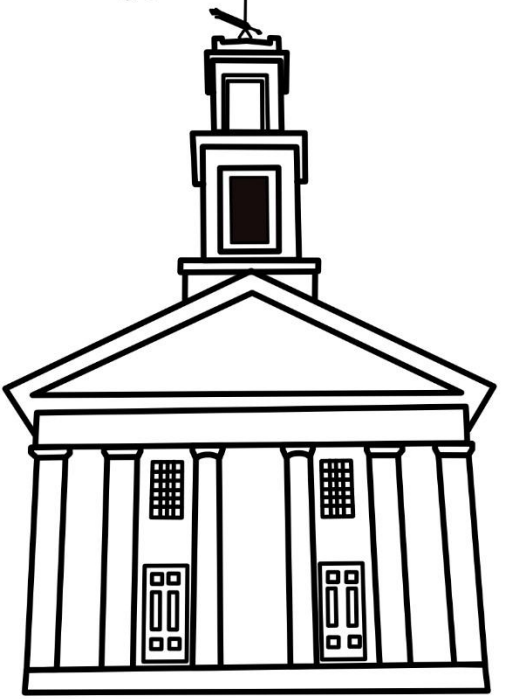
Church Life

November 2026



MIDDLEBURY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MIDDLEBURYUCC.ORG

From the Pastor

This past year, I've been reading *A Year with Dietrich Bonhoeffer,* which is a daily devotional with an excerpt from the writings of Bonheoffer each day. Bonhoeffer is one of the most significant Protestant theologians of the 20th century. He was a leader of the Confessing Church in Germany, which resisted the Nazi takeover of the churches, and he was later imprisoned and executed for involvement in a plot to assassinate Hitler. I've really been enjoying the devotional because it's a really approachable way to read a good amount of Bonheoffer's thought in bite sized segments.

In one of the recent entries, Bonhoeffer is talking about possessions and wealth. He writes "Possessions are not God's blessing and goodness, but the opportunities of service which God entrusts to us."

This coming month is both Thanksgiving and our church's annual pledge campaign, and I think Bonhoeffer's framing of our wealth and possessions is helpful for both.

We often talk about a Christian approach to wealth and possessions as stewardship, since a core aspect of Christian belief is that everything we have and everything we see belongs to God. The first verse of Psalm 24 says: "The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." So, since everything belongs to God, we're stewards or caretakers of all that we have. We're holding wealth and possessions on behalf of God.

One of the misconceptions about stewardship that often arises is sometimes we end up drifting from responsibly stewarding resources to hoarding resources. But, we aren't entrusted with resources to simply look at them or have them make us feel safe.

In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25, the master goes away leaving his various slaves in charge of various sums of money. The slaves who are rewarded are the ones who did something with the money entrusted to them. The slave who is thrown into the outer darkness is the one who simply buried the money he was given in the ground.

Bonhoeffer reminds us that stewardship of wealth and possessions isn't about conservation. It's about God entrusting us with opportunities for service. All that we've been given is a blessing in that it enables us to have greater opportunity for serving God and our neighbor. The question we should be asking ourselves is "how am I using what I have to serve others?"

As we take some intentional time this month to give thanks for all that we've been given, we should also remind ourselves that all our blessings are really God giving us more possibilities to reflect God's love into the world. The more we've been given, the more we have to give. Or, to quote one of the most important lines in all of Spider-Man media: "With great power, comes great responsibility."

Peace,
Katrina Manzi
Minister

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.

Back to Basics: Adult Education Series 2026-2027

For each confirmation class for our teenagers, we typically have another adult to help, and over the years I've noticed adults often seem to get just as much from confirmation class as our teenagers. So, this year when we don't have a teenage confirmation class, I've decided to lightly adapt the curriculum for grownups. Learning is a lifelong endeavor after all. You are welcome to come to all the classes or just the ones that interest you. If you've got a Bible, definitely bring that with you!

The confirmation curriculum we've been using has two main components. The first is classes and the second is reading the gospel according to Luke so we get a full sense of Jesus' life in order. Each class will have a time to check in on how things are going with reading Luke according to the schedule. If you don't read Luke ahead of the class, don't worry; everything else will be read and discussed during the class

Schedule

11:30 on Sundays in the Parlor

11/8: God the Son/Jesus Christ (read Luke 3-4)
11/29: God the Holy Spirit (read Luke 5-6)
12/13: Worship (read Luke 7-8)
1/10: The Bible (read Luke 9-11)
2/14: Saints and Gifts (read Luke 12-14)
2/28: Ministry & Service (read Luke 15-16
3/14: Baptism (read Luke 17-18
4/11: Spiritual Life/Prayer (read Luke 19-20
4/25: Death and Resurrection (read Luke 21-22
5/16: Life in the Church (read Luke 23-24)



Deacon's Bench

I recently traveled to visit my sister and family to belatedly celebrate a milestone birthday of hers. At one point during the weekend I was in ordinary conversation with my young nephew when out of the blue he hit me with

one of those tough questions that seem to be the unique gift of children to keep us adults on our toes. He paused in the middle of whatever mundane thing we were discussing and asked “Am I a good kid?”. The question caught me off guard and broke my heart a little, and as my nephew is on the autism spectrum and was having a particularly challenging afternoon, I confess I struggled to answer immediately in a way that was both loving and also gently acknowledging that an adjustment in behavior at the moment was probably needed.

At the time I managed some kind of encouraging but not particularly articulate response and he moved on but as is always the case when you get caught with a question that makes you think, I mulled over the conversation and what I *should* have said on my long drive home. I thought about how as adults we sometimes ask the same question “Am I a good person?”. I thought about our human failings as children of God but also the endless grace that we receive in response and the expectation that we model that same grace with each other. If my nephew were to ask me again “Am I a good kid?” I would tell him that we are all children of God and as such beloved. I would tell him that sometimes we speak and act the way God wants us to and sometimes not so much but that we’re loved all the same and are always given the grace to do something different next time.

As we move toward a season that can be equal parts stress and joy and maybe not bring out the best in us at times, I share this prayer from an anonymous author to remind us to give and receive the grace that is ours, an endless gift from the One who gave us life.

Pour your mercy into my madness
and your Spirit into my will,
and make me know
in my heart as well as my head
that only in you
am I found, forgiven, and free.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Deacons, Liz Walker

From the Mission Board

As we enter our season of giving [and asking], the Missions board will be collecting food items to provide a bountiful Thanksgiving meal to two families. The sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board outside the kitchen.

We're going to do things a little differently this year for the Christmas baskets; traditionally we collect similar food items during December, and the Missions Board adds a Walmart gift card so that the families can purchase any incidental items that might make their Christmas holiday special. This year we've decided to give only a gift card for a larger amount so that the families can purchase food or other items themselves. We will have designated envelopes available in church and plan to give the families the gift cards in advance so that they can plan for their Christmas celebration. We will post this information in the Crier and will also make the announcement in church, likely more than once!

As always, the Missions Board is grateful for everyone's generosity, and we are honored to do God's work on behalf of all of you, our church family.

Erika Carrington



Music Notes

Both the Thunder and the Whisper

Have you ever wondered why the pipe organ became the traditional musical instrument of Christian worship? Though pipe organ "technology" is thousands of years old (and is, by the way, largely unchanged to this day), the organ didn't come into widespread usage in worship until the Middle Ages, when Christians began to build larger churches…"big" spaces that needed a "big" sound to fill them.

But our ancient ancestors knew a much deeper truth about the organ. They'd call the organ "Vox Dei"…the "Voice of God"…because it was the only instrument that could speak to us the way God does. God's voice thunders in the Scriptures as he pleads with us to abandon our sin

("The voice of the Lord thunders"…Psalm 29)…and yet, God also comforts us with whispers of hope as we face the fires of life ("After the fire, a still, small voice"…1 Kings 19).

The MCC organ is one of the best instruments in the region and, whether it plays a gentle "still, small voice", or it unleashes the magnificent "thunder" of God in full ensemble, our MCC organ allows us to experience both the mystery and the majesty of God…both the thunder and the whisper.

David Obarowski

Stewardship

As our fall pledge campaign gets underway, we've been exploring how each person's contribution helps nourish the mission of our church. In our Stone Soup parable, every contribution of time, talent, and treasure is an important ingredient. And just as ingredients come in different proportions, so can our giving.

Our pledge card offers some helpful information as you consider your pledge for 2027. Another way to approach that decision is to think about giving in proportion to your income. Last December, former Board of Stewardship member Howard Fielding wrote the following article exploring that idea. We're reprinting it here as another perspective to consider as you reflect on your pledge for the coming year.

Board of Stewdarship
Andrew Kwashnak
ShawnaLee Waterbury-Kwashnak
Michele Rowell Finn

Reprinted from December 2025 Church Life, by Howard Fielding.

What About Tithing and Proportional Giving?

MCC's members live up to Connecticut's reputation as the Land of Steady Habits.

That's good: For the last five years, we have maintained a core group of 70 to 75 families who, together, pledge between $120,000 and $128,000 a year. But we keep falling short of what we need for a balanced budget without having to draw down from our endowment.

Can we do better? The Rev. Monica Lewis thinks we can. In the feasibility study she prepared for our proposed capital campaign, she wrote:

Future stewardship programs should include more information on proportional giving and what people should consider when determining how much to give to the church. Though it's clear the congregation has been educated on the average annual pledge, … an overall reevaluation of giving patterns … would be invaluable for the congregation.

In other words, everyone knows whether they give more or less than most other people. But does that amount reflect the value of your church to your own family?

We're stuck in a rut

Mentally, comparing ourselves to others locks us into repeating the model that we had five years ago. What other people are giving determines what we decide to give.

Tithing and proportional giving are based on the Biblical principles of setting aside a portion of our income for the church. In the Old Testament and early Christian church that amount was a tenth, or tithe.

That may not be practical today. The median household income in Middlebury is $142,000. A tenth would be $14,200—well above any pledge we have today. That's where proportional giving comes in.

Giving that feels good

Generosity should feel good. Proportional giving can help.

Start by finding your comfort level. Divide your current pledge by your household income to determine what percentage of income you give now. If your household income is the median $142,000 and your current

pledge is the median $1,200, then your current proportional gift is 1,200/142,000=0.00845, or less than 1%.

Does that percentage look right to you? Or, considering all the blessings you receive from this Christian family, would it feel good to step up a bit, say to an even 1%? That would be $142,000 x 0.1, or $1,420. The following year you might shoot for 2%, or $2,840. And so on.

Repeat as necessary, year after year, until you reach the level that's right for you.



SCOTLAND & IRELAND 2028

Castles. Coastlines. Culture. Adventure.



JULY 2028



Join us for an unforgettable group journey through Scotland and Ireland. Experience historic cities, dramatic landscapes, castles, traditional culture, local food and music, and some of the most beautiful scenery in the British Isles.



- Explore historic Edinburgh
- Experience Scotland's legendary landscapes
- Discover Ireland's countryside and coast
- Visit castles and historic sites
- Experience Irish music, food & culture
- Travel with a fun adult group



INTERESTED IN TRAVELING WITH US?

Middlebury Congregational Church

Wednesday, November 4th at 6 pm

Or Contact Kate Avcollie 203-525-2458



Trip details, final itinerary, pricing, and registration information coming soon.

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.

Portraiture



For the love of Fur-Babies! Commission a quality hand drawn or painted pet portrait in Charcoals or Oils. Limited spaces for the holidays.
www.shawnalee.com

Classifieds

If you want to include a classified in the December Church Life, please email your classified information to the main office at office@middleburyucc.org by Friday, November 20th.

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.

Deaths

Carol G. Bean: May 22, 1920 – September 27, 2026

Important Dates

11/1: 10am All Saints Sunday Worship
11/8: 10am Worship
11:30am Bible Study (Parlor)
11/10: 6pm Mission/Youth Group Sandwich Making for GWIM
11/15: 10am Worship
11/22: 10am Thanksgiving & Consecration Sunday Worship
11/24: 7pm Community Thanksgiving Service @ MCC (joint service with MCC & St. George's)
11/29: 10am First Sunday of Advent Worship
11:30am Bible Study (Parlor)

Middlebury Congregational Church
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Middlebury CT 06762

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