THE VISITOR

TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

At the Heart of the Community - With the Community in Our Hearts

January 2016

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Thurs. 10am-1pm

Visit our NEW web page at www.tccucc.org

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: MONDAY, JANUARY 25 - NOON

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Financial Update of TCC

by Jennifer Davidson, Minister for Finance

We continue to maintain an excess of income over expenses for the year to date through November … but that does assume everyone fulfills their pledges for 2015, and we collect the expected amount from our non-pledgers (only about 75% of our giving is pledged). If God has blessed you this year, consider extra giving back to God, as there are many in our church who do not have enough resources to financially contribute.

Thank you!

Turkey Supper!

Please plan on joining us for the first supper of 2016. We will be serving our famous turkey dinner on January 30 from 5 to 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. The sign-up sheets for donations of food and workers for that evening will soon be available after Sunday services. **David and Lyn Bennett** are jointly overseeing this supper - look for announcements in the weekly *Spirit* for updates. Working at the supper is a wonderful way to meet new friends, catch up on news, and provide a night out for those who enjoy our meal! ***Sign up soon; you'll be glad you did!***

According to Mark

The post-holiday blues are settling in all over New England as record warmth passes into more normal, sub-freezing temperatures and I can already hear the sound of New Year's resolutions being gently broken like the crust on the overnight snowpack. So I've resolved to not resolve to over-promise anything to anyone. Invariably pastors will please some folks and disappoint others, so I think whatever I resolve it will be received with a mixed review. So instead, why don't we look at what has happened over the last year at TCC that we might be rightly proud of or disappointed about.

We received a kind gift that allowed us to buy new bibles for the pews. For many years at TCC we were reading two different versions of the "Good News" Bible in the pews. Most of my study and preaching comes from more agreed ecumenical, scholarly translations, and so, to keep us all on the same page, we chose the New Revised Standard Version of 1986. I hope you will not just notice the difference in language, but also in the deeper meaning and closer translation to the Bible's original texts in Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac. Don't have an NRSV bible for use at home? Stop in and see me. We have plenty and I love giving them away.

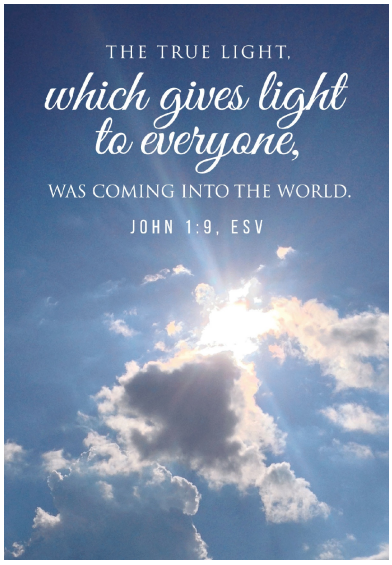
We are doing more ecumenically with the other Christian churches in Townsend. We have successfully partnered on Blessing of the Palms on Palm Sunday, a community Hymn Sing service to benefit TEO one Sunday in July, a fun Columbus Day outing for the Youth Groups, Blessing of the Animals of Townsend on the feast of St Francis, joint Christmas Caroling, and worshipping together during Lessons and Carols to celebrate the arrival of Christ's birth on Christmas Eve. Father Jeremy St. Martin has been instrumental in this outreach and he and I pray together each Wednesday for all, of you as well as collaborate on future things, big and small, for our joint cooperation. Look for next year to include all these events plus community dinners, more community sings, and expansion of our presence in Big Brothers/ Big Sisters.

With the blessing of the Reeves family, we continued to coordinate a community fund-raising event now known as Greg's Run, which benefits high school kids' scholarships. Once again we partnered with the Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic Churches and everyone pitched in to make this event a success, attracting over 250 participants and continuing one of the largest single-day events for the greater Townsend Community. We are especially grateful to all the businesspersons and merchants for their support and the countless hours of volunteers spent on the many aspects of race preparation and race day.

Finally, we voted to continue on our path to revitalization in the community and to renewing our commitment to openness and hospitality. We are doing this through a new Spirit called the Bridge Initiative, which represents our lived-faith commitment to loving one another as Christ loved us. We are finally doing more with and living into the plan that we had for ourselves a few years ago, and will continue this in 2016 with a series on congregational healing, as well as continue initiatives furthering congregational mental health with Stephen's Ministry, and taking on more active roles with our Youth communities in Townsend. Whether through the churches, schools, Scouts, or wherever, we can add meaning and purpose to the lives of others.

So my brothers, sisters, and friends, there's lots going on. Some will like it, some will not. But I'd like each of us to come and give our new direction some fresh energy and not judge things right away as to whether they are "working" or not. God's church took a while to build, and change comes slowly. But change comes nonetheless. Check out our new website at tccucc.org, or our facebook page. We're making progress. And we'd like each of you to join us in the journey. So come to New Member Sunday on January 10 and feel the new vibe, and connect our Spirit. I know you won't be disappointed.

Pastor Mark



Sharing the Good News

by Jennifer Davidson, Minister for Finance

"When you make God's kingdom your first priority, He promises to provide you with what you need to live." - Andy Stanley, "Fields of Gold"

This congregation has, once again, shown its incredible generosity. As of December 11, we have raised over $7,000 for revitalization so far (and counting!). Adding in the $5,000 match from the Village Common Children's Center, we now have over $12,000 to fund revitalization in 2016 and beyond.

There is so much generosity in this congregation - so many of our church needs are donated goods and services. We could not run the church as efficiently without all of you. As a result, we have very frugal, very responsible spending - you can be sure your money is helping people - all of us and the community beyond.

Don't get caught in the cycle of cautious generosity - believe in fearless giving and experience the unbridled joy of generosity.

Restricted Fund Balances

As of November 30, we have the following cash balances in certain restricted funds:

Outreach - $13,713 ($5,000 of this has been spent in December)

Deacon's Fund - $4,463

Organ Fund - $3,840

Gustafson Fund - $3,787

Revitalization - $4,108 (additional significant contributions received in December)

Thank you to all who have contributed!

Estate Planning

I would like to remind people to please remember TCC in your estate planning. Naming TCC as the beneficiary of your IRA has several benefits:

1. No one will ever be taxed on your IRA balance
2. The assets, if added to our invested funds, will help support TCC long into the future by providing an ever-rising stream of income to TCC

If you have any questions about this, please contact me (Jennifer Davidson, your Minister for Finance) at jen@milestonefinancialplanning.com

Revitalization Task Force

At TCC's November Congregational Meeting, we approved our plan for expected revenues and expenditures with one caveat: that we could not fully fund all the programs that we had envisioned when we voted to proceed with our "revitalization" plan for the Church based on current pledges. We needed an additional $5,000 in commitment from the congregation for 2016, and if we could get that over the next few months, VCCC would match that with a $5,000 contribution of their own to fully fund our plans for 2016.

So we asked each of the ministries (Christian Education, Music, Worship, Youth, Congregational Care, and Outreach) to present to the congregation not only what they had accomplished in 2015 but what they wanted to do for 2016. We heard a wonderful array of new music, new bible study curriculums, new opportunities for mission and service, visiting and ministering to the homebound, and responding to the need to maintain worship excellence when the ministers take a holiday.

You all responded. We thought it would take about 4 months to raise the money needed to continue our ministries. It took 4 weeks. We have, to date, received over $6,500 in receipts toward that fund and another $800 in pledges for next year, and I would like to **THANK YOU** on behalf of the ministries for your confidence in what we are doing and how you are experiencing our revitalization efforts. The Spirit is **ALIVE** in our faith lives, and our lived faith is alive with the **SPIRIT**.

The funds raised for revitalization remain dedicated to that continuous renewal for new experiences for us in our hearts and in the world. They will never be mingled with the general funds, and I think you'll agree that it is the continuous renewal of the Holy Spirit in our lives that keeps us coming back and cements our purpose to worship God genuinely, lovingly, and joyfully! We hope you will consider dedicating a pledge to the future of our church, and you can now pledge on-line at tccucc.org in dedicated categories to the General Fund, Outreach, Deacon's Fund, or Revitalization. Please give to this vital ministry and help us keep stretching our hearts and minds to see God in all that we do.

The Revitalization Task Force is composed of Pastor Mark (Chair), Heather Mulrenan, Renee Fossey, Lyn Bennett, and Meg Genoter. If you have any questions, please get in contact with one of us and we'll help you better understand our new and exciting direction in all that we do!

Pastor Mark

3-Linda Modica; 9-Carol Clark; 12-Michele Busler; 13-Jason Goyette and David Wilson; 14-Rob Gosselin; 17-Bob Lorenzen; 18-Jane Misner; 24-Nancy Lee; 27-Louis DuBreuil; 28-Linda Hatch

PRAYERS of the CHURCH

Our Blessings:

We join with John D'Angelillo in praising the faith-filled new book, written by Rev. Betsy Waters, on the faith journey of Andy Gustafson. Pastor Mark gives thanks that Grace (his dog) has not run away again, and prays that she may learn more obedience. We offer prayers of thanksgiving for Doris Poindexter who has recently become engaged to be married. Heather Mulrenan gives thanks for the great kids in our youth group, and for the opportunity to take five of them on a retreat recently; it was inspiring for all. We give thanks that Paul Martineau's eyes are doing better. We give thanks that Grant and Carole Swenor arrived at their travel destination safely. Sarah Riggins gives thanks for the opportunity to stay with her mother during her

recent chemo treatments. While we mourn the passing of Caitlin Ryan, may we remember the joy she brought to our hearts. We give thanks for all those who organized, participated in, and contributed food for the live nativity. We give thanks that Max Duckett has started substitute teaching. Cathy Hill gives thanks that her son is employed at last and seems to be enjoying his work. We give thanks for the caring heart of Deanna Capone - she took such good care of the animals during our live nativity that the company that provided them offered her a summer job with them. We give thanks for having the DuBreuil's friend, Kim, with us in worship and when we went caroling; she was a joy. We give thanks for Lee McTighe for once again organizing the caroling ministry. We offer prayers of thanksgiving for friends and family, especially during times of special celebrations. We give thanks that Emily Bruns' friend, Karen, is recovering well from her cancer surgery and pray that the healing continues. We join with Lee McTighe in celebrating that her son Chris and her grandson Wesley were able to join us in worship. We give thanks for the good works of Flo in Lamontville and congratulate her on the prestigious award she recently received from her government. We give thanks for the blessing of having some of our brothers and sisters in faith from St. John's join us for our late service on Christmas Eve. We offer prayers of thanks for having George Gagliardi and his wonderful music with us again for our late service on Christmas Eve. The Hersey family give thanks for having their puppy home with them after extensive veterinary treatments. We offer prayers of thanks for the people who have help Floyd Truitt since his move to Apple Valley.

Our Concerns:

We pray for the people of Colorado Springs as they deal with the aftermath of another shooting crime. We pray for friends of Dorothy DuBreuil, Brian and Linda, who both have recently lost their jobs. We pray for all those who are unemployed and underemployed. We continue to pray for Anne parks, who is the mother of Meg's good friend, Heather; Anne is in the hospital with unknown ailments, and is unable to speak. We pray for the safety of our first-responders and give thanks for their dedication. We offer prayers of peace and condolence for Tracy Winslow as she grieves the sudden death of her only daughter Caitlin Ryan. We pray for all our friends who are unable to join us in worship. Especially at this time of year, we keep in our prayers all those who do not have a loving support system around them. We offer prayers of peace for Paul Martineau as he seeks ways to deal with a very high stress job. We pray for Dorothy DuBreuil's sister, Mary, who especially struggles with the deaths of her husband and only son at this time of the year. We pray for all those who are especially missing loved ones this holiday season. We pray for Lee McTighe's relative, Nancy, whose husband of 50 years has Alzheimer's disease and is going into assisted living. We pray for Kim (friend of the DuBreuil family), as she mourns the recent passing of her mother. We pray for the Gustafson family as they deal with more changes in their extended family dynamics. We pray for Dorothy DuBreuil's friend, Shawna, who is losing her house. We pray for the people of Dallas and northern Texas as they deal with the destruction caused by extreme weather. We pray for Sherrie Cloutier and her mother.

Our Healing Prayers:

We offer healing prayers for Kathy Duckett who had successful cataract surgery on 12/8; for Karen (Emily Bruns' friend) as she recovers from cancer surgery; for Cathy Hill's mother-in-law, June, who is recovering from having a stint put into one of her heart valves over the Thanksgiving weekend, and has had two trips back to the hospital since; for Cathy Parson's friend who has pneumonia; for the Duckett's friends Alex and Toni as they continue to experience physical and mental distress; for Ray C who may have a new fracture in his back and will be undergoing testing; for Barbara Misner who is scheduled for surgery to repair 4 broken vertebrae.

Our Cancer Fighters:

We offer prayers of healing and hope for all those in our immediate and extended families who are in the midst of battling cancer, and for all those who care for and support them. Louise Coalter's cousin, Dorothy; a friend of Paul Martineau who has a family member being treated for cancer; Bill, who is the husband of Heather's birth mother; Carol Clark; Ed C's mom, Irene; Pam Snaith's relative, Antoinetta S.; Lorena's friend, Tracy, thyroid cancer; Lorraine Quesada; Susan Riggins; Karen Baer's friend, Cathy; Jody Burnham's sister-in-law, Gail; Ken Bruns' mother who has breast cancer; Lorraine M who has cutaneous T cell lymphoma; a friend of Emily Austin-Bruns, Karen, who has breast cancer; Tammy Blackburn's aunt who has been battling metastasized breast cancer for 10 years; Paul Martineau's work-friend, Diane; and Cathy Hill's sister, Morag, who has lymphoma.

COMMUNITY NEWS

MSPP INTERFACE

MSPP INTERFACE is a mental health referral service that is available for all residents in Townsend, Pepperell, and Ashby. Just call 888-244-6843 x1411 during normal business hours (M-F, 9-5) and you will be able to speak with a licensed mental health professional, or an advanced level graduate student, who will discuss the situation with you, and then call you back with a referral which meets your therapeutic needs, insurance, schedule availability and immediate openings.

This service was made possible by Teenage Anxiety and Depression Solutions (TADS) through a grant from the Nashoba Valley Community Healthcare Fund. Check out TADS web site at www.tadsma.org and check out the web site for MSPP INTERFACE at msppinterface.org

Submitted by Pam Snaith

January 2016

TO CONTACT THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR, CATHY HILL:
email: newsletter@tccucc.org
or call 978-337-0638

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
GOD IS STILL SPEAKING					**1** **TCC OFFICE CLOSED**	**2** 8am Saturday team
3 Worship ***COMMUNION & EPIPHANY SUNDAY***	**4**	**5**	**EPIPHANY** 7:30pm Snr Choir	**7**	**8**	**9**
10 Worship/SS	**11**	**12**	**13** 7:30pm Snr Choir	**14**	**15**	**16**
17 Worship/SS	**18**	**19**	**20** 6pm Council, rm 4 7:30pm Snr Choir	**21**	**22**	**23**
24/31 Worship/SS	**25** ***NEWSLETTER DEADLINE – NOON –***	**26**	**27** 7:30pm Snr Choir	**28**	**29**	**30** **CHURCH SUPPER 5-6:30 PM**

Please go to the online calendar at www.tccucc.org for up-to-date entries.

LECTIONARY, JANUARY 2016

January 3, 2016 - *Second Sunday after Christmas Day*
First reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12
Psalm: Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21
Second reading: Ephesians 1:3-14
Gospel: John 1:(1-9), 10-18

January 10, 2016 - *First Sunday after the Epiphany*
First reading: Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm: Psalm 29
Second reading: Acts 8:14-17
Gospel: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

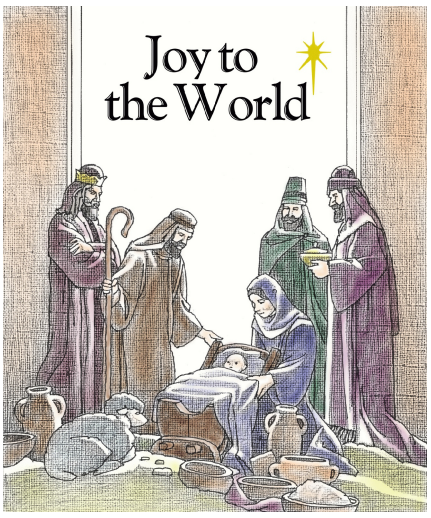
January 17, 2016 - *Second Sunday after the Epiphany*
First reading: Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm: Psalm 36:5-10
Second reading: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
Gospel: John 2:1-11

January 24, 2016 - *Third Sunday after the Epiphany*
First reading: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm: Psalm 19
Second reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Gospel: Luke 4:14-21

January 31, 2016 - *Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany*

First reading: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalm: Psalm 71:1-6

Second reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Gospel: Luke 4:21-30