

# CHURCH LIFE

OCTOBER 2024



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
[MIDDLEBURYUCC.ORG](http://MIDDLEBURYUCC.ORG)

## FROM THE PASTOR

October is my favorite month for living here on the green in Middlebury. The church and Westover always look so pretty with the beauty of the fall color.

In addition to the leaves changing color, October also brings us Halloween. Over the past few years a number of people have asked me if it's Christian to celebrate Halloween because there are some Christian groups that often protest Halloween as pagan or as promoting witchcraft. However, what often gets lost in popular media is that Halloween directly comes from Christian practice and history.

So, we think of Halloween and picture kids dressed up in costumes and trick-or-treating. But Halloween was originally part of a three day observance of the church focused on the dead: Halloween (All Hallows' Eve on 10/31, All Saints' Day (or All Hallows' Day) on 11/1, and All Souls' Day on 11/2. The three days are sometimes known as Allhallowtide, and are still celebrated by especially Catholic or Episcopal/Anglican Churches. (Hallow is the older English term for holy or saint. We mostly just use it in that context during the Lord's Prayer or sometimes talking about "hallowed ground.")

Traditionally, the idea is that this time of year is a "thin place," a time when the barriers between the afterlife and this world grow thin and the spirits of the departed are close at hand. Some thought that the souls of the departed were still on the earth until All Saints' Day. In terms of church, Halloween was a vigil where people fasted and prayed in preparation for the feast of All Saints'. However, there were many popular customs and folk traditions that developed around the evening, some included dressing up to disguise oneself from wandering souls who were thought to be seeking their last chance at vengeance before going on to the afterlife. All Saints' Day was (and still is in many churches) the celebration of the saints known and unknown. Traditionally (and in Catholic theology), this observance is more focused on canonized saints who don't have a feast day. The following day, All Souls' Day, is the day where all the faithful departed are remembered and prayed for.

After the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, one of the main differences that developed between Protestant and Catholic theology was about praying for the dead. In Catholic theology, upon death a good number of people end up in purgatory, essentially the waiting room to heaven where people are able to atone for sins they weren't able to atone for in life. But, people still alive on earth could pray for people who had died, and the idea is that this would help the souls in purgatory in their journey towards heaven. This was a major reason for the observance of All Souls' Day.

However, Protestants nixed the idea of purgatory because they didn't see good biblical justification for it. Additionally, this elimination was a reaction against some people in the Catholic church who were abusing people's concern for their relatives in purgatory as a good fundraising opportunity: "as soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs!" (I promise the Stewardship campaign this year won't be using that one.) So, with the elimination of purgatory, in Protestant theology, that means the souls of the departed immediately go to their final destination with no intermediary stop in purgatory, which eliminated a major purpose of praying for the dead. Additionally, Protestant theology puts a much greater focus on all faithful Christians being saints, rather than a select few.

So, that theological development meant that for many Protestant churches like ours, all of Allhallowtide was eliminated from the church calendar. However, as the centuries have gone on, many Protestant churches have come to realize that tossing out all of this part of the church calendar was throwing the baby out with the bathwater. So, in about the early 20th century All Saints' Day came back into many Protestant churches like ours. So, we've basically rolled All Saints' and All Souls' into All Saints' Day. We take that day as a time to remember and give thanks for all the faithful departed and to proclaim the hope of the resurrection. This year, we'll be observing All Saints' on 11/3, the first Sunday in November.

So, given all of that, celebrating Halloween seems pretty Christian to me.

This part of the church calendar was meant to remind us of the important truth that we are part of the body of Christ, the church, in both life and death. And, even in death, we remain connected to one another.

The great Methodist hymn writer Charles Wesley put it like this:

“One family, we dwell in him,  
one Church, above, beneath;  
though now divided by the stream,  
the narrow stream of death.”

Peace,  
Katrina Manzi  
Minister

## **NAMES FOR ALL SAINTS SUNDAY 11/3**

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, during worship we will be observing the feast of All Saints. We will read the names of those who have died, particularly those who have died in the past year. If you would like a name included in worship, please send it to Pastor Katrina so it can be included on the list ([kmanzi@middleburyucc.org](mailto:kmanzi@middleburyucc.org))



### **THE DEACONS' BENCH**

Katrina recently spoke about a campaign that the UCC ran about the three loves. Love thy neighbor. Love creation. Love children. At Silver Lake, there are 4 including love thy self and love God. I believe that all the loves overlap. When you love everything God created, then you love God himself.

To appreciate and take care of creation also helps us love ourselves and our neighbors. As it is the season of change, it is important to remember to love ourselves and give grace to everyone. There are many ways to love yourself and your neighbor. Take a walk outside and notice the changing leaves. Breathe in the crisp autumn air. Sometimes it is reading a book and drinking a hot tea. Other times it is working out and letting all the pent up rage and anxiety out. And

sometimes it is helping out others in times of need. People often have a hard time with their identity and social media is making it harder to have individual thoughts. This then makes it hard to love ourselves. At camp we find it easy to teach about the loves and we have found that the campers are able to take those teachings out into the world. When you create a safe space then you foster the habits and actions of practicing the loves. It does take work but in the end the world is always a better place.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Deacons,  
Brittany Romaniello



## **FROM THE MISSION BOARD**

We continue to collect food items for GWIM's soup kitchen. October is Peanut butter, November is Dutch Egg Noodles or Elbows, and December is Instant potatoes.

We are pleased to contribute \$200 to our youth group to support their mission project of creating personal necessity bags for the clients of Carolyn's Place. A heartfelt thank you to the youth group for your dedication and hard work in making a difference!

We are sending \$500 to the organization affiliated with Ukrainian refugees through the UCC Marlborough Church. They have requested our support in their efforts to assist those refugees currently living in Poland.

For the flood victims in our neighboring communities, we collected approximately \$565 from our one-time church envelope collection on September 8<sup>th</sup>. With additional donations, we will round up the total to ensure we can send at least \$500 to support TEAM, which is aiding the Valley/Oxford area, and \$500 to the Southbury Needy Fund, which is assisting in Southbury.

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, we will be seeking volunteers after church to help prepare 250 sandwiches for GWIM, which will be delivered on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Our youth group has graciously offered to assist with this project as well.

Thank you all for your anticipated cooperation and for the generous contributions you have made toward our mission projects. Your support is essential, and we would not be able to assist these organizations without your kindness and generosity.

Bless you all.  
Carol Rollins  
Mission Board

## MUSIC NOTES

One of the most important observances in the Lutheran Church's calendar is "Reformation Day", generally celebrated on the final Sunday of October, and many other Christian denominations make note of the occasion as well.

While most Christians will recognize Martin Luther as a key (maybe *the* key) figure in the Protestant Reformation, he is less recognized for his contributions to sacred music.

Luther left behind over 40 known hymns that he himself authored (the best-known being "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God". But arguably more important was his whole philosophy of music and hymnody.

Martin Luther came from a musical background and was a singer and musician who often taught and wrote about the importance of music. He believed that, rather than an elite special choir providing all the music for worship, the laity should be active participants in worship and promoted congregational singing. He approved of congregations singing in their own language and that the only thing more important than the music was the Word of God.

Luther's own hymns were almost entirely based on scripture, giving the people both sound teaching and the opportunity to directly praise God with their participation in hymn singing.

It's been over 500 years since Luther made his famous declaration that sparked the Reformation, but his hymns and, especially, his ideas about church music live on.

Blessings,  
Donna Obarowski

## FAITH FORMATION

We held our first family movie night on August 23<sup>rd</sup> to mark the end of summer and the start of the school year. The kids wore their pj's, munched on popcorn, and watched "Encanto". We are looking forward to our next movie night on October 18th, which will usher in the spooky autumn season with the Disney hit "Coco." All ages are welcome and encouraged to join!

Sunday School began this month with an outdoor activity, creating thank-you bags for first responders. The children decorated the bags and filled them with treats that corresponded to a poem. This idea came from our volunteer Robbie, who thought it would be a great way to start this year's program by focusing on how we can help our community, especially in light of the recent local floods. The bags were donated to our local fire departments. September's lessons centered on God's powerful acts and how they continue to remind us of His power and all He has done for us.

*I'd like to extend a huge thank you to our Sunday School teacher volunteers for their time and planning this month! Pam, Robbie, Erin, Katie, and Amy, you are all rock stars!*

### ***Speaking of which...***

#### ***Sunday School teacher volunteers are needed!***

We continue to invite members of MCC to jump in and volunteer as a Sunday School teacher! The time commitment is minimal and flexible. Volunteers will have access to all the information needed to participate, and we're happy to provide any assistance to help you get started. Having different volunteers allows the children to gain diverse perspectives and enriches their learning experience is a wonderful way to contribute to the growth of MCC and its mission.

If you're interested, or you have any questions please contact Sara Hubbard [shubbard@middleburyucc.org](mailto:shubbard@middleburyucc.org)

Thank you!

Sara Hubbard

Faith Formation Volunteer Coordinator



# AN IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM THE OPEN AND AFFIRMING COMMITTEE

Coming up, we will have a panel discussion with ONA leaders and committee members from other local churches who have recently completed the process. It will be held immediately following worship on Sunday, October 27. Church members are asked to submit questions ahead of time. If you have a question about the process, changes they have seen in their churches since becoming ONA, or anything else you are wondering, please ask! All questions should be sent to Kelly Ecsedy ([kellyecsedy22@gmail.com](mailto:kellyecsedy22@gmail.com)) by 10/19 so that the panel can have time to thoughtfully review them.



## PRESCHOOL ON THE GREEN FUNDRAISER

Our annual fundraiser will be kicking off soon. We will be selling Lyman Orchard pies and cookie dough. There are several varieties to choose from and all items come frozen, so this is a great for when you need an “emergency” dessert. The cookie dough is in individual pieces, so make the whole box or just a few at a time.

The fundraiser starts on October 1<sup>st</sup> and runs until October 15<sup>th</sup>. All proceeds go towards student enrichment programs. Last year, we were able to invite CT Science Center and White Memorial Conservation Center to our school! Delivery of the goodies will be Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, just in time for Thanksgiving.

Participants can place orders online or use the attached order form.

Thank you, in advance, for supporting our school!



## **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.

## **FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT**

**Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup> at 6pm** in the MCC social hall. We will be showing Disney's hit "Coco", rated PG. All ages are welcome! Please feel free to dress up in a costume!

## **CHURCH CENSUS**

We are finalizing and documenting all information from the surveys that were sent out earlier this year. Edits to membership information and requests for contact will be included in our update. If you haven't returned your form please take this opportunity to do so now. We look forward to hearing from you!

## **FALL DINNER PARTY**

**When:** Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>

5:00 – 7:00 pm

**Where:** MCC Social Hall

**Tickets:** \$15 pp

## **COFFEE HOUR**

For the month of October, coffee hour will be hosted by the Faith Formation.



**YOU ARE INVITED TO  
BRING FRIENDS AND  
FAMILY TO OUR FALL  
DINNER PARTY!!**

**WHEN: FRIDAY NOV. 1, 2024**

**WHERE: MCC SOCIAL HALL**

**TIME: 5:00-7:00 PM**

Fresh Green Salad  
Golden Roasted Turkey  
Creamy Mashed Potatoes  
Home Made Turkey Dressing  
Roasted Seasonal Vegetables  
Assorted Dessert Tray

Music, Raffle Baskets, Games

Tickets: \$15.00 pp

# **INFLATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND THE ENDOWMENT**

You will hear a lot about inflation in the coming weeks as the election approaches. One party will say that prices are up 20% over the last four years. The other will say inflation is below 3%.

Both are correct. Spending policies may trigger or worsen inflation, only monetary policy set by the Federal Reserve Bank will help control it. Last month, the Fed eased interest rates for the first time since 2020, signaling that the worst may be over.

Meanwhile, policy proposals from both campaigns could make matters worse. Be prepared for prices to rise again in 2025.

What does this mean for us as stewards of our church and its mission – especially when we’re asking you to prayerfully think about increasing your pledge next year? Consider:

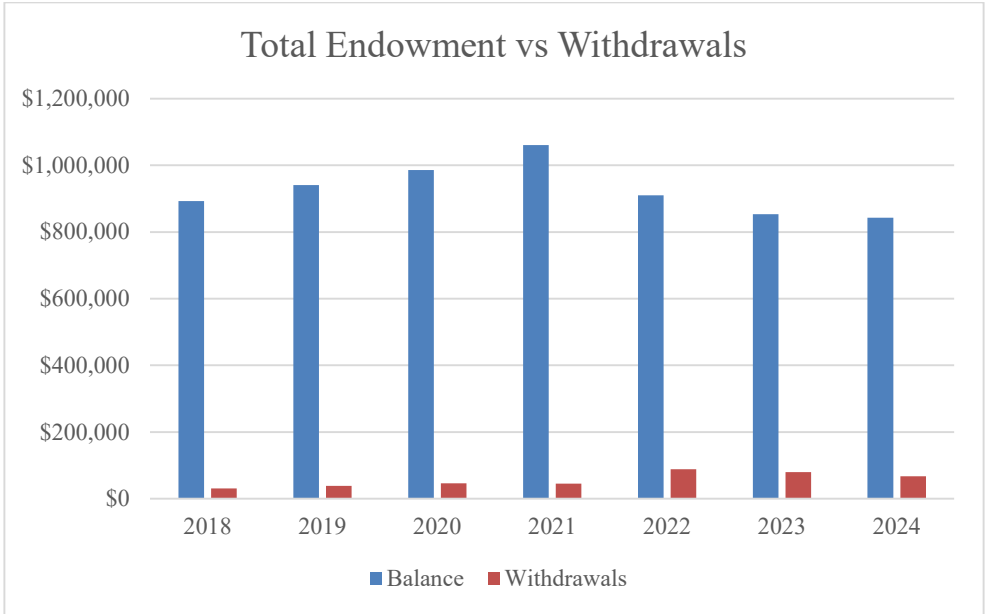
- If you pledged \$1,000 at this time last year, the church could buy only \$980 worth of goods and services with that amount today.
- If you haven’t changed your pledge since 2019, every dollar you pledged then buys only 84 cents’ worth today.
- Major expenses will cost much more in the long run if we defer them. Even at the current 2.53 percent inflation, the leaky parsonage roof we replaced this summer for \$37,000 would cost nearly \$38,000 if we waited another year.

The church covered the emergency project by withdrawing \$12,000 from the Third Century Fund, which is restricted to capital projects, and \$25,000 from the unrestricted funds of our endowment. We intend to replace those amounts in a future capital campaign.

The good news? The annual meeting approved a budget calling for \$60,000 from the endowment to cover operating costs for the year. So far, we have needed only half of that because of spending cuts. Combined, endowment drawdowns total \$67,000 this year: \$37,000 for the roof and \$30,000 for operating expenses.

Meanwhile, because of a good stock market, our overall endowment investments gained \$54,337.81 from January to August. That almost made up for the withdrawals.

The value of the endowment varies based on the stock market and our withdrawals. Here’s a look at its performance since 2018. Over those seven years, we have withdrawn a total of \$395,998 and maintained an average balance of \$926,544. As of August, the current market value of all endowment funds was \$843,076.



Howard Fielding for the Board of Stewardship

## **MCC YOUTH GROUP**

We are thrilled to announce the formation of our new MCC Youth Group for students in grades 6-12. Our first event is set for Friday, October 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm in the social hall. We will be making and enjoying fried dough while creating care packages for Carolyn's Place of Waterbury – a great opportunity to serve our community together. Afterwards, we'll head over to the parsonage yard next door for the MCC campfire night at 6:30pm. Feel free to bring a friend along as well. We can't wait to see you there! please email Sara Hubbard at [sarahubbardmcc@gmail.com](mailto:sarahubbardmcc@gmail.com) with any questions.

### **IMPORTANT OCTOBER DATES**

- 10/1-10/15:** Preschool on the Green fundraiser orders being taken
- 10/4:** 5:30pm First Youth Group Meeting in Social Hall  
6:30pm Church Campfire Night, Parsonage Yard
- 10/6:** 10am Outdoor Worship (weather permitting), Outdoor chapel next to church parking lot. Consider bringing a lawn chair
- 10/13:** 10am Worship: Guest Preacher, the Rev. David Camphouse, Director of Silver Lake Camp and Retreat Center
- 10/18:** 6pm Movie Night in Social Hall showing "Coco"
- 10/27:** 10am Reformation Sunday Worship  
11:30am Open & Affirming Panel in Church Social Hall

# MCC HOMECOMING



MCC Group Photo. ©ShawnaLee Kwashnak, 09/08/2024.



Silly Group Photo. ©ShawnaLee Kwashnak, 09/08/2024.

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

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
Prepaid  
Permit No. 117**