

Are You Craving Deeper Connections?



In a world of endless social media scrolling and rushed conversations, many of us are yearning for something more authentic - real relationships that stand the test of time and nurture our souls. Whether you're navigating an empty nest, juggling family life, or seeking meaningful friendships, we all face seasons where relationships feel challenging or distant.

This February, join us for "Redeeming Relationships," a powerful five-week series exploring the timeless story of Ruth. Through this remarkable biblical narrative, we'll discover practical wisdom for building stronger connections in every season of life - from handling loss and loneliness to taking courageous steps toward deeper relationships. Each week brings fresh insights about trust, integrity, and leaving a legacy of love that impacts generations.

Our journey begins Sunday, February 2, with "When Life Falls Apart: Building

Relationships in Hard Times." You'll find practical guidance for supporting others (and being supported) through life's challenges, while discovering how God works through relationships to bring healing and hope. This series speaks to real-life relationship challenges we all face - whether with family, friends, or romantic partners.

Other messages in the series are:

Feb. 9 – “Risking Love: Finding Courage to Open Your Heart”

Feb. 16 – “Integrity in Action: Relationships that Last”

Feb. 23 – “Choosing Love: Relationships that Redeem”

Mar. 2 – “Legacy of Love: Building a Future Together”

Join us Sundays at 9:30 AM or 11:00 AM at Monroe UMC (206 East Avenue, Monroe, Ohio). Can't make it in person? Connect with us live on our Facebook page or YouTube channel. Whether you're a long-time church member or just exploring faith, you'll find a welcoming community ready to journey with you toward more meaningful relationships.

Lenten Season Begins
March 5th



The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 5th. A service will be held in the Sanctuary at 7:00pm. Everyone is invited.

Monroe UMC to Welcome Bishop, Clergy & Laity of District



Monroe UMC will host Bishop Hee-Soo Jung for a “Day on the District” Saturday, February 22. The theme is “Healing and Restoration in Community,”

guided by Mark 2:1-12.

Clergy of the Great Miami River District will meet from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm (arrival at 9:30 am). At 4:00 pm, Rev. Dr. Suzanne Allen’s Installation Service as District Superintendent will occur. Laity from churches across our District will gather from 5:00 to 8:30 pm. Those who wish to attend the day (it’s free) may register at <https://www.westohioumc.org/bishop-jungs-days-districts>.

Our responsibilities – at least as we know them right now – will include serving as greeters at all our entrances, guides within the building directing people where to go, and hosts offering beverages to guests during breaks. The District will cater the meals that day. We will need YOUR help to show genuine Christian hospitality as we do it here at Monroe!

We are still learning more details about the day’s plan and flow, which may give us further clarity about what else we will need to offer.

Confirmation Class Underway – Would You Like to Provide Lunch?

Please pray for our Confirmation class, which includes youth and young adults interested in exploring and claiming their

faith for themselves, their mentors, and leader Gina Craft and Pastor Jeff Motter. The class began Sunday, Jan. 26 and will continue on most Sundays through Confirmation Sunday on Pentecost, June 8, 2025. Class sessions meet from 12:15 pm to 2:45 pm.



Because of the timing, we are inviting you to extend hospitality to these young people by providing lunch for the class. As of press time, we have 8-10 people who will be present. Sign up with your family, a friend, or with a group to offer lunch. Food does not need to be elaborate – a simple lunch will be sufficient and much appreciated.

Sign up to serve lunch on our website at [MonroeUMC.org/ConfirmationLunch](https://www.monroeumc.org/ConfirmationLunch).

Thank you to our Snow Shoveling Servants



We are grateful to the lady and gentlemen who have recently stepped

up to be our Snow Shoveling Servants. They have agreed to be “on-call” for snow removal from our sidewalk and entrances on Sundays and from our weekday entrance in the back. We also have someone who is servicing our snowblower to get it ready for the rest of the season. A GREAT BIG THANKS to all of you who are giving your time and energy to make it possible for everyone to get into the building safely.

Our Trustees have also contracted with a snow removal company to clear out the parking lots before Sunday morning.

UMW Going to LaComedia



Please join us Thursday, May 15th. We will be going to LaComedia for the play “Children Of Eden.” The play is a Biblical Musical written from The Book of Genesis. Our seats will be on the main floor closer to the stage. Cost is \$47. Payment will be due April 1st. More information in the coming weeks. Please let Jane Majors know if you would like to join us.

Reflections on the new year by Monica Bolton.....

Happy New Year! I know I am a little late, but my message might be right on time....

So it's another new year....2025! Can you believe it? But the new year can be hard sometimes, can't it?

Our world spins so fast, sometimes seems like wildly out of control. It's a wonder it doesn't fly right off its rotation, right out into the universe somewhere.

The commercial world is in such a hurry to end one season and move into the next. Each year they ram the next season down our throats earlier and earlier just to make a dime. You can't find a swimsuit after July, but if you want a winter coat, you can find plenty of those. It's barely August when all the Halloween merchandise comes out, usually also accompanied by everything Christmas. People are so tired of hearing all the Christmas songs before Halloween even gets here, they can't WAIT for Christmas to go away. And away it does go..... promptly it is packed up, ushered out, and yes, replaced by the next marketing event.... Valentine's Day. Lord help us if there was something “Christmas” we needed, but didn't

get time to go out and get it before Christmas. Gone are the days of finding it in the “after Christmas” clearance bins. Just days after Christmas, there is nothing to be found even remotely connecting to the season, other than a few random items tucked back into a dark corner of the store, that NO one wants to buy.

For many, as a year comes to an end, we may find ourselves disappointed, discouraged, or maybe even angry that “once again,” things didn't turn out as we expected or planned. And with each new year that comes, the message of hope is proclaimed from EVERYwhere, from every self-help book, every expert, that comes complete with a whole list of products to make our lives better and transformed. Good or bad, a new year offers a new hope. People often think of it as a clean slate, a fresh start, new beginnings. This leads us to the traditional “New Years resolutions.” We are pumped up and excited about new beginnings and positive changes to be made, to make our lives better. So....off we go.... full speed ahead with an optimistic spirit, so sure that THIS year is going to be different.

Some folks are not fooled by this recurring pattern each year from start to finish. They've become all too aware of the outcomes that always seem to crash and burn and end in failure. So, they don't even BOTHER to make New Years resolutions. No need to waste the energy when they already know how it is going to turn out.

But most of us will once again feel the hope of a new beginning, a new chance to better ourselves. We will plod forward, each new year, doing well for a time, only to discover that yes....it's true....we are human, and we just can't keep it up (doing the right thing.) It usually doesn't take us very long to determine that, “Oh....this year looks like it's going to be just like all the past years,” as we seem to crash and burn (AGAIN) with our New Year's resolutions.

So, let's take it to the Lord in prayer.....
Thank you Lord for another new year! Thank you for the hope that a new year often brings us. And then help us Lord, with our disappointment when we crash and burn with our New Year's resolutions. We were SO sure Lord, that THIS time would be different. Wash away our doubt and disbelief that our lives CAN change. Wash away our certainty that our failures define us. Remind us that even Peter, whose great faith in you, allowed him to walk on water... for a moment... until his doubt gave way, and he began to sink. That's it..... isn't it Lord? We can do things for a while because we believe. But then we take our eyes off of you Jesus. We get distracted. We forget that we need you....that you are the vine, and we are the branches. Apart from you, we can do nothing. So, as we move forward in this new year that you have blessed us with Lord, help us to expect that yes, we ARE going to fail. But engrain in our minds and hearts that our failures do NOT define us. We only fail when we stop trying. We do not have to stay where we are, just because that's what we've always done. Show us Lord, that our lives will always change when we keep our eyes fixed on you. When we cling to you Lord, in the highs and the lows, you will give us the hope, peace, and joy we seek, even in our trials. Help us Lord, to not forget your plan for our lives. There is hope in your plan, even if we don't understand it, help us to trust you. Let us call upon your name and seek you with all our hearts. Help us to not look around, but to look UP and remember that our hope is NOT in what's around us. Our hope is in YOU. Our hope is that, in fixing our eyes on you...that true change can and will happen in our lives. So, be with us today, Lord.... Right now....where we are. Let us lift our praises to your name. Fill our hearts with your hope, love, peace, comfort, and joy. Amen.

For when you want to give up....
Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it

springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 43:18-19

To remind us to have hope and trust in God's plan for our lives, so through HIM, we can achieve change in our lives.....

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord.....

Jeremiah 29:11-13

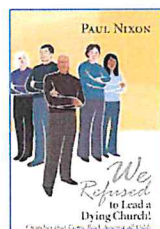
May God bless us all, and help us keep our eyes fixed on him so we can experience real change in our lives.

Interested in God's Future for Monroe UMC?

In late 2024, several members of the Church Council read the book



We Refused to Lead a Dying Church: Churches that Came Back Against All Odds, written by UM pastor and consultant Paul Nixon. The book chronicles the choices that 15 different worshiping communities made when faced with the choice of life (through change) or death (through closing).



The readers discussed insights gained and were so inspired, they wanted to extend an invitation to anyone in the congregation to read and discuss the book further with them. We have a limited supply of books available for loan (see Pastor Jeff).

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You can purchase your own paperback or eBook at Amazon or your favorite bookseller. (Be careful – Nixon has another, different book with a similar title: *I Refused to Lead a Dying Church.*)

Then we'll invite all the readers to attend a discussion on Saturday, Feb. 8 from 9:30am to 12:00 pm at the church. Please contact Edna Miller in the church office (513.539.7290; monroeumc@cinci.rr.com) so we can have enough materials for everyone. We'll process ideas from the book, discuss questions, and listen for God's voice among our sharing.

A Few Church Bulletin Bloopers you might enjoy!

- Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa, will be speaking tonight at Calvary Methodist. Come hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
- The Rev. Merriwether spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience.
- Applications are now being accepted for 2-year-old nursery workers.
- The pastor will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing, "Break Forth Into Joy."
- Next Sunday Mrs. Vinson will be soloist for the morning service. The pastor will then speak on "It's a Terrible Experience."
- Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Nelson's sermons.
- Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- The ushers will come forward and take our ties and offerings.
- The rosebud on the altar this morning is to announce the birth of David Alan Belzer, the son of Reverend and Mrs. Julius Belzer.
- The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the church basement on Friday at 7 p.m. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.
- Don't let worry kill you off – let the church help.
- Let us join David and Lisa in the celebration of their wedding and bring their happiness to a conclusion.
- Diana and Don request your presents at their wedding.
- The outreach committee has enlisted 25 visitors to make calls on people who are not afflicted with any church.
- The 1991 Spring Council Retreat will be held May 10 and 11.
- The audience is asked to remain seated until the end of the recession.
- The choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.
- At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is Hell?". Come early and listen to our choir practice.
- A song fest was held at the Methodist church Wednesday.
- Hymn: "I Love Thee My Ford."
- Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again" giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
- Women's Luncheon: Each member bring a sandwich. Polly Phillips will give the medication.
- Ushers will eat latecomers.
- Tuesday at 4PM there will be an ice cream social. All ladies giving milk will please come early.
- Weight Watchers will meet at 7 p.m. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

FEBRUARY

February Birthdays

- 11 – Barbara Conley
- 17 – Phyllis Richmond
- 18 – Phil Lacefield
- 21 – Alan Dyke
Mike Kuth
- 22 – Nancy Alexander
Phyllis Michael
- 23 – Elizabeth Horton
- 28 – Bob Riggs
Becky Motter

February Anniversaries

- 1 – Dave & Karen Shaffer **(60 years)**
- 3 – Phil & Jennifer Lacefield **(56 years)**

Deadline For
March Newsletter
Wednesday, February 19th



February 17th



February 2nd



February 14th

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26		27 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	28 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	29 11:30am-12:15pm Yoga/Narthex 1:00pm-3:00pm Bible Study/AH 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	30	31 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	1
2	2 Holy Communion 11:00am-12:00pm Liturgical Dance Practice	3 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	4 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	5 11:30am-12:15pm Yoga/Narthex 1:00pm-3:00pm Bible Study/AH 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	6	7 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	8 12:00pm-6:00pm Monica Bolton/Baby Shower/AH
9	9 11:00am-12:00pm Liturgical Dance Practice	10 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	11 10:00am Share Group/Parlor 7:00pm Emmaus Board Meeting/AH	12 11:30am-12:15pm Yoga/Narthex 1:00pm-3:00pm Bible Study/AH 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	13	14 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	15 HAPPY Valentine's DAY
16	16 11:00am-12:00pm Liturgical Dance Practice	17 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	18 10:00am Share Group/Parlor 1:00pm Finance Committee/AH	19 11:30am-12:15pm Yoga/Narthex 1:00pm-3:00pm Bible Study/AH 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	20 7:00pm Trustees/Library	21 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	22 10:00am-3:30pm Installation of DS/Whole Building 5:00pm-8:30pm Bishop Jung Lay Leader Event/AH
23	23 11:00am-12:00pm Liturgical Dance Practice 4:30pm-8:30pm Emmaus Gathering/AH	24 Church Office Closed 6:00pm Yoga/AH 7:00pm Scouts/AH	25 10:00am Share Group/Parlor	26 11:30am-12:15pm Yoga/Narthex 1:00pm-3:00pm Bible Study/AH 6:00pm Youth Group 7:00pm Praise Team/AH	27	28 10:00am Exercise/AH 11:00am Yoga/AH	1



MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
206 East Avenue, PO Box 310
Monroe, OH 45050

REQUESTED RETURN SERVICE

Mission Statement:

*Shining the light on the hill by connecting with Jesus Christ,
connecting with each other and connecting with the world.*



MONROE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Monroe UMC Staff

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Gina Craft, Children's Ministries: gmatcraft@gmail.com

Larry Daniel, Choir Director

Melanie Flower, Organist

Linda Larkin, Nursery Attendant

Arlene Horton, Treasurer

Jerry & Anne Lapham,

Financial Sec'y

MINISTERS: CONGREGATION

OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY 9:00AM-4:30PM



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