



CHURCH LIFE

MARCH 2011



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



ken's korner

It's snowing again but we know that soon the season will change and the flowers will be in bloom.

It is the same story with our understanding of the faith. During the season of Lent we take time to contemplate the meaning of our walk with Christ. It is that time of the year that we will acknowledge his sacrifice for us and the cost of salvation. We know that there is a resurrection after a time of great torment. We have been here before.

This is not a time to relive the torment but to come to an understanding of the result of that torment. We are a free people because Jesus died on the cross and God transformed him through the act of resurrection.

Lent is a time of transformation. It is a time to take a grasp of the faith and learn a little more about it. It is a time to reflect on our lives and the meaning of our lives.

There will be a learning opportunity offered to help focus on the faith journey we all share. From March 16 through April 20 there will be a Scripture discussion at ten AM and seven PM in the upstairs conference room. I hope to see many of you there. Come for all sessions or just a few.

Ken

The Sunday School Scoop

Throughout February and the beginning of March, the children learned about the parable of "The Prodigal Son". In their lessons, the children learned about God's grace. They learned how forgiving God is and that He has unconditional love for all of us. Thank you to our teachers for this unit, Pam Albon, Erika Carrington, Ann Marie Niesobecki, and Marnee Palladino.

In March and April, our students will be learning about the Easter story through our "Crucifixion and Resurrection" unit. These lessons also focus on God's love, grace, and forgiveness of sins.





There are also many fun activities ahead for the children at MCC. On April 17th (Palm Sunday), the children will participate in an Easter Workshop. This was an idea that some of our older kids had last year, and I'm excited to try it out. It will be similar to our Advent Workshop in December, except the kids will be making crafts related to Easter. Following the workshop and church, we will be having our 2nd annual Easter Egg Hunt! In May, we will be putting on the Creation Pageant. Please look for more information on these fun events in the upcoming weeks!

Valerie Beard



"It's almost that time of the year again! CE will be collecting plastic Easter Eggs for our 2nd annual Easter Egg Hunt on April 17th. There will be a box in the Social Hall for all donations. Thank you!!"

Sunday School Grade Schedule
March 2011

	<u>Mar. 6</u> The Prodigal Son Week 4	<u>Mar. 13</u>	<u>Mar. 20</u> C&R Week 1	<u>Mar. 27</u> C&R Week 2
Noah's Ark 	K/1 st	WORK DAY FOR CREATION PAGEANT MATERIALS ~ Rooms TBA	6 th /7 th	4 th /5 th
Storytelling Tent 	6 th /7 th		K/1 st	2 nd /3 rd
Bibleland Theatre 	4 th /5 th		2 nd /3 rd	K/1 st
Mary & Martha's Kitchen 	2 nd /3 rd		4 th /5 th	6 th /7 th

NEEDED:
A DESK AND BOOKCASES
For Mary Brown's Office

(Please let the church office or Mary Brown know if you have a donation – It's Tax Deductable!)

2nd Annual Easter Egg Hunt!

WHO: Kids up through grade 7

WHAT: an Easter Egg Hunt for the Kids at MCC

WHEN: Sunday, April 17th, following church

WHERE: Grades K and younger - on the
playground
Grades 1-7 - the Green, the front
parsonage lawn, the front church lawn

PLEASE BRING: an Easter basket



We hope to see you there!

Youth News!

Our Silver Lake Retreat was a great success. We had 16 youth attend, and the theme of the retreat was, "what is God". We discovered many things about God, ourselves and each other. We also had a lot of fun with our games and sledding. A special thank you to Val and Len Beard, and Andrea Douyard for coming on the retreat and being such a big part of it.

The youth put on the church service on Sunday Feb. 13th and it was awesome. If you missed it, ask Mary or Pastor Ken for the DVD to watch it. We are very proud of our youth for coming together and creating such a master piece. A special thanks to Lexi Fielding for writing the opening prayer, for Sarah DiCorpo and Jake Brown for the sermon creation and scripture readings, to Carrie O'Bar and Marissa Strumolo for their singing talents and all the youth who sang, and read for the service. Also, thanks to the boy scouts for helping during the service and with coffee hour.

The 30 Hour Famine participation is at the end of February, not in time for this writing. The youth will lock in at the church and fast for 30 hours, at the same time as other youth groups nation-wide. This fundraising event will raise money for World Vision to help feed and nurture starving children around the world. During our fast, the youth will learn about different situations in different cultures, and what it's like for other youth around the world.

In March the youth group will enjoy a laser-tag outing to Laser Planet in Waterbury on Saturday March 12th. We will have sign-up sheets in the social hall; all are welcome to join us for this fun event.

On March 26th the youth group will be going to the animal shelter in Middlebury – "Animals For Life" – and volunteering our time. We will also be taking donations of cat and dog food in March prior to our visit. More details on what kinds of food will be in the Sunday Crier. Once again, if you would like to join us for this event, we will have a signup sheet in the Social Hall, or contact Mary Brown.

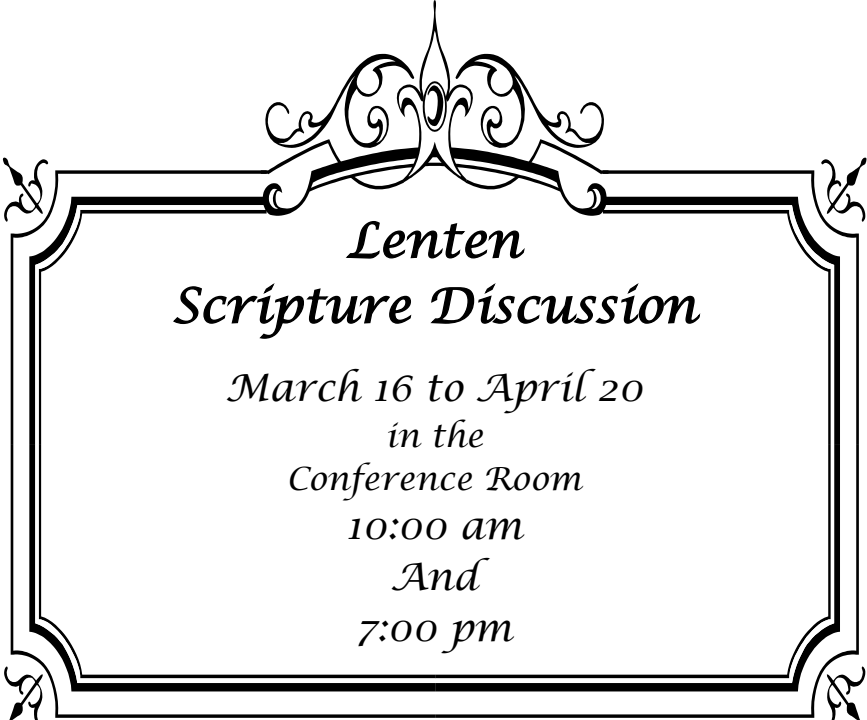
May God Bless our Children,
Mary

Music Notes

Rehearsals for Good Friday, Easter, and the Creation Pageant will begin in March! Anyone--anyone!--interested in singing for the special services coming up in the spring is invited to join us from 4 to 5:30 pm on Sunday beginning March 27.

I've heard from some of you that you've considered singing in the choir, but were hesitant to dive in on a Sunday morning, and you wanted more prep time to become really confident. And, it's true, sometimes it takes a few rehearsals to get the hang of things if you're not used to it. So here's your chance!

Easter music this year will feature excerpts from *Messiah* including the "Hallelujah" chorus.



*Lenten
Scripture Discussion*

*March 16 to April 20
in the
Conference Room
10:00 am
And
7:00 pm*

Asst. Treasurer's Note

Among the important roles the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer perform is to keep the congregation informed about issues affecting the finances of our church. Below you will find a table showing an analysis of our pledges comparing last year with this year's pledge drive thus far.

Our church currently has as an "official" membership of 677 individuals, for whom we pay a fee of \$8.00 per person to the UCC and an additional \$1.00 each to the Naugatuck Valley Association.

It makes practical sense that we attempt to keep our membership list current to avoid over-paying these fees. This will also help reduce unnecessary postage and photocopying costs for communications to those who no longer actively participate in the life of our church or feel a spiritual bond that once existed. If you no longer feel that this church is part of your life, for whatever reason, please drop a note to the church, attn: Church Clerk, so we can edit the membership list and keep our costs in line with the reality of current economic conditions.

If you have personal issues that you would like to discuss, we urge you to call the church office so you can be directed to the right person.

Shari Morris, Assistant Treasurer.

2011 Pledge Analysis		as of 2/14/11				
Annual Pledge Range	Number of Pledges	%	Total Amount	Yearly Average	Monthly Average	Weekly Average
\$2000 +	15	18%	\$ 46,838	\$ 3,123	\$ 260	\$ 60.05
\$1,000 - \$2,000	23	28%	\$ 30,568	\$ 1,329	\$ 111	\$ 25.56
\$500 - \$1,000	26	31%	\$ 17,364	\$ 668	\$ 56	\$ 12.84
< \$500	19	23%	\$ 4,275	\$ 225	\$ 19	\$ 4.33
Total	83	100%	\$ 9,045	\$ 1,193	\$ 99	\$ 22.95

2010 Pledge Analysis							
Annual Pledge Range	Number of Pledges	%	Total Amount	Yearly Average	Monthly Average	Weekly Average	
\$2000 +	24	20%	\$ 75,038	\$ 3,127	\$ 261	\$ 60.13	
\$1,000 - \$2,000	25	21%	\$ 31,620	\$ 1,265	\$ 105	\$ 24.32	
\$500 - \$1,000	42	36%	\$ 27,278	\$ 649	\$ 54	\$ 12.49	
< \$500	27	23%	\$ 5,389	\$ 200	\$ 17	\$ 3.84	
Total	118	100%	\$139,325	\$1,181	\$ 98	\$22.71	

The Deacons' Bench

We say it every week in the church bulletin: On the page where we list the names of the people we entrust to do the ministry of the church, who gets top billing?

The members of the church congregation, as ministers to the world, are named even above the pastor. Not every church, not even every United Church of Christ church, does this, but we do as part of our Congregational heritage.

In the Congregational tradition, there is no higher authority than the local congregation, gathered in God's name. We are members of the United Church of Christ, but the UCC is set up as a gathering of many traditions and serves as a resource to the local congregations rather than a hierarchy.

You'll be hearing more about this in the next few weeks as the Bylaws Committee presents some proposals that begin to define the structure of the church. These changes are designed to help bring our church polity in line with our faith traditions. In structure and in belief, we are what we, as a congregation, bring to the table.

Feel free to worship God in your own unique way, using your unique God-given gifts. If there's something you can contribute to the services or something you'd like to see us incorporate or bring into our worship, speak to Pastor Ken or one of the deacons.

After all, Pastor Ken is the preacher and senior pastor, but if anyone asks you who the minister here is – you are!

- Howard Fielding for the Board of Deacons

MARCH MISSION MOMENTS

The mission committee sponsored its first American Red Cross Blood Drive on February 25. Many volunteered to help register, work in the canteen and donate blood to make this event a success.

On March 6, the committee will be sponsoring a **pancake breakfast** with proceeds going to assist the 17 church members and friends who have volunteered to work in New Orleans during the week of April 17 to 23.

This year's **Lenten Project** will be a **tool collection** to assist the mission work of Simply Smiles in South Dakota. Mary Brown will help coordinate this project as well as the Simply Smiles coffee project to help the needy in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Finally, there will be a **Lia Sophia jewelry fundraiser** on Friday evening, April 29 from 6:30 to 8:30 in the Social Hall. Please invite all your friends and family because 20% of sales will be donated to the Southbury/Middlebury Youth and Family Services.



The Jeanne LaPorta Playground Fund

Jeanne LaPorta, teacher and Director of the Preschool for many years passed away on January 13, 2011, after a brief illness. It was a sad day for the Preschool on the Green Family. On that day the Preschool lost their preschool director & teacher, our church lost a choir director & a church member, many of us lost a friend, some lost a sister, a mother, a wife and we all lost an important member of our community. Jeanne LaPorta touched the lives of so many people in our small town with her vibrant and positive approach to her life and her work. To honor Jeanne a fund has been set up to buy a bench and possibly some new equipment for the Preschool Playground. If you would like to contribute to this effort you may pick up an envelope from the table in the Narthex and drop it in the collection plate or mail your donation to Preschool On The Green, 1242 Whittmore Rd., Middlebury CT 06762.

PANCAKE BREAKFAST



**Middlebury
Congregational Church
1242 Whittemore Road**

**Sunday, March 6, 2011
11:30 am - 1:00 pm**

Adults: \$10.00

Children & Seniors: \$8:00

Under 5 yrs old: Free

Families of 4 or more: \$30.00

**FUNDRAISER WILL BENEFIT MISSION TRIP TO
NEW ORLEANS TO ASSIST REBUILDING AFTER
HURRICANE KATRINA**



AUCTION NEWS

To all church members...only 2 months until the Annual Flea Market and Auction

The event will be held May 14, 2011 this year

Here are a few ways you can help make this event a success so our Missions committee can continue its great work in our community and around the world.

- Plan to take Friday May 13th and/or Saturday May 14th off to help with set up
- Collect items for the flea market
- Search for that special live auction donation
- Plan what appetizer you will make for the preview party
- Tell your friends and family to attend the event
- Place a poster at work or other places you frequent
- Sign up to do a specific job at the event.
- Make a donation to the patron book
- Ask your frequently patronized businesses for a donation
- Donate storage space so we can start collecting items early

Any and all of your efforts will be greatly appreciated. Remember if everyone does a little no one has to do a lot. Please help make this event a success as we try to raise money to carry on the important mission work of this church. We can do it if we work together!

One Great Hour of Sharing

Sharing Resources, Changing Lives, Bringing Joy!



Deciding to share is tough sometimes, especially when we feel we barely have enough to get by ourselves. But compared to people whose lives have been ravaged by disaster, or who live on less than \$1 a day, we have a great abundance.

On April 3rd you will be invited to help people in need around the world and in communities impacted by disasters in the United States through the One Great Hour of Sharing[®] (OGHS) offering. As the church, we are called

to help one another, even through the sharing of our own resources.

Giving changes so many things, for the receiver and the giver. Can you imagine the joy on a mother's face, who because of your gift, can send her children to school or provide them with a meal before bed? OGHS supports many initiatives that help women start their own businesses or learn a wage-earning skill. Programs that through you gift, you become a partner.

By sharing our resources, combined with offerings from thousands of other congregations in eight denominations across the United States, we:

- build homes, schools, medical clinics, and clean water and sewage facilities in villages devastated by earthquakes, floods, and poverty
- bring safety, shelter, and food to refugees after often violent circumstances have made their hometowns uninhabitable
- nurture stronger futures and self sufficiency through health care, education, job training, and tools for livelihoods.

We are blessed that God is able to provide when and where help is needed through us. (2 Corinthians 9:8-15)

When you make your gift, please give generously.

CHURCH RECORDS

BIRTHS

Julianna Eloise Weigel, daughter of Jennifer and Joachim Weigel, granddaughter of Ronald & Julie Clark, born on February 20th

DEATHS

Cyril "Cy" W. Mellette, Jr. on February 12th.

Daylight Savings Time
Begins on March 13th

Don't Forget!

To turn your clocks ahead

*The Deadline for April
Church Life:*

March 15th @ 9:00 a.m.

Worship Attendance

February 6

72

February 13

83

February 20

90