20
Chris	Pearson	01/04	Matthew	Siciliano	01/20
Vic	DiMenna	01/06	Rebecca	Williams	01/20
Don	Parker-Burgard	01/06	Vincent	Firmender	01/22
Katerina	Vargovchik	01/07	Gabriela	Gerhard	01/22
Molly	O'Hara	01/09	Max	Williams	01/22
Susan	Granello	01/10	Carmela	Combs	01/23
Alia	Aguilar	01/11	Braeden	Birn	01/24
Joshua	Correll	01/11	Lina	Birn	01/24
Finlay	Oatis	01/11	David	Swift	01/25
Danielle	Adams	01/12	Jean	Weicker	01/25
Joanne	Malia	01/14	Marian	Schmitz	01/26
David	Coffey	01/15	Margaret	Villani	01/27
Thomas	Culp	01/16	Therese	Zalenski	01/28
Ann	Zeiner	01/16	Lia	Birn	01/31
Jaclyn	Birn	01/18	Sue	Crea	01/31
Clark	Gingras	01/18			



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

Larry & Jennifer Wissink⁽⁰⁷⁾, Michael & Michele Mount⁽⁰⁹⁾, Mike & Barbara Pellegrino⁽²⁴⁾,
Al & Beverly Shaffer⁽³¹⁾ and Cody and Lily Forte⁽³¹⁾



2021 Inclement Weather Policy

Inclement Weather Policy



Here in New England we get to enjoy seasonal weather changes. At MCC, we have learned to be flexible and make safe choices about our scheduled plans. The safety and well-being of our people is one of our most important concerns.

This is our inclement weather policy, including who makes decisions about closings and how the decision is spread in the community. If you serve in a position of responsibility, please find your leadership role below.

In Person Sunday Worship Services:

1. **At 7 am**, Pastor (Jenn Gingras, 203-895-5607) and the current Chair of Deacons make the decision whether or not to cancel in-person worship. If in-person worship is cancelled, Jenn will record and upload an abbreviated worship service on <https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc> by noon (sermon, prayer, announcements)
2. **Jenn** notifies staff and key volunteers (who in turn notify those they work with), including Debi Mastroni-Kenyon (203-444-6760), Will Duchon (203-260-1182), Reader, Usher and Trustee of the Day. Jenn sends a church-wide e-mail and posts on FB (MCC-UCC Conversation and Monroe Cong Church Page)
3. **Chair of Deacons** notifies CT Weather/IAN Snap, Channel 8 & Channel 3
4. **Committee meetings** are cancelled at the discretion of committee chair, although all are held on Zoom at the moment, so weather shouldn't be a problem!

Sr. & Jr. PF groups will be notified of any changes or cancellations by e-mail, phone tree and/or Facebook notifications as appropriate.

1. Kelsey Kaminski (203-362-9794)– Makes and communicates Sr PF decision
2. Debi Mastroni-Kenyon (203-444-6760) – Makes and communicates Jr PF decision

Evening Meetings: It is the responsibility of the convener to notify the meeting participants of any changes or cancellations.

Midweek Morning Programs: If the Monroe School district either delays or cancels school, morning Bible studies and other church-sponsored morning programs are cancelled.

Church Office: If the Monroe School System is closed, and staff members are able to travel, they may choose to do so if conditions are safe. Otherwise, they may choose to work remotely.

*If you have any questions or concerns, please call the church office at 203-268-9327.
For info on parking lot conditions, text Clark (203-895-5604) or Jenn (203-895-5607).
Our plow guy's name is Adam, his cell is 203-258-8382.*

MCC January Community Calendar

Week of Jan. 3rd

Second Sunday after Christmas

10:00 am Worship - Communion
11:00 am Faith, Fellowship & Fun via Zoom
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Senior PF (Pierce Lawn)
4:00 pm Adult PF

Wed. Jan. 6th

The Epiphany

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Jan. 7th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Jan. 10th

First Sunday after the Epiphany

10:00 am Worship
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Senior PF (Pierce Lawn)

Mon. Jan. 11th

7:30 pm Church Council

Wed. Jan. 13th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Jan. 14th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Jan. 17th

10:00 am Worship
11:00 am Faith, Fellowship & Fun via Zoom
11:15 am Outreach
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Senior PF (Pierce Lawn)
4:00 pm Adult PF

Wed. Jan. 20th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Jan. 21th

9:30 am Bible Study
7:00 pm CE

Week of Jan. 24th

10:00 am Worship
11:00 am Annual Meeting
12:00 pm Senior PF (Pierce Lawn)

Wed. Jan. 27th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Jan. 28th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Jan. 31st

10:00 am Worship
11:00 am Faith, Fellowship & Fun via Zoom
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Senior PF