



The Steeple

September 2021

Minister – Reverend Amy Carter – revcarter@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
Church Council Chair – Susan Chapin – moderator@nmchurch.org
Treasurer – Evelyn LeCates – treasurer@nmchurch.org
Recording Secretary – Pete DelMastro – secretary@nmchurch.org
Financial Secretary – Katie McKay – financialsecretary@nmchurch.org
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Steeple Editor – Janet Wittmann – steeple@nmchurch.org

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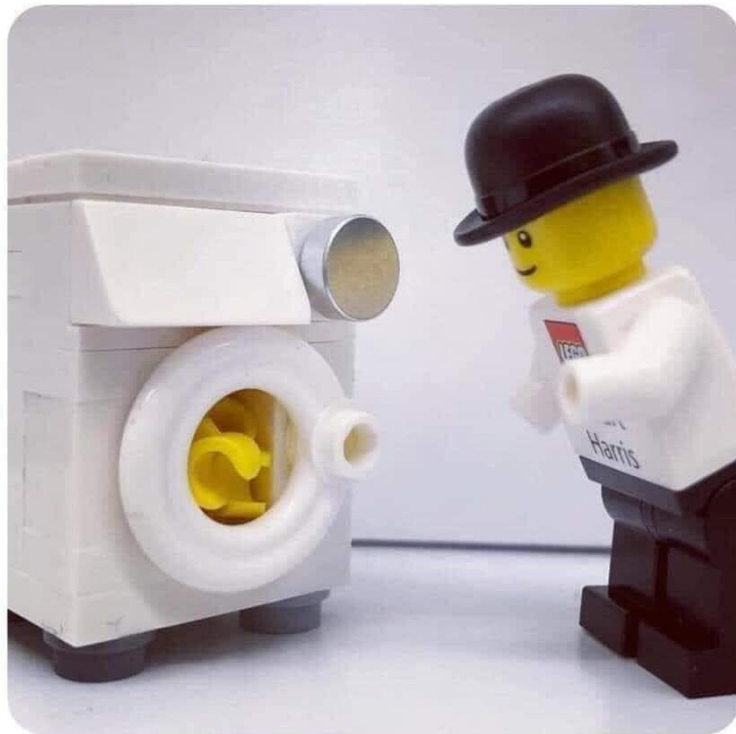
Web site: www.nmchurch.org

In-person Sunday services have resumed!

If joining us in person, please know that in accordance with CDC, state and local recommendations, we are requiring all individuals to mask indoors until further notice. Light refreshments for fellowship are currently discontinued.

The office remains open during its regular scheduled hours Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 12 noon.

Don't forget to wash your hands



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!

Minister's Message

1 Peter 4:9 – "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling."

In April when I candidated to be the settled pastor, I had a glimpse of the wonderful things that awaited me in the church and in New Milford. I relocated just a few hours from my long-time home, but far enough that nothing was familiar. I knew I was in for an adventure, and came fearlessly knowing that the good people of the church would help me settle in this new place.

Over and over again, I have experienced grace and care as people have guided me to finding everything – shopping, restaurants, parks and beautiful views, and connections for professionals of every kind. I underestimated how many times I would have to ask for things, and I also underestimated how much this time of adjusting would teach me about hospitality.

Hospitality has always conjured up a mental picture of lovely tea saucers and cookies on china, but now I see that it is much more. Hospitality is opening and sharing parts of your life with someone. It isn't simply a fancy thing we put on for special events, but rather it is reflected in the way we are interconnected. To show hospitality is to connect with others by hearing their stories and sharing your own. It is an attitude of welcoming the stranger to your life. The good people of First Church have indeed done this without a grumble, and I am ever grateful.

Now our season of "Back to Church" is arriving, and together we are navigating the challenges of 2021. COVID continues to prompt us to make adjustments, but we move forward together as community. Church School and Coffeehouse are restarting, confirmation classes are being scheduled, and even plans for an adult learning opportunity are underway. The budget process is starting, the new Constitution is being "broken in" and the life of the church continues to flourish in new and old ways alike. I am excited to see the warm hospitality of this place extend in new ways!

See you on Sunday!

Rev. Amy Carter

Prayers

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





Lawn Mowing Sign-up

We are still looking for volunteers to mow our very limited lawn area each weekend through October. Please email the Deacon on Duty with dates you can volunteer. Thank you for helping to keep our church grounds inviting!





Open and Affirming (aka ONA) is a specific designation of the United Church of Christ. After years of talking about this process, our ONA team is poised to begin the journey to help the congregation determine if FCC will become an Open and Affirming church. Most churches display signs that proclaim "All are Welcome." However, in many cases that means, 'we welcome all people who are like us,' or in some cases people who are different will be tolerated, but not fully accepted into the life of the church. Open and Affirming in the UCC means that we not only welcome, we fully affirm that all people are children of God - that means 'all.' This includes, but is not limited to, 'people like us,' people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, people with varying abilities, people from every socio-economic level, and specifically people in the LGBTQ community. Open and Affirming allows people to know that this church is a safe place where they will be welcomed and affirmed for who God created them to be. This is an exciting step forward! This process will take some time and we need your input. Going forward there will be opportunities for listening sessions, study groups, and more information. But you don't have to wait to let us know your thoughts. If you have questions, please contact one of the team members. If you are interested in participating on the ONA team, please get in touch with one of us. The inaugural members of the team are Doris Papp: Chairperson, (pappducc4@gmail.com, 203-770-3392,) Dan Martin (daniel.k.martin@gmail.com, 203-770-4650,) and Pat Nicholas (patnicholas@charter.net, 203-770-1885.) We look forward to hearing from you!



Baptism

August 8, 2021, by Rev. Carter

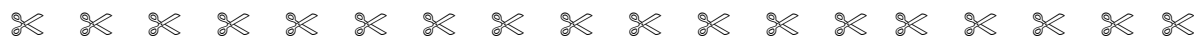
Madeline Ann Martirano, daughter of
Stephen and Amanda Martirano

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.



THE DEACON ROGER SHERMAN SOCIETY

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

☐ ***Yes!*** 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



Sunday Flowers

If you would like to donate flowers for a special person or occasion, please contact the Flower Committee: Sandy Gammons, Bonnie Westerberg, or Debbie Poole, debpoole@charter.net





Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast is **September 18th** (always the 3rd Saturday of the month). We usually have this in Fellowship Hall, but the last two months have been at Theo's on Railroad Street. When we meet in Fellowship Hall, we start cooking at 7:45, and eating at 8:30. When we meet in a restaurant it is usually at 8:30. We will send a note as we get closer to the 18th to confirm the location. Please contact Dan Martin (daniel.k.martin@gmail.com) if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

Please note: This month, we will continue our testing work and discussion of results regarding the efficacy and effectiveness of bacon versus sausage on perceived happiness. This is important work, so please join us!

Room Rentals

As fall approaches, we are back having to implement restrictions with building usage. The CDC has recommended masks be worn by everyone indoors regardless of their vaccination status. In spite of this, the buildings are still open for groups to use, and our past groups are coming back.

Rental revenue is expected to decrease in 2022 with the library being finished and their no longer requiring our space. They were originally expected to only need our space until the summer of 2021, but the current estimate is they will be a tenant until January 2022. Our other renters are expected to continue using our space, and we are working on attracting new clients. The realtor we used in the past will be listing our property in the near future.

The Boy and Girl Scouts will be coming back to the Parish House this fall. We are adding a Boy Scout troop to the one we already have using our building, and one of the Girl Scout troops has disbanded. We get requests for various events, such as baby showers, parties for baptisms, birthday parties, etc., and we continue to promote our space wherever possible.

With Pastor Amy now with us, and the roof fixed, we are looking forward to hosting more weddings. If you know of anyone looking for space to host an event, please have them contact me to discuss options.

Mike Bensema, Room Manager

Christian Education Ministry

Church School begins again, in person, on Sunday, September 12, 2021. That Sunday, Bibles will be dedicated and given to our third graders. We will also dedicate those who have volunteered to teach this Church School year: Carol and Katie McKay, Peggy King, Erin Haynes, Mike Curley, and Dave Eherts. Registration letters have been sent in the mail. If you did not get one, please use the OR Code in the CE newsletter to register your child(ren) for Church School.

The Pre-K (age 3) - 6th grades will continue to meet in the Parish House classrooms from approximately 10:20am to 11:15am. We are introducing a new curriculum that will align with the liturgy in church: Deep B.L.U.E One Room Schoolhouse. This includes children's bulletins, ages appropriate songs based on the Psalms, crafts, games, and Bible stories. This is an inclusive classroom where children are fully immersed in the Bible, learning that they are loved and a child of God.

Our 7th – 12th grades are flipped. First, they meet downtown at a local eatery (place TBD) from 9am- 9:45am for food and fellowship then return to the church, meeting in the Chapel until approximately 10:20am. This is their class time which focuses on the morning scriptures. They join the service in time to hear the sermon, which ties what they've just heard in class together.

Youth group is open for grades 8th-12th and meets the fourth Sunday of each month in the Parish House Youth Room beginning September 26, 2021. More information will come shortly. Information about Confirmation Class is coming - please stay tuned.

We will remain masked up in the classrooms and continue to follow the mandates set forth by the State of Connecticut and the CDC, as well as staying in lockstep with the New Milford Schools as they adjust their guidelines.

Becky Passero, CE Director



The Association of Religious Communities coordinates a faith voices column in the Danbury News-Times, and has invited Rev. Amy to participate. Her first column will print on **Saturday, October 2nd**.

Handmade Knitted, Crocheted, Quilted Items and more!

Chapel Stitches
Sale
In front of the church
Saturday
September 18, 2021



All proceeds benefit Baby Bundles—a ministry of our church helping the youngest members of our community!



On the green, 36 Main Street, New Milford, CT 06776

Fellowship Team

1 Corinthians 1:9

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

2020 was a year of the unexpected, a year of wait and see, of what will come next. There was bad and there was good. We had many reasons to be sad or celebrate. Our weekly fellowship routine was completely disrupted so we were unable to gather and be sad or celebrate together every Sunday as we usually did. In 2021, we started to get back to a normalcy.

The goal of the Fellowship Team is to find a new team lead and look at how we do fellowship going forward while following all safety guidelines. One of the first things we are looking to do is change how the congregation sees fellowship as a passive activity and spark their interest in joining by hosting, baking, or donating. We look forward to working with the Deacons to plan for Rev. Carter's installation celebration, as well as working with CE for the pageant, and of course Social Concerns and Missions for Souper Bowl Sunday.

If you are interested in either joining the Fellowship Team as a member, guest host, baker, or donator, please see the information below or reach out to Deacon Sheri Gunn or Fellowship team members Doug Williams, Sandy Gammons, Sue Metcalf, or Holly Meissner.

If interested, please email news@nmchurch.org or **sign up to host a coffee hour here:**

We're using SignUp.com (the leading online SignUp and reminder tool) to organize our upcoming SignUps.

Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

- 1) Click this link to see our SignUp on SignUp.com: [**https://signup.com/go/BBAeeoW**](https://signup.com/go/BBAeeoW)
- 2) Review the options listed and choose the spot(s) you like.
- 3) Sign up! It's Easy - you will NOT need to register an account or keep a password on SignUp.com.

Note: SignUp.com does not share your email address with anyone. If you prefer not to use your email address, please contact Leslie at communicationsgroup@nmchurch.org and she can sign you up manually.

Sheri Gunn



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

Baby Bundles

This summer the Baby Bundles program was a work in progress. We have been talking to the families that come to our distributions and other groups that assist families with infants to get ideas. With so many changes and restrictions on how we can help the community we have realized it is important to come up with new solutions and possibly new relationships with other outreach programs.

To make the necessary changes to our mission we need your help. There are many young families in our church and community and we are hoping that you will share your ideas and information with us. We need to figure out new ways to assist families in need.

If you would like to help us grow our outreach program, please share any ideas, information or questions you have. You can call the church office or email me directly at j.mccarthy101@sbcglobal.net It's time we upgrade the Baby Bundles program to meet future needs. Will you help?

Jan McCarthy



*Thank
You!*

- to the Jacksons for their continued help with the flower beds.
- to Bill Kraft and John Wittmann for their help in moving furniture
- to Dawn Kraft for her help in the office.

This is the DAY
the LORD has made
let us Rejoice and
be GLAD in it
Psalm 118:24

Fellowship Team: Members needed - help us to serve one another. If interested, please email news@nmchurch.org or talk to any Fellowship member.

A-V Team: The church is upgrading its audio and video systems. We are looking for volunteers to help run sound and video at services and events. Training will be provided. Email avteam@nmchurch.org for more information.



Buildings and Grounds

- The decorative stone wall in front of the Parish House nursery, was significantly damaged by a vehicle impact over the last month. No one has come forward nor have we seen a vehicle in our parking lot with telltale damage. Bill Jackson and John Wittmann repaired the wall to near its original appearance as a few of the underlying stones were cracked.
- We installed a new air conditioner in the Parish House office and sealed it inside and out with a surround of Plexiglass.
- Parish House basement dehumidifiers are now draining continuously. One drains into the Youth Room kitchen sink and the other into a containment barrel in the furnace room and then into the in-ground sump. This will minimize the amount of times that the units need attending to. From just four days after the barrel and sump drain was installed, the barrel collected 20 gallons of water! This should not only help with reducing daily maintenance but also help the air quality and overall health of the environment.
- The office has a new and very inviting look thanks to Nicole Henderson, Dawn Kraft, and others.
- The Fellowship Hall floor has been completely refinished and looks in near new condition. Many thanks to our "go-to" company, Crown Maintenance, and owner Serafin (AKA Serf)
- Lambert and Barr has sent us a proposal to replace the storm/screen windows in Amy's office. The current ones are dysfunctional. Funding sources are being researched to accomplish the task before winter weather.
- John Wittmann arranged with the Town of New Milford DPW to chip seal the entire parking lot behind the church, which includes our small section. The date has yet to be determined and notices will have to go out. This will be at no cost to us as the town regularly uses our few spaces. He is also working on having the lines repainted and will update soon. Without this very much needed maintenance our asphalt will not last much longer. This past spring we swept up half of a plastic trash barrel of loose stone from our area alone.
- We received the estimate to install handicap assisted openers on the Fellowship Hall bathroom doors. At \$3,800 we were surprised that it wasn't more. This expenditure will be a discussion for the MRC and others.

John Wittmann, Chair

Book Club

The next meeting is Tuesday, September 14 at 7pm. We will meet and discuss *28 Summers* by Elin Hildebrand. Please RSVP to Nicole.

Social Concerns and Missions

We would welcome anyone with an idea for mission, as well as anyone that would like to work on mission!

In September, we will be working with CE and others in the church to support the Walk-a-Mile program on **September 19th**. Our church has been a big part of this program for several years. Participants will purchase recommended food items at Big Y, and then walk them up to the collection area in front of our Parish Hall. The food purchased is then brought to the New Milford Food Bank. It is a wonderful showcase for our church! Please consider being a part of this fun and important program!

We will walk from the church to Big Y, buy a bag of groceries (there will be a suggested list of items to purchase), and walk back to the church with your bag, and deposit in the food bins outside the Parish House. Cookies, water and lemonade will be provided to all walkers outside of the Parish House. ***Please bring \$10 to purchase the food.***

Over **400,000** Connecticut residents-including more than **117,000 children** are food insecure. **73%** of these families had to choose between food and utilities. **63%** had to choose between food and rent. **68%** had to choose between food and medical care.

Sign up by sending an email to:

daniel.k.martin@gmail.com or scmchair@nmchurch.org

Or sign up by using this link:

<https://signup.com/go/onHayyg>



Stewardship Committee

The financial support provided by our members and guests is greatly appreciated. Whether these gifts are part of a yearly giving plan or are spontaneous donations, they are wonderful blessings that mean so very much.

Gifts can be submitted in a number of ways. Perhaps the most popular and convenient method is by setting up a recurring contribution from your bank account. Most banks make this feature quick to set-up and easy to use. Just set up First Congregational Church of New Milford as a payee on your account and schedule weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual payments - that's all there is to it!

Feel free to contact the Stewardship Committee if there's anything we can do to help you plan your giving. Thank you to all of our generous donors.

Jon Case, Chair

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Chapel Stitchers will meet on **Sunday, September 12, 2021**, the second Sunday of the month. We will meet outside in back of the church by the Marsh Parish House, weather permitting. Being respectful of the pandemic protocols, please bring your own chair and your knitting/crocheting project. If you need yarn we will have a stash available.

We will be prepping our items for another "handmade" sale taking place in front of the church on **Saturday, September 18th** from 9am till noon. Volunteers are needed to man our table.

All are welcome - beginners 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 at **11:30am**. 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.



When a flashlight grows dim or quits working, do you just throw it away? Of course not. You change the batteries. 🔦. When a person messes up or finds themselves in a dark place, do you cast them aside? Of course not! You help them change their batteries. Some need AA...attention and affection; some need AAA...attention, affection, and acceptance; some need C....compassion; some need D...direction. And if they still don't seem to shine...simply sit with them quietly and share your light. 💕💕



Silver Lake
Award
Celebration
& Fundraiser



Honoring
**Valerie
Tutson**



Silver Lake Award Ceremony & Fundraiser

Honoring Valerie Tutson

Sunday, October 3rd 2021

2:00-5:00pm

A Villa Louisa

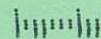
60 Villa Louisa Rd, Bolton, CT 06043

*Silent Auction - Music & Entertainment -
Complimentary Hors d'oeuvres - Cash Bar*

Register online at
www.silverlakect.org

Tickets \$60 per person

Thank you for your support of Silver Lake





Church School News

September 2021

**If you are new to us and reading this, WELCOME!
Old friends, we've missed YOU!
Join us on September 12, 2021 for WELCOME BACK SUNDAY!**

Worship Service begins at 10am
Church School begins at approx. 10:20am
After church, stay for our annual
All Church Welcome Back Fellowship 11am
in the Parish House Parking Lot
(Prewrapped snacks and water bottles provided)

Don't forget your completed registration form!
Please use this QR Code:



Our 2021-22 Teachers:

**PreK—2nd Grades (Parish House Room 4):
Carol and Katie McKay**

**3rd— 6th Grades: (Parish House Room 5)
Peggy King and Erin Haynes**

**7th Grade - High School (The Chapel)
Mike Curley and Dave Eherts**

Upcoming Events for All Grades:

September 7th

"No School" Apple Picking at Averill Farms 10am
Meet in Averill parking lot—no carpooling

Thursday, September 16th

"No School" Hiking 1pm
Place TBD

September 19th

"Walk-a-Mile for a Meal"
12:30pm Meet in church parking
Our church will be the drop point for
NM Social Services and we provide cookies
for the walkers.

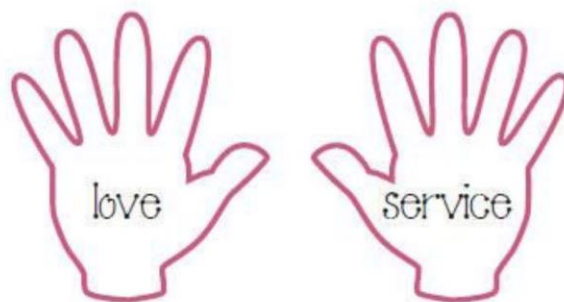
For 8th-12th Grades:

September 26th

First Youth Group Meeting
5-7pm in Fellowship Hall
Dinner provided
*Please wear a mask

Keep looking UP...
THERE MAY BE A
RAINBOW
waiting FOR you.

I have helping hands.



Love and Service go hand in hand



There are no words to express our thanks for how much work Carol and Katie McKay put into VBS each year.

They coordinate it all and manage their team of both adult and youth volunteers.

We are forever grateful to them and to those who gave up their week to run such a fabulous program. With Covid restrictions, this year was no exception to another fantastic and fun VBS!

A very special thank you to:

Rev. Amy
Bill and Cristina Jackson
Becky Passero
Mike Bensema
Nicole Henderson
Jan McCarthy
Sandy Gammons
Erin Haynes
Our 25 Youth Helpers

Our Curriculum

Deep B.L.U.E.

One Room Sunday School (*Abingdon Press*)



DeepBlueKids.com

Be with God

- Develop the sense that God is always with you.
- Feel awe and wonder of God's mighty acts.
- Know that God loves you and offers you grace.

Love God and neighbor

- Show love to family and friends.
- Value the diversity among persons, recognizing the contribution that the variety of gifts, cultures, and physical abilities make to the community.
- Participate in service projects appropriate to age levels and abilities.

Understand yourself as a child of God.

- Develop self-esteem and know that you are worthy of love and care.
- Join with others to worship God.
- Develop a sense of belonging to the faith community.

Explore faith and the Bible.

- Investigate, experience, and question your faith.
- Find guidance for disciplines of prayer and Bible reading.
- Grow in your understanding of the relationship between the Bible message and your own relationship with God.
- Explore the meaning of commitment to God through Jesus.