

CHURCH LIFE

AUGUST 2026



FROM THE PASTOR

I hope all of you are getting a chance to enjoy the summer. Church leadership has been busy this past month working on the capital campaign and beginning one of the capital campaign projects of replacing the floor in the Ark/Activities Room. (One of the donors to the campaign generously offered to cover that whole project.) If you haven't already, please return your letter of intent for the capital campaign, even if you are not planning on making a donation, so we can reduce the amount of follow up work for our volunteers and wrap up this stage of the campaign.

Since I always associate summer with reading because of the great summer reading programs so many libraries do, I thought I'd share some of the books I've been reading.

The Marriage Journey: Preparations and Provisions for Life Together by Linda Grenz and Robert Glover (Church Publishing)

- This is a book published by the Episcopal Church. I've read the 2003 edition, but an updated edition was released just this May. (I've just ordered the new edition which is supposed to have more info on discussing end of life planning/care and finances in general.) There are a couple places where things in the book are tied to the Episcopal Church marriage vows, but overall, this is a general book on Christian marriage in a mainline protestant context. What I think is great is there are discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and there are two sets of questions, one for people preparing to be married and one for people who have been married/in a relationship a while. So, there is material in here whether you're thinking about marriage, newly married, or looking to do some more intentional focus on your marriage. (If anyone is interested in doing some of the chapters as a group discussion let me know, and I would be happy to plan that.)

Faith, Hope, and Love in a Time of Loss: A 90 Day Devotional through Grief by Katrina Larson (Lexham Press)

- I've only gotten to day 50 of this 90 day devotional, but what I've read is good. Larson's mom died of cancer right when Larson was graduating college and getting married. This book is her reflections on navigating that grief. The book is set up like a devotional, so there is a scripture verse for each day, a reflection of a couple pages, and then a prayer for the day. This is very accessible and easy to read, and Larson is a young mom; so there is a good amount in here reflecting on losing a parent and being a parent.

The Church after Innovation: Questioning Our Obsession with Work, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship by Andrew Root (Baker Academic)

- This book is an exploration of the American church's obsession with innovation and creativity as a solution to decline. What I found most interesting was the work Root does tracing concepts of uniqueness, creativity, and innovation to their origins in capitalism, and he points out that when the church takes on those values of capitalism we end up losing core aspects of what is actually important about the church. I was very sold on his diagnosis of the American church, but I was less sold on his prescription for a solution. For a theology book, Root is a very accessible writer. This book made me think way more than most books I've read in the last few years. Root has a number of books on ministry in the secular age, and I hope to chip away more at those after this one was so interesting.

The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism by Tim Alberta (Harper)

- Alberta is a journalist and the son of an evangelical pastor, and he seems to fall in the conservative "never Trump" sort of camp politically. That position does come through in the book, but in general the book is an exploration of the way the evangelical wing of the American church has yoked itself to

politics and perhaps lost its soul in the process. He also discusses how politics are often driving people's theology rather than theology driving politics, which in turn fuels greater political division. Since Alberta is an evangelical, he writes about the branch of the church he knows, but I think some of the issues he raises about the dangers of the church yoking itself too closely to secular politics apply readily to many mainline protestants on the left end of the political spectrum. The gospel and the Church have distinct things to say about the world that never fit precisely into any secular political agenda, and I really appreciated Alberta's exploration of the dangers and consequences of church involvement in secular politics.

This summer, I'm preaching through much of the book of Hebrews, so if you wanted to learn more about that book here are two easy to read commentaries on Hebrews:

Hebrews by Thomas Long (Interpretation series, Westminster John Knox Press)

- Long is a renowned expert in homiletics (preaching). I took a class with him when I was in seminary, and I loved his class and all his books I've read. His Hebrews commentary is one of the few commentaries I've sat down and read cover to cover in one go. He's a great writer.

Hebrews for Everyone by N. T. Wright (Westminster John Knox Press)

- Wright is a biblical scholar and Church of England bishop. He's a bit more conservative than me about certain topics like human sexuality, but I really value his scholarship. He's got a whole series of "for everyone" commentaries written for a general audience going through books of the Bible, and they're great resources for learning more about the Bible. Typically, most of his "for everyone" commentaries also come with an included study guide, but that sometimes depends on the edition.

As we look ahead to fall, mark your calendars for Homecoming on September 13th, which will also be our celebration of a successful capital campaign! Stay tuned for more details on the fun celebration being planned.

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister



THE DEACONS' BENCH **THE LORD IS YOUR KEEPER**

The month of August is a month of transition. In the garden, some flowers are at their peak while others are beginning to fade. Tomatoes ripen for the picking, while pumpkins quietly begin to form. Likewise, you may be enjoying a vacation away or at home while also making plans for fall. Teachers prepare their classrooms. Families gather school supplies. College students check their dorm lists one more time. New routines are just around the corner.

August reminds us that our lives, like the seasons, are always in transition. Some transitions involve packed suitcases and Google Maps—measured in miles and remembered through photos. Others involve grief, uncertainty, illness, change, or new beginnings—journeys marked not by miles but by faith and remembered through transformed hearts.

Whatever transition you are in, I offer the words of Psalm 121. It reminds me that whatever season we walk through, the Lord is the one who helps us, watches over us, goes with us, and keeps us. Our help comes from the Lord.

If, like me, you sometimes struggle to find the words to pray, perhaps this psalm can become one of your own prayers of assurance. Pray it over those you love. Pray it before a trip, before the school year

begins, or simply before an ordinary day. That has become my own practice. When my husband travels, I quietly go out to the garage and pray this psalm over his car and his luggage. I also keep a copy of Psalm 121 tucked beneath the floor mat in the car my daughter drives. It is my way of declaring over them the truth I know: wherever they travel, the Lord goes with them.

Life has taught me that this psalm does not guarantee protection from every sorrowful road, literal or figurative. Instead, it reminds us that the Lord is our Keeper. He walks with us through every circumstance, accompanies us through every season, and remains faithful in every journey.

As you move through August, let the assurance of this psalm settle into your heart. "The Lord is your keeper." He neither slumbers nor sleeps. And the words I hold most dear are these: "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore."

Psalm 121 (NRSVue)
Assurance of God's Protection
A Song of Ascents.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
- 4 He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
- 6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

8 The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

On behalf of Deacons,
Michele Rowell Finn

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

The Mission Board is somewhat quiet for summer. We are collecting school supplies and backpacks for children through August 9th; please drop items for donation at the Church office. The GWIM food contribution item for August is peanut butter.

The Wellmore Foundation [back to school supplies and Star Tree gifts at Christmas] has merged with The Village for Families & Children. This organization is over 200 years old and has an interesting history that you can read about on their website: <https://thevillage.org>. We look forward to continuing to support the work of Wellmore and the expanded services for our area youth that this merger will provide.

In church-family news, after five years of dedicated leadership, Carol Rollins is stepping down as chair of Missions. Carol has made chairing Missions a priority in her life and her dedication and unwavering attention to detail and organization will be hard to sustain. She will continue as treasurer of this Board to ensure that our balance and donations remain on target. From all of us on Missions, we give Carol a heartfelt thank you and are very grateful for her past and continued effort!

Erika Carrington

MUSIC NOTES **LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE!**

As I write this, several of MCC's young people are at Silver Lake Camp participating in a week-long summer program. As most of you know, there are currently no Silver Lake summer camp programs planned for beyond this year. A number of MCC members have been discussing the value of these programs that have served generations and about the future of Silver Lake and that had me thinking about the musical elements of the summer camp experience. Some of these songs have been passed down through generations.

One of the songs that comes to mind is "This Little Light of Mine." Nearly everyone knows it from summer camp and/or Vacation Bible School and/or Scouts.

"This Little Light of Mine" has usually been attributed to Harold Dixon Loes, the writer of about 1500 gospel songs. The song dates from the 1920's and was meant for children and often paired with hand motions. But "This Little Light" came into even greater use during the 50's and 60's when it became a popular song of the Civil Rights movement.

The structure of the song is repetitive and easy to remember, which makes it a great song for both children and adults joining in community singing. The text is inspired by Matthew 5:14-16, where Jesus tells His followers, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Let's all let our lights shine!
This little light of mine,
I'm going to let it shine.
Oh, this little light of mine,
I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine,
I'm going to let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel? No!
I'm going to let it shine...
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.

Blessings,
Donna Obarowski

STEWARDSHIP

I often think about Jesus' words:
"keep watch".

What are we watching for? Are we
noticing? Would we know what
to do?

I was presented with one such
moment not so long ago in our
church. April 12th to be exact.
During a Sacrament of Baptism
for Connor Easton and Landon
Chase Port, something truly remarkable occurred. The moment Dave
started to play, the little boy became so captivated by the organ's
music that his eyes never strayed from Dave. Not a single moment.
His love for the music was glowing!

This was something very special.

As service ended and folks gathered around
the freshly baptized children, I let Dave know
just how much that little boy adored the music.
Without skipping a beat (pun intended!), the



baton had been gladly grabbed and within moments, Dave was showing Connor the organ, giving him expert guidance to see what made the sounds and where these sounds came from.

That captivated intensity I had witnessed earlier was now something much, much more special. Now there were two souls shining brightly, while the family looked on with absolute bursting pride and wonder. It was so beautiful to see.



Did you notice?

These two musicians, decades and generations apart, spoke a musical language together that only they understood in between spoken words.



What transpired, in my mind, was nothing short of what I can only infer was God’s plan in action. This was a magical moment that I had the privilege and joy to be a witness to. Could this be one of those moments Jesus intended for us to keep watch for?

Stewardship just might mean “keep watch” so that you can discover how you can participate in God’s plan with your time, talents and treasures, and perhaps a bit of music to awaken your soul.

ShawnaLee Waterbury-Kwashnak on behalf of Stewardship.



MCC AUGUST BOOK GROUP

Yellowface by R.F. Kuang.

Wednesday, August 26th at 6:00pm.

Meet in the parlor or the outdoor chapel, weather permitting.

FRIENDS OF SILVER LAKE

Friends of Silver Lake, Inc. is a new nonprofit formed to unite the dispersed community that values Silver Lake and to work toward a vision of future ministry in line with its historic mission. Created just after the announcement of Silver Lake's closing in November, FOSL is moving with strength to continue this sacred legacy's ministry. It is a membership organization and we encourage you to join in this future-oriented ministry. Whether you were ever a camper or simply loved retreats, served as a volunteer or just know others whose lives were transformed there, we hope you'll go to <https://www.friendsofsilverlake.com> and click on "Stay connected" to learn more and join this important movement of the Holy Spirit! Friends of Silver Lake has put in a proposal with the Southern New England Conference to purchase the Silver Lake property to ensure the ministry of Silver Lake will continue.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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.



Portraiture

Bring the joy of portraiture into your home! Commission a quality hand drawn or painted portrait in Charcoals or Oils. See examples of my work on Wenty's poster or at www.shawnalee.com



Classifieds

If you want to include a classified in the September Church Life, please email your classified information to the main office at office@middleburyucc.org by Wednesday, August 19th.

IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE

Foundations for Our Future
"Building for the Third Century"

Dear Friends,

As we look back over the past several weeks, our hearts are filled with gratitude. Your generosity has already begun to turn hope into reality, and together we have taken meaningful steps toward strengthening the future of our church.

Now, imagine what's possible.

Imagine a church where a sound roof protects the ministries taking place beneath it, a restored steeple, parking areas and walkways that continue to welcome our community, and safe, inviting spaces make every member and visitor feel at home. These are more than building projects, they are investments in this sacred place and in the future generations who will call this church their spiritual home.

As we enter this next phase of our campaign, we invite you to help us finish what we've begun together. If you have already made a commitment, thank you. Your generosity is making a lasting difference. If you have been prayerfully considering participating, there is still time to be part of this shared vision. Every gift, regardless of size, brings us one step closer to preserving this beloved church and ensuring that its ministry continues to flourish for years to come.

Thank you for believing in our shared future. Together, with God's guidance, imagine what is possible.

With humble gratitude,

Ellen Aronheim and Sal Sena
Foundations for Our Future Campaign Administrators



★ JOIN US! ★

SUNDAY

AUGUST 30, 2026

★ 4:30–6:30 PM ★

MCC SOCIAL HALL

BUILD YOUR OWN RED, WHITE & BLUE SUNDAE!



Fresh strawberries



Fresh blueberries



Creamy vanilla ice cream



Homemade hot fudge

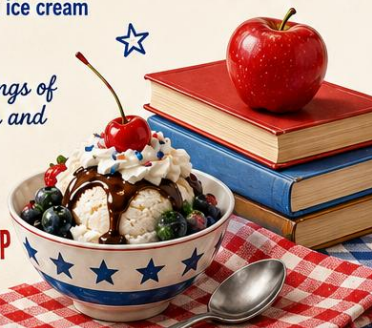


Erika's famous
salted caramel sauce

Join us as we celebrate the blessings of
our nation's **250** years of freedom and
230 years of God's faithfulness
to our church family.

We can't wait to share an evening of
ICE CREAM, LAUGHTER & FELLOWSHIP
with you! ♥

Bring
your
family
& invite
a friend!
♥





SAVE THE DATE

Save the date for a very special
homecoming on
September 13th, 2026



IMPORTANT DATES

8/2: 10am Worship

8/9: 10am Worship

8/10-9/1: Pastor Katrina's vacation

8/16: 10am Worship: Guest Preacher, the Rev. Peggy Allen

8/23: 10am Worship: Guest Preacher, the Rev. Peggy Allen

8/26: 6pm Book Group Meeting

8/30: 10am Worship: Guest Preacher, the Rev. Rebecca Spencer
4:30-6:30pm Sundaes on Sunday

9/13: Homecoming Sunday

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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