

The Steeple

May 2021

Interim Minister – Reverend R. Randy Day – revday@nmchurch.org
Pastoral Consultant – Reverend Shannon Wall – revwall@nmchurch.org
Music Director – Sarah Fay – musicdirector@nmchurch.org
Manager of Church Operations – Nicole Henderson – nhenderson@nmchurch.org
Bell Choir Director – Sarah Archer – bells@nmchurch.org
Director of Christian Education– Becky Passero – cedirector@nmchurch.org
Moderator – Susan Chapin – <a href="musiche

Office Hours: By Arrangement Office Phone: 860.354.8232 Fax Line: 860.354.4327

E-mail: church@nmchurch.org
Web site: www.nmchurch.org

In-person Sunday services have resumed! We are asking people to sign up – please read the procedures and complete the registration form found on the main page of the church website, or call the church office if you plan to attend. Services will continue to be live streamed, if you prefer not to attend in person.

In an effort to keep people as safe and healthy as possible during these times, we ask that you please let us know if you have experienced symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 within 14 days after you have been at a worship service or in-person meeting/event at the church. This way we can initiate contact tracing efforts. Be assured that names and medical information will be kept confidential to the best of our ability and following the guidance of the local health department.

Your continued support for our church is critical while attendance at services is restricted due to COVID-19. Please visit the main page of the church web site and click, "Donate to the Church!" to find out how you can keep your regular pleage or donation to the church current.

Please see the link below to review guidelines for community/faith organizations regarding COVID-19. Please visit the CDC website for updates; information can also be found by dialing 2-1-1.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-community-faith-organizations.html



Prayers

Anyone wishing to submit a prayer request during the week is asked to send an email to <u>prayer-requests@nmchurch.org</u> or call the church office.

<u>Pastor's Page</u>

On May 4, 1864, Grant's Army of the Potomac followed the roads leading south to challenge Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. Not since the days of the American Revolution has such a shadow of death threatened the nation. Armies engaged in savage fighting, making the American Civil War one of history's bloodiest.

In A Stillness At Appomattox, historian Bruce Catton describes the great battles and forgotten skirmishes in vivid detail, but he also gives attention to the gentle side of the campaign. Springtime meant the dogwood blossoms were floating in the air like lost flecks of sunlight, and beside the roads the violets were in bloom and the bush honey-suckle was out. What a contrast to warfare!

Another intriguing contrast is the fact that whenever these two opposing armies were not physically far apart, the pickets usually got acquainted. Perhaps more than anyone else, they saw the enemies as human beings not unlike themselves. The Union and Confederate pickets constantly arranged informal truces, meeting to trade knives, tobacco and newspapers. They filled their canteens in the same creeks, exchanged gossip and kept an eye out for officers!

In today's complex world we sometimes resemble the individual soldiers, incapable of stopping the war single-handedly, powerless to sign the formal treaty. Yet in the very midst of this hostility there are frequent opportunities for informal truces.

Through the jungle of mistrust among anti-scientists and pro-scientists, conspiracy addicts, and fact-checking persons, runs a stream of life-sustaining water, reminding us of our universal needs. On the turbulent sea of racial hatred, conscious and unconscious, are islands of informal truces where communication, dreams, and hopes are shared by black, brown and white persons who recognize the potential for racial justice and economic equity.

The ridiculous bickering of family feuds dating from the era of obstinate, old grandparents is often splendidly ignored by two grandchildren who fall in love. With a bit of luck, this informal truce between the youthful lovers spreads to their respective families, and a forgiving covenant is sealed at the wedding gathering.

Herein lies the hope of humankind. Although a permanent cessation of hostilities is difficult and not easily negotiated, there is always the chance an informal armistice may lead to a firm and lasting peace. Jesus, who lived in anything but a romantic utopia, gives us this hope.

See you in church or through live streaming!

Grace and peace, Rev. R. Randy Day



Church Meetings

The **Spring Meeting** of the church will be held after the worship service on **Sunday, May 16.** We will vote on a new slate of teams that aligns to the revised constitution.

The next Church Night meeting will be Monday, May 17.

Lawn Mowing Sign-up

The Trustees have asked for volunteers to mow our very limited lawn area each weekend from April through October. Please email Nicole to sign up. This effort saves the church quite a bit of money each summer. Volunteers will be sent a reminder of the date they have chosen. Thank you for helping to keep our church grounds inviting!



Sunday Bulletin Deadline

Bulletin information and announcements are due to Nicole Henderson, nhenderson@nmchurch.org by **Tuesday**, each week. Please keep them as brief as possible and send them in a Word document or email. Thank you!

Deacon's Bench

The First Congregational Church of New Milford is on the edge of great things! We've opened our doors and once again have in-person worship services, while still maintaining our live-stream services. We've found our settled pastor who's eager to make this her home. We've written (and adopted) a new church constitution to guide our ministries. These are exciting times!

I've been thinking about the life of the church during the past year. While there have been too many peaks and valleys to name, I can't help but think about the helpers. Fred Rogers, known best for the television show, Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood, is quoted as saying, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." We are blessed to have so many helpers at our church.

What a wonderful place the First Congregational Church of New Milford is, that there are too many helpers to be named here. From our interim ministers, Shannon and Randy, to our Deacons. From our Called to Care group to our Prayer Shawl Ladies. From our Moderator's Council to our Trustees. From our Meetinghouse Restoration Committee to our Reopening Committee. From our Search Committee to our Constitution Revision Committee. From our musicians to our technology experts. From our Christian Education Committee to our Office Staff. We are blessed.

In preparation for writing this article, I Googled, "Bible verses about helping". The first thing that popped up was "47 Bible Verses About Helping Others". It seems that Mr. Rogers was right. Look for the helpers because the Bible tells us to help (a lot). After reading all 47 Bible verses, my favorite is perhaps the simplest of them all:

Matthew 5:16: In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Thank you to all of the helpers volunteering to make an exciting future for our church. We must be glowing for all to see!

Jennifer Albright For the Board of Deacons

Offering Envelopes

If you need envelopes and have not yet done so, please let Katie McKay or Nicole Henderson know.



Pastoral Search Committee

The Search Committee unanimously and enthusiastically presented Rev. Amy Carter to the congregation on April 11. The candidating weekend consisted of a Meet and Greet on April 10 from 10 to 2 in the church parking lot. On Sunday, April 11, Rev. Amy led the worship service. Following the service, church members overwhelmingly approved the call of Rev. Amy as our full-time settled pastor.

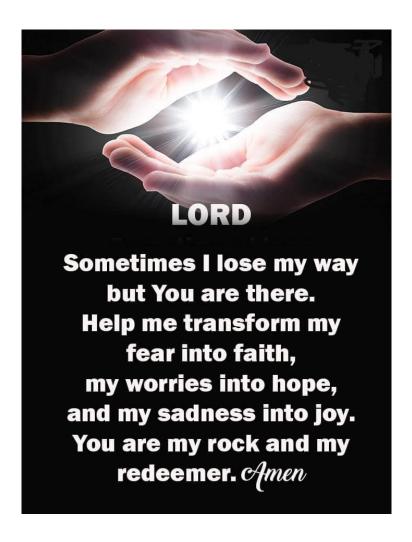
We continue to collaborate with the Deacons to welcome Rev. Amy as our full-time settled pastor. More details will follow as the time draws nearer. For the next month and a half, Rev. Amy will be finishing her work with her current congregation and preparing for relocation to New Milford. She will begin her call on June 1 with the First Congregational Church. Her first service as settled pastor will be June 6.

If you have specific questions for, or regarding, Rev. Amy, please address questions and concerns in email to Deacon Jennifer Albright. (<u>albright6787@gmail.com</u>) Doris Papp will continue to focus on questions regarding the finishing details of the search. In addition, the committee will be writing a handbook as supporting documentation for the Constitution Revision Committee. The June 2020 local church profile will be retained in the official records of the church.

As chairperson of the Search Committee, I cannot say enough about this faithful, hard-working committee: Sarah Albright Archer, Jessica Baranowski, Susan Chapin, Mike Curley (co-chair), Jason Davis (chair for the first year, committee member for two years), Pete DelMastro (who joined the committee in July), Allen Holcomb (co-chair), Bill Jackson, Barbara McGiver, Jessica Menkes, Rev. Dr. Pat Nicholas, and Scott Steele (member for one year). It was a very demanding commitment to serve on the Search Committee. In addition to the usual challenges of a search for a settled pastor, the pandemic necessitated flexibility, a tremendous time commitment, and willingness to learn new technology tools.

Finally, thank you to all of you for the faith and confidence you placed in the Search Committee.

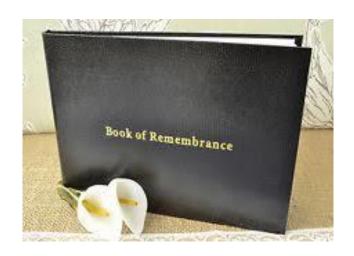
Doris Papp



A. Russell Ayre Scholarship Committee

It's hard to believe that scholarship time is right around the corner! Applications for 2021 A. Russell Ayre Scholarships are due to scholarship@nmchurch.org, by **May 2.** If you know an interested New Milford High School senior who is planning to attend a secondary school, please direct them to our church website for an application. The Committee is excited to help another group of talented and dedicated young people with their educational dreams!





Book of Remembrance: Memorials given to the Book of Remembrance by our church family and friends will be dedicated in memory of those dearest to their hearts. Contributions are put into a special fund and are used to enhance the beauty of the church and its spiritual ministry. Donations may be sent in any time of the year to the church office, in care of the Book of Remembrance. Those gifts received later than **May 9** will be dedicated in November. The list will be posted on the bulletin board by the side door entrance of the church on **May 23** for review.

A Russell Ayre Scholarship: With your generous support we are able to offer financial assistance to deserving college students. Donations of any size may be sent in any time of the year to the church office, in care of the Scholarship Committee. Please indicate who your gift is in memory/honor of, as well as to whom an acknowledgement should be sent. Those gifts received later than May 9 will be dedicated in November. The list will be posted on the bulletin board at the side door entrance on May 23 for review.

Please make check payable to: The First Congregational Church

Memo: Book of Remembrance <u>OR</u> A. Russell Aye Scholarship

(<u>Note</u>: A. Russell Ayre Scholarship and Book of Remembrance are separate checking accounts.)



Thank you to Bronwyn Metz and Sophie McSherry for volunteering their time to assemble and distribute the Church School Holy Week Bags in March.

Thank you to Dawn Kraft for her help in the office, and to the Jackson family for their work with the flower beds.

Music Committee

Sarah Archer led 8 bell choir members in the prelude on Easter Sunday. The service also featured Jerome Burns playing trumpet on several hymns and the postlude.

Senior choir members continue to meet Thursday nights for a virtual rehearsal. Choir members submit videos every week which Sarah and Chris Fay use to create a virtual choir video. Thanks to all, especially Sarah and Chris, for great videos each week. It is hoped that the choir will resume in person singing next fall.

Dave Elmore, Chair



Social Concerns and Missions Committee

Shared Garden Update:

We are in the process of beginning Year 2 of our shared garden with St. Johns. Here is our initial work plan:

- Saturday April 24th
 - Initial spring clean-up and alignment on what to plant, and what improvements are required
- Saturday May 1st
 - o Build 2-3 raised beds
 - o Fill beds and improve existing beds
- Saturday May 8th
 - Planting Day!

2021 Programs:

We will be focusing on the following Core Programs for the balance of the year:

- April-May: Mother's Day Blankets
- May-June: Father's Day Tools
- May-September: Shared Garden
- September: Walk-A-Mile program
- o October: One Great Hour of Sharing
- o November: Neighbors in Need
- December: Collection for the Troops

Dan Martin, Chair

Rev. R. Randy Day's Recommended Reading



Please refer to the past few issues of *The Steeple* for comprehensive lists of recommended books and articles. Here are some recent additions:

Quoted in Sermons

- Saint Peter: A Biography by Michael Grant
- Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation (Revised and Updated) by Miroslav Volf
- Pilgrimage: Meditations on a Journey of Faith by Patricia D. Brown

General Reading

- Book of Jeremiah by John Goldingay
- Gonna Trouble the Water: Ecojustice, Water, and Environmental Racism by Miguel A. De La Torre
- The Words of Her Mouth: Psalms for the Struggle edited by Martha Spong

Be the reason believes someone goodness in the goodness of people.

Planned Giving

That's the name that has come to be associated with gifts to your church or other charity that happen after your lifetime. Simply put, you plan now, for a gift that will occur later. In our church, we recognize those who have declared they have arranged for a planned gift by receiving them as members of the Deacon Roger Sherman Society.

There are many ways to make a planned gift, and depending on your unique circumstances, some methods are better for you and for the church than others. Contact the Church Office for more details. The simplest and most direct way to make a planned gift is to include the church as a beneficiary on your life insurance policy. Your insurance agent can guide you on the specific forms and options available from your insurance company. Just tell them you want to add a beneficiary; the agent will take it from there.

When you have arranged your planned gift, be sure to let our Pastor know – no details, just that you made arrangements – so we can appropriately recognize your generosity. For your convenience, you may use the form below.

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THE DEACON ROGER SHERMAN SOCIETY

A gift to First Congregational Church of New Milford is in my (our) estate plans.

☐ **468**! Please count me (us) as a Member of The Deacon Roger Sherman Society.

Please Print Name(s) as you would like them to appear on recognition documents

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Have you moved? Do you have a new email address? Please keep the church office undated!



People are shopping online more than ever, and this will likely increase as we approach the holidays. If you are among this group, did you know that as you make online purchases at Amazon you can support the church at the same time? Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price - there is no additional cost, and once signed up, the donation to the church is automatic.

To shop at AmazonSmile simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile. You use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same. On your first visit to AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com), you need to select First Congregational Church, New Milford, CT to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Your selection will be remembered, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation.

The Chapel Stitchers

The Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet on **Sunday**, **May 16th on the Green in front of the church following worship service**, **weather permitting**. We will be discussing possible dates to have a craft table in front of the church during the Farmers Market times. All are welcome - beginner and/or advanced stitchers. Our informal meetings are a great place to relax, enjoy friendships, share experiences, and learn from some long time experts! Join us as we gather for a time of faith and fellowship. Be sure to **bring your own chair and project to work on**. If you need a shawl or know someone who does, please call the church office or email Leslie Schlemmer at news@nmchurch.org. Donations of yarn are always welcome!

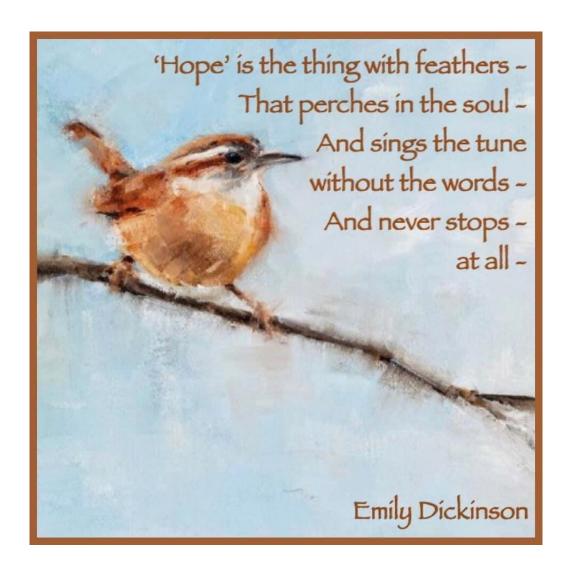




Investment Committee

At March month-end the invested funds continued to do well. On average, investments are up YTD about 3.5%. The endowment fund has fully recovered from the stock market crash of March 2020.

Dave Elmore, Chair



In Loving Memory

Dianne Cook March 23, 2021

Baby Bundles Committee

The Baby Bundles program is continuing to assist families in our local area during these stressful times. So many families with young children are finding it difficult to make ends meet. While we work closely with Social Services and the VNA Nurse-Family Partnership, we are also sharing our baby items with other organizations – so we can help the most number of families.

Baby Bundles, in conjunction with our Church School, sponsored a drive to collect diapers, wipes and personal hygiene products during Lent. These items were shared with Camella's Cupboard to help more of our friends and neighbors.

We want to thank all of you who dropped off diapers, wipes, and Personal products during Lent. It is encouraging to know that we have so many church and community members willing to help out the many families in need.

Jan McCarthy, Chair





Constitution Revision Committee

Thanks to all who voted to approve our recommendations for a revised Constitution. We were delighted with the overwhelmingly favorable vote and with the eagerness of the congregation to move forward with a new model of ministry.

The committee is now helping the Ministries and teams begin to implement the changes. Each committee member is working with one Ministry and the teams under it as follows:

- Worship Ministry: Jerry King
- Christian Education Ministry: Dave Eherts
- Outreach Ministry: Ross Detwiler
- Growth & Congregational Care Ministry: Leslie Schlemmer
- Church Management Ministry: Ken Papp

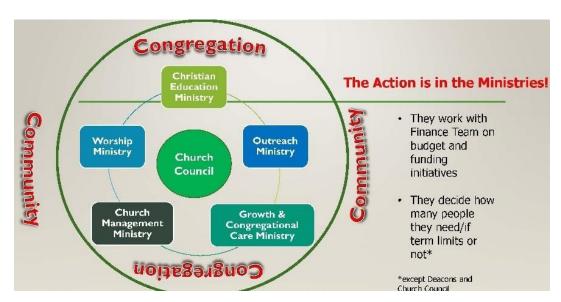
Our work is chartered through the end of May, but the team members will continue to be available to each Ministry and to the Church Council as needed.

The first task is for the current Boards and Committees to develop a slate of Ministry and team members to be voted on by the congregation on Sunday, May 16. In most cases, they will decide how many people they need and whether or not they should have term limits. (The exceptions are the Deacons and the Church Council, as specified in the 2021 Constitution.) I will be leading worship and preaching that day on the Biblical basis for the changes we are now beginning to implement.

After the vote, the new Ministries and teams will meet and choose their chairs/representatives to Church Council, and the new structure will begin June 1.

The CRC is also creating a set of leadership development materials and other resources to guide the Ministries and teams. We will also have some suggestions for additional resources that each Ministry may want to develop going forward.

Many thanks and blessings to all, Rev. Shannon Wall



PLANTING YOUR SPRING GARDEN FOR THE GARDEN OF YOUR DAILY LIVING

Plant Three Rows of Peas

- · Peace of Mind
- Peace of Heart
- · Peace of Soul

Plant Four Rows of Squash

- Squash Gossip
- Squash Indifference
- Squash Grumbling
- Squash Selfishness

Plant Four Rows of Lettuce

- · Lettuce be Faithful
- Lettuce be Kind
- · Lettuce be Patient
- Lettuce Really Love One Another

No Garden is Complete Without Turnips

- Turnip for Meetings
- Turnip for Service
- Turnip to Help One Another

To Complete Our Garden We Must Have Thyme

- Thyme for Each Other
- Thyme for Family
- · Thyme for Friends

Water freely with Patience and cultivate with Love.

You will reap what you sow.

Meetinghouse Restoration Committee

Phase One is complete, but there is still work to be done. Here is an update on other projects:

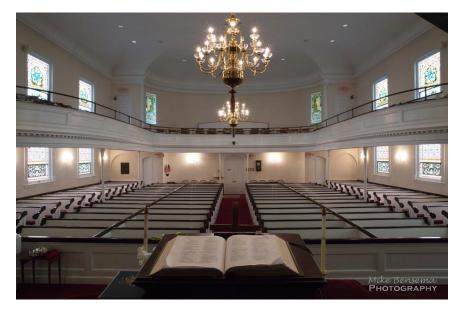
Accessibility Team: Great news is that Jeff Vill and a colleague who has expertise in motion control systems and electronics were able to make the needed repairs to the old lift, and it has been operated successfully. Jeff needs another few weeks for re-assembly of physical components and it will be ready for any engineering inspection deemed necessary by the town or our insurance carrier. It will be ready for use shortly for members who have difficulty walking up and down the stairs to Fellowship Hall.

Other Handicap Accessibility Needs: Other current needs are for the Fellowship Hall Bathroom doors to have electronic openers. John Wittmann is currently looking into a firm quote for the latter.

Audio-visual improvements: Dave Elmore and the Music Team have a good understanding of what is needed and in what priority order. Replacing the mixer is number one priority and next will be wiring and the video source (computer/laptop) for input, new microphones and speakers, and a new projection system.

We have more than \$50,000 left over from Raise-the-Roof funds. The MRC recommends fixing the handicap accessibility issues noted above with part of the remaining RTR funds and remanding the decision on AV improvements to the Music and Finance Teams, who will then make a proposal to Church Council. Hopefully by this summer, all of these items will be complete and all members will be able to access Fellowship Hall with relative ease and be able to clearly hear and see our services whether they be in the sanctuary or at home. Thanks to all our excellent volunteers who make this possible.

Dave Eherts, Chair



Church School News May 2021

We are excited to announce that INPERSON Church School is BACK!

Beginning May 2, 2021 at 10am

in Parish Houses Room 5.

These will be All Ages classes led by Miss Becky and Miss Carol.

We will continue to follow our church Covid protocols which can be found on our website at www.nmchurch. This includes: mask wearing by all, hand sanitizing and temperature taking upon entry, and sign-in for contact tracing purposes.



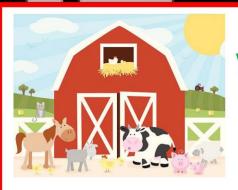
Sunday, June 13, 2021, 10am.

during the regular worship service.

Please stay tuned to your emails for more information.

We will celebrate the end of our regular church school year and also welcome our NEW PASTOR!





ACATION BIBLE CAMP! JUNE 28—JULY 1, 2021 9AM—12:30PM AGES 3 -5TH GRADE

BARNYARD BASIA

Space is limited to 50 campers! This ensures small groups sizes.

Due to Covid restrictions, there will be no late entries and no walk-ins.

During camp, all Covid protocols will be in place and followed including, but not limited to: temperature taking upon arrival, mask wearing, social distancing, hand sanitizing, and contact tracing forms.

Please see Carol McKay or Becky Passero for more information.

Registrations are now available in the church office and online at www.nmchurch.org

Space is limited

*** Registration Form can also be found on the following pages ***



BARNYARD BASH!

June 28—July 1, 2021 9am-12:30pm—Lunch Provided

Registration open to children
Ages 3 (fully potty-trained) to 11 years old.
Location: New Milford Congregational Church Parish House,
36 Main Street, NM

Cost: \$35 for one child, \$63 two children, \$81 for three or more.

Mail Registration Form to:

VBS Director, Carol McKay 32 Caldwell Drive, New Milford, CT 06776.

Please use one registration form per family.
Please direct all questions to Carol at 860-248-1924

Cash or checks payable to FCCNM (Scholarship available)

Children will be placed in multi-age crew. Friend requests accepted.

Registration Deadline June 1st.—NO Exceptions ***Space is limited to 50 campers*** *No Walk-ins or late entries*

Please note that we will be following all current Covid guidelines per the CDC and State of CT.

This includes, but not limited to:
temperature taking upon arrival each day
mask wearing by children and adults while indoors
social distancing
regular hand washing/sanitizing
Our groups are small on purpose this year to accommodate these
quidelines and to best keep your children healthy and safe.

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Join us for this week full of Bible Stories, new songs, fun games, crafts, and NEW FRIENDS

Our fee includes a t-shirt, daily snack, daily craft, program supplies



BARNYARD BASH!

June 28—July 1, 2021 9am-12:30pm—Lunch Provided

Registration Form

Registration Deadline June 1st NO Exceptions

Parent/Guardian 1	Name		Phone		
		Cell			
	ail Home Church				
Emergency Conta	ct Name & Phone			•	
Physician Name & P	hone	·			
Child(ren) Info: Last Name 1.	First Name	Birth Date		Youth Shirt Size	
2					
3					
We often take photographs during VBS events that may be used in publicity, (bulletin, newspaper, website, FB) AND will "Live Stream" from our website. Please indicate if you DO NOT want your child's picture used:					
***I hereby agree to release all parties affiliated with Vacation Bible School for any liabilities arising from my child(ren) participating in this program.					
Parent/Guardian Signature					
Paren	vouardian Signa	ature			
All registrat	tion forms m	ust be mail	ed direct	v to the VB	S Director :
All registration forms must be mailed directly to the VBS Director:					
VBS Director, Carol McKay 32 Caldwell Drive, New Milford, CT 06776.					