# CHURCH MATTERS



## NOVEMBER 2026

### Streams of Grace

Rev. Dr. Andy Nagy-Benson

Dear Church,
Streams of grace flow through our lives in all seasons. And come November—Thanksgiving month!—we give special thanks to God for the gifts of God, and for our many blessings. We might even pray one of Anne Lamott's three essential prayers: "*thankyouthankyouthankyou*."

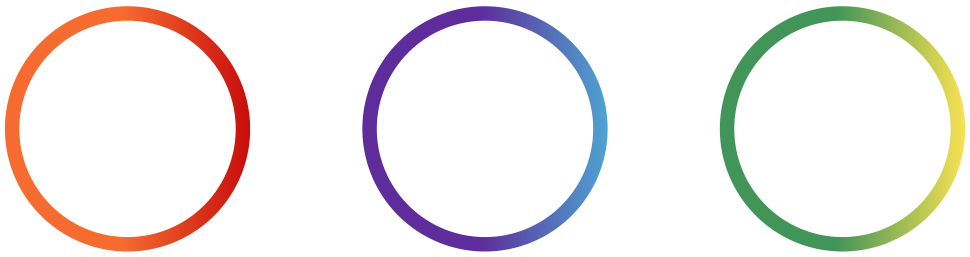
This November, I give thanks to God for our community of faith. And for the pleasure of having known Bob Gleason, Ed Williams, and Peter Carothers. (Turns out, it is possible to be thankful and bereaved.)

And, yes, our 102 nd Holiday Bazaar is still days away, but I am grateful in advance for what that day will hold—and I am grateful today for the days of planning and doing that go into that event. I give thanks for the congregation's generous response to our Capital Campaign 2026 and for your steadfast support of our annual stewardship campaign.

And I give thanks for the autumnal splendor of recent weeks. These prayerful words of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918) resonate with me—I share them, gladly:

O God, we thank you for this earth, our home;
For the wide sky and the blessed sun,
For the salt sea and the running water,
For the everlasting hills
And the never-resting winds,
For trees and the common grass underfoot.
We thank you for our senses
By which we hear the songs of birds,
And see the splendor of the summer fields,
And taste of the autumn fruits,
And rejoice in the feel of the snow,
And smell the breath of the spring.
Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty;
And save our souls from being so blind
That we pass unseeing
When even the common thornbush
Is aflame with your glory,
O God our creator,
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

With love and gratitude,
Andy



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# CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING OCTOBER 14, 2026

At the Oct. 14 meeting of the Church Council, Robert Foster, chair of the Board of Trustees, said a mistake by workers who are replacing the roof allowed water to infiltrate the sanctuary through a portion of the northeast ceiling. Insulation above the ceiling had to be discarded, and a portion of the ceiling will need to be repainted, but the underlying wood appears to be fine. The project has progressed more slowly than the church would like, he said. To speed things along, Naylor & Breen, the chief contractor, has said it will add crews to do staging and non-slate work.

Moderator Leanna Maglienti asked Pastor Elizabeth Gleich to update the Council on her September arrest, along with six other pastors, on misdemeanor trespass charges after they participated in a demonstration at the Williston offices of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Pastor Elizabeth said she is due to appear in court Oct. 20 to enter a plea, and that she and others in the group are receiving pro bono legal representation. Someone asked if church members have responded negatively to her participation. Pastor Andy Nagy-Benson said he has had conversations with a handful of congregation members who've expressed concerns about her arrest; some wanted to know if Council had approved her participation. Council members repeated what they'd said previously: that both pastors are free to act on their personal convictions, and that church members are free to agree or disagree with them.

Pastor Andy said the Friday Night Community Supper Program is on firm footing now that Gus Jordan has agreed to spearhead the volunteers. He asked the Council to consider setting up an approval process for Art in Unity's wall hangings in the church, not because there have been problems with the displays, but because there is no system now for reviewing them.

Michele Brown, a member of the Budget Team, said the church already has received $76,000 for the 2026 Capital Campaign, which seeks to raise $675,000 to replace the roof, repay two loans, and buy the leased solar panels on the roof of the new addition. The roof replacement is expected to cost up to $550,000.

Council members voted to allow May Poduschnick, director of Children and Youth Ministries, to continue her efforts to find a Middlebury College work-study student to provide adult supervision in the nursery during Sunday worship; to have Leanna sign a work-study agreement with the college; and to have the Board of Christian Development review the church's Safe Church Policy to see how hiring a student would require its amendment. Bill Thurber, who chairs the board, said May has been unable to find enough volunteers to provide consistent supervision.

After emerging from an executive session, Council approved two motions:

"Having reviewed the self-assessment of our Senior Pastor, Church Council affirms that our church community continues to thrive under and benefit from Pastor Andy Nagy-Benson's leadership, inspiration, and dedication. We are grateful for the devotion and care he shows to both the church and the greater community. We are blessed by his many talents including inspirational and timely sermons and teaching of adult education classes and we are continuing to benefit from his advanced education. We recognize his increased focus and commitment to Pastoral Care, the Youth Group and mentoring of Eliana. Other contributions include Vice Moderator of the Addison Association of the Vermont Conference (UCC), continued active participation in the Middlebury Clergy Association, and leading Table 21's effort to fund significant home repair/improvement projects for church families;" and

“Having reviewed the self-assessment of our Associate Pastor, Church Council affirms that our Church community continues to benefit from Pastor Elizabeth Gleich’s leadership, inspiration, and dedication. We are grateful for the devotion and care she shows to both the Church and the greater community. We are blessed by her many talents and appreciate her leadership of Parent Playdate, the College Ministry team, Taizè services and in her Pastoral Care. She is recognized for consistently thoughtful, faithful leadership of worship services and exceptional sermons. Her ministerial call to act on social justice issues has garnered her attention and praise.”

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Cox, Church Clerk

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## What is Church Council?

Between annual meetings, the **Church Council** meets once a month to fulfill its responsibility to coordinate the church's programs and business. Council has the powers generally ascribed to a corporation's board of directors.

The Church Council is composed of the following Church members: **Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and the chairpersons of the six church boards. Also, there are three at-large members. One is elected every year and serves a 3 year term.**

## What is All Boards?

The basic life and work of the church is under the direction and supervision of church boards, which meet monthly at the **All Boards Meeting** and report to the Church Council. Members of these boards are elected from the membership of the church.

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MIDDUCC MUSIC

# FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR

Ronnie Romano

Dear Church,

Last week, I sat on the edge of my bed looking out the window to see a magical sign of the changing seasons. A towering maple tree in the neighboring yard was ever so gently shedding its leaves, many falling everywhere like little snowflakes. Something in this natural image brought on a deep nostalgia in me. As I literally

witnessed the decay of life, I found myself thinking how strikingly beautiful it was, and how it enraptured my full attention in that moment. It also called to mind the future: winter snow!

Like the passing of the seasons outside, my thoughts are also turning to the upcoming church seasons. Before long, all of the music will be imbued with themes of Advent and Christmas, continually pushing to bring hope and light to a dark season. As we did last year, the **Chancel Choir** warmly invites anyone in the congregation who sings to join us for this special musical season.

**Children's Choir** had another wonderful session this past weekend, singing "This Little Light of Mine" while wearing choir robes. The robes were donated by Elliott's home church in Maine (hand-delivered!) — what a joy to bring new life into something that had sat dormant for some time!

**The Handbell Choir** will return to worship for All Saints Day thanks to the efforts of Carol Campbell. No bell or music-reading experience necessary to join—contact me if you are interested (ronnie@midducc.org).

**Taizé** continues on the first Wednesday of each month with a rehearsal for musicians at 5:30pm and a service at 7:00pm open to all. This form of prayer feels especially poignant to me in the darker months, with all gathered around gentle candlelight.

In other news, a new component for the church organ has arrived, thanks to the generosity of the Chase family. It is a zimbelstern ("cymbal star") — a rotating bell tree that produces a lovely tinkling of bells while the organ plays. Christmas hymns are going to feel just a little bit more festive this year...just you wait and see!

With love,
Ronnie






# FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

May Poduschnick

**Church School**

We are planning to present Bibles to our third graders in November! Does this mean they will read them from cover to cover? We can hope! But if nothing else, we hope this gift will introduce them to the Bible as a book of wisdom, hope, and life.

Whether it is a picture Bible that first brings the stories to life, a graphic novel that tells them through comics, or a full-text translation, we hope these words of wisdom will help guide our children toward the good life God has in store for them.

It is also time to start thinking about the Christmas Pageant. Stay tuned for our big reveal!

**Junior Youth Group (JYG)**

JYG continues to buzz along with great energy and enthusiasm! The group is planning to bake apple pies for the Holiday Bazaar, putting their teamwork and baking skills to good use.

It is our hope and prayer that JYG will continue to be a community of hope, encouragement, and belonging as these young people navigate the transitional years of middle school. We are also grateful for the ecumenical connections we share with St. Stephen's and St. Mary's congregations, which enrich our time together.

**Nursery: More Than Babysitting!**

Our nursery continues to be an important ministry to the littlest members of our church family. It's not just babysitting; it's an

opportunity to model what church is all about: welcome, joy, and a sense of belonging. The nursery is available every Sunday of the year, and we are always looking for adults willing to help staff this ministry. No experience is necessary! We will provide training and make sure you feel supported. Even if you can help only a few times a year, every extra pair of hands makes the load lighter.

Please consider being part of this important ministry and helping our youngest members experience the warmth and welcome of our church community. Contact me (may@midducc.org) or Robyn Stattel (rzeliff@gmail.com) if you are interested.

**Growing Together**
We are continually grateful for the children, youth, and families who make our church such a vibrant place. We are equally grateful for our multigenerational community, where people of all ages bring their unique gifts, perspectives, and joy. Together, we create a place where faith can grow, relationships can flourish, and everyone can find a sense of belonging.

May

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# GREENING THE CHURCH

## Helping Hands Group



The Advent season is upon us! Please mark your calendars and join us in decorating the church on Monday, November 23rd, at 10:00 a.m. We will be hanging garlands and wreaths and decorating the tree.

Come join in the fun and get into the spirit with fellowship, along with taking in the sights and smell of the season. Join in on this beloved annual tradition with your church friends!

You can let Dorothy Douglas know if you are coming or if you have any questions at 802-989-0405.

## TAIZÉ: SERVICE OF HOPE AND HEALING AFTER THE ELECTION



Join us Wednesday, November 4, at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary for our monthly Taizé service. While our Taizé services are always rooted in hope and healing, this month we'll hold these themes especially close. In the wake of the election, whatever the outcome, we'll come together in candlelight, quiet prayer, and repeated songs to make space for whatever we're carrying and to remember that God endures in every generation. All are welcome to join us for this time of stillness, prayer, and hope.

## A MESSAGE FROM NOMINATING COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, thank you to everyone who has already agreed to serve on our church boards in 2027 and beyond. We truly appreciate your willingness to share your time and talents in support of our church.

As we finalize our nominations for the coming year, we still have one opening on each board, except for Trustees. We hope a few more members will feel called to step forward and get involved in this important work.

If you are interested or would like to learn more, please reach out to me. I would be happy to talk with you! Thank you all for the many ways you support our church community.

Warmly,
Robin
Chair, Nominating Committee
rbentley05@gmail.com




# NEW MEMBER SUNDAY

## Board of Membership

New Member Sunday will be held on November 15. Curious about becoming a member or exploring if membership is right for you? An informational meeting will be held after church on November 1. You can also reach out to Pastor Andy (andy@midducc.org) or Pastor Elizabeth (elizabeth@midducc.org).





# ALL CHURCH RETREAT RECAP

What a beautiful thing it is to share a weekend in community with an amazing group of brothers and sisters! Our 2nd annual All-Church Retreat happened Oct 16-17, 2026 and ended on a tremendous note of gratitude. Here are a few highlights reported back from participants of one word or phrase that describes their experience:

“Tired but happy”
“Belonging”

Enjoy some of these photos from the experience, and please take note that we are planning for a 3rd All-Church Retreat next fall. Details and dates will be coming soon as we can finalize!




















## NOVEMBER'S GATHER & SHARE THEME

### Board of Missions and Social Concerns

Let's get baking! This November, our Gather & Share theme is **Flour Power**! Help our neighbors stock their pantries with baking essentials for homemade treats and family favorites. We're collecting flour, sugar, powdered sugar, baking soda, baking powder, cornmeal, cake and brownie mixes, and cooking oil. Every donation helps spread a little warmth and sweetness this season! Bring your donations to church on Sunday or drop off at the church office M-F 9-12.

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## POINSETTIA ORDERS

### The Board of Deacons

Poinsettias are available in 6½ inch pots in your choice of red or white for $25 each. You may dedicate your plant in memory of or in honor of a loved one. Dedications will be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletin.
Orders may be placed online using this link or in person during coffee hour on Sunday, November 8 and 15.

The deadline for all orders and dedication information is November 17.
If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Evarts at 802-349-5788.

Thank you for helping us make our church beautiful for the Christmas season!



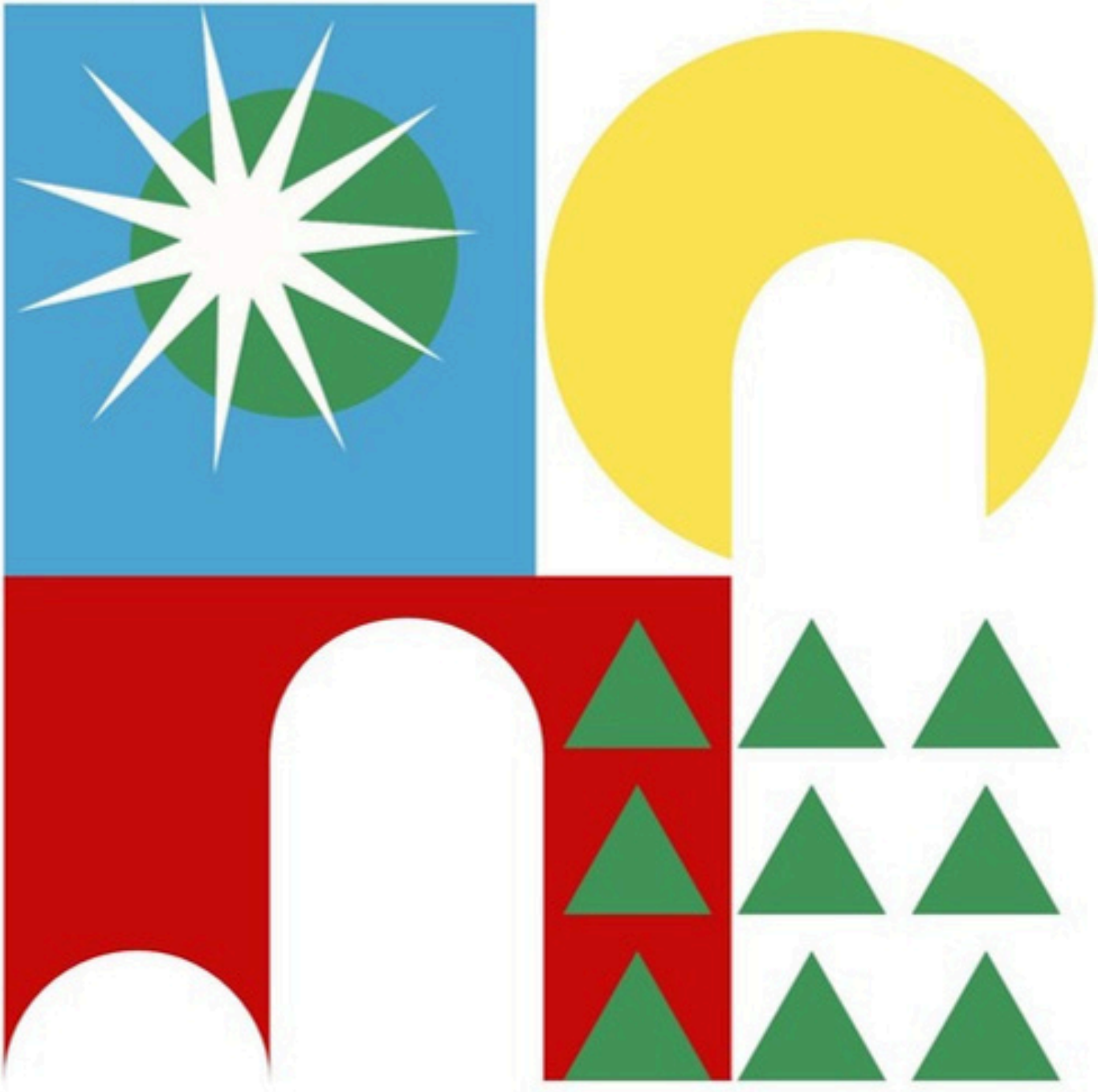

# SHARE A PAIR

## Board of Missions and Social Concerns

This November, the Board of Missions and Social Concerns invites you to “Share a Pair” by donating new, adult-sized socks to support our neighbors through Gather in Middlebury.

Gather is a welcoming, free community living room located on Court Street in Middlebury. Gather offers a warm, inclusive space where people can connect, share a meal, enjoy conversation, and find companionship and support. It is especially meaningful for neighbors experiencing housing insecurity, isolation, or other challenges.

As colder weather approaches, something as simple as a fresh pair of socks can provide warmth, comfort, and dignity. Throughout November, please drop off your donations in the collection bins near the church office or at the back of the Sanctuary. Together, we can share a little warmth and help care for our neighbors!



# 102ND MIDDUCC HOLIDAY BAZAAR

**NOV 7, 2026 | SATURDAY | 9 AM-3PM**

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF MIDDLEBURY, UCC
30 NORTH PLEASANT STREET, MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT 05753
WWW.MIDDUCC.ORG | @MIDDUCC

# THE 102ND MIDDUCC HOLIDAY BAZAAR

Our Holiday Bazaar returns this year on **Saturday, November 7, 2026 from 9AM-3PM** and we need your help to make it another successful event. Last year over 50 volunteers contributed to help us raise close to $15,000 for our church. Let's do it again!

Mark your calendars and invite your friends! Here are the event details:

The two levels of our church are transformed into a festive Holiday Bazaar atmosphere. Shop upstairs for beautiful handmade crafts, fashion and fine jewelry, and explore our book room filled with an amazing selection of gently used books. Also upstairs, bid on a variety of creative theme baskets that make wonderful gifts for family, friends or yourself!

On the lower level in Fellowship Hall, this year's garden table area is home to a wide variety of indoor and outdoor plants and a huge assortment of garden and home decorating items. We also have a room filled with games, puzzles and toys for both children and adults. Homemade foods will be available and safely packaged for take-out. Shoppers can visit the food tables to choose tasty treats, cookies, candies, breads, jams and jellies, as well as our ever-popular specialty and traditional pies. And, just in time for the chilly weather, a variety of hearty homemade soups can be purchased by the pint or quart.

This year's raffle quilt is an oversized queen quilt 93" x 93" made from 100% cotton fabric. The star and chain layout uses the rich colors of plum, teal, maize, and pinks. Come purchase a raffle ticket, and you could be the lucky winner!

Proceeds from the Bazaar help benefit the church's community programs.
Read on for how you can support the behind-the-scenes work that makes bazaar week so special...

# THE GRATITUDE COLLECTION

## Church Administrator

This month in the gratitude collection: we're highlighting a special connection between churches in the form of adorable children's choir robes!

We are giving thanks for our children's choir, who led us in song recently during worship. With the beginning of our Children's Choir, all children ages four and up are welcome to join our monthly rehearsals and share their music during worship. Email Ronnie Romano for details!

**Did you know?** These choir robes came from Norway's Second Congregational Church UCC, in Norway, Maine—the home church of Pastor Elizabeth's husband, Rev. Elliott Munn. When they heard we were starting a children's choir and needed robes, two members of their congregation drove them all the way to Vermont so our children could carry on the tradition of children singing in the church.

We're grateful to our friends at Second Congregational for sharing these robes with us and helping make our children's choir possible. What a gift to have a little piece of their church's story become part of ours. Thank you, God!

Have some gratitude you'd like to pass on? Email it to office@midducc.org OR drop a note in the "Gratitude Jar" outside the church reception window and we'll add it to the gratitude collection for a future Church Matters!

Mira



# THIS MONTH'S BIRTHDAYS




| | |
|---|---|
| Pamela Quinn | November 1 |
| Michael Cummings | November 3 |
| Debbie Deering | November 4 |
| Victoria Luksch | November 4 |
| Levi Nuceder | November 4 |
| James Davis | November 6 |
| Bronwen Kent | November 6 |
| Josie Masterson-Glen | November 8 |
| Matthew von Behrens | November 8 |
| Alan Shashok | November 9 |
| Frank Winkler | November 10 |
| Jennifer Stefani | November 11 |
| Caitlin Myers | November 12 |
| John Evarts | November 13 |
| Josie Abbott | November 16 |
| Arthur Esser-Calvi | November 17 |
| Mira Maglienti | November 19 |
| Natali Sullivan | November 19 |
| George Cady | November 21 |
| Frank Van Gansbeke | November 21 |
| Greta Allen-Buettner | November 23 |
| Doug Sinclair | November 23 |
| Mary Alice Beazley | November 25 |
| Mary Jo Champlin | November 25 |
| Pete Emerson | November 26 |
| Sandy Youell | November 29 |




## THIS MONTH'S ANNIVERSARIES

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| Vanda & David Crook | November 6 |
| Conor Stinson & Ellen Whelan-Wuest | November 12 |
| Jeff & Diane Munroe | November 13 |
| Charles & Nancy Jakiela | November 17 |

We don't know there is a mistake if you don't tell us! If you or a loved one have a birthday or anniversary coming up that you'd like us to know about, or if you're aware of a mistake, please let us know by emailing office@midducc.org OR by submitting this form. We want to celebrate with you, and no one wants to miss the party! THANK YOU for letting us know!

# CHURCH MATTERS

Church Matters is a monthly publication of the Congregational Church of Middlebury, United Church of Christ offering longer-form articles and a deeper look at our ministries, leadership, and community.

Read **Last Month's Church Matters Here**.

Thank you to all those who submitted articles, information, and photographs for this month's publication. Interested in sharing in a future Church Matters article? email **office@midducc.org** to submit an article or feature.