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**Office Hours:**  
Mon. 9am – 5:30pm  
Wed. (remotely) 8am - 6pm  
Fri. 9am – 3:30pm

Senior Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Gingras  
Music Director: Will Duchon  
Administrator/Bookkeeper: Diane Prall  
Asst Music Director: Heather Hisey  
Church e-mail: secretary@mcc-ucc.org

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



# THE MONROE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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# STEEPLE

**May 1, 2025**

## **Parable of the Shared Table**

In a quiet New England town nestled among rolling hills stood two churches: Monroe Congregational Church and St. Peter's Grace Episcopal Church. Though their steeples rose from different corners of their shared green, they both rang out with the same spirit of faith and goodwill.

Long ago, there was a beloved tradition that brought townsfolk together each Lent — a fish fry filled with laughter, music, and the smell of golden filets crisping in the fryer. But as time passed, volunteers dwindled, schedules clashed, covid complicated plans, and the sizzle of the parking lot fryers fell silent.

One early December morning, the ministers of the two churches met at the local diner. As they stirred cream into their coffee, they shared stories of the old fish fry — of children with cheeks dusted in flour, elders swapping stories over paper plates, and the warmth of a shared meal with neighbors and friends. It was a lot of work for St.PG, and yet many were nostalgic for the old days.

*"Why did you ever stop?" asked one. "Because we tried to do it alone," said the other.*

So, the Pastor and the Rector made a bold decision: to bring back the Lenten fish fry... together. Plans were made, leadership was determined (thanks Mike Ganino!), a sign-up sheet was posted, and online pre-order managed, and soon members from both churches gathered side by side. The Congregationalists brought their famous brownies, the Episcopalians their homemade carrot cake. Tasks were shared; some set up tables, others wrapped plasticware or ran fresh, hot orders to their guests, all worked with joy.

They partnered with a beloved local business — Dave Kuban's Planet Pizza Truck. Though known for its out-of-this-world slices, Dave surprised everyone with a special fish fry menu that honored tradition while adding his unique flair. His truck became a beacon,



drawing people from nearby neighborhoods who hadn't stepped near a church in years but couldn't resist the aroma or the buzz.

As the first Friday of Lent arrived, the parking lot began to fill. Long tables filled with chatter, laughter, and stories. Children drew crayon masterpieces on paper tablecloths. Everyone, regardless of church or background, shared in the simple joy of fried fish & chips, warm pizza, and each other's company. They were to repeat this for another five Lenten Loaves & Fishes FryDays, sharing hospitality between the two churches.

And as the final plate was served and the last fryer turned off, the leaders gathered once more and reflected.

From those six nights, they learned:

- That teamwork between church communities multiplies joy and divides burdens.
- That we grow stronger when our hands work together.
- That those who support, serve, and show up deserve deep gratitude.
- And that sometimes, the perfect partner is a pizza truck owner with a heart for tradition and community.

And so, the tradition lived again — not just in fried fish & chips, but in shared purpose, rekindled friendships, and the sacred joy of gathering as one. Amen.

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### Deacons

Although we typically share **communion** on the first Sunday of the month, due to an abundance of scheduling reasons the sacrament has been moved to next Sunday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for understanding!

**May 4 - Welcome Raymond  
Fellow Guest Preacher!**

Tony is the Executive Director of Recovery Community Development, a nonprofit organization that creates affordable, supportive housing in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Previously, he served as Executive Director of Pivot Ministries, where he also held roles as Board Member and President. He is the Co-Founder of The Lighthouse in New Canaan, CT, which offers and manages sober living and supportive housing for local residents in need. Tony is a Certified Recovery Advisor with extensive personal, managerial, and operational experience in the field of addiction and recovery.

He was a member of the Congregational Church of New Canaan for 30 years, where he served as a deacon, participated in the missions committee, and contributed to the senior minister search committee. Tony's professional background also includes more than 25 years of financial management experience at firms such as Morgan Stanley, Deutsche Bank, and Credit Suisse. He holds a BA from the University of Connecticut and lives in Westport, Connecticut, with his wife and son. **Welcome Tony!**



**Tony Kiniry**  
Executive Director of Recovery  
Community Development

## Outreach

**Thank you** to all of our tag sale volunteers and everyone who donated to our **Outreach Charity Tag Sale!** We had a record-breaking year with a little over \$3,000 raised! The funds are being redistributed to charities such as: Homes for the Brave, Triangle Community Center, nOURish Bridgeport, and Center for Family Justice. Well done MCC Board of Christian Outreach, members, and friends!



**Feel The Warmth with nOURish Bridgeport!** Our crew felt grateful and inspired to cook and serve the Feel the Warmth community hot supper in Bridgeport last month. **Our next opportunity to serve will be on May 15<sup>th</sup>.** Please look for the signup sheet and join us to bring some hope, laughter and nourishment to neighbors dealing with food insecurity. A typical meal includes making and distributing salad (featuring greens from their hydroponic garden), dessert and a main dish for about 200 folks, serving alongside Sacred Heart students and more seasoned volunteers. Join us! 203-268-0280 with any questions.



**May 4<sup>th</sup> CROP Walk** MCC will be participating in the 2025 CROP Hunger Walk to support CWS and help families who are struggling with hunger. We're asking you to join us - with your steps and your donations - to provide more meals for the growing number of people in our community who need them, and greater food security in communities around the world.

**Please join Team Monroe Congregational Church or donate by using the link below today!**

Julie McClenathan [2025 CROP Hunger Walk - Team Monroe Congregational Church](https://resources.crophungerwalk.org/download/4713/)  
<https://resources.crophungerwalk.org/download/4713/>

**MCC members are *being the light!*** Over \$900 in contributions have been received for One Great Hour of Sharing! Thank you! One Great Hour of Sharing® stands as a cornerstone of the United



Church of Christ's special mission offerings. This Lenten initiative provides vital support for disaster relief, refugee care, and development work through Love of Neighbor ministries.

A notice from the Board of Christian Outreach in support of **Refill the Pantry:**



Please mark your calendars: our next faith-based *Refill the Pantry* food collection will take place on **May 3 at Stop & Shop in Monroe**, benefiting our neighbors through the **Monroe Food Pantry**.

Food insecurity continues to affect many in our community, but together, we have the power to bring hope to the table. Here's how you and your congregation can help:

1. **Bring your donations to Stop & Shop on May 3.**
2. **Volunteer at the event** — it's easy to sign up at [volunteersignup.org/Q4DYB](http://volunteersignup.org/Q4DYB).
3. **Please save the date for our second collection on August 2.**

Last year, we collected nearly 3,000 pounds of food and raised \$750 for the Monroe Food Pantry — a tremendous effort! However, the need has grown, and **with your help, we can take even further strides this year.**

If you have any questions or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out: (203) 520-3751 or [richlansing@gmail.com](mailto:richlansing@gmail.com).

Let's come together to nourish not just our bodies, but also our hearts and spirits. **Thank you for being a vital part of this mission.**

With gratitude, Rich Lansing *Refill the Pantry Coordinator*

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### Fellowship

**Morning Circle** invites the women of the congregation to join our next meeting on **Wednesday, May 14 at 11am** in Dineson Parlor. We will be collecting women's hygiene products for the Food Pantry like: sanitary napkins, tampons, antiperspirant, deodorant, soap, lotion, shampoo, conditioner, etc. Please bring your donations to the meeting or leave them in the collection bin across from the men's room. We will also be taking suggestions on where to hold our June picnic meeting scheduled for Wednesday, June 11 at 12pm. We will not be meeting in July or August.

Please contact Susie Cuseo at [thecuseos@yahoo.com](mailto:thecuseos@yahoo.com) or 203-268-0280 with any questions or comments.



Many thanks to the women of Morning Circle for their donations and assembly of 20 Church World Service hygiene kits.



**Young At Heart** will meet at noon on May 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Details to be announced.



Join us for the monthly Book Club on the **3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month**. We will continue to meet via zoom so that all members can join from wherever they may be. Questions can be sent to Paula via email [pjsh55@gmail.com](mailto:pjsh55@gmail.com) or home phone or 203-452-0850

**May 21<sup>st</sup>** The God of the Woods by Liz Moore Host: TBD  
**June 18<sup>th</sup>** The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters Host: TBD  
**July 16<sup>th</sup>** Brave New World by Aldous Huxley Host: TBD

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### Faith Formation



Prayer Partners Unite!!! Our "Big Reveal" potluck luncheon is only two weeks away. We've been keeping our partner in our thoughts and prayers since October. Finally, we will meet on Sunday, May 18 at 11:15am in Wilton Hall and find out who's been praying for whom. Please bring a dish to share no matter

what it is; that's what makes potlucks fun and exciting. Remember to sign your notes or cards with "Your Prayer Partner" and use the church's address (34 Church St Monroe CT 06468) as the return. I look forward to seeing you all at the luncheon. Please let me know by email (thecuseos@yahoo.com) or call 203-268-0280 if you plan on attending. I leave you with this prayer:

Holy Father, you are the Creator of the heavens and earth and you are faithful and worthy of all the glory and honor. Thank you for the blessing of a new month. I pray for joy, love, and laughter in abundance. Guide me daily to make wise decisions in May. Drawing near to me as I draw near to you. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



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**Flowers for Worship:** Would you like to honor or remember a loved one, or celebrate a milestone? You can do so, while also helping Monroe Congregational Church continue its tradition of fresh flowers on the communion table. You can sign-up in Wilton Hall or online! You may choose to arrange flowers from your garden, purchase an arrangement, or send a check (\$25) to Monroe Congregational Church (memo: "flowers" & the date) or use our website to pay online, and we will order for you. If you are supplying the flowers yourself, please set them up between 9:30am and 9:45am, before worship. Thank you!



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C48ADAC2CA5FEC61-flowers> or [MCC-UCC.org](https://www.mcc-ucc.org)

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### Close the Gap 5k Challenge



Thank you to those who have already contributed to our Close the Gap campaign! As a reminder, anything donated by an individual or household above and beyond their current 2025 pledge will be matched by an anonymous donor family and given to Senior PF – **up to \$5,000.**

Our challenge closes on Strawberry Festival Sunday. To participate, submit a gift with the notation "Close the Gap" so we can keep track. This could have a huge impact on our youth's summer mission trip, not to mention our ministries here at MCC! Thanks for your consideration.

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**53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Strawberry Festival 2025**

**will be held on Saturday, June 14 (10am-5pm) & Sunday, June 15 (11am-5pm).**



The Strawberry Festival is only a month and a half away on Saturday, June 14 and Sunday, June 15. We've got our entertainment scheduled, over 1,400 jars of jams made, acquired major support for most of our areas and lot of ducks in a row. A great festival is attributed to all our volunteers who help out with berry picking, sorting, dipping, shortcake making, country store help, face painting, manning the prize table, helping out with games, making smoothies, giving tours of the Meetinghouse, cleaning and anything else in between. Your time and

dedication to the Festival makes it a huge success. Our kickoff will be on Sunday, June 1 after service where we will have cake, sell jam, festival paraphernalia and have signup sheet available so you can claim your favorite spot(s) during that wonderful weekend of community and camaraderie in support of MCC in our largest fundraiser of the year. Please contact Clark Gingras, Pastor Jenn Gingras, Frank Wittenauer or Susie Cuseo with any questions, comments or concerns.



**AREA CHAIRS** – Please join the co-chairs for a zoom meeting on Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm on zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2038955607?pwd=bWxMMDRXN3d6emJNZ2JsVzlsTFp3dz09&omn=82217161979>

Meeting ID: 203 895 5607 Passcode: MeetMe

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**Trustees**

Missing; Four orange colored highway safety cones missing from the Rexford electrical room. If found, please return.

Dave Allen, MCC Property Manager





**Coming Soon! Labors of Love**

Have you been wanting to help out during one of our spring or fall church clean up days, but they haven't lined up with your availability? Have you spotted something that's been really bugging you – like that cobweb in the Rexford House entry, dirty windows, a dead light bulb, or you'd really love to have the ladies room looking spic and span like when it was new? The Trustees have too, but there is only so much that can get accomplished by a handfull of busy people. That's why we are

starting Labors of Love. **Keep an eye out for the up coming Labors of Love list (indoors and out) and please help out were you can, when you can!**

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Please check the **Lost & Found** area across from the nursery. Any items left there on Sunday, May 11th will be sent to the Mustard Seed Thrift Shoppe. Take a look at the items and claim whatever is yours. Thank you for donating your lost items.  
-Susie Cuseo



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Senior PF is thankful to all who donated and purchased filled Easter eggs in support of our mission trip to North Carolina this summer. We are ever grateful for the continued support and love from our church community.

Senior PF is looking forward to leading worship for Youth Sunday on June 1st! It is always a special day!

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Were you aware that there is a state website "[ctbiglist.gov](http://ctbiglist.gov)", which lists all of the unclaimed funds that the state is holding? Individuals, organizations and businesses are listed, and it is easy to see if there is anything that can be claimed. Thanks to Melissa Coleman for the tip!



## *Easter Flowers Are Given with Love by the Following People*

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Kathy & Dave Allen                  | In memory of Don and Lillian Allen                               |
| Vaughan Askue and<br>Arlene Redmond | In memory of our parents   |
| Ganino Family                       | In memory of Anibal Rodrigues (Gloria's dad)                     |
| Rev. Jennifer Gingras               | In celebration of family, given and chosen                       |
| John and Cindy O'Rourke             | In memory of Jack O'Rourke                                       |
| Mike and Jessica Pfalzgraf          | In memory of our parents   |
| David Walker                        | In memory of Susan Walker  |
| Myron and June Winger               | In memory of our loved ones                                      |
| Anonymous                           | In memory of Don and Janice Whiteley and their<br>love of family |
| Ann Zeiner                          | In memory of Bob, Val and Carol                                  |





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

|          |            |       |         |            |       |
|----------|------------|-------|---------|------------|-------|
| Alexa    | Adams      | 05/01 | Megan   | Molloy     | 05/11 |
| Steven   | Andrejczyk | 05/01 | James   | Hisey      | 05/12 |
| Chuck    | Schneider  | 05/01 | Cindy   | O'Rourke   | 05/13 |
| Allen    | Crosnier   | 05/02 | David   | Spence     | 05/13 |
| Joyce    | Rousseau   | 05/03 | Nicole  | Williams   | 05/14 |
| Jenna    | Rice       | 05/05 | Mark    | Barnhart   | 05/15 |
| Hank     | Allen      | 05/06 | Marissa | Maiolo     | 05/18 |
| Nora     | Blaiotta   | 05/06 | Linda   | Caballero  | 05/20 |
| Jonahan  | Culp       | 05/06 | Emily   | Coleman    | 05/22 |
| Kristina | Logan      | 05/06 | Bethany | Dupuis     | 05/24 |
| Gay      | Muizulis   | 05/06 | Linda   | Rooney     | 05/24 |
| Gilles   | Rousseau   | 05/06 | Stacy   | Andrejczyk | 05/25 |
| Gary     | Thompson   | 05/06 | Debra   | Hansen     | 05/26 |
| Will     | Duchon     | 05/07 | Justin  | Riffard    | 05/27 |
| Alexa    | Unger      | 05/07 | Muriel  | Hastedt    | 05/28 |
| Tyler    | Vaglivello | 05/07 | Rebecca | Young      | 05/28 |
| Corey    | Schneider  | 05/08 | Kaelyn  | McEvoy     | 05/30 |
| Nate     | Cooper     | 05/10 | Scott   | Whiteley   | 05/30 |
| Chip     | Mortenson  | 05/10 | Melissa | Coleman    | 05/31 |



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

Gayle & Bob Hammond<sup>(04)</sup> Kathy & John Maiolo<sup>(14)</sup>

Lorrie & Bernard Sippin<sup>(14)</sup>

Brian & Ann-Marie Campbell<sup>(17)</sup> Myron & June Winger<sup>(24)</sup> & Sheldon & Nancy Smith <sup>(28)</sup>

## In Our Prayers

**Alison Abrams** (Jessica Pfalzgraf's sister); **Allie** (Colegrove's friend); **Jennifer Bittar** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend); **Jackie Bleakney; Lisa Cody and Dave Barton** (friends of Julie and Rob McClenathan); **Kevin Daly** (Gary Thompson's friend); **Dealmira** (Jonathan Ganino's grandmother); **Dan & Laura Dimauro** (Cuseo friends); **Dot Dralus, Matt Duchon; Elaine** (Wendy Colegrove's Aunt); **Bruno Forte** (Nancy Hedine's friend); **David Fischman** (Sue Granello's Friend); **Dave Fuller** (Gail Olson's brother); **Mary & Rachel Heerema** (Julia Gutierrez's mom & sister); **Brad Heines** (Susie Cuseo's friend); **Bob Heffernan** (Ann Zeiner's son-in-law); **Heather Henning; Brian Hopkins** (Donna Konkol's cousin); **Vera James** (Jenn Wissink's mother); **John** (Donna's father); **Jonathan** (Matt Colegrove's brother); **Kelti** (friend of Liska Gutierrez), **Samia Houry** (Will Duchon's friend); **Cindy Kovacs; Monica Lynch** (Bethany Dupuis' friend); **Jonathan Malia; Nicole Malia; the Manuzzi Family; Mary** (Kate Brigg's Mother); **Betty McKeown** (Donna Konkol's mother); **Meghan** (Mary Unger's niece); **Mike** (Janie Allen's son); **Olivia Morrison** (Donna Nickdow's niece); **Pat Nugent; Ocampo family** (friends of Liska Gutierrez); **Nancy Olofson; Missy & Gail Olson; Donna Parratt; Dean Perosino** (Gayle Hammond's brother); **Regina Roberts** (Kathy Maiolo's niece); **Alfredo Rodriguez** (Osirus Gutierrez's cousin); **Noah Santiago** (Shari Carrano's great-grandson); **Jill Sapak; Palma Senatore** (Sara Alvarez's grandmother); **Carlos Serrano** (Kathy Maiolo's cousin); **Ed Simonovich** (Nancy Hedine's friend); **Bernie, Lori & Gary Sippin; John Skarupa** (Barb Pellegrino's brother); **Sheldon & Nancy Smith; Christine Stadler; Claire Stenzel** (June & Myron Winger's granddaughter); **Timara** (Mary Unger's friend); **Tom** (Wendy Colegrove's dad); **Wayne Thompson** (Gary Thompson's brother); **Richard Turco** (Jack Fracassini's cousin); **June Wilkes; Natica Williams** (Will Duchon's friend); **Allen & Ann Zeiner**

**The concerns of our world:** The people of **Gaza & the West Bank; Israeli hostages** and their families, the people of **Ukraine, Sudan, Syria** and the **Middle East; LGBTQ+ children and their families** facing discrimination; those who serve or live in **war or conflict zones** around the world; **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**.

**Those serving in the military, veterans & their families:** **Lt. Col. Rachel Hoffman**, Tacoma, Washington (Vaughan Askue's daughter), **Zachary Gingras**, 395th Combat Sustainability Support, **Joel Smith**, 250th Engineering Company, **Chris Meneses** (Lorraine Zeiner's friend), **Lance Corporal Taylor Smith** (Cheri Irwin's Nephew)

## May MCC Community Calendar

### **Fri. May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Women's Retreat (2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup>)

### **Week of Sun. May 4<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 am Worship

11:30 am Trustees

1:00 pm Crop Walk

5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

### **Mon. May 5<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 pm Council (Zoom)

### **Tue. May 6<sup>th</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

7 pm SF Chairs Meeting (Zoom)

### **Thurs. May 8<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation

### **Week of Sun. May 11<sup>th</sup>**

*Mother's Day ~ 3rd Grade 1st Communion*

10:00 am Worship

### **Mon. May 12<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 pm Deacons (Zoom)

### **Tue. May 13<sup>th</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

### **Thurs. May 15<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study

3:00 pm Feel the Warmth nOURish Bpt.

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

### **Week of Sun. May 18<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 am Worship

11:00 am Prayer Partner Lunch

5:00 pm Jr & Sr. PF

### **Mon. May 19<sup>th</sup>**

7:30 pm Council (Zoom)

### **Tue. May 20<sup>th</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

### **Thurs. May 22<sup>nd</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study

12:00 pm Young @ Heart

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation

### **Week of Sun. May 26<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 am Worship

1:00 pm Memorial Day Parade

5:00 pm Sr. PF

### **Mon. May 26<sup>th</sup>**

*Memorial Day – Office Closed*

### **Tue. May 27<sup>th</sup>**

1:30 pm Mustard Seed Sort & Tag

### **Thurs. May 29<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am Bible Study

6:00 pm Bell Choir

7:00 pm Chancel Choir

7:30 pm Confirmation