

**NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE
OR WHERE YOU ARE
ON LIFE'S JOURNEY
YOU ARE
WELCOME & HERE**



SEPTEMBER 2026

FROM THE PASTOR

The summer seems to go by so fast! I can't believe it's September already! We've got a lot going on this fall, so be sure to look at everything we have coming up! Mark your calendars for Homecoming Sunday on 9/13 where we will have a special worship service and celebration thanking everyone for the generosity and success of the Foundations for our Future Capital Campaign! If you are planning on attending lunch after worship, please RSVP here so we can purchase the right amount of food:

<https://middleburycc.breezechms.com/form/lobsterRSVP>

One of the parables that came up in the lectionary this summer was the Parable of the Sower. This is the version of it from Luke: "A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed some fell on a path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and as it grew up it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew it produced a hundredfold." (Luke 8:4-8)

I preached on that parable when we were down worshiping at St. George's in July, and since then I've been thinking about how it really encapsulates how the Foundations for Our Future Capital Campaign has gone.

Like the sower spreading seed in every single direction, even unlikely ones, we cast a wide net and asked many, many people to be part of building our foundation for our future. And we have been surprised over and over to discover soil we would have thought was rocky yielded a harvest. It was a daily reminder of that sports adage "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

But, the part of the parable that speaks most directly to how this capital campaign has gone is the part about the seed that falls on good soil yielding a hundredfold. What that is saying is God's grace produces a miraculous harvest. The harvest from the good soil is disproportionately large; it's beyond any reasonable expectation. God's grace produces an abundance far greater than we could imagine.

And throughout this capital campaign our church leaders have been surprised again and again by the grace and generosity of people both who are part of the church and those who have moved away or are friends in the community. We exceeded our more pessimistic predictions of what we thought we'd actually raise. We blew past our numbers for what we thought would be a reasonably hopeful amount to raise. Your generosity has gone far beyond what our church leadership thought to even hope for at the start of this campaign. It's something like that hundredfold harvest from the parable. When God's grace is at work in the world, in the church, and in our lives, it produces an impact far greater than we could dream.

We are still receiving Letters of Intent, and on Homecoming, we will announce the total success so far! We have already completed our first project, replacing the floor in the Ark Activities Room, thanks to a generous donor who offered to cover the entire project. A number of people who pledged to the campaign were able to pay their pledges off up front or made sizable down payments, so we have received enough money up front to move forward with some of our more urgent projects now. We are getting updated quotes for the roof and other projects, and we hope to have at least the flat roof replaced before winter. More news to come!

As we look ahead to seeing how the seeds planted here at MCC come to fruition, here is a prayer for the seeds of grace planted in each of us: "Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your Word. By your Holy Spirit, help us to receive it with joy, and live according to it, that we may grow in faith and hope and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen." (PCUSA Book of Common Worship)

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH SILVER LAKE?

INFO MEETING AFTER WORSHIP 9/20

Join Pastor Katrina after worship for a discussion and Q & A on what is happening with Silver Lake. We will meet in the parlor at 11:30, and if that is too tight we will move to the Social Hall. Read on for further context on what's been happening.

In November 2025, the Southern New England Conference (SNEUCC) announced plans to end programming at Silver Lake Camp and Retreat Center after Summer 2026. The current plan is for the property to be sold in the near future. An alumni and friends organization, Friends of Silver Lake has formed a nonprofit corporation and put in two offers to purchase the property. The Conference is waiting for more offers from outside organizations that are supposed to come in this fall.

At the same time, the SNEUCC Annual Meeting is September 25-27th, and the major piece of business for that meeting is approval of a full corporate merger of CT, MA, and RI. (We previously only had merged the ecclesial functions while retaining the separate historic corporations for each state.) As CT's corporation owns Silver Lake, the merger affects Silver Lake since CT delegates have rights to vote on the sale and transfer of assets we don't have in the SNEUCC corporation. The initial plan for merger would have stripped CT of its right to vote on the sale of Silver Lake and given that power entirely to the SNEUCC Board of Directors.

In response there has been a statewide effort in CT to call out how unfair and inappropriate this course of action is. Our Litchfield South Association along with three other Associations, representing over 55 churches, submitted formal resolutions for Annual Meeting protesting the planned merger. There were additional Associations, clergy, churches, and delegates who all contacted the SNEUCC Board about their concerns.

In June, the SNEUCC announced they were modifying the plan for Annual Meeting. While there would still be a vote to merge the corporations, CT's merger would not take place (would not be filed with the state) until after the sale of the Silver Lake property. This would

mean CT delegates would retain the right to vote on the sale of the Silver Lake property. This is now what is on the agenda for Annual Meeting.



THE DEACONS' BENCH

A PRAYER FOR A NEW SEASON

Heavenly Father, as summer gives way to fall, and each of us enters this new season in different ways, we come before you, trusting that you walk with us every step of the way and humbly offer this prayer of intercession.

For those entering a new school year, we pray for students, their families and caregivers who support them, and for all who help create places where learners of all ages can learn, grow, and flourish. Bless all who teach, support, encourage, and care for those in our schools and throughout school life, and grant them wisdom and patience. Be there for everyone in the hard moments too, and protect our places of learning as sacred, where all may grow in safety, dignity, and hope.

We also pray for those stepping into a new chapter in life, whatever that might be. Surround them with your presence. Grant courage when the path feels uncertain, wisdom when decisions must be made, and joy in moments of discovery and growth.

For those continuing through seasons that are familiar, changing, or difficult, remind us that as we find the courage to keep walking each day, you remain faithful. Renew our strength, help us recognize your presence along the way, and fill our hearts with gratitude.

For those carrying burdens into this new season—whether known by others or held quietly within their hearts—draw near. Give us strength for each day, comfort in difficult moments, and the assurance that we never walk alone.

For those experiencing a season of celebration, we offer our thanks. Thank you for moments of joy, for friendships, for family, for community, and for the blessings that remind us of your goodness.

Lord, continue to shape our church home as a place that sees one another, cares for one another, and shares your love. In every season of life, let our MCC community be a home where people find welcome, encouragement, and reminders that they are not alone, for you walk with us all.

Lord, remind us that wherever this season leads us, we are held in your care, and that you are with us in every coming and going.

"The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore." Psalm 121:8

Amen.

On behalf of Deacons,
Michele Rowell Finn

STEWARDSHIP

As summer gives way to fall, our thoughts naturally turn toward Homecoming Sunday—a time to gather again, reconnect after the summer months, and celebrate all that God has done through our *Foundations for Our Future: Building for the Third Century* campaign. As we look ahead to that celebration, we'd like to introduce this year's stewardship theme. Stay with us—we promise the connection will soon become clear!

This year's stewardship theme is **Stone Soup**.

Many of us know the old story. A pot begins with nothing more than a stone and some water. Curious neighbors gather. One brings onions. Another adds potatoes or herbs. Someone brings a fiddle. What began with almost nothing becomes a nourishing meal shared in fellowship, not because of any one ingredient, but because everyone offers what they have.

Our stewardship theme is inspired by that story.

Imagine the earliest members of Middlebury Congregational Church, gathered by Christ on our village Green and called to build a community where people could worship, learn, serve, and grow in faith together. And so they began to build, first creating a place where that community could gather.

Every Stone Soup needs a pot. Ours is this church home, where generations have gathered their gifts and watched God transform them into something that nourishes many.

Year after year, each person has brought what they could—time, talents, and treasure—and together God has transformed those offerings into worship, prayer, music, learning, fellowship, outreach, hospitality, encouragement, and countless quiet acts of service. In other words, together we have filled the pot.

Through the generosity of our members and friends, the *Foundations for Our Future* campaign is strengthening our church home—the pot that holds our shared ministry—so it can nourish God's people for generations to come. But a strong pot is only the beginning. Each year we gather again to fill it so that ministry can continue. Now it is time to fill the pot.

In the coming weeks, you will receive our stewardship brochure and annual pledge materials. We hope you will see your own gifts reflected in this year's theme and prayerfully consider how you can help nourish the ministry we share together in 2027.

Together, with God's help, there will be enough.

Sincerely,
Board of Stewardship
Michele Rowell Finn
Andrew Kwashnak
ShawnaLee Waterbury-Kwashnak

25 YEARS LATER: REMEMBERING, REFLECTING, AND CARRYING FORWARD

“It is in the shelter of each other that the people live.”

~Irish Proverb



One of the ways we will mark the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001 is by looking back and remembering. It is clear that the memory of that day, and the days that followed, still lives within us. A quarter century has passed, and yet the images, the emotions, and the meaning of that day remain close, reminding us how profoundly that day shaped our lives.

Against the backdrop and promise of a brilliant blue sky, we bore witness to terror of such magnitude that we had no nouns, verbs, or adjectives to fully describe our understanding of the experience. That day became a dividing line in the timeline of our lives, and we still say, “that was before 9/11 or that was after 9/11,” much like we do for other defining moments: the birth of a child, a graduation, an illness, or the loss of a loved one. These passages become our touchstones for context, perspective, and understanding as we remember how they forever altered our shared narrative.

In the days and weeks following that September morning, we tried to reconcile the images, the sounds, and the reality of what had shattered the promise of that brilliant blue sky. Coming to terms with such profound shock was a deeply personal journey of reflection and understanding. We looked to one another for reassurance. We reached out to others in our community. We worshipped and prayed together.

Images of service remain vivid, including those who stood at Ground Zero and those who worked quietly behind the scenes. They remind us of the devastation and grief that so many were willing to step into with courage and compassion. We remember, too, the countless acts of care from within our own congregation: children assembling Peace Bags, volunteers preparing food, organizing donations, and showing up in whatever way was needed. These were not extraordinary people doing

extraordinary things, but ordinary people allowing love to guide them. Love carried us then, and love endures still.

So much has changed in our world over these 25 years. Our faith community looks different. We sound different. We are different. There is a clarity now that helps us better understand the depth of what was lost and the resilience that carried us forward. We are also mindful that a new generation has grown up knowing this day only through the stories we share. And so we carry not only memory, but responsibility: to remember well, and to pass forward the truth of both loss and love.

Most importantly the promise of the Psalmist still remains: God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in times of trouble. The faces have changed, yet the revelation of goodness and the threads of mercy and compassion that have woven us together for more than 230 years continue to hold us. Even in the midst of tragedy, we were reminded of the gift that has always been ours: each other.

And so it is today. We are still one another's gifts. One another's shelter. *For it is in the shelter of each other that the people live.*

May God bestow abundant blessings on our remembrance, and on the love that continues to guide us forward.

Ellen Aronheim



SEPTEMBER IS "THE OTHER JANUARY"

For many people, September feels like a fresh start. The summer events and travel are over. The fall routine is setting in as typical activities resume.

Just like January is a common time for reevaluation and making changes, September feels like a nice time to consider your plans for 2026-27. One thing you might consider is spending time in the music program of our church.

One of the unusual aspects of the MCC Choir is that they decided that the most practical time for choir to rehearse is on Sunday mornings. I've served at a number of other churches, and the weeknight choir rehearsal has always been an institution. But, before I arrived at MCC, the choir and its leadership had already decided that they would rather come earlier on Sundays than commit another weeknight to choir.

This makes choir participation much more practical as far as time commitment goes. You're already coming out on Sunday morning for Service, so just come a little earlier.

Another thing about the MCC choir is that you don't need to commit to every week. Several of our people have conflicting commitments and just come to choir on the weekends that they are available.

The final thing about choir is that all levels of singers are needed and welcome. We are also interested in knowing if there are any instrumentalists out there. We just might need you for an anthem if we know you can play.

So, is this your year to make choir a part of your faith life?

Blessings,
Donna Obarowski

A GENEROUS GIFT MAKES A BEAUTIFUL DIFFERENCE

A heartfelt thank-you to the **Morris family**, whose generous gift made it possible to install a much-needed new floor in our downstairs activities room, formerly known as “The Ark.” Shari is a lifelong member of our church, and for many years, Bill could be found in that very space teaching Sunday school or providing Troop 5 with his steady leadership. After more than 60 years, the old vinyl flooring has been replaced, creating a safe, clean, bright, and welcoming space for our church family, scout troops, and wider community to enjoy. We are deeply grateful to the Morris family for their generosity and for helping us care for and renew the spaces that support the life and ministry of our church.





CAMPAIGN ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

Over these past several months, we have invited you to “Imagine What’s Possible” through our *Foundations for Our Future* Capital Campaign. Today, because of the extraordinary generosity of the members and friends of our church, so much of what we once imagined is moving from possibility to reality.

We have been deeply humbled by your response. Your generosity reflects something far greater than a financial commitment; it speaks to a shared belief in the value of this church, its ministry, and its place in our community. Each gift represents someone saying, *“I believe in what we are doing. I believe this church matters. And I want to be part of its future.”*

That spirit of participation has been at the heart of this campaign from the beginning. Our goal was 100% participation of the heart, not because everyone was able to give the same amount, but because everyone has a place in building our future. Every gift, every prayer, every word of encouragement, and every act of support has helped bring us to where we are today. Together, we have exceeded our initial campaign goal; an extraordinary milestone made possible by you. We are now thoughtfully planning how these generous gifts will be put to work, guided by our priorities and our commitment to faithful stewardship.

Look at what we are making possible together! Projects that once existed as plans and possibilities are becoming real investments in the place we call our church home, protecting and caring for this sacred space so that worship, fellowship, service, and ministry can continue here for generations to come.

There is still more to do, and there is still time to be part of this shared work. We move forward with tremendous gratitude not simply for what has been given, but for the faith, hope, and love behind every gift.

Because in the end, our success won't be measured only by how much we raise, but by how many hearts we touch and how many lives are united in building the future of our church.

We began by asking you to Imagine What's Possible. Because of you, we no longer have to simply imagine.

Together, we are making it possible.

With heartfelt gratitude and faith,
Ellen Aronheim and Sal Sena,
Campaign Administrators

FROM THE MISSION BOARD

The Missions Board took a break from meeting this summer, but not from continuing our outreach efforts. The collection of school supplies for the students at Wellmore was impressive thanks to everyone's generosity. Special thanks to our Episcopalans [wordplay borrowed from Pastor Katrina] at St. George's who joined our campaign and added two large boxes of school supplies and backpacks. Wellmore was most appreciative and thrilled with the donations.

We are looking forward to the start of the church year and being together with our church family, especially the special homecoming/campaign celebration. It is not to be missed- see you there!

Erika Carrington

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.



BREAK OUT YOUR ROLLING PINS A BLUE RIBBON IS WAITING!

As part of our Lobster Boil Homecoming celebration, we're hosting a **Blueberry Pie Baking Contest!** All entries, styles, and recipes are

welcome. So **"Let's Get Cracking!"** Dust off your favorite rolling pin and help us make this an event to remember!

To enter a pie for judging, simply email the church office at office@middleburyucc.org or call to leave a message at **203-758-2671**, or email Ellen at spirit2000@aol.com

We'll send you all the details, including drop-off information, once we have your name.

Best of luck and happy baking!

Also one more reminder to reserve your lobsters using the form on our website www.middleburyucc.org or by calling the church office to leave a message at 203-758-2671.

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 puppers. 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

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 October Church Life, please email your classified information to the main office at office@middleburyucc.org by Friday, September 18th.

REEL FAITH: THE HERO'S JOURNEY WITH JESUS

The Third Annual Fairfield East Association of the SNEUCC's Men's Retreat is happening November 20th – 22nd at Wisdom House in Litchfield, Connecticut. Join men from across the state in an exploration of the spiritual journey of Christian faith through the lens of science fiction and fantasy films. With thoughtful conversation, scripture, and personal reflection, Rev. Todd Shipley will connect moments from several

films that uncover the sacred journey unfolding within and around us. For more information, contact David McKinnis at

DavidMcKinnis@optonline.net or sign up at <https://bit.ly/FEAMensRetreat>.



Reel Faith: The Hero's Journey with Jesus

**Iconic sci-fi and fantasy film moments
blend with thoughtful conversation,
scripture, and personal reflection.**

*Uncover the sacred journey unfolding
within and around you.*

Details:

Nov. 20 -22

Wisdom House, Litchfield, CT

Cost: \$175/\$220/\$300

Financial Aid Available

Info & Registration:

<https://bit.ly/FEAMensRetreat>



IMPORTANT DATES

9/6: 10am Worship

9/13: Homecoming Sunday, Foundations of Our Future Celebration
10am Worship

Celebration after worship (food provided)

9/20: 10am Worship

11:30am What's Happening with Silver Lake? Info meeting in
the Parlor

3pm Ecclesiastical Council for Chris Cole, First Congregational
Church of Watertown

9/27: 10am Outdoor worship (worship will be in the outdoor chapel
next to the parking lot. Consider bringing a lawn chair and
something for shade! Rain date: 10/4)

**Middlebury Congregational Church
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Middlebury CT 06762**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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