

34 Church Street  
Monroe, CT 06468

Tel.: (203) 268-9327  
Fax: (203) 268-3153

**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](mailto:secretary@mcc-ucc.org)



**THE** MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**STEEPLE**

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

**September 1, 2020**

**Happy September, folks!**



Normally, I'd be using this article to illuminate what a return to familiar fall patterns means for all of us. But as we all know by now, in 2020 there's not too much that feels "the same". Instead of getting the usual school supplies for our daughter, I'm figuring out if her mask supply will be sufficient and trying to find some Lysol wipes to send in for her teacher (I know, may the odds be ever in my favor.)

In my professional life, late August is my most creative time of dreaming about future worship series, setting up the church calendar, deciding upon Advent themes, and what to cover in weekly Bible study. Instead, I'm reviewing safety recommendations from the CDC, the UCC and others and thinking about what we can do together safely as a church community once the weather turns colder.

There are some things that we, as a community, can control – for example, our behavior. We've proven these past 5 months that following the simple rules of staying home when directed by public health officials, maintaining good handwashing and sanitation, steady mask-wearing and social distancing makes a public health difference in CT. Since June, the number of those infected with the coronavirus have consistently been decreasing in our state. This is very good news!

Unfortunately, there are many things over which we have no control – we learn new things about the science of this disease every day. Until there is rapid testing and a vaccine widely available, any public in-person interaction carries some amount of risk. This truth is hitting parents with school age children very hard as they make difficult decisions about their children's education. Double or triple that stress for parents who are teachers, bus drivers, school office workers, etc. and well, you know! There are no simple, easy fixes. So, let's lead with love and continue to be extra kind to each other.

I've been working with staff and leadership to build best practices for church life going forward. At latest count, we've held 10 in-person worship services using the guidelines put out by the CDC and others. Since the best indicator of future behavior is what we've done in the past, I'm confident that our congregation will continue to follow health and safety guidelines as we move to the next phase. We also recognize that about 1/3 of our

congregation will continue to stay safe at home, so we are continuing to develop our online capabilities and offerings. If the local health numbers dramatically change, or if we have an occurrence of COVID-19 in our church, we will need to be flexible and pivot to an online-only presence like we learned to do in March.

This program year, we hope and pray for the best but need to remain careful and flexible. More specific program details will be forthcoming as they develop. For now, we are considering:

- A return to worshipping in the Meetinghouse when the weather begins to cool, with safeguards and livestreaming in place, possibly on September 20 at 10 am.
- A hybrid faith formation program for school age children, which meets in person once a month and online with small family pods at other times.
- In-person small groups, with Jr and Sr PF on Sunday afternoons, Bible study on Thursday mornings, Morning Circle etc., all with safeguards in place, shifting indoors to Wilton Hall
- Additional online opportunities – online devotions, zoom gatherings, etc.
- Church staff to continue working mostly from home, church business meetings to continue on Zoom, pastoral care mostly over the phone/text/email/zoom/Facebook, and limited in-person porch visits.

If there is anything to be said about our church, it's that we are an Easter people. In the midst of all the lamentation over what we have lost, there is always hope. We have experienced hard times, and yet we are resilient. I'm grateful for you, and for all of the ways we make out of no-ways, and for all the present and future possibilities that we will gather from our creativity and deep faithfulness, as we live as Christ's disciples.

There is much behind the scenes work that your staff, Trustees, Christian Education and Deacons are taking care of to get ready safely. If you'd like to lend a hand with preparations, please let me know. And as always, if you have questions or concerns I'd love to hear them.

*In peace, Pastor Jenn*

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### **Embrace the New Normal**

That's what they keep saying, "Embrace the New Normal", but it still feels weird. Right now I would be imagining what our Advent will look like at MCC, but instead I am having to find and create a new Faith Formation program that will not only keep everyone safe, but work well for this community.

That being said, I have been sitting with what I have been doing since March, what works and what doesn't when I thought about the Intergenerational programs we have done together and I believe that Faith, Fellowship, and Fun will be the best way to forge forward.

What does this mean? Well, beginning in October on the LAST Sunday of every month, we will gather in family groups at 10:00 am in Wilton Hall to engage in Faith Formation activities. There will also be simple at home activities that relate to the gathering, and a way to share them, in the weeks between.



Here's an example:

- Gather on November 29<sup>th</sup> and have an Advent kick off in person activity for example making an Advent Wreath for use at home
- Over the next three weeks engage in simple at home Advent activities such as using the Advent wreath and maybe an additional craft (a stained-glass Nativity).
- The idea is that whatever the at home activity is it will be simple.

Through the month of September Jr. PF will continue to gather outdoors, but at it's new time from 12:00-1:30 pm. When the months get cold, we will move into Wilton Hall and need to meet at a separate time from Sr. PF because they will be using Wilton Hall too.

I am excited about this new way of gathering and forming our faith. Together we can do this!

*Peace, Debi Mastroni-Kenyon*

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### **Fruit of the Spirit Sunday school**

There will be no in-person gatherings in September. Debi will send some simple at home activities for families to do at home. In October, there will be an all ages Faith, Fellowship & Fun gathering for families on October 25<sup>th</sup> during worship, with safety protocols in place. We are following the school system's example of hybrid education, with a combination of in-person and at-home faith formation activities.

### **Worshiping with Children**

Our hope on the weeks we do not have in-person Sunday School is that families will attend worship together. Once we move inside for worship in late September, that there will be additional family-friendly seating in Wilton Hall with services streaming so that we can safely social distance. Because of safety protocol, worship time has been decreased from an hour to 30-45 minutes.

Throughout the year, we will be providing every child and youth from Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade with Worship Journals that will have prompts and activities for them to use to enhance their worship experience. These journals can be decorated and personalized and we will store them at the church for use each week. If you need assistance or have any suggestions, please contact Debi at [debi@mcc-ucc.org](mailto:debi@mcc-ucc.org).

### **Nursery Closed**

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



### **Jr. PF**

- 09/06** – NO Gathering
- 09/13** – Gather from 12:00-1:30 pm on the Green
- 09/20** – Gather from 12:00-1:30 pm on the Green
- 09/27** – Gather from 12:00-1:30 pm on the Green

## Senior Pilgrim Fellowship Elects New Leadership



Senior PF would like to congratulate our outgoing (seated, left to right) Secretary Amanda Cohen, President Abby Clausen, Vice President Lydia Aguilar as they prepare for college – thanks for your service!

Please join us in welcoming (standing, from left to right) our new leadership, President Josh Correll, Vice President Jake Minch, Treasurer Grace Callanan, Secretary Josie Kelman and Minister of Outreach Vee Sampson! Outdoor, socially distanced, masked meetings begin on Sunday, August 30 from 5:30-7.

### Jr. PF Guidelines for Safe In-Person Gathering

If you have a cough or fever that is not allergy related, please stay home (we will miss you!)

Please bring and wear a mask (let's show off some cool ones)

Please bring a chair or blanket to sit on and Please bring your own food and drinks (we love to share, but just not right now)

No hugging or physical contact (bummer—no Tag games)

Use the hand sanitizer (will be provided)

### PF HARD - PF SAFE

IF YOU HAVE A COUGH/FEVER (NOT ALLERGY RELATED), PLEASE STAY HOME AND JOIN US ON ZOOM

MASKS MANDATORY

PF-OUTSIDE (BRING LAWN CHAIR)

BRING YOUR OWN SNACK (NO SHARING)

NO IMMEDIATE CONTACT (HUGS)

WASH HANDS FREQUENTLY (OUTDOOR HAND WASH STATION)

LIMITED ONSITE BATHROOM USE

## YOUTH CONFIRMATION

### Youth Confirmation

Confirmation at MCC is a 9 month journey of freshman exploring their faith and talking about the big questions, as they move towards a decision about whether or not they are ready and willing to become adult members of the church. The program

is led by Pastor Jenn and Debi, with adult sponsors that partner with the confirmands through the year. We meet most Wednesday nights from 6:30-7:30 - in person, outdoors, socially distanced with masks until we need to move to Wilton Hall. Of course, if the local metrics change in a way that schools suspend in-person programming, we will need to pivot accordingly for the safety of all.

Learn more on our ZOOM call for parents, teachers and confirmands on Wednesday, September 16 at 6:30 - here's the link below. In-person will begin the following Wednesday, August 23rd at 6:30.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88274800068?pwd=L2hwYXBGeGVFTzlldklnZkZzSGx3QT09>



### Thursday Morning Bible Study Begins September 3rd

We offer a weekly Bible Study at MCC on most Thursday mornings from 9:30-11 through the program year. Sometimes we'll focus on what will be offered in worship on Sunday, sometimes we'll focus on a particular book of the Bible, sometimes on a theme, such as the

"Parables of Jesus" study we did a while back. We also enjoy reading and discussing inspirational books from time to time, and spending time in fellowship and prayer. This year, we will meet in Wilton Hall so that we can spread out and be safer. Please wear a mask. As always, we invite anyone to come and join us – please speak with Pastor Jenn if you have any questions.



Fall **Adult PF** Schedule to be announced at a future date.



### Join the MCC ZOOM Book Club

Stolen Beauty by Laurie Albanese

discussion via Zoom on Wed., September 9<sup>th</sup> 7 pm

Transatlantic by Colum McCann

discussion via Zoom on Wed., October 7<sup>th</sup> 7pm

Questions -contact Mary Unger (203) 268-5754

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2032610153> Meeting ID: 203 261 0153

One tap mobile +16465588656,,2032610153# US (New York)

Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) ID: 203 261 0153

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2032610153>

## Community Event

### Ice Cream Sundae Sunday on the Green with the Monroe Playground Foundation



When: 2pm – 4pm, Sunday September 13, 2020

(rain date September 20)

What: Ice Cream Sundae Sunday with various flavors and toppings. NO self-service, all scooped and topped by volunteers.

Where: Monroe Centre Green for socially distant, stationary eating (bring a blanket, wear a mask). Driveway between Meetinghouse and Parsonage for "Drive Though Pickup"

Who: All proceeds will benefit the Monroe Playground Foundation, raising money for the building of the Wolfe's Den Playground at Wolfe Park

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## Trustees



### Have you heard? It's a Win-Win!

Here at MCC we are all about cost efficiency. We do our best every day to use your generous contributions in a way that will give the "most bang for the buck", and we are always looking for ways to save money. Our partnership with Ambit Energy for the supply cost of our electric bill has the potential to save both MCC and our participating parishioners (and their family & friends) money! How can we all save money? It's simple, join

us in becoming a customer of Ambit Energy and get their great rate! For every 15 parishioners who sign up with Ambit Energy, **MCC will get one of their electric bills for free** (supply side only). MCC's goal is 3 free bills = 45 people. We are 1/3 of the way there. For more information or to sign up, call Donna Konkol at 203-209-2974. It's a win-win for everyone; **you save money on your electricity supply bill & MCC gets a refund on their electricity bill each month!**

Thank you for helping the church -and your pocketbook!



### Restroom Remodel Capital Campaign Project Update

The Ladies' Bathroom Renovation Team met recently now that we have reached our financial goal. In fact, money has continued to come in. We are now at \$18,700—which is good because the budget is very tight. Hopefully, we have a little breathing room. We

are so grateful to all of the donors. Thank you. We are working to come to a final agreement with a contractor. This summer we needed to wait for the summer camp utilizing Wilton to finish up its session. In addition, the contractor we are likely going with is tied up through most of September. So, if all goes well, we should be able to start work around the end of September. The project should take about three weeks. We are looking forward to having a fully functional and attractive facility as we work toward greater utilization of the campus (with greater public health).

-Arlene Redmond

*Thank you for your commitment  
to the Monroe Congregational Church  
during this challenging time.*

Mail or drop off donations to 34 Church Street,  
Monroe CT 06468, attn MCC Receiver.

Give online: <http://www.mcc-ucc.org/donate.html>

Arrange for automatic payments  
via your bank

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### Outreach



#### **Dress A Girl Around the World**

I know many of you have been sewing at home and have dresses you would like to turn in. I will be **collecting dresses on September 26 from 10 am until noon** at the Big Y in Monroe. Please let me know if you will be dropping off dresses. I will start planning our 2021 Sew-a-Thon schedule in the fall and let everyone know when that is finalized. Please stay healthy and

safe in this new world we all live in.

Liz Skarzynski, Ambassador Southern CT, Dress A Girl Around the World  
[dressgirlssouthernct@yahoo.com](mailto:dressgirlssouthernct@yahoo.com)



Morning Circle invites the ladies of the congregation to our meeting on Wednesday, September 9th at 11AM in Wilton Hall where we will be putting together birthday bags for the Food Pantry. Please wear your masks,

bring your lunch and a comfy chair or use one from the Hall. We are looking for donations of birthday candles, cake mix, frosting and napkins. It will be prudent to sanitize your hands prior to the activity and afterwards. If you have any questions, please contact Jackie Bleakney at 203-268-5275.



#### **Providing Help to Those Displaced by the PT Barnum Fire**

**A huge thank you** from the Board of Outreach to the MCC Family for helping to support the families of Building 8 in the PT Barnum community in Bridgeport. In early July, a fire displaced 19 families. While there is no clear road for those families to getting resettled, with the support from the MCC Family, they have extra love and resources to meet their daily living needs.

# TAG SALE



**CANCELLED!**

**Outreach Tag Sale, Tentatively Re-scheduled for September 12, has been cancelled** The Board of Outreach has been in conversation over the last few months with several people about the feasibility and safety precautions of holding a re-scheduled tag sale in September. We've decided that with the amount of work it takes to prep the tag sale, the question of sanitizing all the items dropped off and the fact that most of the members who do the sorting/tagging are in our most vulnerable population for catching the virus, it's just not feasible at this time. Of course, we are saddened that this will have an impact on what we are able to do financially for those in need, at a time when needs are deep. We're

committed to serving our neighbors and looking for safe ways to engage in work of building and strengthening our community.

Stay tuned! In peace, the MCC Board of Outreach



### **Senior Pilgrim Fellowship Serves Neighbors at nOURish Bridgeport, Inc.**

On Thursday, August 20 and Friday, August 21 members of our Senior Pilgrim Fellowship volunteered at nOURish Bridgeport's Feel the Warmth community meal! They packaged and delivered 245 meals each day to the Bridgeport Community Thanks Josh, Grace, Josie, Jake and Jess for your help feeding our neighbors!



Good day Monroe church community. I have news from our CROP Walk committee. The important dates for this year's event have been solidified. Please see the enclosed attachment for our flyer regarding the Virtual Walk. That is correct, this **CROP Hunger Walk will be virtual!** We will focus on small groups and safe, socially distanced walks. The date is **October 18, 2020**. Detailed information about this format will be available on the C.W.S web site, [www.crophungerwalk.org](http://www.crophungerwalk.org)

The rally will be September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2PM at Unity Hill UCC in Trumbull. Updated plans for that will be distributed shortly. Additionally, there are valuable resources available by download on the C.W.S site. Looking forward to speaking to you all! God's peace, Quintin



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

Mia	Briggs	09/02	Romeo	Crea	09/18
Liska	Gutierrez	09/02	David	Rooney	09/19
Vinathi	Sampson	09/02	Jeff	Swift	09/19
David	Bailey	09/03	Colleen	Konkol	09/20
Mathias	Aoaeh	09/05	Marisa	Pinto	09/20
Davida	Lowry	09/05	Vandana	Sampson	09/20
Eliana	McEvoy	09/05	Mary	Massar	09/21
Paul	Adams	09/08	Daniela	Combs	09/24
Lorraine	Sippin	09/08	Kristen	Prall	09/24
Becky	Unger	09/08	Nancy	Hedine	09/26
Edward	Dotoratos	09/09	Priscilla	Cunningham	09/29
Laura	Cuseo	09/10	Jacob	Hampel	09/29
Noelle	Swift	09/10	Katherine	Logan	09/29
Mary	Smith	09/11	Elizabeth	McHugh	09/29
Karen	Manuzzi	09/12	Samuel	McHugh	09/29
Andrew	Logan	09/14	John	Cross	09/30
Angela	Cross	09/15	Everlee	DiMenna	09/30
Joshua	Post	09/16	John	Esposito	09/30
Ronald	Villani	09/16	Heather	Henning	09/30
Julie	McHugh	09/17	Laurel	Post	09/30



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

Mike & Kim Riffard <sup>(14)</sup>	John & Reggie Hastedt <sup>(16)</sup>	Osiris & Julia Gutierrez <sup>(16)</sup>
Jamie & Shirley Dotoratos <sup>(16)</sup>	Anne & Pete LaQuesse <sup>(17)</sup>	Andy & Jenn Nivison <sup>(19)</sup>
Hubert & Gay Muizulis <sup>(25)</sup>	Chris & Jan Pearson <sup>(29)</sup>	Jim & Donna Gill <sup>(30)</sup>

Community Calendar  
**MCC September**

\*Worship may be found on our new YouTube Channel, streaming live on Sundays by 9am or later on demand <https://www.youtube.com/monroecongregationalchurchucc>

**Thursday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>** 9:30 am Bible Study Wilton Hall

**Week of September 6<sup>th</sup>**

9 am Summer Chapel: Outdoor, Socially Distanced Worship with Communion\*

10:30 am virtual coffee hour

<https://zoom.us/j/460134127?pwd=cjYrUDhSSkppdjNMYjhvQ0ZDci9hUT09>

5 pm Senior (in-person, socially distanced, masked, outdoors)

**Wednesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>**

11 am Morning Circle

7 pm Book Club <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2032610153>

**Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup>** 9:30 am Bible Study Wilton Hall

**Week of September 13<sup>th</sup>**

9 am Summer Chapel: Outdoor, Socially Distanced Worship\*

10:30 am virtual coffee hour

<https://zoom.us/j/460134127?pwd=cjYrUDhSSkppdjNMYjhvQ0ZDci9hUT09>

11:30 am Deacons on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83200392247?pwd=RGx4TIFONmIMQmpaNGpVN2JzQzhqZz09>

12:00-1:30 pm Junior PF on the Green

2-4 pm Ice Cream Sunday Social hosted by the Monroe Playground Foundation (on the Green)

5 pm Senior PF (in-person, socially distanced, masked, outdoors)

**Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>** 6:30 pm Confirmation Class, Parents & Confirmands on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88274800068?pwd=L2hwYXBGeGVFTzlldklnZkZzSGx3QT09>

**Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>** 9:30 am Bible Study Wilton Hall

**Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>** 7:00 pm Board of Christian Faith Formation on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84792986983?pwd=TjN5SWxyMDd6L2J1YTJCR2wyZ21Edz09>

**Week of September 20<sup>th</sup>**

10 am Worship in the Meeting House/Wilton Hall (with precautions)\*

11 am Zoom coffee hour

<https://zoom.us/j/460134127?pwd=cjYrUDhSSkppdjNMYjhvQ0ZDci9hUT09>

11:30 am Trustees on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/591991278?pwd=SVIkazlRNudhWmpGN01CTytNSjJWZz09>

12:00-1:30 pm Junior PF on the Green

5 pm Senior PF (in-person, socially distanced, masked, outdoors)

**Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>** 6:30 pm Confirmation Class

**Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>** 9:30 am Bible Study Wilton Hall

**Week of September 27<sup>th</sup>**

10 am Worship in the Meeting House/Wilton Hall (with precautions)\*

11 am Zoom coffee hour

<https://zoom.us/j/460134127?pwd=cjYrUDhSSkppdjNMYjhvQ0ZDci9hUT09>

12:00-1:30 Junior PF on the Green

5 pm Senior PF (in-person, socially distanced, masked, outdoors)

**Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>** 6:30 pm Confirmation Class