



THE BELL TREE
AN MCCC PUBLICATION

A Newsletter for
APRIL 2026

The Mount Carmel Congregational Church
(A United Church of Christ)
3285 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518

 *From the Pastor's Desk...* 

Church Family,

I am writing these words during the last full week of March, before Holy Week begins. I trust that by the time you read this we will be able to see signs that Spring is really upon us.

April is going to be a busy month for our congregation, full of opportunities for fellowship, education, and service. We will begin the month celebrating Christ's resurrection. On the second Sunday, April 12, we will have our annual congregational meeting to both look back and look forward, and we will have lunch together. April 18 will be our annual Spring Tag Sale. On April 25 from 10:30 am-12:00 pm, Rev. Dr. Ginger Brasher-Cunningham, Lead Pastor at First Congregational Church of Guilford and Death Doula, will lead a workshop entitled "Living Well, Dying Well," which is for all ages. We will look together at planning our memorial services and supporting our families. I hope you will make plans to be there.

I will close my article with a poem that I have found meaningful, **Small Kindnesses** by Danusha Laméris:


*I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,*

*and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the body, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead — you first," "I like your hat."*

Peace,
Milton

APRIL WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Please join every Sunday at 10am in the Church for service, followed by coffee hour in the Parlor! Note: These are lectionary passages for your own devotional purposes. Weekly scripture readings are subject to change.

<p><u>April 2, 2026</u> Maundy Thursday, 7pm Service Scripture: A Service of Tenebrae</p>	
<p><u>April 5, 2026: Easter Sunday</u> Communion Scripture: Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118:1-2 Colossians 3:1-4 John 20:1-18</p>	<p><u>April 12, 2026: Annual Meeting</u> <i>Second Sunday of Easter</i> Scripture: Acts 2:14a, 22-32 Psalm 16 1 Peter 1:3-9 John 20:19-31</p>
<p><u>April 19, 2026</u> <i>Third Sunday of Easter</i> Scripture: Acts 2:14a, 36-41 Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 1 Peter 1:17-23 Luke 24:13-35</p>	<p><u>April 26, 2026</u> <i>Fourth Sunday of Easter</i> Scripture: Acts 2:42-47 Psalm 23 1 Peter 2:19-25 John 10:1-10</p>

APRIL BIRTHDAYS



Happy Birthday Wishes Go to the Following:

Nancy Poland	April 2 nd	Rhonda Pruzinsky	April 2 nd
	Beverly Dean		April 22 nd

Don't see yourself on our Birthday List? Please contact the office!

Call to the Annual Meeting

The 261st Annual Meeting of the Mount Carmel Congregational Church will take place immediately after the regular worship service on Sunday, April 12, 2026.

-Sandra Martin,
Church Clerk

Annual Meeting and Luncheon: April 12, 2026

The 261st Annual Meeting of the Mount Carmel Congregational Church will be held on Sunday, April 12, 2026, following our regularly scheduled worship service. Your attendance at this meeting is very important because we need a quorum in order to approve the Annual Report.

Copies of the 2025 Annual Report, as well as the 2026 directory will be made available for pickup in the narthex on Easter Sunday, April 5, or in the office during office hours on April 2. You may also request a digital copy of either document from the office at any time.

Our next churchwide luncheon will follow our Annual Meeting. Finger sandwiches and a meat/cheese sandwich platter will be provided. The following items are needed: chips, baked beans, potato salad, coleslaw, cookies & brownies. Please let Debbie or Aren know if you can help provide any of these foods. Thank you.

-Church Staff

Spring 2026 Tag Sale – April 18, 2026

Our annual Spring Tag and Craft Sale is scheduled for Saturday, April 18 from 9:00am to 2:00pm. Per usual, there will be a variety of unique craft and tag tables to choose from, making our tag sale the perfect place to find some ‘Tag Sale Treasures’. There will also be some delectable treats to discover via our Church Bake Sale table. If you would like to reserve your spot for this event, table spaces are \$20 each and can be reserved by calling Vera DeAngelo at (203) 239-7135. Hurry, because spots are filling up fast! As always, drop-offs for items will occur on the Friday before the sale, April 17, from 11:00am to 3:00pm.

-The Craft Ladies

Living Well, Dying Well – April 25, 2026

“Living Well, Dying Well” is a workshop for all ages on planning our memorial services and supporting our families. Led by Rev. Dr. Ginger Brasher-Cunningham, Lead Minister, First Congregational Church, Guilford, and Death Doula, this important workshop will take place on Saturday, April 25 from 10:30am to 12:00pm in the Parish House. All are welcome to attend!

-Church Staff

Stewardship

Current Pledge Total: As of March 26th, we have reached 40 individual pledge units totaling \$73,473 in pledges! Please feel free to continue to mail in your pledge cards or drop them off in the offering plate on Sundays. To those of you who have already pledged, we would like to thank you for your generous contributions to the Church and our ongoing mission.

“You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” – *Amy Wilson Carmichael, American Missionary*

-Debbie Wooley

Faith Formation

Seasons of the Church. Curious about Easter and its meaning for Christian life? Well, look no further than **pages 6 and 7** of this month's newsletter, where we provide a brief overview on the origin, meaning, and symbology of Easter and the Resurrection!

ARK Banks. Please don't forget to keep bringing in your ark banks. The monies collected go into a pastor's discretionary fund which can be used to help people in our community who need help. If you have not picked up a bank yet, they can be found in the narthex or in the entrance to the parish hall. Keep your Ark Banks floating!

-Debbie Wooley

Thank You From Debbie

Thank you for the lovely sympathy card. Your thoughts and prayers are appreciated.

-Debbie Wooley

Thank You From Aren

Our family extends our heartfelt thanks to everyone who surrounded my grandmother, Betty, with love, prayers, and support over this past year. Your kindness carried us through a difficult time and meant more than we can express. Though she was never able to officially join Mount Carmel, she always considered it her church and all of you her church family. We are deeply grateful to Reverend Milton, Lynda, Diane, and Val for helping to create such a meaningful Celebration of Life service, to Leon for providing the livestream, and to Debbie, Gail, and the Hospitality Committee for their care in preparing the reception. Finally, thank you to all who attended the March 22 service. Whether you knew Betty personally or came to support our family, your presence, prayers, and compassion have meant the world to me.

-Aren Alberico

FINANCIAL REPORT: JANUARY 2026

Following is the financial report for January 2026. If you have any questions, Ellen can be reached at treasurer@mccucc.com. February / March reports will be included in the May Bell Tree.

Income:	Pledges and Offerings:	\$8,940.00
	Other Income:	\$4,034.00
	Total Income:	\$17,974.00
Expenses:	Total Expenses:	\$19,124.00
Net Income (Loss):		- \$1,150.00

GENERAL ANNOUCEMENTS/REMINDERS

Volunteers Needed. We are always looking for volunteers to help with Sunday services, whether as Ushers, Coffee Hour hosts, or by providing Altar Flowers. Signup sheets for all three are posted on the bulletin board at the Parish House entrance. For ushering, please contact Dave or Bev Jurkiewicz with any questions; for Coffee Hour or Altar Flowers, reach out to the Church Office at office@mccucc.com or (203) 248-7408. Please note that flowers must be provided by you, and you will need to contact the office to include a message in the weekly bulletin.

Bell Tree. Do you have an event to announce? A story to share? We would love to hear it! Send us an email at office@mccucc.com by the second to last Tuesday of the month and we may include your article in our next publication!

Joys and Concerns. If you wish to have a joy or concern announced during worship, please forward to them to Aren at office@mccucc.com or call the church office at (203) 248-7408.

Pastoral Support. If you require pastoral support or guidance, feel free to contact our minister, Reverend Milton, by email at Pastor@mccucc.com, or by contacting the Office by email at office@mccucc.com or phone at (203) 248-7408.

Food Bank. Donations for the Food Bank are always needed if you are able to contribute. Non-perishable items such as canned beef stew, hearty soups, canned fish, peanut butter, mac and cheese packages, and oatmeal would be greatly appreciated.

Prayer Shawls. As a reminder, Prayer Shawls (lovingly handknit by members of our Church craft group and blessed by Reverend Milton) are always available to those who need them. If you or anyone you know needs one, please contact the office and we will arrange a shawl for you.

QU Student Parking. Please be aware that the first row of spaces in the gravel lot (closest to Whitney Avenue) has been reserved for Quinnipiac student parking. These spaces are clearly marked with signs, so please use other spots. Thank you for your cooperation!

Directories and More. Physical copies of the 2024 Annual Report, 2025 Revised Bylaws, 2025 Directory, and the 2026 Annual Draft Budget are available for pickup in the Church Office. If you would like a digital copy of any of these documents, please contact the office at any time.

Church Pictures. We are always looking for new pictures! If you happen to attend a Church event, please feel free to snap a few pictures and send them to us by email (office@mccucc.com).

Mouse Deterrents. We have installed discreet mouse deterrent devices in key areas of the church to help maintain a clean and sanitary environment. These devices are safe and effective only when plugged in, so we kindly ask that they not be unplugged, even if they appear decorative. Thank you for your cooperation in caring for our shared space.

Seasons of the Church: Easter



The events of Holy Week, from Palm Sunday through the Saturday Easter Vigil, culminate in Easter, the center and turning point of the whole Church Year. Easter is the celebration of Jesus as the Christ, an event which calls us to hope and to tell the world of Christ's victory over death and eternal life with God.

Duration: Easter lasts for fifty days from Easter Sunday until Pentecost.

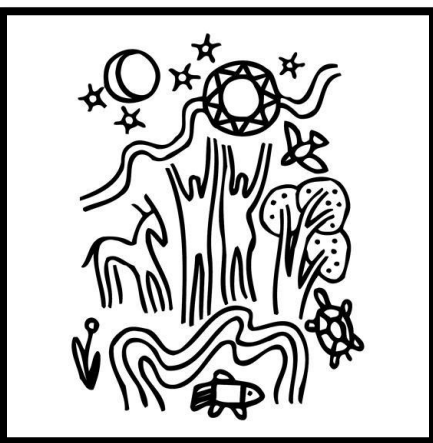
Focus: Christians celebrate the good news that Christ has conquered sin and death.

Bible Verses: Matthew 28:11-20 Luke 24:13-53

Easter: A Brief Overview

Easter is the earliest Christian festival, celebrating Jesus' resurrection from the grave in triumph over sin and death. This festival was first mentioned by name in 130 A.D. The Season of Easter lasts 50 days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost.

New Christian converts in the earliest centuries were trained and tested in Lent and finally baptized at the Easter Vigil; the days after Easter were the time for them to explore the meaning of their new life in Christ and the significance of the mysteries of baptism and holy communion of which they were now partakers.



On Easter we, too, celebrate our baptism, for baptism joins all of God's people with the death and resurrection of our Lord. For us, too, the Easter season is a time to rediscover how the mystery of salvation and resurrection now can become a more influential part of our life for the coming year. And, remember, the Easter celebration continues with every week of the Church Year, for every Sunday is a "little Easter."

Our next page explores the various images and words associated with the Easter celebration.

Images and Words for Easter

Easter: The English word “Easter” is borrowed from the name of a pagan spring festival and is related to the fact that the sun rises in the east. As our **sun** is a life-giving power that makes spring rebirth possible, so the Son of God demonstrated his power over death in his victorious resurrection.



Alleluia: A Hebrew word which means "praise the Lord" that appears in the New Testament as part of the grand victory celebrations in the Book of Revelation (Chapter 19).

Angel: The messenger who announced Jesus' resurrection in the **open tomb**, shown with a rock rolled away from its entrance.



“Jesus Christ is risen today...”: This is a quote from the well-known Easter hymn, a Latin carol from the 14th century, which was set in English by Charles Wesley in the 18th century. **“He is risen!”** and the reply, **“He is risen indeed!”** are the ancient and always-new shouts of Christian people at Easter.

Butterfly: The butterfly emerging from its tomb-like cocoon symbolizes Christ emerging from his empty tomb.



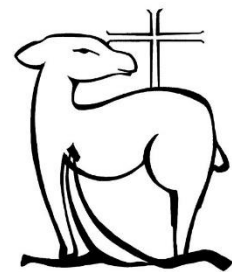
Triduum: Triduum is a Latin term for the three days from Maundy Thursday to Easter around which the whole Church Year turns. In these sacred hours our Lord instituted a “new covenant” in his blood between God and humanity, offered himself on the cross as the sacrifice for sin, and after his death rose, alive, in victory over death for all humankind.

Easter Lily: This flower, shaped like the bell of a trumpet announcing victory, grows from a seemingly dead bulb which is buried in order for it to grow and bloom.



White and Gold: White is the color for Easter's joyous celebration, although gold is sometimes the color for Easter Day and the following week.

The Lamb: *Paschal* is a term for Easter borrowed from the Jewish feast of Passover at which a lamb was sacrificed for sin. As the Jews celebrated God's Passover rescue of his people from slavery, so Christians celebrate their liberation from sin's bondage through the sacrifice of the “paschal” Lamb of God. On the first Easter service, which is often an Easter vigil on Saturday evening, a **Paschal Candle** (renewed each year at the Easter Vigil) is lit as a reminder of the risen Savior, Light of the World.



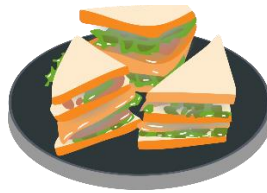
Please join us for the
261st Annual Meeting of the



Sunday, April 12th
Directly Following Our 10am Service

All members are invited as we:

- Approve the Annual Report**
- Hand out the 2026 Directory**



Sandwiches and Salads will be provided!



**Copies of the Annual Report will be made available
for pickup in the Narthex by Sunday, April 5, 2026.**

We need a quorum to move forward—your presence matters!

Please join us for our Annual



WHERE:

Mount Carmel Congregational Church
3284 Whitney Avenue, Hamden CT 06518

WHEN:

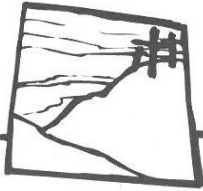
Saturday, April 18
9:00am-2:00pm

WHAT:

Tag Tables!
Handmade Crafts!
Bake Sale!
& MORE!

BOOK NOW:

Tables are \$20 each and can be booked now by calling
(203) 239-7135



Jesus' Sad Walk to a Garden

After Jesus celebrated the Passover with His apostles, He shared the Last Supper with them. Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. It was a sad walk for Jesus. He is God, and He knew what would happen in the garden that night. To learn more about this story, write the missing letter from each set of letters on the line.

- | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. QRTUVWX _____ | 3. ABDEFGH _____ | 4. ABCEFGH _____ |
| EFGHJKL _____ | WXYZBCD _____ | YZABCDF _____ |
| LMOPQRS _____ | LMNOQRS _____ | PQRTUVW _____ |
| PQRTUVW _____ | PQRSUVW _____ | ABCEFGH _____ |
| 2. XYZACDE _____ | STVWXYZ _____ | NOQRSTU _____ |
| BCDFGHI _____ | NOPQRSTU _____ | SUVWXYZ _____ |
| QRSUVWX _____ | BCDFGHI _____ | |
| NOQRSTU _____ | | |
| XYZBCDE _____ | | |
| TUVWXZA _____ | | |

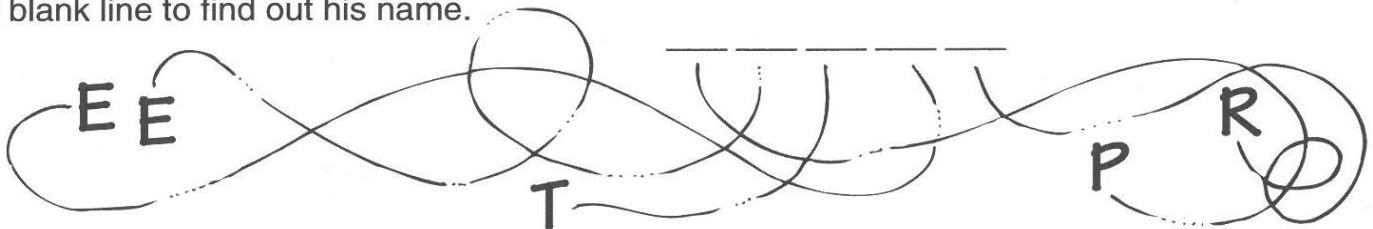


Use the words you wrote above in the sentences below.

Jesus was sad because He knew that . . .

1. He would soon bear our _____ in His body on the cross.
2. One of His apostles, Judas, would _____ Him to His enemies.
3. These enemies would come and _____ Him.
4. All of His other apostles would _____ Him.

Later that night, another apostle denied three times that he knew Jesus. Trace each letter to a blank line to find out his name.



Are you ashamed to tell your schoolmates and friends about Jesus? Isn't that the same as denying Him? Speak up for Jesus! Share His love!

Easter Morning



Circle the letter in the true column if the sentence is true. Circle the letter in the false column if the sentence is false. Write the circled letters from top to bottom in the space below for an Easter message. Then read John 20:1-18.



	True	False
1. Mary went to the tomb at sunset.	O	J
2. Mary found the stone rolled away.	E	S
3. The other disciple could run faster than Peter.	S	P
4. The burial clothes were all wrinkled.	N	U
5. Two angels in white were in the tomb.	S	L
6. Peter let the other disciple enter the tomb first.	B	A
7. Mary wept outside the tomb.	R	M
8. Someone told Mary to quit crying.	C	O
9. Mary thought Jesus was a gardener.	S	Q
10. Jesus wanted Mary to hug him.	D	E

_____ !



Mount Carmel Congregational Church

3284 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518

Website: www.mccucc.com

Phone: (203) 248-7408



Staff and Officers

Minister:	Reverend Milton Brasher-Cunningham pastor@mccucc.com
Office Admin:	Mr. Aren Alberico office@mccucc.com
Music Director:	Mrs. Lynda Pedersen lyndal.pedersen@gmail.com
Faith Formation:	Mrs. Debbie Wooley ce@mccucc.com
Treasurer:	Mrs. Ellen Amato treasurer@mccucc.com
Church President:	Eric Grantz egrantz73@gmail.com
Church Clerk:	Sandee Martin sandeemart48@gmail.com
Board of Trustees	Anna Anderson, Chair aanderson545@gmail.com
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