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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>

November 1, 2020

The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before ... What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's [back] fade in the distance. So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder. There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon.

~ Jan I. Richardson

morefamousquotes.com

Many of my clergy colleagues are brainstorming about how to mark Advent and Christmas this year. While each congregation is unique in when it comes to buildings, budgets and membership composition, we have been sharing best practices around how best to keep our individual local congregation as safe and vital as possible.

When it comes to our church members, we expect that many will remain closer to home. We anticipate that large family, corporate and community parties will be on

a much smaller scale or perhaps virtual. The things we were able to do safely in worship together will be adapted for the health regulations of this time, which may be hard for those of us who cherish the traditions we have held dear for many years.

Of course, this is nothing new for church leaders – it is a dance we had to begin to learn for Lent and Easter. Over these past 9 months we have had to figure out how to conduct funerals, confirmations, baptisms, weddings and other types of spiritual care either virtually or in person with many precautions.

Traditions that have the potential to harm each other or our neighbors need to be adjusted, and your MCC leadership is planning for an upcoming holiday season that will be, well, different. So let's just focus on the simple message of hope, peace, joy and love that Christ brings, and being together in the safest possible ways. Here's a preview of what to expect:

- Current **precautions** will remain in place when it comes to capacity and social distancing.
- We are adding a **4 pm Outdoor Vespers service** around the fire pit on Pierce Lawn (weather permitting) every Sunday night in Advent (beginning Nov 29) and on Christmas Eve. This may be a safer choice for those of you avoiding indoor crowded spaces. Dress warmly.

- Our **7 pm and 11 pm services will be the same format.** This year, if you are accustomed to attending all the services, we ask that you pick one (to leave room for your neighbors) We will also have a 5 pm Quiet service, which is more contemplative.
- A **Christmas Eve pre-recorded service** will be posted on YouTube and Facebook, incorporating the elements of the typical 11 pm service, with special readings and music. For some of you, this year may be a perfect chance to cozy up at home and welcome the Christ child.

If you would like to assist, we are looking for musicians willing to play in worship on Sunday morning and/or later in the day at the campfire vespers. We are gathering recordings from singers and musicians to be used in the pre-recorded service, as well as scripture readers. Please, speak with Will or I if you are able to help out.

Christmas is not cancelled. Christians across the world will still mark the coming of God to Earth in a human body, in ways that honor the human bodies on Earth today. We will remember that God so loved the world that God stepped into the messiness of our lives together. We will still give thanks that God did not come as part of the ruling elite, but into an ordinary family like yours and mine. We will marvel at the place where Jesus first laid his head. We will still rejoice that in the dark, ordinary, difficult places of human experience, God is born amongst us.

In hope and peace, Pastor Jenn



The Art of Advent

Greetings MCC Community! For Advent I have been planning an offering for adults which will hopefully excite you, get those Advent juices flowing, and nourish your spirits for the Christmas season.

During “The Art of Advent” we will look into different works of religious art and how they might speak to us and take on deeper meaning. You do not have to be an artist to participate, all you need is a willingness to look at some images, reflect on what they mean to you, and discuss it.

This will be a Zoom offering so there is no need to leave your homes and I can even offer this at different times – perhaps during the morning and the evening. In looking at the church calendar Tuesdays, December 1st, 8th, and 15th, seem to be open, so I am thinking of offering this on those mornings from 10:00 – 11:00 am and then in the evening from 7:00 – 8:00 pm. **Please contact me ASAP at 203-444-6760 if you would like to participate in “The Art of Advent”**

I am also still looking for some windows for the “Advent Windows” project. If you are willing to decorate a window in your house during Advent, please give me a call or text. When 24 people sign up, I will put together a schedule and then a viewing schedule for the season.

Peace to you all – *Debi*

Trustees

Trustees Fall 2020 Update

Your board of Trustees have continued to work on our campus and be the caretakers of our finances, despite the challenges of COVID-19. The planning that went into the 2020 budget approved last January did not take into account the disruptions of worship and other activities we would face as a church community later that spring. Fortunately, our YTD expenses are less due to reduced use of our facilities and utilities and we've been very careful about sticking to our budget. Overall, we are fortunate that budget tracking is strong and with your continued commitment on stewardship, we should close the year just about as we expected.

Presently, we have received 75% of the funds people pledged to give from the 2020 Stewardship drive. This is on track and we need to continue throughout the remainder of the year to finish strong. Many members have shifted their giving to the electronic Vanco system, which has made it easier for the member to give and for the Trustees to track (<http://mcc-ucc.org/donate.html>). We are also aware of some members and friends who are experiencing financial hardship, so if you have issues meeting your pledge, please reach out to our Receiver, John O'Rourke at jorourke224@gmail.com.

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP business loan) we applied for in the spring was granted and the \$42,700 has supported us well. Due to our small loan size, this will be forgiven and we are completing the final forgiveness paperwork on that. This has made up for the loss of income from Strawberry Festival and has helped us cover our expenses.

Our investments have steadily grown this year, from less than \$600,000 to \$625,000 in our most recent statement. Early this year, we stopped withdrawing funds from our investments, after \$22,000, to continue our push to reduce the reliance on these funds to balance our budget. The plan this year was to only drawdown \$50,000 instead of much more in past years. Another part of our budget plan (to reduce drawdowns), was to have \$25,000 made up by other fund raising activities, renters, donations, etc.

We are grateful that the work on the ladies bathroom began Friday, October 23rd – thanks to the generosity of those who were able to support the project, and the drive of the team who have spearheaded the implementation.

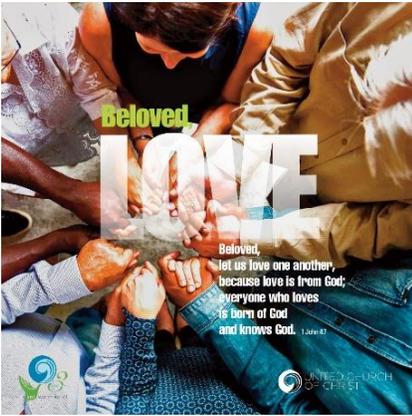


In closing, we want to thank you for your continued commitment to MCC. This year has not been without its challenges, but we have weathered the storm together, and that is what we will continue to do. Please be on the lookout for our Fall Stewardship mailer, coming to you soon.

Ladies' Bathroom Renovation Project is under way! Thank you again for your generosity that allowed this project to proceed. We can't wait to see the finished bathroom - we hope that is by the time of the next Steeple!

The Ladies' Bathroom Renovation Team (Dave Allen, Kyla Allen, Julie McClenathan, Arlene Redmond)

Beloved, Love 2021 Stewardship Campaign



At the Monroe Congregational Church, we give ourselves to answering God's call to love. Our annual stewardship campaign, which begins on Sunday, November 1st, 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. Over the next number of weeks, we will offer inspiring testimonials about the ways God calls us to love children and youth, our neighbor, and creation here at

MCC.

You should be receiving our 2021 Stewardship Drive mailer soon, 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.

Ministry in a time like this depends on all of us: our time, our energy, and our money. We recognize that not all of you are able to give what you could in the past because you may be facing uncertain financial futures, we understand, and our prayers are with you. Others have been able to maintain their giving, and for that we are most grateful. Some of you have even been able to increase your giving, which is very appreciated. Remember that every gift, of any and every size, counts.

Thank you for your willingness to be the hands and feet of God, to and for a world so in need of the Good News that God is love. Not just telling others about this improbable truth but SHOWING them it's true through your lives and in your actions. So, what's love got to do with it? Everything! Keep on sharing the love, God's love. Keep on telling the stories of love. Keep on filling the world with love. And keep on being God's love for all.

Christian Education

Faith Formation Schedule:



Fruit of the Spirit Sunday school

Faith, Fellowship and Fun gathers on **Sunday, November 29th at 10:00 am**. This gathering is for families to attend (parents/guardians and children/youth, age 4-8th grade). We will gather for a Bible lesson and related activities. In the weeks in between you will receive Faith At Home activities via email and our Facebook group.



Jr. PF

11/01 – Gathering from 3:00-4:30 pm

11/08 – Gathering from 3:00-4:30 pm

11/15 – Gathering from 3:00-4:30 pm

11/21 – Adventure Day at Silver Lake (this is a Saturday)

11/29 – NO Gathering – Happy Thanksgiving!

Jr. PF Silver Lake Adventure Day – November 21st

Enjoy a day full of Adventure programming at camp! Fun, physically distanced, and safe. The morning will be spent playing together, exploring field games and low elements. We'll enjoy a bagged lunch, and then move to the high ropes course for some climbing.

Participants will need to bring their own masks and personal hand sanitizer. The cost is \$48 per person, please contact Debi if your Jr. PFER would like to attend or if you have any questions.

Bible Sunday

Bible Sunday will be celebrated on Sunday, November 29th! On that day, our 3rd Grade Sunday school students will be receiving their Bibles. If you have a 3rd Grader, please call Debi at 203-444-6760 by November 16th with your child's full name for the Bible plate inscription.



Adult PF is returning to the first and third Sundays of the month 4:00 - 5:30pm. For information about Adult PF please contact Don Parker-Burgard. dpburgard@sbcglobal.net

Outreach



Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe will reopen only on Saturdays starting November 7th from 10-2. The Shoppe is not yet accepting any donations at this time due to the overflow of merchandise we have in storage.

Our plan to reopen the doors and keep our volunteers and customers as safe as possible will include:

- Volunteers will wear masks and gloves throughout their shifts
- Hand sanitizer and wipes will be available for both worker and shopper
- A Plexi-safety screen will be placed at the counter for the consideration of both the worker and shopper
- Dressing room will not be available to use
- A sign will be posted outside the Shoppe indicating that masks **MUST** be worn upon entering and a limit of 5 persons are allowed to shop at one time

Volunteer shifts are 10-12 and 12-2. We have a few volunteers willing to return at this time, but we need a few more to cover each shift. If you'd like to work behind the counter on Saturdays either at 10-12 or 12-2, please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or call 203-268-0280 and let her know your availability. It's easy and worthwhile for the church and the community.

Fellowship



MCC Book Club

November 11 th	The Keeper of Lost Things by Ruth Hogan. Host: Linda Fracassini
December 9 th	Last Christmas in Paris: A Novel of World War I by Hazel Gaynor and Heather Webb. Host: Paula Haggstrom
January 13 th	The Accidental Empress by Allison Pitaki. Host: Linda Fracassini
February 10 th	The Book of Lost Friends by Lisa Wingate. Host: Peggy Villani
March 10 th	The Gown: A Novel of the Royal Wedding by Jennifer Robson. Host: Trees Whitbeck
April 14 th	The Children Act by Ian McEwan. Host: Arlene Redmond

Questions -contact Mary Unger (203) 268-5754

MORNING CIRCLE

Morning Circle invites the ladies of the congregation to attend our next meeting on Wednesday, November 11 at 11AM in Wilton Hall. We will be collecting items for Thanksgiving dinner for the Food Pantry. You know what we're talking about: stuffing,

cranberry sauce, canned veggies, gravy, even those Big Y turkey coupons, etc. Bring your donations as well as a sandwich for lunch while we hold a short business meeting.

Wrapped gifts for the Giving Tree program need to be brought to the church office by Sunday, November 15th. Please be sure that the gift tag is attached to it. Thank you for your generosity and kindness in providing a little something for someone who doesn't have much.

Our last meeting of the year will be on **Wednesday, December 9th at 11:15AM** in Wilton Hall where we will have a catered luncheon to celebrate the holiday season.

Contact Jackie Bleakney at 203-268-5275 with any questions or comments.



Prayer Partners who've signed up this year should have received their letter and information sheet of the person they will keep in their thoughts and prayers for several months before meeting in May 2021 for the "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon held in Wilton Hall. If you have not, please contact Susie Cuseo at thecuseos@yahoo.com or 203-268-

0280. If you'd like to sign up, it's not too late. Volunteers can attest that it takes a moment out of their day to think about their prayer partner and wish them a great day. They may write a card or short note to them using the church's address (34 Church St., Monroe, CT 06468) as the return. We keep ourselves anonymous until next year. Thank you to those signed up already.

November 2020 Celebrate and Give Thanks for...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 An extra hour of sleep, unless you're a farmer or own a pet!	2 The smell on a crisp fall day.	3 The taste of a crisp, local apple.	4 Soup on the stove.	5 Knitting or crocheting.	6 Jigsaw puzzles.	7 Technology!
8 Family meal, however family is defined!	9 Learning about the Peace and Friendship Treaties.	10 The smell of a wood burning stove.	11  Memory.	12 Books and the ability to read.	13 Sea glass.	14 That first stretch in the morning.
15 Freedom to worship or not.	16 Warm, fuzzy socks.	17 Running water.	18 Music.	19 Board games.	20 Refrigeration.	21 The feel of clean sheets on the bed.
22 The first thing you see when you look out the window.	23 For meaningful work, or work that pays the bills.	24 Learning new skills.	25 Scarves and mittens.	26 Rainbow flags becoming common.	27 Crusty bread.	28 Ice skating.
29 Generations enjoying each other's company.	30 Anticipating or enjoying the first snowfall.					



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

James	Allen	11/03	Alexa	Cross	11/17
Sean	O'Hara	11/03	Michele	Mount	11/17
Kate	Barnhart	11/05	Jonathan	Malia	11/18
Diane	Fraser	11/05	Caleb	Nealon	11/18
Mark	Malia	11/07	Paula	Haggstrom	11/19
Jack	Campbell	11/08	Thea	Rice	11/19
Judy	Coward	11/09	Madison	Caballero	11/20
Dorothy	Dralus	11/10	Betty	Heiney	11/20
Diane	Prall	11/10	Tess	Bauer	11/21
Gail	Olson	11/11	Robert	Hammond	11/21
Linda	Resnick	11/11	Trees	Whitbeck	11/22
Jordan	Vaglivelo	11/11	Ruth	Wakeley	11/24
Nolan	Molloy	11/13	Amaiah	Santiago	11/25
Osiris	Gutierrez	11/14	Abby	Clausen	11/26
Joseph	Sullivan	11/14	Gail	Thompson	11/26
Lucy	Sullivan	11/14	Marc	Cardentey	11/27
Michelle	Cardentey	11/15	James	Brown	11/28
Marian	Hampel	11/16	Katherine	Hyde	11/28
Kathy	Allen	11/17	Henry	Bergeron	11/29



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

Gilles & Joyce Rousseau ⁽⁰²⁾ Ken & Laurel Post ⁽⁰⁵⁾ Mike & Leanne McEvoy ⁽⁰⁶⁾
Andrew & Kristina Logan ⁽⁹⁾ Paul & Susan Granello ⁽¹²⁾ Al & Dana Jesulaitis ⁽¹⁷⁾

MCC NOVEMBER Community Calendar

*Worship may be found on our new YouTube Channel, streaming live on Sundays by 10am or later on demand

<https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurch>

Week of Nov. 1st

****DAY LIGHT SAVINGS**

10:00 am Worship - Communion Sunday
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
4:00 pm Adult PF
5:00 pm Senior PF
6:00 pm Junior PF

Tues. Nov. 3rd

****Election Day 2020**

Thurs. Nov. 5th

9:30 am Bible Study

Sat. Nov. 7th

Senior PF Retreat, YMCA Camp Hazen

Week of Nov. 8th

10:00 am Worship
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour

Wed. Nov. 11th

11:00 am Morning Circle
6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Nov. 12th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Nov. 15th

10:00 am Worship
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:30 pm Trustees Zoom
4:00 pm Adult PF
5:00 pm Senior PF

Mon. Nov. 16th

7:30 pm Church Council

Wed. Nov. 18th

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Nov. 19th

9:30 am Bible Study
7:00 pm CE

Week of Nov. 22th

3rd Grade Bibles

10:00 am Worship
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
11:30 am Deacons Zoom
4:00 pm Adult PF
5:00 pm Senior PF

Week of Nov. 29th

Stewardship Sunday

First Sunday of Advent (Hope)

10:00 am Worship
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
4:00 pm Adult PF
4:00 pm Advent Campfire Vespers
5:00 pm Senior PF

Wed. Dec. 2nd

6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Dec. 3rd

11:00 am Morning Circle
6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Week of Dec. 6th

Second Sunday of Advent (Peace)

10:00 am Worship - Communion
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
4:00 pm Adult PF
4:00 pm Advent Campfire Vespers
5:00 pm Community Tree Lighting
5:00 pm Senior PF

Wed. Dec. 9th

11:00 am Morning Circle
6:30 pm Confirmation Class

Thurs. Dec. 10th

9:30 am Bible Study

