

CHURCH LIFE

APRIL 2026



FROM THE PASTOR

Happy Easter! The fifty days after Easter are the season of Easter or the Great Fifty Days. It's fifty days of celebrating the good news of Christ's resurrection.

In baptism, we are baptized into Christ, into his life, death, and resurrection. At our baptisms, we die and rise with Christ. There is a sense that we have already been raised to new life. We are a resurrection people.

This year, our church celebrates its 230th anniversary, and as we celebrate our past, we're looking ahead to our future. We are conducting a capital campaign "Foundations for our Future: Building for the Third Century" to ensure our mission as the church in and for Middlebury continues into the future. We have the opportunity to ensure that the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to be lived and shared in this little patch of God's kingdom.

The money raised for the campaign is going to be put into a fund (the Third Century Fund) that is used for capital expenses for our physical plant and infrastructure. Our current and past members and leaders have been diligent about continuing to invest in our buildings to keep abreast of maintenance. However, we know some major capital expenses are coming up based on the age of the current infrastructure (replacing the roof on the church building, repaving the parking lot, repainting the steeple, repairing our sidewalks, paying ourselves back for the parsonage roof replacement, etc.) You will be hearing a lot more about the campaign throughout the coming weeks.

Now, at first glance it might not seem exciting to be investing in things like buildings, but our buildings are vital to our mission and ministry here in Middlebury. We were founded as the parish church for this area before Middlebury was even officially a town yet, and for 230 years we have served our community. Our building is used weekly by multiple AA meetings and multiple scout troops. Our parsonage enables us to afford a full time minister in a time where housing costs have soared. Our location enables us to be involved

with all the important events that go on in our town. Investing in our buildings is investing in our future.

I know there is some trepidation about whether we can do a successful campaign. We are a smaller church than we were when we've undertaken campaigns in the past. The statistical outlook for churches across the board isn't particularly rosy. But, we are a resurrection people. We are already living the new life that Christ makes possible and we continuously receive the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to believers: teaching, diligence, generosity, sincerity, encouragement, compassion, faith, hope, and love. God has given us what we need to follow Christ and be his people today and into our future.

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

LENT STUDY
THE LAST THINGS: A LOOK AT DEATH, THE
SECOND COMING, JUDGMENT, THE
AFTERLIFE, AND THE END OF THE WORLD
Wednesdays during Lent in the Social Hall 6:30pm Supper, 7pm
Discussion

“The Four Last Things” in Christian theology are Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. These are topics people often have a lot of questions about, and often Mainline Protestants like us tend to talk about them much less than other denominations. So, this Lent we're going to take a look about what the Bible says about the last things and some of the common views from throughout the history of Church. Bring your questions and curiosity!

4/1: Heaven: What does heaven look like? Who goes to heaven? Do we have bodies in heaven? What is eternal life? We'll look at Bible passages describing heaven and heaven on earth and explore some of the views in the Church on heaven and resurrection.

For Further Reading

- *Second Thoughts about the Second Coming: Understanding the End Times, Our Future, and Christian Hope:* by Robert J. Allen and Robert D Cornwall (Westminster John Knox Press)
 - This is an overview of the history of Christian thought on the second coming of Christ and the end times written for a general audience. It gives a really good broad overview of the major views the Church Universal has or had on these topics along with addressing where things come from in scripture.
- *Second Thoughts about Hell: Understanding What We Believe* by Ronald J. Allen and Robert D. Cornwall
 - This is an overview of the biblical origins of hell and the various understandings of hell historically and presently in the Church Universal.
- *Deliver Us from Evil: A Call for Christians to Take Evil Seriously* by John Swinton (Cascade Books)
 - This is a discussion of evil and sin that is fairly accessible and short.

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.

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

These last few weeks I have used the opportunity to be inspired and challenged by Pastor Katrina's sermons, attend Michelle Rowell Finn's Second

Hour discussions, Katrina's Soup and Scripture sessions, and joining in one very inspiring Confirmation class as the second adult. I realized that we at the Middlebury Congregational Church have the choice: Holiday meals (just attending on major Sundays like Christmas and Easter), weekly dinners with family (every Sunday) or an all-you-can-eat buffet (also partaking of the extra opportunities for learning.)

This year, those experiences have given me several enhanced perspectives on life and my own spiritual growth.

For one, I have thought so much more about what it meant for Jesus Christ, the son of God, to be willing to fully experience what it means to be human like us:

To be born. To learn to walk as a toddler (he must have, although that was not in the gospels.) To get angry (and toss the tables of the people who disrespected the temple). To be tempted to do the wrong thing to make our lives more comfortable (temptation in the desert). To love and lose someone he loved (Lazarus, whose death made him weep). To have people listen and believe. To be betrayed. To experience scorn and humiliation. To be beaten and tortured despite having done no wrong. To die, and die with great suffering.

But that same Jesus – the one who understands what it is to be human – also has given us clear expectations. His messages were very consistent, and I think well condensed in the Sermon on the Mount and his instruction to us on how to pray (The Lord's Prayer). He was

clear: that we love one another. That we forgive if we expect to be forgiven. That we speak out about injustice. That we consider *everyone* our neighbor and a reflection of God, and treat them accordingly. Making sure everyone – not just ourselves – has enough. That we avoid evil and sin.

And in this most blessed of seasons, as we celebrate His Resurrection, that we remember that this life is just the beginning, and well-lived, we – like that thief on the cross next to Him – can know that when we die, we will be in paradise with God forever.

For the Deacons, wishing you all a Blessed Easter,
Janine Sullivan-Wiley

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

Our monthly food contribution to GWIM will be noodles and elbow macaroni.

Items for the Easter dinner baskets should be brought to church by Sunday, March 29. Sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board by the kitchen for those who would like to contribute. In addition, we will be supporting three youths from the Anne C. Courtney Foundation by providing non-perishable food bags.

For the upcoming Strawberry Festival, we will once again feature raffle baskets and tag sale items. Please start thinking creatively about putting together a basket, or consider donating some treasures for the tag sale table.

The Missions Board extends its sincere gratitude for your continued generosity and faithful support, which make these outreach efforts possible.

Mission Board
Carol Rollins

FAITH FORMATION

As we move through Lent, we're so grateful for those who make Sunday School such a meaningful experience for our children. A heartfelt thank you to Erin, Norma, Katie, and Kelly for sharing their and teaching this past month.

As I type this, we're looking forward to Palm Sunday, when the children will lead a special intergenerational craft activity during coffee hour alongside the congregation, with guidance from Kelly P. It's always a special time together.

Excitement is also building for our annual Easter Egg Hunt, a favorite tradition for many of our families. While we wait for spring (and hopefully spring weather) to arrive, the children are learning about the Lenten season and the meaning of Easter.

Mark your calendars! MCC's Vacation Bible School Camp will be held **June 30th–July 4th**. This year's theme is "Snowball Mountain Challenge." Registration will be available soon, so keep an eye out for details!

Sara Hubbard,
Faith Formation Volunteer Coordinator

MUSIC NOTES WORD PLAY

On April 5, we celebrate Easter Sunday, the first day of the fifty-day long Easter Season. During this season, the word "alleluia" will have a constant presence in our worship and our music.

"Alleluia" is an interesting word to contemplate. Rather obviously, it's not an English word, but actually an ancient Latin translation of a Greek translation of a yet older word from the Hebrew language. Even that gets confusing, since Jesus and his followers spoke Aramaic. Both Hebrew and Aramaic are Semitic languages with Hebrew being the language of most of the Old Testament, and Aramaic being a later evolution of that language with many dialects of

its own (a few parts of the Old Testament were originally recorded in Aramaic). Adding further complications, none of these ancient languages uses alphabets or syntaxes that compare well to English. But all of these share some form of the word we typically spell "alleluia".

So, let's see if we can make this user-friendly. The original word, which we represent phonetically as "Halleluyah" or "Hallelujah" is a compound word with the first part, "Hallelu" meaning to "give praises" and "Jah" is a shortened form of "Yahweh", a Hebrew name for God. And "Alleluia" is the Latin version of that word. So, in essence, every time we sing/say "Alleluia", we're proclaiming "Praise the Lord".

Please rejoice with us every time we proclaim "Alleluia" this blessed season!

Donna Obarowski

CLASSIFIEDS

Running Club

Established in July 2025, the Middlebury, CT Run Club meets twice a week, Thursdays at 6pm and Saturdays at 9am. Currently each meetup gathers at the Middlebury Volunteer Fire Department at 65 Tucker Hill Road we run on the safe and off street Middlebury Greenway Trail. ALL are welcome as well as ALL skill levels. We are a no pressure group that is comprised of walkers and beginner runners all the way up to competitive marathon runners. Run/walk at your own pace or bring your leashed dog and just take a nice stroll and meet some new people. We have occasional team events, theme nights, raffles, swag, etc. Also, each meetup will always have a first aid kit on hand, bug spray, and a water bowl and healthy



treats for the puppies. We practice SAFE: S(Safety) A(Accountability) F(Fun) E(Exercise). So what are you waiting for?! Check us out, you may have just found your new favorite weekly event.

Looking for Car to buy, Garage to Rent, Offering Handyman/Yardwork Services (Volunteer or Paid)

David Haase dshinwtbyct@hotmail.com 860-993-9285

- looking for a 2002 or older 4cyl. or 6cyl. pickup truck or hatchback car
- looking for a garage to rent for storage.
- Looking for paid work or willing to help people as a volunteer if they need a helping hand
- I have work, personal, volunteer, references. I have background checks done with two different sources

Flower Sale: April 3 & April 4

Crew 444 Flower Sale fundraiser
Friday & Saturday April 3rd and 4th
from 9 AM to 5 PM on the
Green! Just in time for Easter!
This Annual Flower sale supports
High Adventure trips and helps
defray costs for the next trip in
2027!

Bottle Drive: June 6th

Troop 5 and Troop 6 will be running
their Bottle Drive fundraiser from
8:15 AM to 1:15 PM at 530
Middlebury Road. This is one of the
Troops big fundraising events to help fund events throughout the year.



Portraiture

Bring the joy of portraiture into your home! Commission a quality hand drawn or painted pet portrait in Charcoals or Oils. www.shawnalee.com

Middlebury Congregational Church

1242 Whittemore Road, Middlebury, CT

Presents World Premier of:

MCC
PLAYERS

As Much As You Want

May 15 & 16th 6:30 pm
\$35 per person includes dinner

May 17th 2:00 pm
Matinee \$15 per person

A Play in Three Acts
Sequel to "As You Were"

Written & directed
by Christopher Avcollie

Purchase tickets online at
www.middleburyucc.org/mcc-players
(Service fees apply) or during coffee
hour before May 8th. Limited seating.

Call the church office at
203-758-2671 with any questions.



Matinee recommended for children 12 and younger as it will be a shorter event.

CHURCH RECORDS

Deaths

Wendy Cooper on December 12, 2025

IMPORTANT DATES

- 4/1:** 6:30pm Lent Discussion Supper
7pm Discussion (Social Hall)
- 4/2:** 7pm Maundy Thursday Worship
- 4/3-4:** 9am-5pm Crew 444 Flower Sale
- 4/5:** 10am Easter Worship
Easter Egg Hunt following worship (Green)
- 4/12:** 10am Worship
11:30am Confirmation Class
- 4/19:** 10am Worship – Guest Preacher Solomon Kwaghko, Yale
Divinity School Student
- 4/25:** 8am-noon MCC Spring Cleanup
- 4/26:** 10am Worship
11:30am Confirmation Class

HOLY WEEK & EASTER

with

MIDDLEBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

PALM SUNDAY: MARCH 29

Worship: 10am

SPY WEDNESDAY: APRIL 1

Soup Supper: 6:30pm

Bible Discussion: 7pm

MAUNDY THURSDAY: APRIL 2

Worship: 7pm. Communion & Office of Tenebrae

EASTER SUNDAY: APRIL 5

Worship: 10am

Egg Hunt following worship (approx. 11am)

1242 WHITTEMORE RD, MIDDLEBURY, CT

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

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