

CHURCH LIFE

JUNE 2025



MIDDLEBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
AN OPEN & AFFIRMING CONGREGATION OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MIDDLEBURYUCC.ORG

FROM THE PASTOR

We have a lot of things going on here at MCC in the month of June. June 8th is Strawberry Festival and a Sunday where we'll be worshipping outdoors. It's also Pentecost where we celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. It's often viewed as the birthday of the Church. The following Sunday, June 15th is Celebration Sunday, recognizing the end of the church program year and start of summer, followed by an all church picnic. June 23rd through June 27th is Vacation Bible School!

This past month, the Roman Catholic Church elected a new pope, Pope Leo XIV. One of themes the new pope has been highlighting in these first days of his papacy is church unity and church unity across denominational lines. Another way to say that is the pope is indicating ecumenism is going to be one of his priorities.

The United Church of Christ (UCC), our denomination, was formed as a direct result of the ecumenical movement, as a direct result of a worldwide movement of working towards church unity. The UCC, formed in 1957, is essentially the result of four denominations all merging together: the German Evangelical Church, the German Reformed Church, the Christian Church (they were closely related to the Disciples of Christ denomination if you're familiar with them), and the National Council of Congregational Churches. As you might guess from the name, MCC is from the Congregational part of the merger.

The backdrop of the merger that formed the UCC was a worldwide ecumenical movement and optimism for what the Church Universal might be able to do if Christians worked together across denominational lines. There was some debate as to whether our denomination's name should actually be the "Uniting Church of Christ" because the hope was that this was just the dawn of a new era of healing divides among churches. The motto of the UCC is part of John 17:21 "that they may all be one" because the foundational hope of our denomination was to look towards a day when the Church Universal would be whole again.

As the 20th century continued, it turned out that people had been overly optimistic about how worldwide ecumenical relations would go. The UCC didn't end up expanding beyond those initial mergers. But, there have been a number of really important victories in the work for church unity. We have a number of full communion agreements with other mainline Protestant denominations that allow for us to recognize each others' sacraments and ordinations. Protestants and Catholics together developed the Revised Common Lectionary, the calendar of church readings that many churches use, which means on any given Sunday a large percentage of the Church, even those of different denominations, are all reading the same scripture in worship.

I believe the biggest victory of the ecumenical movement has been on baptism. After decades of dialogue and incremental agreements, in 2011 the United Church of Christ General Synod approved the "Common Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Baptism," which was also approved by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, and the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference. What this agreement means for us is that our baptisms in the UCC are recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and vice versa. In our part of the U.S., this agreement is such a big help because there are so many mixed Protestant and Catholic families. It means families can celebrate important faith milestones together without worrying that being baptized in this church or that church might consign their loved one to perdition.

I don't know what the future of Catholic/Protestant relations will hold, but it seems based on the messaging out of the Vatican we might have some renewed efforts towards unity. And in a nation and world that often can seem so hopelessly divided, it's nice to have reason to believe we might not have to wait until Christ returns for the Church Universal to sit at one table, share one baptism, and proclaim one Lord, especially as we look towards Pentecost this month.

This is a prayer for the unity of the Church from the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship*:

“O God, you are the giver of life. We pray for the church in the whole world. Sanctify her life, renew her worship, give power to her witnessing, restore her unity. Give strength to those who are searching together for that kind of obedience which created unity. Heal the divisions separating your children one from another, so that they will make fast, with bonds of peace, the unity which the Spirit gives. Amen.”

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

BUILDING FOR OUR FUTURE: UPDATES ON POTENTIAL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

As was shared last month, our church leadership is discerning whether we should do a capital campaign in 2026 to raise money for capital improvements. The core improvements most needed are to replace the church roof, repave the parking lot, repair the sidewalks, repaint the steeple, and replace funds spent to replace the parsonage roof in 2024. We’re looking at needing to raise about \$240,000 to complete all those mandatory improvements. Plus, we should replenish the funds used to support the buildings so our buildings don’t drain away money that is better used for ministry, mission, and operations.

This past month, we signed a contract with the United Church of Christ Church Building & Loan Fund for them to conduct a financial feasibility study with us this October to help us learn whether we’d be able to successfully raise the amount of money we’d need. The financial feasibility study will involve around 20 interviews with people in our church and community as well as reviewing our financial information.

Once we get the results of the study, our church leadership will have the information we need to determine whether we should move forward with a capital campaign in the coming year.



THE DEACONS' BENCH

As we come to the end of the school year and church calendar, we remember that many of us follow different schedules and timelines. The

Mayans thought the world was going to end in 2012 as that is when their calendar stopped. Even our current year is different from the first iteration as seen with October being the tenth month but has the prefix of the number 8, all because of some Roman emperors who wanted to be remembered. We have come to the time of year where children are happy for summer break and we as a congregation start celebrating everything that has happened throughout the church season, again not following the calendar year. However, even though our church year is “ending” we still have summer services and VBS kicking into full gear. It is important to remember that we are all in different seasons of life as well. But the most important thing to remember is that God is with us no matter where we are on our journey through life. He welcomes us all from birth then reaffirms that welcome through baptism and throughout life. While calendars and lives differ, God is the one constant in which we can all depend.

Respectively submitted for the Board of Deacons,
Brittany Romaniello

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

Our monthly food contribution to GWIM Soup Kitchen is Cereal.
Place these items on the Multiplication table.

Last month on Tuesday, May 20th we hosted the Litchfield South Association meeting/dinner. Ellen Aronheim cooked up a delicious barbecue meal of BBQ Pork, BBQ Chicken, BBQ plant based tofu, Cole slaw, macaroni salad, mixed BBQ beans and scrumptious berry cream cake. At this meeting they gathered to compile personal care bags for disaster sites that were sent to Church World Services. Our missions group purchased enough items for 30 bags to be created and other churches attending also brought along items and they were successful in creating 137 bags. It was a great success.

Last month we also supported Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury,

which is a facility helping victims of domestic violence, with a check for \$250 to help with supplies they needed for families.

We are getting ready for our Strawberry festival and by the time you read this our festival will be over. Just a big thank you to all those who donated baskets and items for baskets. Hoping for a big success at the Strawberry Festival. We will update you with the results of all our efforts next month's Church Life.

Thank you again for all your generous donations all year long.

Bless you all,
Mission Board
Carol Rollins



On May 20th, MCC hosted the Spring meeting of the Litchfield South Association, our local United Church of Christ judicatory body. As part of the meeting and with the combined contributions of our area UCC churches, we were able to assemble 138 hygiene kits for Church World Service to help with disaster relief.

FAITH FORMATION & YOUTH GROUP

May Highlights: We're grateful to our Sunday School teachers *Norma, Pam, Robbie, & Liz* for jumping in and teaching the kids this May! We are also grateful to our teen youth, *Shaelyn, Charis, Callie, Emily, Gabe, Raeghan, & Jillian* who volunteer to help with the kids as needed!

This month, our church family enjoyed a special intergenerational activity during coffee hour where everyone planted herbs to take home and nurture. We've also concluded our Sunday School season, marking the end of a wonderful year with both our long-time families and the new faces who joined us this year. Welcome to all who have become part of our community! We are thankful for all of you and to our volunteer teachers!

Youth Group: We are so proud of our amazing youth group, who continue to volunteer wherever needed at MCC. We're now planning some fun activities just for them (after a very busy sports season). Stay tuned for more details coming soon!

Sara Hubbard
Faith Formation Volunteer Coordinator

ON THE STEWARDSHIP TRAIL

As Christians, we often talk about our “faith journey” and where it has taken us. My own was a long one, starting with baptism in a Congregational church. When my parents moved to a new town, I wandered with no church for most of my school years. I found another church home when I needed the recommendation of my faith leader to become an Eagle Scout.

My uncle invited me to Pompton Reformed Church, where I met a certain redhead who sang in the choir. It's always good to have a partner on the trail. So far Barbara and I have gone about two-thirds of the way together. Thank you for joining us on this last leg.

So, why am I getting all deep and reflective about faith journeys and life paths? To introduce this year's Stewardship theme, of course.

Over the years we've baked apple pies, cared for the orchard, followed treasure maps, and searched for the light of the lighthouse. This year we're going to hit the trail.

This fall's Stewardship theme will tie in with the Vacation Bible School theme of Camp Firelight. What do you do when you're at camp? You explore! You take hikes. You have adventures. This summer we hope everyone – not just the kids – will have a chance to get out on the trails, make discoveries and memories, and share your photos with us. Between now and then, we and other MCC outdoors types will share thoughts about life on the trail and what we've learned. We hope to work with the Middlebury Land Trust through our church friends who are also Land Trust members. We might even take a walk or two.

This is all still in the early stages of planning, so stay tuned! Meanwhile, always remember to follow what Kent Sullivan-Wiley calls your GPS: God's Path to Salvation.

Howard Fielding for the Board of Stewardship

MUSIC NOTES **“A TALE OF TWO HYMNALS”**

As you all know, we continue to use two hymnals for worship at MCC, the (red) *Pilgrim Hymnal* and the (black) *New Century Hymnal*. Both are official hymnals of the United Church of Christ, so why keep both?

The Pilgrim Hymnal was first published in 1912, with several updates, the last being in 1958. Instead of another update, the decision was made to develop a new hymnal (*New Century*) which was published in 1995.

The "old" hymnal had limitations. For example, it didn't include many popular hymns such as "Amazing Grace" and "How Great Thou Art".

At the same time, the "new" hymnal updated the language of the hymnal to be more modern and inclusive. That means that many

hymns that people already knew by heart were different. For example, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" traditionally ends with the phrase "Hark! The herald angels sing, 'Glory to the new-born King'". But *New Century* has it as "Hark! the herald angels sing, 'Glory to the Christ-child bring'".

Consequently, our church community has found a place for both hymnals in our worship. We can treasure our traditional favorites as we know them and still find places for some newer hymns.

Blessings,
Donna Obarowski



**MIDDLEBURY
& STRAWBERRY
FESTIVAL**

June 8, 3pm-7pm

Middlebury Green

**Shortcake, Fun, Food, Raffle, Games
Silent Auction**

**All proceeds go to
support Middlebury Congregational Church**

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL IS BACK!

6/23-6/27, 9AM TO 12PM

Registration info: Join us for *Camp Firelight*, our church's Vacation Bible School running June 23rd to June 27th from 9am to 12pm. It is open to children entering Kindergarten through 6th grade. During this program, children will explore bible stories through music, drama, games, crafts, science activities, and play. Registration is now available! <https://middleburycc.breezechms.com/form/VBS2025>

Counselor Application: We're looking for youth to serve as VBS counselors. This is a great opportunity to get experience working with younger kids and to pick up a lot of volunteer hours! The counselor application form is here:

<https://middleburycc.breezechms.com/VBSCounselor2025>

Seeking Donations for VBS:

- Clear plastic cups
- Paper towels
- Wet Wipes
- Plates of any size
- Plastic water bottles
- Disposable baking pans
- Disposable spoons
- Empty 2 liter bottles with labels removed
- Bubbles
- Food coloring
- Balloons without latex
- Paper bags
- Corrugated cardboard
- Gallon of glue
- Pipe cleaners
- Tea lights (battery powered)
- Cloud clay by Crayola



A box for donations is in the Social Hall.

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.

MCC GOES TO THE YARD GOATS: FRIDAY, AUGUST 1ST, 7:10PM

We're looking to get a group together to go see a Yard Goats game.

Tickets are around \$18 each, dependent on how many people we want to go. Please email Pastor Katrina (kmanzi@middleburyucc.org) if you're interested in going so we can get a headcount for what kind of tickets we should get.

CELEBRATION SUNDAY & PICNIC: JUNE 15TH

Join us for worship on June 15th as we celebrate the end of the church program year and the beginning of summer! After worship, we will have an all church picnic with food provided.

IMPORTANT DATES

6/1: 10am Worship & Communion

6/8: 10am Pentecost Worship (outdoor chapel, weather permitting)
3-7pm Strawberry Festival

6/15: 10am Celebration Sunday Worship & Picnic

6/22: 10am Worship

6/23-6/27: Vacation Bible School

6/29: 10am Worship

**Middlebury Congregational Church
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Middlebury CT 06762**

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