

CHURCH LIFE

JUNE 2023



FROM THE PASTOR

We've just come off of a busy May with the play and Pentecost, and June looks to be quite busy here at MCC. On June 4th, we'll welcome Chris Cole, who will be covering the majority of my sabbatical. He'll join us for worship, and afterwards, you'll have a chance to meeting him at coffee hour. Inside this edition of Church Life is a calendar of when Chris Cole is preaching and providing pastoral coverage and when the Rev. Shannan Hudgins is preaching and providing coverage. The calendar also has contact information on it for how to get in touch with Chris and Shannan.

We've also got Strawberry Festival on June 11th and Celebration Sunday and Picnic is on June 18th. Celebration Sunday is Valerie Beard's last day as our Faith Formation Coordinator. So, we will recognize her during worship that Sunday. After worship, we'll have a picnic. Food is provided, so just bring yourself!

We are still looking for an Interim Faith Formation Coordinator. We made an offer to a candidate, but they decided to take a full time position. If you or anyone you know might be interested in the position, please be in touch. The position is a one school year position with possible opportunity to continue on beyond that. The hours per week are about 15. More info can be found here: <https://www.middleburyucc.org/job-openings-at-middlebury-congregational-church/>

We also have Vacation Bible School this June 19th -23rd for children entering pre-k through 6th grade. If you know kids who might be interested in joining us for VBS, please invite them!

For the rest of my article this month and for my article next month, I thought I'd share a bit about what I'll be up to during sabbatical. From June 29-July 5, I'll be in Indianapolis for the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Every other year, our denomination, the United Church of Christ, has General Synod, which is the national decision making gathering for the United Church of Christ. There are clergy and laypeople representing the entire country at Synod. Our local Litchfield South Association is actually being represented by a delegate from our church this year, Diane Barnard.

I have gone to Synod twice as a delegate, but this is my first time going without having delegate responsibility. (It's also the first time I haven't counted as a "youth" for demographics. You stop being a youth after age 29.) I'll be attending Synod this year as part of the Next Generation Leadership Initiative, which is a continuing education program to support young, early career clergy. So, I'll be spending a lot of time exploring the continuing education workshops offered at Synod, and I'll have opportunity for fellowship with other UCC clergy my age from across the country.

In August, I'll be taking a course through Luther Seminary with church consultant Susan Beaumont called "Stepping Up to Supervision." It's all about the nuts and bolts of being head of staff in a church. The course covers best practices for performance evaluations, staff supervision philosophy, hiring, firing, and some of the complications that come from being a pastor and a supervisor. This is one area of church I didn't receive any instruction in during seminary, so I'm really looking forward to the course, particularly as we are experiencing staff transitions here at MCC. I'll share more about other things I'm doing in my next article.

In preparation for Celebration Sunday, I was looking up liturgy options for worship, and I found this blessing from the United Church of Canada for a church building dedication. And, I thought it actually works quite nicely as a prayer for home, work, or church, really any place where people come and go. This part of spring is a time of comings and goings with graduations and the end of the school year. So, I figured it seemed a good thought for the month:

"Peace be to all who enter here and to all who go out from here. Peace be to all who love this place, and who love the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister



THE DEACONS' BENCH

This month I am serving as Chair for the Strawberry Festival, so I made an internet search to find any connections between strawberries and the bible.

While some were a bit of a stretch, there are passages that refer to generic fruit that could be a strawberry or strawberry plant. And historically in Christian art, literature, and culture, strawberries were symbols of virtue, purity, and perfection. They were often symbols of love. All very nice, but not quite what I had been looking for with a clear connection to our own church, or our strawberry festival.

But then I thought about the way that strawberry plants spread: by sending out runners. There it was – a great image for our church, the Strawberry Festival, and the recent dinner theater experience.

The original strawberry plant sends out runners. Where the runners touch the ground, they set down roots, and another strawberry plant grows up there. That multiplication process continues with more runners, producing more plants. That IS a great representation of how our church and its values of faith, love, and community can spread and multiply – one person, and one event at a time.



When we gather for worship, or to have an event, others come mostly be the way we have spread the word, or seeing us in action. Each Instagram post, each Facebook page share, each poster, each personal invitation, is a runner sent out. Through that, an individual or even a family may come by and visit us at worship, or come to an event. Then it is up to us to make sure that the ground that runner touches is warm and welcoming, so (to continue the metaphor) a new plant may choose to set down roots. Through that process, over time, we become a whole network – each part of which can bear fruit that is full of Christian

virtue and love. We are a community that welcomes others into our family, happy to share our bounty and mission. Our Strawberry Festival and then Celebration Sunday are wonderful opportunities to both send out runners, and then celebrate our harvest of faith, love, and community.

Janine Sullivan-Wiley

On behalf of the Board of Deacons, and hoping to see you at the Strawberry Festival!

FAITH FORMATION

Our May lessons focused on the Epiphany season and Paul, ending with a lesson on Pentecost. Thank you to our teachers: Amy Coughlin, Brittany Romaniello, Megan Romaniello, and Robbie Kamide. We have a couple more weeks until we celebrate the end of the program year, when we will begin our summer break from Sunday School. Nursery care will continue throughout the summer.

Each year, our church gifts our third-grade students with a Bible. This year we celebrate 3 of our children, who will receive them in June: Liliana Bruce, Joseph Lerz Sandoval, and Natalie Tiso.

We are looking forward to our Vacation Bible School program, “Hero Hotline,” which will be held June 19-23. The last day of registration is Sunday June 11 – so please register ASAP if you have not yet! We have a great group of volunteer teachers and counselors ready to help our kids learn to use the Ultimate Hero Handbook-the Bible- to discover how we can follow the examples set by some Bible Heroes, who work together to bring peace, build each other up, and share the great story of God’s love for us where they are and with the whole world. We can’t wait to see what the week brings!

Valerie Beard

Faith Formation Coordinator

MUSIC NOTES

While you've been making your summer plans, so have we.

During the time when our COVID restrictions were still in effect, a major change to our music program (and MCC's summer schedule) took effect: the long-standing arrangement with St. George Church to share summer services was suspended. This will still be the case this summer, which means that summer services will again be held at MCC all summer long.

In past years, under that sharing arrangement, we continued to have choir sing during the July, because we were joined by members of the St. George choir. This year, without those extra voices, the Music Committee has decided that we'll end formal choir after June 25 and resume on September 3. Additionally, we (Dave and Donna) are to take some vacation time during July and August, since we won't have the August music provided by St. George Church.

But will we still have music? Of course! We'll be arranging for substitute organists/pianists and for some subsets of the choir to provide music leadership this summer.

And in September, we'll all be back to kick off the new program year at MCC.

Donna Obarowski

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

We are planning a couple of events for the Strawberry Festival.

1. Book Sale. We saved some really great book that were not sold at out Book Sale in October to put out for sale under a tent at the Strawberry Festival. If you have some interesting books in good condition, please feel free to donate them for our book sale.

2. Raffle- 8 Baskets; The still have the following themed baskets

available to donate to: Date Night, Baking to your hearts content, Beach time, Christmas in June, Garden Delight and Margarita Salsa Night. We thought it would be fun if anyone has items that they are cleaning out of their house during spring clean-up and that are in good condition which you might want to donate to one or more of these baskets. So if you are wanting to donate: Christmas ornaments, extra spatulas, rolling pins, bread bowls, frisbees, beach balls, buckets, tickets to a restaurant you haven't used, etc. we would love to have them to incorporate in our baskets.

Sign-up sheets for these baskets will be posted on the bulletin board for you to sign up for an item you would like to donate to these baskets, either new or used. I think it will be exciting to see what items we all have that can be recycled or new items you want to purchase.

In late summer we also start to gather school supplies and book bags for the Back to School Challenge. So if you are out and about in the stores this summer and come across some sales on school supplies remember we will be in need of those items for our commitment to Wellmore to help support their kids needs for the coming school year.

Looking forward to these events and more in the future. Thank you again for all your in-kind donations. We couldn't do what we do without your help.

Carol Rollins
Mission Board

ATTENTION KNITTERS!

Attention prayer shawl knitters! If you find knitting a prayer shawl to big a commitment (sore, tired hands, no time!) try knitting a "prayer patch." Knit small squares in the traditional prayer shawl patterns and they work up in under an hour – great way to use up all of those small amounts of yarn leftover! They can be slipped into a purse or under a pillow and carried in a pocket for comfort – without the bulkiness of a shawl. We also attach a little rhyme with each. If interested, please email me at liblady151@gmail.com for further information.



Strawberry Festival

Sunday, June 11

**The Green
3pm-7pm**

Games

Food

Shortcake

Raffle

Book Sale

Fun

**Middlebury Congregational Church
1242 Whittemore Rd, Middlebury**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WOW what a play! If you didn't attend Chris Avcollie's "As You Were", you missed a great time. The three shows were well attended, and the atmosphere was exciting. Cast members spent hours and hours rehearsing their lines and practicing where they should be during each scene. They all can be proud of their performance. Trustees moved their meeting one week due to play preparation.

Treasurers Bob G. and Diane B. presented their quarterly report and stated that we are doing "ok" on the operational budget front. We have had some large bills (chimney on Parsonage, elevator repairs, Bob W for painting church) which we take care of through the Third Century Fund and other endowments. All your pledges to date have given us a good financial start, though we expect donations to slow through the summer months. We are still seeking for quotes for wall repairs and painting in the Parsonage.

Trees on the Green. The two new trees are being watered regularly. One of the trimmed trees now looks sick and Eversource has agreed to take it down and we will request the town to grind the stumps.

Church Spring clean-up went well. A few church members worked the weekend prior to trim and do prep work. We managed to get three large loads of mulch Friday in anticipation of rain Saturday. This gave us a good head-start while trucks and trailers gathered more mulch. For the most part, the rain held off so church members, Scouts from Troop 5 and 6 were able to get the grounds covered, window wells cleaned out etc. Thank you all that helped.

Word from our scout and his Eagle project to refurbish the outdoor Chapel, are still proceeding.

Office coordinator and Faith Formation Coordinator positions are still proceeding. Rev. Manzi is focused on her Sabbatical and may stay with temp help until she returns. This should help the church with cash flow through the summer months.

The Trustees were honored to have Barbara Hampton and Howard

Fielding present a training module called “Safeguarding Your Church Finances”. The discussion focused on risk management. More to come on this topic. Thank you, Barbara and Howard.

Respectfully submitted,
Russ Tolles, for the Board of Trustees

LEARNING TO FOLLOW BEST PRACTICES

As a church family, we learn through Scripture, sermons, and song how to practice what we preach: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love others as yourself. Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and unto God that which is God’s.

The teachings of Jesus outline best practices to use in our daily lives. Consider, for example, the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). A man leaving on a journey gives his servants some coins to take care of while he is away. On his return, two of them give him back the money, which they doubled in his absence. They are rewarded. The third buries his coin and returns it to the master with nothing else to show for it. He is punished.

Here’s one way to look at this story: God gives us many gifts of time, talent (of a different sort), and treasure. To be stewards of these gifts, we must follow the best practices. We must not waste our time. We must apply our talents. And we can’t just bury treasure and assume it will be there when we need it. We must follow best practices to keep our money safe.

The third servant didn’t do anything wrong; he just didn’t do everything right. He wasn’t following best practices. No one else knew what he was doing or where he hid the money.

The Board of Stewardship is leading a training program for our church boards, leadership, financial officers, and staff. “Safeguarding Your Church’s Finances” from Church Law & Tax, part of Christianity Today, is a refresher course on best practices, from handling cash to writing policies that govern our endowments.

It takes the whole church community to form the checks and balances that keep our funds safe. If you would like to be part of that or attend the training, or if you have questions, let me or Barbara know.

Howard Fielding
For the Board of Stewardship

IMPORTANT JUNE 2023 CALENDAR DATES

6/4: Trinity Sunday: Meet Chris Cole, our sabbatical pastor

6/11: Strawberry Festival 3p.m.-7p.m.

6/18: Celebration Sunday worship and picnic after worship

6/19-6/23: Vacation Bible School

6/25: Pastor Katrina's last Sunday before sabbatical



MAY 2023 PHOTOS “AS YOU WERE”



Rehearsal: The Final Luncheon. ©Sarah Kwashnak, 04/21/23



Rehearsal: Battle of the Rubber Ducks. ©Sarah Kwashnak, 04/21/23



Cast and Crew of "As You Were." ©Sarah Kwashnak, 05/14/2023



Premier Performance. ©Sarah Kwashnak, 05/12/2023



Taking the Case. ©Sarah Kwashnak, 05/13/2023

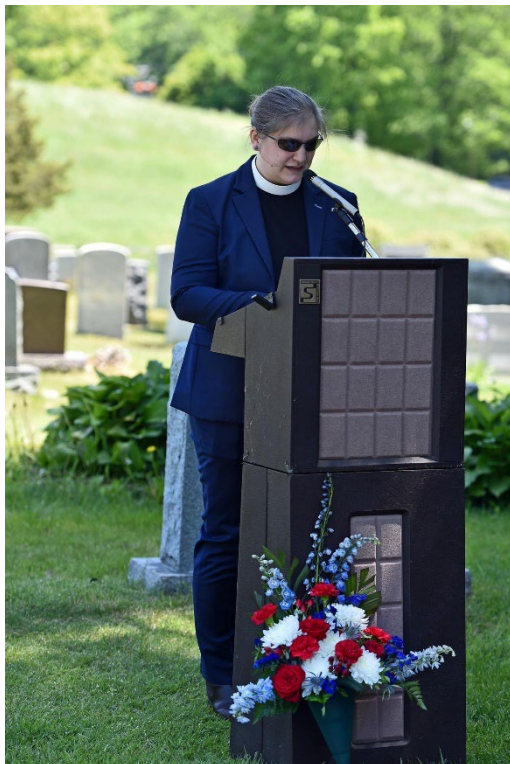
MEMORIAL DAY



Repairing the Sign. 05/29/2023



Memorial Day Parade. ©Michael Mastroianni, 05/28/2023



Memorial Day service at Middlebury Cemetery. ©Michael Mastroianni, 05/28/2023

**Middlebury Congregational Church
1242 Whittemore Rd.
Middlebury CT 06762**

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