

CHURCH LIFE

JANUARY 2011



Middlebury Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
The Green
1242 Whittemore Rd.
Middlebury CT 06762
203-758-2671
www.middleburyucc.org

An Invitation

When I was studying for my degree in preaching it was suggested to have a sermon group. I established one and it was a fruitful and helpful experience. I would like to do that here in Middlebury. So what is a sermon group?

It consists of anywhere from 6 to 9 people from all levels of church life who will meet with the pastor on an agreed upon time to discuss the sermon presented and to share thoughts on the lectionary for the coming week.

The group gives insights regarding the upcoming lectionary and shares thoughts regarding how they were presented by the pastor. This is a constructive process and one I openly welcome. The meeting is no longer than 30 minutes. The review of what was said is 15 minutes and the suggestions are 15 minutes.

The ideal time is after service on Sunday but other times can also be considered. So I invite you to come forth and share your thoughts. Please call me and let me know if you would be interested.

Thanks,
Ken

The Sunday School Scoop

December was an exciting month for all of our children. The Advent Workshop was once again very successful. I'd like to thank all of the Christian Education Committee members, as well as our youth, for helping organize and run it. In addition to making many ornaments to take home, the children also made holiday cards and ornaments that were donated to the Middlebury Convalescent Home. Kelly and Ron Pelletier also led our "older kids" in the making of beautiful advent wreaths.

I was very happy that the weather remained warm enough on December 12th so that we only had rain, not snow! I would like to thank everyone who helped make this year's pageant so successful. Thank you to all of our actors, readers, musicians, choir members, parents, and helpers. It would not have been possible without all of you!

On January 9th we will begin our next Sunday School unit, "The Good Samaritan". The children will learn how to show others about God's presence in their life and how God embraces everyone. The lessons also teach us to love your neighbor as yourself.

Happy New Year!
Valerie Beard

Thank you to everyone who donated or collected money for Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF. Our donations will help children throughout the world through immunization, nutrition, education, and safe, clean water. We collected just over \$234! Great job!






Sunday School Grade Schedule January 2011

Youth News!

December was a time of reflection and participation for the youth. Several youth participated in special services such as Hanging of the Greens, The Christmas Pageant, and Christmas Eve services. During our Friday evening meetings, the youth are connecting and bonding more than ever as a group. It is always a privilege to work with this group.

In January we look forward to putting on a major fundraiser in the form of a Pasta Dinner – on January 14th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Our youth group funds are getting low and we use the money in our account to offset the cost of our spiritual retreat for the kids – who otherwise may not be able to attend. We also use our monies for all the missions we do. We purchase plane tickets for the youth who will be going to Louisiana in April, as one example. Please help us spread the work and support our youth in this very important fundraiser on January 14th!

Blessings,
Mary

	<u>Jan. 2</u>	<u>Jan. 9</u> Good Samaritan WEEK 1	<u>Jan. 16</u> Good Samaritan WEEK 2	<u>Jan. 23</u> Good Samaritan WEEK 3	<u>Jan. 30</u> Good Samaritan WEEK 4
Noah's Ark 	 <i>All In Church</i> <i>For Family Communion Sunday</i>	6 th /7 th	4 th /5 th	2 nd /3 rd	K/1 st
Story-telling Tent 		K/1 st	2 nd /3 rd	4 th /5 th	6 th /7 th
Bibleland Theatre 		2 nd /3 rd	K/1 st		4 th /5 th
Mary & Martha's Kitchen 		4 th /5 th	6 th /7 th	K/1 st	2 nd /3 rd
Youth Room				6 th -12 th	

JANUARY YOUTH GROUP SCHEDULE:

MEETING DATES

MEETING IN YOUTH ROOM - 7:00 - 8:30 P.M.

Jan. 9 (Sunday following church), 21 & 28

PASTA SUPPER

Jan. 14

SUNDAYS

In the Youth Room During Church

Jan. 23

Happy new year from the Board of Deacons!

One of the responsibilities of the diaconate is membership, which includes welcoming new members, retaining existing ones, identifying those who have moved or otherwise left the church, and providing the best ministries we can for all.

As we enter the new year, you'll be hearing more from us about membership as we try to identify the active members of our congregation. Partly this is for administrative reasons, such as voting at the annual meeting, but mostly it's so we can find out who makes up our diverse congregation and how the church can minister to everyone better.

Membership is more than having your name on a roster. It means involving yourself in the active church community, through worship, volunteering, pledging, and participating in church governance.

One big void the deacons have noticed is that many of the committees of the church, including the diaconate, have vacancies. Some have no members at all. Few hands means more work for everyone, but no hands means no work can be done. Please think prayerfully about where you can help by serving on committees and boards that follow your interests.

Congregational churches are different from all others because in our polity, there is no central authority other than the congregation. That's you. If you feel strongly about an issue, or have a particular skill or interest, or want to see change, you can make it happen. But as the lottery people say, you can't win if you don't play.

Please make it a resolution this year to become more involved in your church, not only by participating in the annual meeting but by working throughout the year with one or more of the committees that serve your interests. You'll be the richer for it, and so will your church. Thank you!

-- Howard Fielding for the Board of Deacons

Music Notes

The Adult Choir meets every Sunday morning at 9, and everyone is welcome. Come give singing a try; give the church the gift of your time and spirit!

CALL TO THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION



The Annual Meeting of the Middlebury Congregational Church will be held on **January 23rd, 2011** following worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to elect officers and board members and to vote on the budget for the year 2010. All Board, Officer & Committee reports are now due in the Church Office.

(Child Care will be available!)



If you have borrowed items from the Church please remember to **bring them back**. We are missing our large Coffee Pot which was needed for a recent memorial service. If you would like to borrow an item please check with the office first to see if the item is available and sign the item out on the Signup Sheet found on the refrigerator in the Kitchen.

MISSION MOMENT

Thanks to your generosity (and a little help from the mission committee), 100 children received Christmas gifts because of your donations. A heartfelt thank-you goes out to Leslie House who arranged this year's Star Tree project and to Becca House who cut out, punched holes, put ribbons on, and labeled all the stars with the names of the children they represented.

The mission committee is currently discussing a Simply Smiles coffee project to benefit the families who live in Oaxaca, Mexico as well as another Lenten project. Last year, we donated 50 hygiene kits and 26 baby kits to Church World Service which distributed them to the victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

Finally, please prayerfully consider going on this year's mission trip to Little Farm, LA. This will be the 6th trip that church members and friends have taken to help those still affected by Hurricane Katrina. The dates are April 17 to 23, which happens to be Region 15's spring break. We already have 13 interested youth and adults, but there's room for more. Most of us are unskilled laborers, so don't let that scare you off! However, if you do have remodeling or building skills, your presence on this trip would be greatly appreciated! For more information, please contact Debra Balletto at dballetto@sbcglobal.net.



PRESCHOOL ON THE GREEN REGISTRATION

It's time for preschool registration for the 2011-2012 school year. The deadline for priority registration for church members is January 21st, 2011. If any church members are planning to enroll their child in the preschool program, please call the church office (203-758-2671) or the Preschool (203-577-2275) for an application. Children who were born in or before 2008 are eligible. Open registration begins February 2nd and church members must register *before* that date to retain their priority.

BYLAWS REVIEW

Do you have concerns, questions, or suggestions about our church's governance? The Bylaws Committee (Peter North, Curt Titus and Barbara Hampton) would like to hear from you. We are arranging meetings with church boards, committees, and leaders. Some of the questions we're studying include:

- Can we clarify and streamline our parliamentary procedures to enhance fairness and efficiency in our meetings?
- Which offices should be elected and which appointed?
- Can we give our committees & boards clear lines of authority within which to work independently and avoid overlapping authority?
- Are there areas of congregational decision making that should be governed by super-majorities (e.g. 2/3 majority for bylaws revision)?
- Should there be scheduled special meetings for major issues (e.g., the budget)?
- Should term limits be made for offices?

Please help the Bylaws Committee by sharing your ideas about these and other aspects of our bylaws. Speak to a member of the committee or drop a note in our mailbox (outside the church office).

If you borrowed something from the church for your holiday gatherings we would appreciate it if you would return it. We are missing our large coffee pot which was needed for a funeral reception. In the future please check with the office before you borrow something and don't forget to sign out the item on the sheet on the refrigerator in the kitchen.

Beat the Post-Holiday Blues!

Join us for a

Pasta Supper



Sponsored by the MCC Youth Group

Friday, January 14th

5:00 – 8:00 pm

Menu will include:
Pasta with Meatballs,
Salad, Bread
& Dessert

Cost:

Adults: \$10

Children & Seniors: \$8

Under 5 yrs. old Free

Families: \$30

(Proceeds support the youth's participation in the Mission Trip to Louisiana in April and to offset the cost of the youth's other mission projects.)

CHURCH RECORDS

DEATHS

Diane Booker Hermonot on December 26th.



Weather Related Closings!



For information on Service and Activity Cancellations due to inclement weather, please tune to Channel 8 (ABC). You may also check the Church's website (middleburyucc.org) or call the church office.

Jeff Lukens, who has been a member of MCC for 30 years, has been called to be the Associate Pastor for Children & Youth at St. John's United Church of Christ in Chambersburg, PA. If you would like to drop a line to Jeff and Megan you may at 1910 Powell Dr., Apt., 2D, Chambersburg, PA.

*The Deadline for February
Church Life:*

January 15th @ 9:00 a.m.

*A Thankyou Note from Wellpath,
(Behavioral Health for Children and
Families)...*

On behalf of the staff of the Family Enrichment Services program, I would like to thank the Mission Committee for coordinating the collection of gifts and the members of your congregation for the generous donations of Christmas gifts for 100 children.

As the economy worsens we have seen a reduction of our program budgets and services in the community. You have brought smiles to the faces of children who are at risk for abuse and neglect and helped families to celebrate the holidays. These are difficult times for all of us and your generosity and continued support of our programs is greatly appreciated.

I wish you all happy Holidays, Merry Christmas and a happy New year.

Sincerely,

Harriet Sternthal, LCSW
Team Leader
Family Enrichment Services