

CHURCH LIFE

APRIL 2025



FROM THE PASTOR

Palm Sunday (4/13), Holy Week, and Easter (4/20) are all in April this year. During Holy Week, we will have Bible study on Wednesday 4/16 (6:30 supper, 7pm discussion) and our Maundy Thursday worship service on 4/17 at 7pm. The Easter egg hunt will take place this year on Easter Sunday following worship. Holy Week and Easter are my favorite time in the church calendar, and I look forward to observing these holy days with all of you.

However, Easter this year is late, so we will spend most of April still in the season of Lent. One of the traditional ways to observe Lent is to spend more time reading scripture. A number of you have asked me what Bible or which Bible translation you should use, so I'm going to do a summary of some of the different bibles and translations out there.

As many of you know, the original words of the Bible weren't written in English. The Old Testament is in Hebrew, and the New Testament is in Greek. All Bible translations exist on a scale from word for word translation (formal equivalence) to thought for thought translation (dynamic equivalence.)

Word for word literal translation preserves a lot of grammatical aspects of the original languages, but it makes for some very difficult to read sentences in English. It also gives the impression that scripture was written much more formally when in many places the language is more conversational.

Thought for thought translation tries to render in English the tone and ideas of what's in the original texts. This makes a much more readable translation in English, and it often preserves the formal and causal variation in tone throughout scripture better. The downside is you lose many grammatical features of the original languages, and translators often have to make bigger interpretive decisions about what something means versus doing a more literal translation.

Before I start talking about some particular translations, I do want to say the best Bible translation is one you read. So, if you have a Bible you like, please keep reading it.

Word for Word Bible Translations

- **King James Version (1611)**
 - The KJV is very much a word for word literal translation in 1611 English, and it laid the groundwork for what the Bible sounds like to English ears. All future word for word translations I'm going to mention are revisions of the KJV text with updates due to evolutions in English language and the discovery of new manuscripts.
 - The KJV is beautiful, but it can be difficult to understand for modern readers.

- **Revised Standard Version (1952)**
 - The RSV is a revision of the 1901 American Standard Version (ASV), which was itself a revision of the KJV. This translation was overseen by the National Council of Churches, and much of the translation work was done at Yale Divinity School. One of our classrooms was where the committee met, and it's named the "RSV Room." The RSV is what many of the pew Bibles are in our church.
 - It was commissioned initially to provide a more modern English translation than the 1901 ASV. However, midway through the translation, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, necessitating a new translation shortly after the RSV publication. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were able to be used during the work on the translation.
 - The RSV keeps archaic "thee" "thou" language in the Old Testament, but drops it for the New Testament, which reflects the New Testament Greek being more conversational.

- **New Revised Standard Version (1989)/New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (2021)**
 - The NRSV is a revision of the RSV. It's also produced by the National Council of Churches. The NRSV was able to take full advantage of scholarship done on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The

NRSV was translated by Catholic, mainline Protestant and Jewish scholars. This is the translation we typically read on Sunday mornings, and it's the translation most college courses on the Bible would use. This is the translation I most frequently use.

- NRSV drops all archaic “thee” and “thou” language and uses inclusive language when referring to human beings. (e.g. Men is no longer used as the plural for mixed groups.)
- NRSV Bibles
 - Scholarly/Academic Study Bibles
 - Harper Collins Study Bible & New Oxford Annotated Study Bible
 - These both have full notes, maps, and commentary throughout. These are often the assigned Bibles for college or seminary courses. Yale Divinity School always assigned the Harper Collins because more Yale faculty are in it. I use the Harper Collins the most of my Bibles.
 - Bibles for Devotional Purposes
 - The C.S. Lewis Bible
 - This is the text of the NRSV with relevant quotes and notes from C.S. Lewis throughout. You can read the Bible and C.S. Lewis at the same time.
- NRSVUE Study Bibles (just released this past fall)
 - The SBL (Society of Biblical Literature) Study Bible
 - This is a rebranded and updated version of the Harper Collins Study Bible using the newly released NRSVUE text. I have bought this, but like any church person, I dislike change. So, I haven't made the switch to the updated text yet. By all accounts, this is a good study Bible.
 - The Westminster Study Bible
 - This was the first completed study Bible with the NRSVUE text. It's published by Westminster John Knox Press, which is the Presbyterian Church (USA) publishing house.

- English Standard Version (2001)
 - The ESV is a revision of the RSV done by more conservative evangelical biblical scholars.
 - I actually find the ESV quite readable, and there are a lot of nice editions of it. The publisher (Crossway) has done a great job. They somehow make the best sized thin Bible to fit into a small purse where the text isn't microscopic. So, I often have an ESV Bible in the hospital. I like its translation of the Psalms.
 - Things I have an issue with:
 - The scholars who made this translation were for the most part all from denominations that don't permit women's ordination and believe in complementarianism, which is the belief that God has created men and women to specific and different roles in the family, church, and in society (e.g. men lead and teach, women submit and support, etc.) (Mainline Protestant denominations like the United Church of Christ and others believe in egalitarianism, which is God has created men and women equal.) The theological perspective of translators comes through in choices made particularly in translating Paul's letters, which deal with both marriage and women's roles in the early church. For example, Paul uses the word "brothers" in Greek to refer to mixed gender groups in the church. Other translations will add "and sisters" to make it clear that this is a mixed gender group. (I would prefer a translation of "siblings", but no one asked me). The ESV just says "brothers" which disguises when scripture is referring to groups that include women and when indeed it is a male only group.
 - Another example is Romans 16:1 where Paul talks about Phoebe and describes her as a servant, which in Greek is the word deacon. Most translations say Phoebe was a deacon or they say she was a servant and footnote "deacon" as an alternative translation. The ESV goes with servant and footnotes "deaconess" as the alternative. In places where the same word appears in reference to men, it's translated as "deacon" rather than "servant."

Thought for Thought Translations

- New International Version (Initially published in 1978, most recent update 2011)
 - Many evangelicals were unhappy with the RSV translation for both theological reasons and because it was such a word for word translation which made it harder for people to read. The NIV is the translation that was produced in response to those needs. The National Association of Evangelicals was in charge of the translation.
 - This is the most popular modern Bible translation. It's very readable. There is some inclusive language for people, but some exclusive male language is retained. (This all depends also on which edition of the NIV you're using.) There are a ton of different Bibles available with the NIV text.
 - I actually prefer how the NIV reads compared to the CEB below, but I have some quibbles with how Paul's letters are translated.

- Common English Bible (2011)
 - An alliance of mainline Protestant scholars and denominations desired a more readable translation of the Bible not produced by an Evangelical group. There was also a desire to have translation that used fully inclusive language for people. This led to the translation of the CEB.
 - The CEB is very readable. Lots of my colleagues love it. I personally think it can end up sounding a little too simplified or odd. But, lots of people who aren't me love it.
 - CEB Bibles
 - The CEB Women's Bible
 - All the notes and info in this Bible are written and edited by female scholars and clergy. There's a summary to give you background on each book of the Bible, and then there are notes and asides throughout dealing with the various topics that come up in the text. Many of the notes are on topics of particular interest to women, but they're useful information for everyone.
 - CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible

- This is the study Bible we give to the 3rd graders here at MCC. It's got lots of good notes explaining things and boxes talking about topics of particular interest to kids.
- First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament (2021)
 - This is a New Testament translation done by indigenous/First Nations people scholars in an effort to capture in English how Native people in North America have told the story of Jesus Christ. If you want to hear a lot of the New Testament in a different way, this is a nice read for devotional purposes. It's very readable.

Bible Paraphrases

- The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language (completed in 2002) by Eugene Peterson
 - I don't think this should be the only Bible anyone should read because it's just one interpretation, but Peterson puts scripture in very easy to read language that's very helpful for basic understanding of what's going on.

In addition to looking at the translation in picking a Bible, you can also look at the publishing house to get a sense of what theological bent the notes and study materials are going to have. Cokesbury (United Methodist) and Westminster John Knox Press (Presbyterian Church USA) are the two big mainline Protestant publishing houses that still do Bibles. InterVarsity Press and Zondervan are two of the major evangelical publishing houses. I've got resources I like from all of those publishers.

I know that is a lot of information. If you have any questions, I'm very happy to talk to you about Bible translations. If you want to read a book on the history of English Bible translation, I love *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles Over Translating the Bible* by Peter Thuesen.

I'll leave you with my favorite prayer for reading the Bible: "Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen." (Book of Common Prayer)

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

BACK TO BASICS: A LENTEN DISCUSSION ON THE APOSTLES' CREED

*Social Hall, Wednesdays during Lent: 6:30 Soup Supper, 7pm
Discussion*

4/2: "He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father"

- 1 Peter 3: 8-22, Ephesians 4:7-10, John 20: 1-18, Acts 1: 6-11

4/9: "and he will come again to judge the living and the dead."

- Mark 13:24-27, Matthew 25: 31-46, Revelation 20:11-21:8

4/16: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

- Holy Spirit: Acts 2:1-13, John 14: 15-31
- Church: 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:4-6, John 1: 17-26, Hebrews 10:24-25
- Communion of saints, resurrection of the body, life everlasting: 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18, Hebrews 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

For further reading:

The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism by Ben Myers
(Lexham Press, 2018)



THE DEACONS' BENCH

April is a time for new beginnings. Spring has officially begun, and as I write this, there are snowdrops, crocuses and hellebores blooming, and daffodils are sending up their green leaves. But besides the new beginnings in the natural world, there are three other ones I want to mention.

On April 20th we will celebrate Easter, the ultimate new beginning as we remember how Christ rose from the dead. Now thousands of years later, we know the ending to the terrible events we recall as Holy Week. But I sometimes think what a cold and terrifying time it must have been for Jesus's followers and disciples, seeing the one they expected to be their king killed in such a brutal and ignominious way. They were probably not yet over their shock and fear when Mary came to them to report "He is risen!" That is a kind of rebirth that Jesus' resurrection promises us. The ultimate spring gift!

Another gift to us this spring is that our church has been offering us two study series: the Wednesday evening Soup & Scripture groups with Pastor Katrina, and the Sunday "I Am" series by Michele Finn. Thank you to both for these wonderful opportunities! Several of us in the groups have had big "Oh!" and "Wow!" and "I never thought about it that way!" moments, as we have gotten new insights into bible passages that we thought we already knew, and a renewed sense of how they relate to our own lives. There will be a few more of the Wednesday evening groups in April, so do consider going to one or more.

Lastly, also In the spirit of change and new beginnings, we have decided to **rename our Cherub Choir**, as it really has children and youth of all ages, some of which are hardly Cherubs anymore (age, not behavior – they are a great group of kids!) Two possibilities are the **Youth Choir**, or possibly the new **Sounds of Joy Choir**. To be decided – I'd love to hear your thoughts. We are also seeking some new volunteers for the fall to assist me by playing the piano or the guitar or even drums as we will no longer have Norma Solberg accompanying us when she relocates permanently to their home in

Rochester, NY. I know there is a lot of talent and skill within our membership. It would not have to be an “every single Sunday” commitment. We can be flexible. Maybe you’d just like to try it once, and see how it goes!

On behalf of the Deacons, wishing you a glorious Easter!
Janine Sullivan-Wiley

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

Mission Board is busy discussing ideas for the Strawberry festival this year. We would like to do another raffle or possibly a silent auction. If anyone is inclined to create a basket or donate an Gift Certificate or something that is of value we would appreciate it.

We will also be providing two Middlebury families this year with Easter Dinner baskets as we have done in the past. Keep an eye on the bulletin board for our lists of items needed for those baskets.

Our mission board is also thinking of helping with other worthy causes within our communities. We will keep you updated as we move forward with our mission goals.

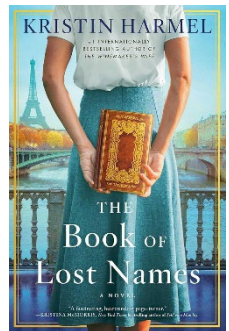
Thank you to everyone in our congregation for your generous support with our mission goals.

Carol Rollins
Mission Board

MCC BOOK CLUB

Please join us for our MCC Book Club on Tuesday, April 15th, 2025 at 6:00p.m. in the Parlor. In April, we will be discussing *The Book of Lost Names* by Kristan Harmel.

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



FAITH FORMATION & YOUTH GROUP

A big thank you to our wonderful March Sunday School volunteers: Brittany, Katie O., Norma, Pam, Robbie, and Erin! Your creative lessons have made a real difference.

This Lenten season, our Sunday School students are exploring the deeper meaning of Lent and discovering how these important teachings connect to their everyday lives. The excitement is building as we prepare for our annual Easter Egg Hunt, which will take place on Easter Sunday this year!

Our youth group program continues to grow. As I type this, we're eagerly anticipating our "Wicked" dinner & a movie night fundraiser—special thanks to Ellen & Katie A. for making this special event possible!

We need you! Sunday School teachers are always needed, and no experience is required. We provide all materials and guidance to help you succeed. Please reach out to me at sarahubbardmcc@gmail.com for more information or to sign up.

Thank you!
Sara Hubbard
Faith Formation Volunteer Coordinator

SILVER LAKE CAMP INFO & SCHOLARSHIPS

Registration is still open for Silver Lake: <https://www.silverlakeect.org/>

- Scholarships Available: contact kmanzi@middleburyucc.org
 - We have scholarships available through MCC
 - There are also scholarships available this year through the Litchfield South Association. Email kmanzi@middleburyucc.org for the application.
- Future of Silver Lake Camp Listening Session: April 23 @7pm here at MCC
 - Silver Lake in Sharon, CT has faced growing deficits since the pandemic and the merger of the CT Conference into the

Southern New England Conference, and the Southern New England Conference is actively working to discern a future for the camp. I encourage anyone, kids and adults, with an interest in the future of Silver Lake to come to the listening session on 4/23 here at MCC. The Conference asked us to host the event because our church sends campers to Silver Lake each year and because we are near many of the churches that most use Silver Lake.



THE BLESSINGS OF "MESSIAH"

For many years, I've had the privilege of teaching music classes for the non-credit OLLI program at UCONN-Waterbury. The class that I'm currently teaching is "There's More to *Messiah* Than Meets the Ear", a class about the German-English master composer, George Friederick Handel, and his most famous oratorio, *Messiah*.

It's a class I've taught previously, and it's been such a blessing to revisit the material in preparation for leading the class sessions. In addition to a "deep dive" into the music itself, we're examining the libretto (the actual word-book of *Messiah*). The texts of the oratorio were not assembled by Handel (who was not a native English speaker) but by a wealthy art patron and admirer of Handel, Charles Jennens. Jennens was a devout Christian himself who wanted to convey the story of God's plan for our salvation. The texts are drawn entirely from scripture, with the majority from the Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures.

Many of our class members associated *Messiah* with the Christmas season and that's not surprising since it's so often performed during that time of year. But we quickly realize that the work is in three parts and many people are familiar with Part One and don't know Parts Two and Three as well except for its most famous chorus, "Hallelujah".

Interestingly, Handel arranged for multiple performances of *Messiah* during his lifetime (mostly to benefit charities). The premiere was in Dublin on April 13, 1742, during Lent. And most of the subsequent

performances were during March and April. This was in part because, when the entire work of three parts is performed, the "story" of *Messiah* encompasses God's full plan of salvation- therefore a great choice for Lent and Easter seasons.

But there was another, practical reason. In the 1700's, during Lent, the theatres were closed, and no performances could take place. Meanwhile, concerts could still be performed. Handel was both a brilliant composer and a brilliant empresario!

Spending so much time with *Messiah* has been personally meaningful. I hope you're have meaningful Lent and Easter seasons.

Blessings,
Donna Obarowski

OPEN AND AFFIRMING COMMITTEE

Our Open and Affirming Covenant has officially been accepted! We are proud to join with over 340 other UCC churches in the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ (CT, MA, and RI) designated ONA. Nationally, there are over 1,800 ONA UCC churches. As Matthew 7:12 tells us, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." We are happy to continue this journey as a congregation.

Valerie Beard,
on behalf of the ONA Committee

STEWARDSHIP AND SILVER LAKE

Stewardship isn't only about raising money for the church. Stewardship is about using all our resources – time and talent, as well as treasure, to fulfill our mission.

Our mission of Worship, Spiritual Growth, Service, and Fellowship is supported by many resources, including the conference's Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon. Generations of MCC families have been enriched through the worship, growth, fellowship, and service of its summer camp.

Yes, Silver Lake is in financial trouble that has worsened since the pandemic. As Katrina has told us, the camp has assets but not enough revenue to continue operations and complete long-deferred maintenance. So yes, stewardship of the camp – shared by the entire Southern New England Conference – is about money.

But it's also about mission. As a church, we have a duty to future generations to offer young people a place to build their faith within a Christian community. If we don't, there is no reason to expect they will support MCC – or any church – in the future. Camp is all about fellowship, service, and growth. A Christian camp like Silver Lake builds in worship as well. If it fails because of changing demographics or lifestyles, we lose that continuity and commitment forever.

In any budget, from our individual households to the federal government, decision-makers must balance costs against value. Is it better to keep Silver Lake operating or to sell its prime real estate to fund the conference? (There is an urgent need in this state for affordable housing, but it won't be there. Lakeside property in wealthy Litchfield County will bring top dollar.)

If Silver Lake is critical to our mission, how should we all go about saving it? That's where our time and talents come in. MCC will host a "listening session" at 7 p.m. April 23 to hear a presentation by SNEUCC's Engagement Team and to hear your ideas and concerns. Please plan to attend with questions and suggestions.

Other ways to show support for Silver Lake and help turn it around include:

- Register for Youth Camp at www.silverlakeect.org/summercamp
- Attend a retreat: www.silverlakeect.org/campsessions
- Donate directly to Silver Lake at www.silverlakeect.org/donate

Here's a link to the SNEUCC article about the Silver Lake study:
<https://bit.ly/4inSNFZ>

As ever, many thanks!

Howard Fielding for the Board of Stewardship

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.

CHURCH RECORDS

Deaths: Mickey Shea on January 3rd, 2025

(Memorial Service: April 12th, 2025)

IMPORTANT DATES

4/2: 6:30pm Soup & Scripture Lent Discussion (Social Hall)

4/6: Fifth Sunday in Lent

4/9: 6:30pm Soup & Scripture Lent Discussion (Social Hall)

4/12: 11:30am Mickey Shea Memorial Service (Sanctuary)*

4/13: Palm Sunday

4/15: 6:00pm MCC Book Club (Parlor)

4/16: 6:30pm Soup & Scripture Lent Discussion (Social Hall)

4/17: 7pm Maundy Thursday worship

4/20: Easter Sunday with youth & adult choirs singing

11am Easter Egg Hunt (on the Green)

4/23: 7pm Listening Session about the Future of Silver Lake Camp**

4/26: MCC Spring Clean Up (full details to be emailed out)

*An email will be sent out confirming the time and reception details

**The Southern New England Conference, which owns and operates Silver Lake, is hosting a listening session for us and area churches as the Conference discerns the future of the camp and how to deal with increasing budget deficits. I encourage anyone with interest in Silver Lake to please attend so the Conference is aware of the importance of Silver Lake.

**Middlebury Congregational Church
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