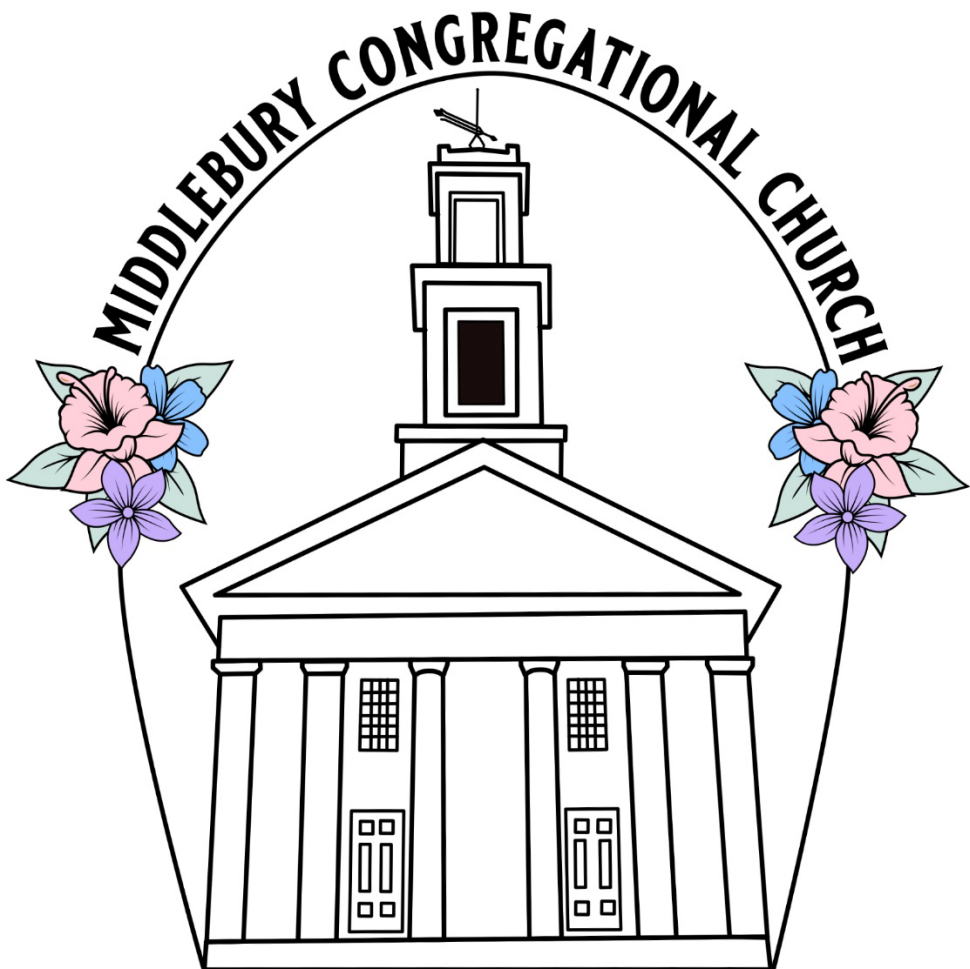


CHURCH LIFE

APRIL 2024



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MIDDLEBURYUCC.ORG

FROM THE PASTOR

Happy Easter and happy Spring! I want to thank all of our staff and volunteers who made our Lent, Holy Week, and Easter services special through their extra efforts. As we begin April, we continue in the season of Easter, celebrating Christ's resurrection. The season of Lent lasts for 40 days, and the season of Easter lasts for 50 days.

One of the ways of interpreting the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is that it inaugurates a new age. God walked among us as Jesus Christ. Jesus rises from the dead and opens the way to eternal life. The kingdom of heaven broke into this kingdom on earth, and therefore the world has changed.

However, this kingdom on earth isn't fully like God's kingdom in heaven. Our world still has problems. God's will isn't done fully on earth as it is in heaven. There's a gap between the way the world is and the way it should be. We're promised that on the last day, Jesus will come on clouds descending to finally close that gap and set things aright, but until then we live in an in-between time, the already but not yet kingdom.

As Christians, our mission is to live lives that work to narrow that gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be. And indeed, one of the main ways God works to narrow that gap is through human beings, so we're not doing this alone.

The other aspect of living in this already but not yet kingdom is that despite the gap between the world as it is and the world as it should be, the kingdom of heaven is accessible to us in the here and now. Heaven breaks into earth each and every day when we experience a person coming into our lives at just the right time, a moment of pure joy, or any number of ways we look around and feel wonder, awe, or the presence of God. We all experience some moments where, at least for a short time, the world is exactly as it should be; things just feel right.

Presbyterian minister and writer Frederick Buechner describes it like this: "If we only had eyes to see and ears to hear and wits to understand, we would know that the Kingdom of God in the sense of holiness, goodness, beauty is as close as breathing and is crying out to be born

both within ourselves and within the world; we would know that the Kingdom of God is what we all of us hunger for above all other things even when we don't know its name or realize that it's what we're starving to death for. The Kingdom of God is where our best dreams come from and our truest prayers. We glimpse it at those moments when we find ourselves being better than we are and wiser than we know. We catch sight of it when at some moment of crisis a strength seems to come to us that is greater than our own strength. The Kingdom of God is where we belong. It is home, and whether we realize it or not, I think we are all of us homesick for it.”

In this Easter season, I pray you glimpse some of those kingdom moments of dreams, prayers, and goodness.

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

SABBATICAL SPOTLIGHT

One of the nicknames for the city of Geneva in Switzerland was Protestant Rome because once the city embraced the Reformation and the wars of religion began, the city became a refuge to Protestants fleeing war and persecution from throughout Europe. Protestant congregations of refugees



worshiping in different languages grew throughout the city, one of early ways Geneva began to have character as a multicultural and international city, centuries before the establishment of the Red Cross there.

Geneva was home to a congregation of English speaking Protestants, and their leader for some of their time in Geneva was John Knox, who is one of the main reformers responsible for Scottish Presbyterianism. Many of those English speaking refugees would later return to the U.K. during the reign of Elizabeth I and become influential Puritan and Church of

England leaders. One of the most important contributions of this group was the 1560 Geneva Bible, which was the first complete translation of the Bible into English from the original biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. (Much of the text was a revision of the earlier translation done by William Tyndale, but Tyndale was executed as a heretic by Catholic authorities before he could finish translating the Old Testament.) The King James Bible wouldn't be published until over 50 years after the Geneva Bible, and the Puritans who settled New England used the Geneva Bible, which had very Reformed Protestant leaning explanatory annotations.

The building where these English refugees worshiped, the Calvin Auditory, is still standing in Geneva, and it's currently home to a Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) congregation along with some additional non-French speaking Protestant congregations. I was able to go to worship with that Church of Scotland congregation one of the Sundays I was in Geneva. (See exterior and interior photos.)

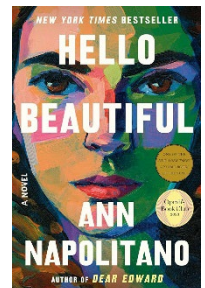


One of the reasons I'm interested in the Swiss Reformation is precisely because you can draw such a direct line between Switzerland and New England. Our church and the other Congregational churches of New England were founded by people reading Bibles and believing ideas that came from the melting pot of Protestant theology in Geneva during the Reformation.

MCC BOOK CLUB

Please join us for our MCC Book Club on Thursday, April 25th, 2024 at 6:00p.m. In April, we will be discussing *Hello Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano.

Middlebury Public Library has copies you can pick up. We hope to see you there!



FROM THE MISSION BOARD

Mitten line is hung in the Social Room for any new/gently used mittens, gloves, scarves, hats to be donated to GWIM.

We have been continuing to gather the below items for the GWIM Food Kitchen. Here is a list of items for you to have on hand for those times you see any sales.

April – Instant Potatoes

May – Jarred Spaghetti Sauces

June – Canned Chicken from BJ's or \$ Donations as they like this brand

July – Chicken Gravy

August – Cereal

September – Jelly

October – Peanut Butter

November – Dutch Egg Noodles and Elbows

December – Instant Potatoes

Easter Baskets were a great success! Those two families were very grateful for all the items you provided for their Easter Dinner Celebration.

Thank you all for your generosity. You know that all that you give, does make an impact for those in need. We thank you for your efforts.

Bless you all.

Carol Rollins

Mission Board

YOGA AT MCC!

What: Vinyasa Yoga for all fitness levels

Where: Our Social Hall

When: Mondays @ 5:30 p.m.

Why: Join us and RELAX!

How: Bring a mat and blocks. Bolster, water bottle, strap and blanket are optional. Please dress to move.

Any questions, ask Cynthia Flisher @ 203-758-8454



Mental Health FIRST AID

from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

- Employers.
- Police officers.
- Hospital staff.
- First responders.
- Caring individuals.

WHY MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

On average,
130
people die by
suicide every day.

*Source: American Foundation
for Suicide Prevention*

From 1999 to 2019,
841,000
people died from
drug overdoses.

*Source: Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention*

Nearly
1 IN 5
in the U.S. lives
with a mental illness.

*Source: National Institute
of Mental Health*

Sources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. (n.d.). Suicide statistics. <https://afsp.org/suicide-statistics/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Drug overdose deaths. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/deaths/index.html>

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (n.d.). Mental illness. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

REGISTER TODAY!

Delivery Format:

Blended online introduction and in person. The first part is about two hours, done online, at the participant's own pace. The second part is an in-person, instructor-led class on 4/13/24

Date and Time:

Saturday, April 13, 2024 from 9:00 AM- 4:30 PM
Cost: \$20

Location:

Middlebury Congregational Church, 1242 Middlebury Rd., Middlebury CT 06762

Where to Register:

email Janine Sullivan-Wiley at JSW.4MHFA@gmail.com

The course will teach you how to
apply the MHFA Action Plan (**ALGEE**):

- **Assess** for risk of suicide or harm.
- **Listen** nonjudgmentally.
- **Give** reassurance and information.
- **Encourage** appropriate professional help.
- **Encourage** self-help and other support strategies.



THE DEACONS' BENCH

Mental Health First Aid Class being offered at MCC
on Saturday, April 13, 2024

What IS Mental Health First Aid and why is it being offered at MCC? Everyone knows what First Aid is; that training teaches a person the skills needed if someone has been injured. But what if the difficulty is with their mental health? ***Mental Health First Aid*** teaches participants how to identify, understand and respond appropriately to signs of mental health challenges among adults.

The format we will be using has two parts. The first part is about 2 hours of online, self-paced work. That is followed by the 9-4:30 instructor-led part. There are two fully accredited instructors for the April 13th class here at MCC, in a dynamic class process.

At the end of the clas, there is a quiz and participants become Mental Health First Aiders – ready and equipped to recognize when a person may be having a challenge, and when and how to help.

Recognizing how much this is needed in our own communities, the MCC Mission Committee and the Jared Coffin Foundation are providing financial support, making the cost to participants only \$20 per person (It would be at least \$75 per person without that support).

Here is a testimonial from a person who took this class a few weeks ago: *"MHFA applies to any organization or group that cares about the wellbeing of their people. It is immediately applicable and relevant! I acted on some skills I learned within days of becoming certified, and it made a difference."*

If you are interested in more information, or you wish to register for the class, contact Janine Sullivan-Wiley at JSW.4MHFA@gmail.com. Registration should be submitted by April 7th to assure time to complete the online portion 48 hours before the instructor-led part.

Respectfully submitted for the Deacons,
Janine Sullivan-Wiley

MUSIC NOTES

SEARCHING OUT EASTER SONGS

As you'll all recall, the church's Easter Season is the 50 days between Easter Sunday and Pentecost. While planning ahead for MCC's worship times during these upcoming weeks, I've been spending time with our two hymnals matching up hymns that are appropriate for the season and correspond well with the lessons.

I was reminded of how many "Easter-ish" hymns can be found outside of the actual Easter/Resurrection sections of the hymnal. In fact, it's remarkable how many of our hymns refer to the purpose of Christ's death and resurrection in some way, whether directly or by inference.

Remember these phrases from Christmas?

"Now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save..."

"Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die..."

"This day is born a *Savior*, of a pure virgin bright..."

Or these frequently sung hymns?

"With His own blood He brought her and for her life He died."

"Let us see Thy great salvation, perfectly restored in Thee."

"Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee."

It's been said that every Sunday is a "little Easter". We hope you enjoy all the upcoming hymns that are also "little Easter" music.

Blessings,
Donna Obarowski

TRUSTEES

Great news that church finances are holding their own. January expenses were slightly below and January income slightly above expectations. Bob G reports we are ahead by less than \$2000.00 but this was the end of February. Thanks to better-than-expected early donations/pledges this year.

Work behind the scenes to keep the church expenses continues. Sal and Bob G were above the sanctuary replacing light bulbs, John D shaved off

the door on the Town Hall side so that it closed properly, Greg E has worked to get door closer to function properly. Greg and Russ replaced a strip of molding in the Parsonage just ahead of painters. I'm sure there are others that go unnoticed quietly keeping the building kept up.

The painters finished up as much in the Parsonage as they could. Issue in kitchen wall is being addressed prior to finishing the painting. Pastor Katrina put on her tool belt and fixed a dripping sink.

Social Hall chairs, we received five chairs to try and see if they would suit our needs. Unfortunately, they are too low and the backs are angled back too far. Good for a lecture but unacceptable to sit at a table, which would be our main use.

Verizon continues to work on installing the 5G system. That improvement has no bearing on a couple of changes within the church. Improvements to our fire and security alarm systems will increase monthly monitoring costs slightly but eliminate the need for dedicated phone lines, resulting in a net savings of \$32 per month. We have also changed from cable to fiber optic internet and phone service which will save an additional \$105 per month. Trustees are looking for savings anywhere we can.

Who has been downstairs in the ARK recently or in the past year. Neglected and in very poor condition. Trustees and Pastor are looking for suggestions and possibly help to refurbish that area. If you have a suggestion or would like to help, let us know.

Last, we will (tentative date) have an early spring cleanup on 4/13 and major (mulch, raking, bring your tools) clean and spruce us on 4/20 with BSA and church members. Who drove a truck across the parsonage lawn? This will be addressed as well.

Respectfully submitted for the Trustees,
Russ Tolles

MCC VIRTUAL TIP JAR



This Lent we had a tip jar for MCC where we could throw a few dollars in and give a shout out to someone. The word cloud above is all the shout outs run through a word cloud generator. The full list in no particular order is below:

- Ellen Aronheim! Not only is she there for every meeting, but she always brings the goodies!
- Elijah Wells - a great big brother who helps out without being asked
- Georgia Wells - gave away her favorite friendship bracelet to a little girl who didn't have one
- Sal and Bob G for fixing the attic and sanctuary lights
- Each week, John DiCorpo faithfully serves behind the scenes to make sure our services are live streamed. We were so blessed to already have this capability up and running during the pandemic thanks to him, and blessed still to have it continue. This is just one of many ways John has quietly served MCC over the years, and his steadfast and humble nature is an inspiration and a blessing.
- For years Malcolm Todt has consistently organized ushers for all services. He is organized, dependable, and always follows

through. It is a blessing to "just know" that this important aspect of service is always handled because of Malcolm's efforts. Thank you Malcolm!

- In summer for many years, our sanctuary is blessed with blooms from Teen Mendillo's garden! Each Sunday she cuts fresh flowers, and beautifully arranges them for all to enjoy during service. Thank you Teen for this blessing!
- Gratitude to Norma Solberg and Janine Sullivan-Wiley, who have enthusiastically led our Cherub Choir for MANY YEARS! It is a joy to hear our cherubs sing in service, and if the Devil doesn't like it, he can "SIT ON A TACK!" ;-)
- Appreciation to Bill Cooper for always quietly pitching in wherever needed during service whether it's to usher, serve communion, or make sure we've unlocked the front doors and ring the church bell before service! And, he is super patience untangling garlands when decorating the sanctuary for Advent! ;-)
Thanks Bill!
- A shout out to Sal Sena & Trustees for getting us a dust buster which makes sanctuary clean-up easy before Sunday or other special services. It has come in handy many times at the last minute, especially around the pulpit area when there are floral arrangements! Thank you for this!
- Henry Wells - his love of group hugs and how happy they make everyone
- Ellen Aronheim for her leadership and steadfast devotion to MCC.
- John DiCorpo for running the livestream of our Sunday services and for all the repairs and maintenance work he quietly does behind the scenes.
- ShawnaLee K. and members of the choir who participated in the Memorial Service for Joyce Zeman (friend of MCC and wife of retired Middlebury clergyman, Fr. Andy Zeman of St. George's Church).
- Michele Finn for organizing and leading the prayer workshop and her many contributions to our church.
- Ellen Aronheim for beginning the Lenten season with the delicious Jambalaya dinner and fellowship.

- Sean for fixing the parsonage window
- Choir, Dave, and Donna for all their work to offer us beautiful music for the Lent and Easter seasons
- For the wonderful Lenten study and the folks to bring dinner lovingly
- Norma Solberg for being a “friend-in-need” when my car broke down in front of her house!
- Greg Ecsedy’s emails always make me laugh :)
- Ellen Aronheim is always there with a kind word, a helping hand, a good meal, a warm hug and the biggest of hearts!
- Carol Rollins is always there when someone needs help. Whether it is helping in the kitchen, preparing ahead of time, cleaning up, putting baskets together, organizing items for a fundraiser – Carol will be the first to arrive and the last to leave!
- John DiCorpo does more work behind the scenes for MCC than anyone could ever imagine. He is the first call when anything with the facility goes wrong and is so knowledgeable that he not only is always able to make the repair but he also saves the church a lot of money. Kudos John!
- Pam Albon is an absolute GEM in every way: kind, generous, sweet, faithful, hardworking and the best possible friend. She does everything with a smile and a big heart!
- Diane, for her countless hours keeping our finances straight and making sure all our bills are paid
- Our Mission Board and all the work they do to help us help others!

OPEN THE DOORS, SEE ALL THE PEOPLE

This is the church,

This is the steeple.

Open the doors,

See all the people.

There’s a lot of truth in that silly little hand game I learned as a child (although I never mastered the last move; all my people dangled like stalactites from the ceiling).

It reminds us that the church isn't a building all by itself. The church and its people are one, like hands helping one another, morphing together into something greater.

Stewardship is about much more than money. It's about using all the resources God has given us to fulfill our mission in the world and the community. In many ways, the community itself is a resource, touching all four points of our mission of Worship, Spiritual Growth, Service, and Fellowship.

This year, the Church Council is seeking to open our doors to all the people by expanding our community programs. Different boards are organizing events like a blood drive, a mental health first aid class, possible book talks by authors, and more in addition to old standbys like the Strawberry Festival. Last year's MCC Players production of Chris Avcollie's "As You Were" was a rousing success and a major fundraiser.

From a stewardship perspective, fundraisers are certainly important as membership declines and fewer people participate in annual pledge drives. And the more people we welcome in our doors, there's always the chance that some of them will feel a part of our community and want to join the church.

Businesses refer to this as a conversion rate – the percentage of visitors who eventually become regular customers. In a church context, "conversion rate" takes on a whole new meaning. Unlike some other denominations, Congregationalists don't seek to make converts; we think people should make their own choices.

Still, they can't make that choice unless they know it's there and that the choice is a good one. That's why we open the doors to all the people. If you have an idea for a public program for the community, make it happen! Bring it up with your board or with other members and get it on the church calendar. We can't meet our mission of service and fellowship without reaching out to the community that needs it.

Howard Fielding
For the Board of Stewardship

Scouts BSA Troops 5 & 6

BOTTLE and CAN DRIVE

Upcoming Drives

April 6th

9am - 1pm

Where: Village Square Plaza parking lot,
530 Middlebury Road, Middlebury

Please donate your Connecticut refundable cans,
glass bottles, and plastic bottles

Thank you,
Troops 5 & 6
Middlebury, CT



Trucks generously donated by Marie's Movers

<https://www.mariesmovers.com/>

CHARLES P. LUCKEY SCHOLARSHIP

The application for the Charles P. Luckey Scholarship is available and is on our website: <https://www.middleburyucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Luckey-Scholarship.pdf>

Scholarship is open to any high school student entering their freshman year that is a member of Middlebury Congregational Church and will be attending an accredited college or university. All applications must be postmarked by May 24, 2024.

FAITH FORMATION

Thank you to our Volunteer Sunday School Teachers for March! *Norma Solberg, Katie O'Connor, Amy Coughlin, Brittany Romaniello, and Kelly Pelletier*; your time is always appreciated as you are an invaluable resource to the children of our community.

March was a whirlwind of activities for our Sunday School youth as we prepared for the joyous Easter season! The kids dove into lessons on discipleship and spreading God's love, just as Jesus commanded. They also explored the significance of the Passover meal and the fellowship it represents. Our youngsters assisted in crafting beautiful beaded garden stakes, which were used as examples during the family plant-a-bulb craft during coffee hour on Palm Sunday.

Speaking of which, what a wonderful success Palm Sunday turned out to be! Palm Sunday service commenced with the youth choir filling the sanctuary as they sang the introit. After service, the highly anticipated annual Easter egg hunt took off and was hopping good fun!

A huge thank you to *Kristine Zold, Thomas Zold, Shaelyn Walsh, and Charis Hubbard* for stuffing hundreds of eggs, making the hunt an egg-stravagant delight!

I'd also like to give a huge shoutout in gratitude to the Faith Formation Committee for facilitating the joyful plant-a-bulb craft.

We are immensely grateful to all who donated funds towards the Easter egg fillers. Your generosity helped make the egg hunt a huge success!

As Pastor Katrina reminds us, we are all vital parts of this mission. Each person's unique gifts combine to create something beautiful and whole – a lesson we strive to impart to our Sunday School youth. They are precious individuals, and we nurture them to find their special roles in serving the church and community.

Thank you to everyone who sets such an inspiring, positive example. Your impact ripples outward in wonderful ways. Happy spring!

Sunday School teacher volunteers are needed!

Teaching Sunday school is a hugely rewarding way to serve our MCC church family. By leading our children in exploring faith, you help nurture their relationship with God in their most formative years. No special experience is required, as everyone has a unique perspective to offer from their own walk in faith and life. Lesson plans and materials are provided.

Time commitments are flexible based on your availability. This is a great opportunity for anyone (16 and older) wishing to support the spiritual growth of our youth. If you are interested in volunteering, I am happy to answer questions and get you signed up. You'll be glad you did! Please feel free to contact me at shubbard@middleburyucc.org.

Sara Hubbard

Faith Formation Volunteer Coordinator

POTLUCK

There will be a Potluck after church on April 21st, planned by the Deacons as a fellowship activity.

All are encouraged to bring a dish to share. This is a great time for folks who may be new to our community and church to join us, and get to know others while enjoying a meal together. We are asking folks to include a card or piece of paper to indicate ingredients for people who may have allergies or food restrictions.

PRAYER WORKSHOP SESSION 3

When: Sunday, April 14th after worship

Hope you all can join us for the next prayer workshop! So far we've had meaningful discussions on *adoration* and *petition* in prayer. In this next workshop, we will look at the elements and power of *lament*. Think lament is simply the act of complaining? Join us to find out that it is not!

We will meet in the parlor. For questions, e-mail Michele Rowell Finn at michfinn@comcast.net.

IMPORTANT APRIL DATES

4/6: BSA Bottle Drive

4/7: Communion Sunday

4/13: 8am-12pm: MCC Spring Clean-up Part 1
9am-4:30pm: Mental Health First Aid

4/14: Prayer Workshop after Worship

4/20: 8am-12pm: BSA Spring Clean-up Part 2

4/21: Potluck after Worship

4/25: 6pm: MCC Book Club

4/27: Axe-Throwing Event

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

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