

Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’

Hymnodly Meditation We Hail You God's Anointed NCH, 104 (insert)

The current safety recommendations do not allow us to sing together as a congregation at this time. Our music director and pastor will play and speak the words of the hymn. Should you want to hum along, please do so, continuing to wear your mask.

Sermon Preparing in the Wilderness Rev. Jennifer Gingras

Announcements

Benediction

Postlude Bethany Dupuis, Flute

God is still speaking, welcome to all who are worshipping with us today, in-person and online!

Our Pandemic Commandments

In order to keep our community members safe, please follow safe gathering guidelines:

- Thou shalt stay home if you feel unwell or have a fever (and catch us on YouTube or Facebook)
- Thou shalt wear a mask (if you need one, just ask!)
- Thou shalt maintain a social distance of 6 feet (even when passing peace)
- Some pews are taped off, to allow space between the seating of households. Please respect the tape, and enter/exit from the side of the pew that is open.
- We have provided hand sanitizer and tissues in the pews, please use carefully as the chemicals are corrosive on wood and other surfaces

Worship is live streamed on church’s You Tube Channel under CCLI Streaming License #2169137 on: <https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc>, as well as on our Facebook page “Monroe Congregational Church, UCC”

Please join us for a time of fellowship following the service in Wilton Hall. We also offer a virtual zoom coffee hour at 11:30: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81347810863?pwd=SERMb1ILNUZLdHVnc3VMcm5wcEthUT09>

In Our Prayers

Larry Wissink and his family, on the loss of his mother, Rita; **Ann Zeiner; Jackie Ajello** (Michele Mount's mother); **Michael Barresi** (Maria's Son); **Jennifer Bittar** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend); **Byron Brown & Bruce Bryant** (friends of Will Duchon); **Cheryl Ciambriello** (Wendy Colegrove's friend); **Dot Dralus; Matt Duchon; Dave Fuller** (Gail Olson's brother); **Meredith Gibson** (Paul & Judy Coward's niece); **Lily Grace** (Maria Barresi's baby cousin); **Karen Guinness** (Jennifer Nivison's friend); **Rachel Fracassini** (Jack & Linda Fracassini's niece); **Donnajean & Ken Fredeen: Gary & Julie Hedine** (Nancy Hedine's son & daughter-in-law); **Mary Heerema** (Julia Gutierrez's mom); **Rachel Heerema** (Julia Gutierrez's sister); **Bob Heffernan** (Ann Zeiner's son-in-law); **Brian Hopkins** (Donna Konkol's cousin); **Vera James** (Jenn Wissink's mother); **Heather Joyce** (Paul & Judy Coward's daughter); **Kelti** (friend of Liska Gutierrez); **Walter Lane** (Marge Fox's brother); **Mary-Margaret Logan** (Andrew's mother); **Beverly Lowrey** (Jackie Bleakney); **Jacque MacLean** (Jennifer Nivison's friend); **Nicole Malia; Mike** (Janie Allen's son); **Rev. Jonathan Miller** (Paul & Judy Coward's friend); **Olivia Morrison** (Donna Nickdow's niece); **Joe Mumper** (Julie McClenathan's friend); **Kathy Nivison** (Andy's mother); **Pat Nugent; Ocampo family** (friends of Liska Gutierrez); **Olson Family; Ray Osborne** (Colegrove's Family friend); **Dean Perosino** (Gayle Hammond's brother); **Geno Piacentini** (Karen MacDonald's husband); **P.T. Philip** (Liz Sampson's father); **Norman & Jan Ricker** (Linda & Jack Fracassini's friend); **Barbara Rivel** (Judy Coward's friend); **Regina Roberts** (Kathy Maiolo's niece); **Kelly Rodman** (Angela Cross' friend); **Alfredo Rodriguez** (Osirus Gutierrez's cousin); **Roshong** (Judy Coward's nephew); **Noah Santiago** (Shari Carrano's great-grandson); **Connor Scalia** (Jen Nivison's friend); **Carlos Serrano** (Kathy Maiolo's cousin); **Al Shaeffer; Yessika Siccardi** (Sampson family friend); **Bernie Sippin; John Skarupa** (Barb Pellegrino's brother); **Christine Stadler; William Stadler** (Jessica Pfalzgraf's nephew); **Tom & Jane Steen** (Jessica Pfalzgraf's father & step-mother); **Christian & Dain Steiner** (Julie McClenathan's nephews); **Claire Stenzel** (June & Myron Winger's granddaughter); **Ellie Swindlehurst** (Joanne Malia's mother); **Olga Terwilliger** (Nancy Hedine's sister-in-law); **Ian Thompson** (Gary's cousin); **Dick Thompson** (Gary's cousin); **Meg Trogolo** (Paul & Judy Coward's niece); **Richard Turco** (Jack Fracassini's cousin); **Susan Walker; John Whitbeck; Margaret Woodruff** (Mike Pfalzgraf's mother); **Charles L. Wynn, Sr.,** (and his mother) **Alleane Wynn** (friends of Will Duchon); **Bill Zaleha; Allen Zeiner** (Ann Zeiner's son)

The concerns of our world: *Those who serve or live in war or conflict zones; 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: South Korea: **Zachary Gingras**, Washington: **Rachel Hoffman** (Vaughan Askue's daughter), Virginia: **Chris Meneses** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend), Poland: **Zachary Peters** (Jacob Parker-Burgard's cousin), Kuwait: **Steven Roshong** (the Coward's nephew), Germany: **Bob Peters** (Don Parker-Burgard's brother-in-law), Afghanistan: **Samuel Siciliano**, North Carolina: **Jake Terifay**

✦ We are an **Open & Affirming** congregation of the United Church of Christ, and we invite everyone to join in the full life and ministry of this church. We strive in word and deed to be faithful to Jesus' model of loving acceptance and welcome to all persons, inclusive of every age, race, ability, economic and social status, nationality, faith background, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital standing and family structure.

Thank you for assisting in this morning's worship!

- **Trustee:** Mark Barnhart
- **Counter:** Fred Dubois
- **Deacon:** Joanne Malia
- **Usher:** Maria Barresi



to the following people and to anyone we may have missed, we will keep you in our prayers. (Number is birth date)

Henry Bergeron ⁽²⁹⁾
Lilly Briggs ⁽⁰²⁾

Frank Wittenauer ⁽⁰²⁾
Jeremy Young ⁽⁰³⁾

Stefany Mitchell ⁽⁰⁴⁾

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

Richard & Lynn Draus⁽⁰⁴⁾



Advent Fireside Vespers: In order to keep our capacity down during popular December services, and to prepare an additional place for worship where some may feel safer, we are adding a 4 pm Advent Campfire Vespers every Sunday in Advent and on Christmas Eve. This is an outdoor, socially-distanced, masked, casual worship service around the fire pit with readings, prayer, Advent Candle and a little music (weather permitting). Dress warmly!

Please join us on December 6, 2020 at 5:00 pm for the **Lighting of the Christmas Tree on the Monroe Center Green: A Community Celebration of Advent and Christmas**, Hosted by the Monroe Congregational Church, UCC & St. Peter's Episcopal Church. In order to keep our community members safe, please follow safe gathering guidelines by wearing a face covering/mask and maintaining a holy distance of 6 ft from those outside your household. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight!



December 24, 2020 - Christmas Eve with MCC

"We Believe, Even Now"

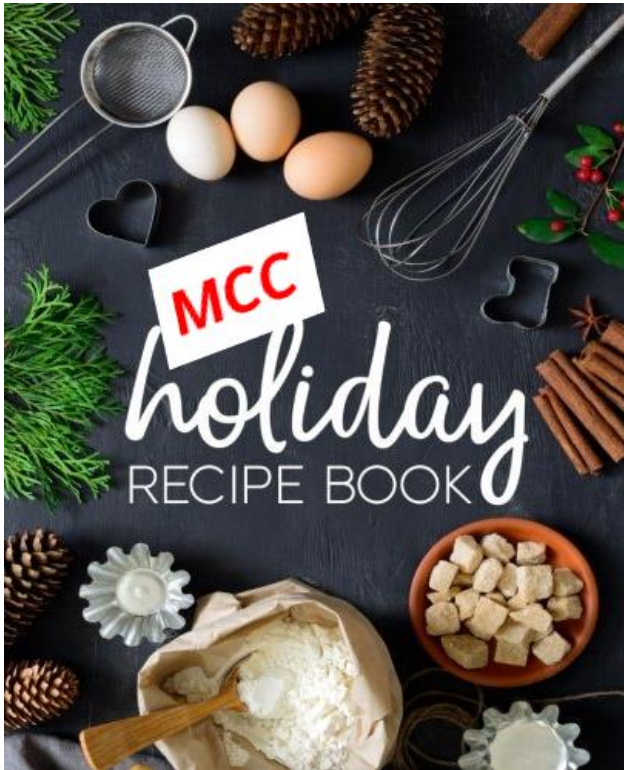
- 4 pm Christmas Eve campfire vespers
- 5 pm Quiet Service, a contemplative, prayerful worship
- 7 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service with Children's Message
- 11 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service (same content as 7pm)



Please RSVP for which in-person Christmas Eve worship service you and your household plan to attend:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0d44a8ac22a2fb6-christmas>

A **pre-recorded Lessons & Carols** service will be uploaded onto our church's Youtube page by noon on Christmas Eve, for those of you staying safe at home to enjoy.



Seeking Holiday Recipe Book Entries

It seems like many of our traditions, like the Christmas Coffee Hour, will be postponed until next year in order to comply with health and safety guidelines. Many of our church families are adapting their Thanksgiving and Christmas festivities this year too.

With that being said, at MCC we won't be entirely skipping our celebration, just modifying this year's approach. The slogan of 2020 has been "we are all in this together" and what better way to keep that feeling of togetherness than to create an MCC Holiday Cookbook where we can share some of what we love about the holidays with each other? This year's book will be a packet we will print ourselves and share over e-mail. Maybe by next year, we'll have enough to make a more formal book.

A Holiday Recipe template can be found on our church's homepage: www.mcc-ucc.org. You can use it

to type up your recipe, or you can send a handwritten copy to me and I will take care of typing it up for you. Please include a little note sharing why this recipe is special to you, and a picture if you like. I would love to get books printed before Christmas if possible, so I ask that you kindly submit all recipes to me by December 15th.

Thank you and stay safe!

On Behalf of Your Fellowship Board, Michelle Cardentey (michelle.cardentey@gmail.com)

St. Georges Supper / Sock Drive

Hi folks, December 21 is our last St. George's Supper for 2020, and the Covid19 protocol is still the safest way to provide this meal, so we will be providing bag lunches that Outreach will be making and delivering.

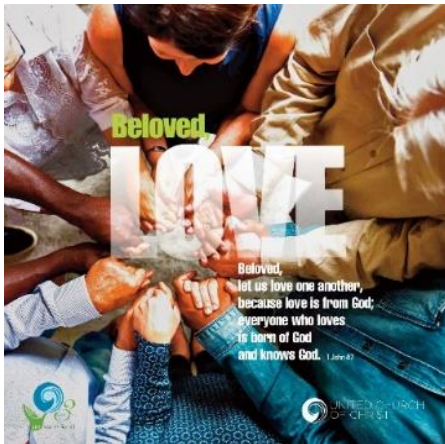
As has been our tradition in December, we'd like to provide gifts of **Socks & Scarves** to the folks we'll be serving. We are asking for new men's crew socks and kids socks (ages 5 and up) as well as scarves for men, women and children, so different sizes and patterns.

If you'd like to provide socks and scarves, please bring them to the church office by Monday, Dec. 14. Thanks so much for helping our neighbors.

Peace, Kathy

p.s. Unfortunately, there will be no Covenant to Care gift drive in December due to pandemic restrictions.





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 11/25/20, 31 pledges have been received for a total of \$100,420.00

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

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!

Christian Education

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 Debi ASAP at 203-444-6760 if you would like to participate in "The Art of Advent"



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 December 6th and 20th, and 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.

Nursery Closed Out of an abundance of caution, nursery services are closed at this time.

Worship Bags

We are offering "Worship Bags" for all children and youth from age 4 through 8th Grade! Bags can be colored and personalized and will become their bag, please put their name on it. You will leave the bags in the Narthex and pick it up there each Sunday too. Inside each bag is a Worship Journal with prompts, games, and coloring pages for each week, a "Bendy Jesus" and Stress Balls too. I would even encourage you to bring something that doesn't make noise from home to keep in the bag too! Lastly, if there are any needs for the bags (broken pencil, markers that don't work, etc.) please just let me know by emailing me at debi@mcc-ucc.org. Peace, Debi



Adult PF is meeting via Zoom the first and third Sundays of the month. For information about Adult PF please contact Don Parker-Burgard. dzburgard@sbcglobal.net

MORNING CIRCLE

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.



Join the MCC ZOOM Book Club

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 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 |

MCC Community Calendar

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

Tue. Dec. 1st

10 am The Art of Advent -Zoom
7 pm The Art of Advent -Zoom

Wed. Dec. 2nd

6:30 pm Confirmation Class
7:45 pm Choir Catch Up - Zoom Meeting

Thurs. Dec. 3rd

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Dec. 6th

Second Sunday of Advent (Peace)

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
4:00 pm Advent Campfire Vespers
5:00 pm Community Tree Lighting

Tue. Dec. 8th

10 am The Art of Advent -Zoom
7 pm The Art of Advent -Zoom

Wed. Dec. 9th

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

Thurs. Dec. 10th

9:30 am Bible Study

Week of Dec. 13th

Third Sunday of Advent (Joy)

10:00 am Worship - Communion
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Senior PF (Pierce Lawn)
4:00 pm Adult PF
4:00 pm Advent Campfire Vespers

Tue. Dec. 15th

10am The Art of Advent -Zoom
7pm The Art of Advent -Zoom

Wed. Dec. 16th

No Confirmation Class

Thurs. Dec. 17th

7:00 pm CE

Week of Dec. 20th

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love)

10:00 am Worship - Communion
11:00 am Faith, Fellowship & Fun via Zoom
11:15 Outreach
11:30 am Zoom Coffee Hour
12:00 pm Senior PF (Pierce Lawn)
12:30 pm Trustees
4:00 pm Adult PF
4:00 pm Advent Campfire Vespers
7:00 pm Zoom Christmas Caroling

Mon. Dec. 21st

3 pm St George's Supper

Wed. Dec. 23th

No Confirmation Class

Thurs. Dec. 24th Christmas Eve

4:00 pm Advent Campfire Vespers
5:00 pm Quiet Service
7:00 pm Christmas Eve Service
11:00 pm Christmas Eve Service

Fri. Dec. 25th Christmas Day

Week of Dec. 27th

Christmas Casual Worship

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

Wed. Dec. 30th

No Confirmation Class

Thurs. Dec. 31st New Year's Eve

Fri. Jan 1st New Year's Day

