

CHURCH LIFE

MAY 2024



FROM THE PASTOR

Happy Easter! The season of Easter lasts for 50 days, from Easter until the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost this year is on Sunday May 19th. We're looking forward to worship service that Sunday with special music and an opportunity to hear scripture in a number of different languages.

Before I say a bit more about Pentecost, I do want to let you all know that our insurance company and multiple contractors have determined the parsonage needs a new roof. We've been receiving quotes and are looking to start work as soon as possible to prevent further interior damage. Once a new roof is on the parsonage, interior painting can finally be finished, and the kitchen will need some renovation work to fix water damage and make it suitable for painting. This all is going to be a significant unplanned capital expense. We have investments that we can use to pay for these current projects. However, church leadership is in the very beginning stages of looking at other large capital projects we will need to complete in the next number of years (e.g. church roof, parking lot paving, sidewalks, church gutters, etc.) and exploring how we will raise capital for those expenses. In the meantime, expect to see roofing work starting in this month or next at the parsonage.

So, let's get back to talking about Pentecost. Pentecost is the holiday where we commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, which is often thought of as the birthday of the church. The liturgical color for Pentecost/the Holy Spirit is red, and red is also the color for ordinations and installations.

The Holy Spirit is often given much less air time than God the Father or Jesus Christ in preaching and teaching in our branch of Christianity. I've often wondered if that's due to the Holy Spirit often being associated with spontaneity or things like fire. The words for spirit and wind are the same in biblical languages, and there's a sense that the Holy Spirit blows with just as little predictability as the wind. Reformed Christians like us are often joked about as the "frozen chosen." Presbyterians in particular will use a phrase from one of the

apostle Paul's letters, "decently and in order," to describe how church life should be conducted.

One of the interesting aspects of the Holy Spirit is that in Greek the word is gender neutral and in Hebrew the word is female. In the second verse of Genesis the Spirit of God is described as hovering over the waters, and the Spirit is often mentioned during many of the creative events in the scripture. Because of these aspects of the Spirit, there are many people who use female pronouns for the Holy Spirit and see the Spirit as a way of talking about aspects of God, like creation/birth, that are connected to motherhood/femininity.

One of the devotionals I use, Celebrating the Seasons, has daily readings for each day of the year by Christian writers. Feast days like Pentecost have multiple readings, and for Pentecost, one of the readings is a poem by writer Joyce Rupp, "inside each of us." And her poem embraces some of the ideas about the Holy Spirit I mentioned earlier:

"inside each of us
there awaits
a wonder
full
spirit of freedom

she waits
to dance in the rooms
of our heart
that are closed
dark and cluttered

she waits
to dance
in the spaces where negative feelings
have built barricades
and stock-piled weapons

she waits
to dance
in the corners
where we still
do not believe
in our goodness

inside each of us
there awaits
a wonder
full
sprit of freedom

she will lift light feet
and make glad sons
within us
on the day
we open the door of ego
and let the enemies
stomp out”

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

SABBATICAL SPOTLIGHT

During my sabbatical, I was able to visit ten different churches: First United Methodist Church of Victor (NY), East Bloomfield United Methodist Church (NY), First Congregational Church of Washington, First Congregational Church of Branford, The Riverside Church (NYC), Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Congregational Church of Birmingham (MI), Northminster Presbyterian Church (MI), Church of Scotland in Geneva, Emmanuel Episcopal Church (Geneva.)

I really enjoyed the opportunity to simply attend church, which isn't something I often get to do. However, it was a bit frustrating that it was summer time, so none of these churches had the full choirs or were doing shorter services for the summer. So, it was difficult to get

a sense of what things are like during the program year. But, overall, I was surprised how similar worship was across all the churches. The only noteworthy difference was at Riverside; they had figured out some ways to integrate the community that worships online into the service because they had a lot of screens and a pastor specifically in charge of working with that group of people.

When I visited Switzerland, I was able to attend the Church of Scotland church there and Emmanuel Episcopal Church. I talked about the history of that Church of Scotland congregation last month. Emmanuel Episcopal Church also has an interesting history, but it's not tied into the Protestant Reformation.

In the 19th century, there was a growing community of American expats living in Geneva, and they petitioned the Episcopal Church in the U.S. to send them a priest so they could found a church in Geneva. The request was approved, and President Ulysses S. Grant laid the cornerstone of the new church. The celebrations for the opening of the church were attended by the American consul and vice-consuls to Switzerland. For many years, the church was called "The American Church." The church grew markedly post WWII as American businesses expanded in Europe. In the 70s, the church stopped calling itself "The American Church" because the congregation represented English speaking people from countries throughout the world.

While Emmanuel Episcopal Church was founded well after the Protestant Reformation, it's part of the legacy of Geneva serving as a home for Protestants from throughout the world since the Reformation.





THE DEACONS' BENCH

The month of May reminds us all of how truly blessed we all are! As summer approaches, we see renewed beauty all around us in nature. It's a time to revel in the sights, sounds and aromas of fresh flowers and newly awakened wilderness. God has created such a lovely landscape for all to enjoy!

May is also a time for remembrance and reflection. Mother's Day is celebrated on May 12th this year. On this day, we honor our mothers and those who fulfilled the roles of mothers. In Proverbs 31:25-26, mothers are characterized with these words: "Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

Another prayer to recognize mothers during this month is as follows: "Heavenly Father, I speak this prayer to you now in gratitude and praise for the gift of mothers. My mother, those of my friends, relatives, those I'll never know, all mothers. Thank you for the role they play in the family unit. Thank you for their teachings, their wisdom, their patience, and understanding. Thank you for the physical, emotional, and spiritual gifts they possess. I pray that you help mothers all across the world to be a blessing upon their children. Whether delivering affirmation or discipline, I pray that you help every word and action to be done in love. And I pray that children throughout the world would take time to honor their mothers, that you would show them how to uniquely do so." Unknown Author.

Memorial Day is being commemorated on May 27th and is a day to remember the sacrifices fallen soldiers made for their country's defense. The Bible offers words of solace for families who grieve their sons and daughters. There are two passages which stand out on this day of remembrance. The first is from Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." Another passage which reminds us of the indomitable spirit of the brave men and women who faced adversity is from Isaiah 40:31 "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will

soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Keep mothers and those who fought the good fight in your prayers in this month of remembrance.

Respectfully submitted for the Deacons,
Christopher Ranaudo

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

The mission board last month sponsored the Mental Health First Aid course that Janine Sullivan-Wiley taught. It was a great success. They had 10 attendees. We provided the attendees coffee and continental breakfast as well as lunch that consisted of a 3-foot turkey grinder, salad, chips and cookie bars.

The month of May we are collecting jarred spaghetti sauce for the GWIM food donation.

For mother's day this year, Missions Board felt it would be a good idea to help another foundation that does such good for first time and second time mothers. It's called Carolyn's Place. They are located on Grandview Avenue in Waterbury. This organization provides support from pregnancy till after the baby is born. They hold free labor and child birth preparation classes, parenting classes, second blessings for the birth of second child, safety classes, nutrition, financial classes, and a lot of other support for mothers. They have an earn while you learn program to help first time mothers as well.

This organization is looking for *new items* for their mothers. The following is a list of items if you want to purchase as you are out and about shopping and hopefully finding some sales. We provided a box in the social room labeled *Carolyn's Place* where you can drop your donations off.

They *don't* need diapers as they have a company that supplies them a big quantity.

Here is a list of some items they are looking for:

Baby Shampoo/Wash
Baby Lotion
Baby Grooming Kits
Baby Wipes
New Bottles & Brushes

Infant & Toddler Socks
Baby Shoes sizes 4, 5, 6
Baby Towels
Crib Sheets
Medicine Spoons/Dispensers
Bulb Syringe

Outlet Covers & Protectors
Cabinet Locks
Furniture Bump Guards

Training Potty Seat
Diaper Bags
Tote Bag for hospital
For Mother's Tote: Deodorant, slipper socks, combs

Books: *What to Expect When You're Expecting: What to Expect the First Year*; Books on picking baby names, Pregnancy diet type books

Children's Books: *Love You, Hug You, Read to You* by Tish Rabe

The Mission Board wants to thank you all for your generosity and helping to support our mission project.

Bless you all.
Carol Rollins
Mission Board

READERS NEEDED FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY 5/19

We're looking for people who can speak/read a language in addition to English, particularly if it's a language related to our heritage. On Pentecost the disciples were given the power to speak in different languages by the Holy Spirit, so we're looking to read some of our scripture for Pentecost in numerous languages. Please email Pastor Katrina if you're interested! (kmanzi@middleburyucc.org)



MUSICAL MNEMONICS FOR SCRIPTURE

If you are like me, you might find that it's much easier to remember a few lines of poetry or the lyrics of a song than to remember standard texts. That's because rhyming and/or rhythmic words are powerful mnemonic devices. Mnemonic devices, you'll recall, are the tricks we use as memory aids. As just one example, when we were children, we probably all learned the twenty-six unrelated letters of the alphabet by singing that "Alphabet Song."

In the back of the New Century Hymnal (as in many hymnals and online) there's a Bible Scripture Index. If you are looking to see if a particular verse from the Bible is included in any of the hymns, you'll find your answer in that index. The amazing thing is that there are multiple pages of citations of scripture being quoted or paraphrased in hymns.

Perhaps I want to know if the first chapter of the Book of Revelation is used in any hymns. I can look in the index and see, "Yep – it's in Hymns 602 and 300." Is the last chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew cited in any hymns? Yes, again! I can find texts from those Gospel passages used in Hymns 240, 253, 239, 233, 243, 229, 528, 280, 324, 535, and 477!

Any of us who can recall lines from a hymn may have memorized more scripture than we realize – since our hymns are full of scripture quotes. So keep singing! (And even if you can't sing for whatever

reason, be sure to have your hymnal open to follow along and soak in those Bible verses.)

Blessings,
Donna Obarowski

FAITH FORMATION

We are grateful to our April Sunday School teachers: *Norma Solberg, Erin Wells, Pam Albon, and Robbie Kamide* for your generous time and dedication to enriching the spiritual growth of the MCC youth! The April curriculum centered on the joyous season of belief in Jesus' resurrection. Our students explored the meaning of faith and how to spread Christian love through their words and actions. Engaging activities, creative projects, interactive games, and impactful lessons filled our classroom sessions.

This month, we had the privilege of witnessing three of our Sunday School children – Callie Hubbard, Evelyn Hubbard, and Emilia Hubbard – take the sacred step into God's family through baptism. We warmly welcome them into our spiritual community!

As May ushers in blooms and warmth (hurray for warm sunshine!), we eagerly anticipate continued growth and deepening of faith fostered by our Sunday School program.

Sunday School teacher volunteers are needed – no green thumb required!

Springtime brings new growth and what better way to nurture young minds than by serving as a Sunday school teacher? It's a blooming opportunity to share your unique faith journey with our little sprouts. No green thumb required – we provide the lesson plans and materials, while you bring your unique perspective. Just an occasional hour of your time can help cultivate a lifelong relationship with God. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just taking root, this rewarding role is open to anyone 16 and older looking to sow seeds of spiritual growth in our MCC church family. So, don't let this opportunity blossom without you!

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

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.

TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees continues to focus on the board's membership. Currently Greg is chairman and Sal, Russ, Len, and Sean are members. We should have a total of six members per our By-Laws. So, we have been doing the work of six members with five. Russ stayed on when Sal stepped down to help Greg in transition and will depart the board at the end of June. We need to get another trustee between now and then. Following that we need a second member by the end of 2024 to get our membership back to six members. Ladies and gentlemen, we need your help sooner than later. If you are a member of MCC and have a few hours for a meeting once a month, please contact Greg Ecsedy at 203-512-6356 about becoming a Trustee. Thank you.

Bob and Diane report finances are holding and within our operational budget. Please keep your pledges coming as promised so our cash flow remains consistent. Thank you.

Trustees gave Matthew Titley a gift card for all the computer and other communications work he has done for the church at no charge.

Thank you, Sean, for repairing a windowsill on the parsonage before one of our rainy days.

We continue to have leaks in the parsonage roof. Rev. Katrina has worked hard to spread tarps in the attic to help protect the newly painted rooms below. The current roof is one layer of shingles decades old and well beyond expected life. Most likely a completely new roof will be required to prevent future damage. Trustees are waiting for quotes.

Spring clean-up April 13th, Greg Ecsedy had 12 volunteers cleaning up the grounds around the parsonage. On April 20th we will gather again to spread trailer loads of mulch around the church and parsonage. Boy Scouts and church members will finish the job started on the 13th. Thank everyone that has and will bring our church alive with your hard work. Thanks, Greg.

The carpet in the balcony near the door to the steeple has worn thin and needs to be replaced before someone gets hurt. Bill Wildman will give us a price to replace/repair that area of carpet. This is probably the oldest carpeting in the balcony.

Sal reports that savings from switching from Comcast to Frontier (after all the dust settled) was not \$1800.00 but \$2040.00 for a year. Trustees focus on every dollar we can save that can be put to good use elsewhere. Thanks Sal.

Respectfully submitted for the Trustees,
Russ Tolles

THAT RAINY DAY IS HERE

Maybe I should have saved those leftover dreams.

Funny but here's that rainy day...

Stewardship is about using the resources God has given us to fulfill our mission in the world. That mission – Worship, Spiritual Growth, Service, and Fellowship – is a continuing and long-term commitment.

We have to think of stewardship that way, too. We manage our resources both day-to-day and for the future, saving for a rainy day.

Our annual fall pledge drive and weekly offerings provide the money our faith community needs each year to pay its staff, provide a place to meet and worship together, and offer our service to the community. This year's successful fall campaign means we have completed the first quarter with a balanced budget. Thank you!

But as with a household, we have to think beyond the annual budget to deal with unforeseen challenges. When the meeting house burned in 1935, we literally picked up the pieces of the bell and began rebuilding. In the 1950s we expanded by adding classrooms and office space. Fifty years later, another expansion added offices and the elevator, making our facilities accessible.

When faced with an addition or emergency, homeowners and businesses typically cover the costs through insurance, loans, savings, or some combination. So do we. Each of those events required capital campaigns to raise the funds needed initially and set aside an endowment for future needs. When we installed our Holtcamp organ in the 1980s, MCC set aside funds for its maintenance and eventual replacement. Likewise, when we built the addition that would carry us into our third century, we created the Third Century Fund.

Unlike the Music Fund, which generates interest that we use to maintain the organ, the Third Century Fund serves as a reserve. The principal is used for major capital projects beyond our budget: repainting our facilities during the pandemic, emergency repairs, and the like. Over the past 10 years, this has brought that fund to about \$18,500 – a point where we will need to replenish it if we're going to use it for another rainy day.

As Frank Sinatra once sang, "that rainy day is here." Or rather, a series of rainy days.

Our budget was in the black for the first quarter of 2024 as the last of our major projects – replastering and repainting the interior of the

parsonage – was ending. Then Katrina noticed water pooling in the newly finished ceiling and walls. Inspections showed several leaks in the parsonage roof, which will need to be replaced.

Any homeowner who has replaced a roof knows how expensive it is. The Trustees are getting competitive bids, which are expected to start at more than \$25,000. Our insurer ruled that this was not covered because it was not accidental or a natural disaster. So our choices are limited.

Do we dip into our unrestricted endowment again to cover the cost? Should we take out a loan and have a special pledge campaign to pay ourselves back? Or should we conduct a larger campaign to cover the parsonage roof and other foreseeable projects such as the church roof and parking lot, and use the remainder to replenish the Third Century Fund?

The Church Council will meet with the UCC's Church Building & Loan Fund, which has helped us with previous major capital campaigns, to consider the best strategy. The CB&LF offers consulting services and helps us plan capital campaigns – for a fixed fee. It would make it worthwhile to bundle a number of projects into a larger campaign that would include replenishing the Third Century Fund for the future.

We'll keep you informed in Church Life. Send your questions and concerns to us at stewardship@middleburyucc.org.

Howard Fielding
For the Board of Stewardship

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT MCC?: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MEDIA CAMPAIGN

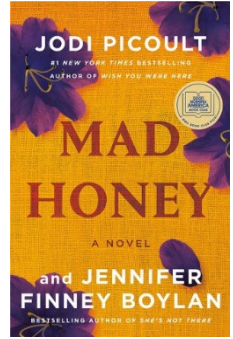
We're planning to do some social media video ads featuring short testimonials from MCC friends and members about what they love about MCC. We need volunteers willing to be filmed sharing what they love about our church for the campaign. We're looking for people of all ages to participate. People are most likely to try a church

because someone they know invited them, so this is a way for us to invite our neighbors. If you're interested, please contact Pastor Katrina (kmanzi@middleburyucc.org).

MCC BOOK CLUB

Please join us for our MCC book club on Thursday, May 23rd, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. In May, we will be discussing *Mad Honey* by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney.

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



YOGA AT MCC!

What: Vinyasa Yoga for all fitness levels

Where: Our Social Hall

When: Mondays @ 5:30 p.m.

No class on May 6th

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

IMPORTANT MAY DATES

5/19: Pentecost Sunday

5/23: 6:00 p.m. MCC Book Club

5/27: Memorial Day

**Middlebury Congregational Church
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