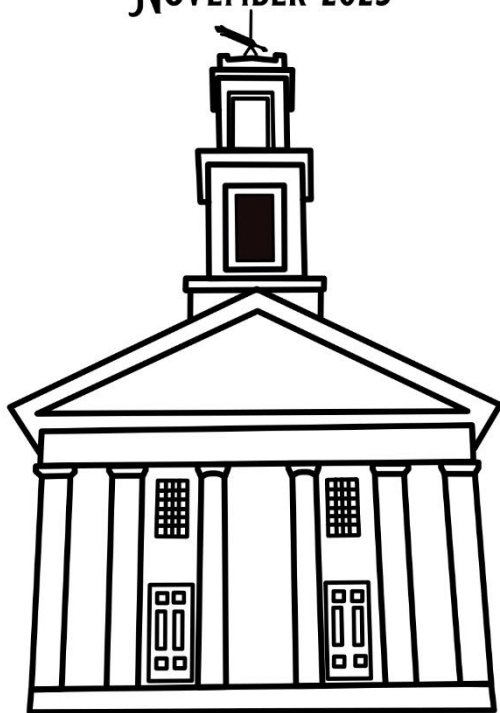


CHURCH LIFE

NOVEMBER 2025



**MIDDLEBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MIDDLEBURYUCC.ORG**

FROM THE PASTOR

I am a person who buys far more books than I have time to read. This fall, I've been trying to make a dent in my pile of unread books. One of the books I've been going through is *Grace from Heaven: Prayers of the Reformation* edited by Robert Elmer. It's a collection of prayers by various protestant reformers arranged by theme. It's set up so you could use it as a devotional.

The selection of authors is good, and it's a solid way to get exposure to central figures in church history in a digestible way. I also appreciate that everything has been translated into or rendered in contemporary English, which makes everything feel much more accessible than some other resources. I find reading these prayers makes these historic people feel much more real. Just like us, they pray for their sick relatives, for their children to do well, for the tumultuous world to be more peaceful, etc.

One of the prayers that caught my eye is by Thomas Cranmer, who was Archbishop of Canterbury and author of the first editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Much of our language in the English speaking church has been profoundly shaped by Cranmer, and we regularly use prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer* in our worship. The prayer that caught my eye is a prayer for our neighbors:

Merciful Father in heaven, give us your grace and help to love our neighbors from the heart, and to always do them good—both in words and deeds. Grant that we may live purely, avoiding offense to others, and provoking no one to unclean living. Help us to encourage others to honesty.

May we help others to save and keep what they have. And if they live in poverty, help us to relieve them as we are able.

May we never hurt others with a false witness, but instead always speak well of our neighbor.

Keep us from evil lusts and desires, never wanting what belongs to others.

For this is your will, and you have commanded us to be obedient.
Amen.

One of the fundamental ills in our nation and even in our local community is precisely a failure to love our neighbors as scripture commands and as Cranmer prays. We've had a lot of speaking ill of our neighbors and making false accusations and false witness rather than encouraging each other to honesty.

As we head towards Thanksgiving this month where we give thanks for our blessings, I would challenge each one of us to pray for all of our neighbors and give thanks for them and do good for them. We can't control what other people do, but we can control our own actions and how we respond to things. If we want to foster a Christian spirit of love, generosity, and honesty in our community, we need to start with ourselves. We need to pray to love our neighbors, and then with the help of God we need to act on those prayers.

Loving God means loving other people, even our neighbors we least want to love.

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

READ THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE WITH THE CONFIRMATION CLASS

As part of Confirmation Class, our confirmands will be reading the gospel according to Luke throughout the program year. Everyone is welcome to read Luke at home along with the class.

November: read chapters 3-6

December: chapters 7-8

January: chapters 9-10

February: chapters 11-14

March: chapters 15-18

April: chapters 19-22

May: chapters 23-24

We also need adult volunteers to be the second adult for confirmation classes offered after church from 11:30-12:30. All you have to do is attend the class. It's a great way to learn some new things and a chance to get to know some of the kids in our church better! If you're interested in volunteering, contact Pastor Katrina (kmanzi@Middleburyucc.org.)



THE DEACONS' BENCH

In light of Jane Goodall's death, I wanted to read one of her many published books. I settled on the autobiography *Reason to Hope* written in 1999. Jane

was a Congregationalist who grew up in England in the 1930s and 40s, which was around the Great Depression and the height of World War II.

In the book, Jane talks about how spirituality, the natural world, and the human experience shaped her life and her connection to God. I relate a lot with Jane as she is a person of both science and Christianity. She often comments on the tension between the two, but in the first few chapters she makes the connection between them flawlessly. She had several moments where she was able to connect with nature *and* feel God. One such moment was when she was observing the chimpanzees up in the trees, noticing how quiet the world is, and her ability to find peace in those moments.

Another author who explains his experience of God in the natural world is Nando Parrado, a survivor of a plane crash in the Andes 1972. *"I deeply respect the faith of my friends, but, to be honest, as hard as I prayed for a miracle in the Andes, I never felt the personal presence of God. At least, I did not feel God as most people see Him. I did feel something larger than myself, something in the mountains and the glaciers and the glowing sky that, in rare moments, reassured me, and made me feel that the world was orderly and loving and good. If this was God, it was not God as a being or a spirit or some omnipotent, superhuman mind. It was not a God who would choose to save us or abandon us, or change in any way. It was simply a silence, a wholeness, an awe-inspiring simplicity."*

Even better is a quote from Jane Goodall herself, “*Science demands objective factual evidence—proof; spiritual experience is subjective and leads to faith. It is enough, for me, that my faith gives me an inner peace and brings meaning to my own life.*” We can all live with faith and nature and factual evidence in union. It is not science *or* faith or spirituality - not just one or the other. They work in tandem in our lives as I believe God wanted it to.

Brittany Romaniello,
on behalf of the Board of Deacons

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

GWIM Soup Kitchen

November’s monthly food contribution to the GWIM Soup Kitchen is **Canned Chicken and any Canned Vegetables**. The pantry shelves are running low, so every can truly counts. Please consider donating a variety of vegetables to help restock their supply and ensure families have nutritious options through the season.

Blood Drive

Our **October 11th Blood Drive** was a wonderful success! A heartfelt *thank you* to everyone who volunteered their time, donated blood, or baked treats for the refreshment table. The patients were so grateful for the delicious goodies and the caring atmosphere you helped create.

A special thanks goes out to **Erika** for her dedication and organization in making this event run so smoothly.

Harvest Sunday – November 23rd

Harvest Sunday is a beautiful tradition where we share the bounty of the season with those in need. This year, the **Middlebury Food Bank** is requesting **potatoes, carrots, onions, celery, sweet potatoes, and apples**.

Please bring your fresh produce to church and place it on the **Harvest Table** in front of the podium. Together, we can make a meaningful contribution to local families for Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Baskets

Once again, we will be assembling **Thanksgiving Baskets** to provide a full holiday meal for families in Middlebury who could use a helping hand.

If you'd like to donate an item, please sign up on the **bulletin board by the kitchen**. Your generosity brings warmth and comfort to these families during the holiday season.

We are continually inspired by the kindness and giving spirit of our congregation. Every can, every potato, every act of service makes a real difference.

Thank you all—your generosity is deeply appreciated by every organization we support.

With gratitude,

Mission Board

Carol Rollins

WAITING FOR THE RESULTS TO COME IN

Back when I worked for the newspaper, the first weeks of November were always nerve-wracking. The results from elections—local or national—always make headlines. Those numbers determine the direction of news for years to come.

Our deadline for November's Church Life is late October. By the time you read this, our fall pledge drive will be winding down. Pledges will be consecrated on Sunday, November 23. If you haven't already sent in your card, please do so as soon as possible so our treasurers can prepare next year's budget. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with any member of the Board of Stewardship.

Meanwhile, some Stewardship news while we wait:

- **When is a pledge not a pledge?** Some of our members contribute to the church through a community foundation or donor-advised fund. Donors use these tax-deductible nonprofits to allocate their charitable giving through grants. Because the foundation or fund is

a third party, legally it cannot be held responsible for a pledge the individual makes. Therefore, many such programs explicitly say their grants cannot cover pledges.

If you plan to give through a third-party grant, tell Diane how much you intend to give and by what method (such as quarterly grants through your fund). We will add the total to our drive in a way that will not obligate the fund for your individual promise.

- **What if I give but don't send in a pledge card?** Sometimes members set up recurring gifts through their bank, Breeze, or other method but don't send in a pledge card. We appreciate your gifts either way, but the pledge card tells us that you intend to continue (or increase) your giving and that we can count on your support throughout the year.
- **Time and Talent are valuable gifts.** At the annual meeting of the Litchfield South Association, the Rev. Bonnie Bardot, a former interim minister for MCC, gave the report of the nominating committee. She apologized that several positions for our area association of UCC churches had no nominees. In fact, she was the only member of the Nominating committee, which should have multiple lay and clergy members from area churches. No one wants to volunteer.
Your church has the same problem: too few volunteers for too many positions. MCC's Nominating Committee faces this problem year after year. Many of our church leaders wear more than one hat. Others feel obligated to return when they have reached their term limit because few others will step forward.

Please, if you are a new member or haven't been part of a board or committee for a while, contact Michele (Rowell) Finn or nominating@middleburyucc.org and tell of your interests and availability. Your church needs you!

Howard Fielding for the Board of Stewardship

FAITH FORMATION

It's officially fall, which has meant sweaters, pumpkins, and Ellen's apple fritters!

Our children have been learning from the story of David, discovering how listening to God, using our gifts, and keeping God in our hearts can guide us in courage, friendship, and faith. Sunday School lessons this month include David the Musician and David and Goliath.

We also have several of our kids and youth participating in the MCC Variety Show, sharing their wonderful talents with the congregation! Our Youth Group recently gathered for an evening around the fire pit, complete with s'mores and Ellen's homemade apple fritters.

November brings our season of thankfulness and giving. 

As always, please reach out if you have any questions or have an interest in helping our Sunday school program!

Warmly,
Sara Hubbard, Faith Formation

MIDDLEBURY COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH, 7PM

ST. GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
393 TUCKER HILL RD. MIDDLEBURY, CT

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IMPORTANT DATES

11/2: 10am All Saints' Sunday Worship

11/9: 10am Worship

11/16: 10am Worship: Guest Preacher The Rev. Matt McCaffrey

11/23: 10am Thanksgiving Sunday Worship

11am Decorate meetinghouse for Advent/Christmas

11/25: 7pm Community Thanksgiving Service @ St. George's
Episcopal Church (St. George's is hosting and Pastor
Katrina is preaching)

11/30: 10am First Sunday of Advent Worship

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

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