THE VISITOR

TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

January 2018

Volume 41 No. 1

Pastor: Rev. Mark Brockmeier
Pastor's Line: 978-597-0157
cell # 603-818-2328
home # 603-432-3255

TCC Administrative Asst.:
John Mims
Office Line: 978-597-8925

Village Common Children's Center Line: 978-597-0834

Editor: Catherine Hill

TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC
PO BOX 487
TOWNSEND MA 01469

E-MAIL ADDRESSES:
Pastor: revbrock@bu.edu

Church Secretary:
secretary@tccucc.org
Newsletter:
newsletter@tccucc.org
Village Common Children's Center: vccc@tccucc.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:
Monday - Friday
10:00am - 1:00pm

PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS:
On medical leave.

Visit our web page at www.tccucc.org

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: MONDAY, JANUARY 22 - NOON

In this edition ...

- "According to Mark" : Pastor's Monthly Column
- A New Year Wish for 2018
- Revitalization Update
- Our Birthdays
- Chairperson Needed for April Supper
- Free! Round Tables
- Gifts of All Who Are Wise
- New Year's Noise Makers
- The Birthday Fund-Raiser
- VCCC News
- Fear and Joy
- Our Prayers
- Community News: MSPP Interface; Townsend Public Library Events
- UCC-Ever Flowing Streams Event
- Our January Calendar and Lectionary

Financial Update

by Jennifer Davidson

Over the past few years, our larger donors have died or moved away. As a result, our contribution income is down from prior years.

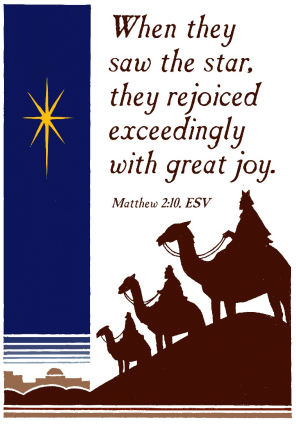
Through December 15, 2017 our books reflect a year-to-date loss of approximately $10,000.

If God has blessed your family this year, please consider an extra donation to help us move into the new year with a positive cash flow.

Remember to check the members-only portion of the TCC website for updated reports.

Turkey Supper!

Please plan on joining us for the first supper of 2018. We will be serving our famous turkey dinner on January 27 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 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 lyrics of one of our most well-known carols say in their first words, "Joy to the World…".

Joy to the **WORLD**. Not joy to just a few of us. Not just to the rich, or the poor, or the many in-between on the economic ladder by which we so often measure ourselves. Not just to the white, brown, yellow, or olive-skinned among us by which we so often divide ourselves. Not just to the Americans, or Russians, or Columbians, Haitians, Syrians, Serbians, Nigerians, North Koreans, or the nation-states to whom we so often pledge fealty amongst ourselves. And certainly not to just the Christians, but also to the Muslims, the Taoists, the Buddhists, the Hindu, the Agnostic and the Atheist, Joy has come into the world for each and all of them, too. Joy to the **WORLD**, for the Lord has come to bless all peoples whomever they are and wherever they may be. God's love is not for some and exclusive; it's for everyone and inclusive.

Joy to the **WORLD**. And yet we see even in the Christmas season how our divisions can dominate our perceptions of each other and a world torn asunder. Over who is allowed to travel to our country and who is not, based on what we thought were protected classes of personal identity: religion, creed, national origin. Over who is a perpetrator and victim of sexual assault and misconduct: the powerful who act with impunity, or the ones struggling to make a life or career for themselves and their families. Over a slogan meant to bring awareness to the differences in perception of treatment in many walks of life and social and economic justice: Black Lives Matter. Over our constant race to the bottom of how those who rule us behave, paradoxically and crazily, now requiring the poor to subsidize the rich in social and tax policy.

Joy to the **WORLD**. It is never too late to turn our eyes toward justice, equanimity, kindness, mercy, and love. Even though America is the only nation on earth no longer involved in climate talks on how to stop global warming (literally 200+ other nations are engaged in talks last month in France), we would be welcomed back if we engaged again in discussions on how to love our planet. We could find ways to strengthen housing and reduce both crime and poverty by restructuring how Section 8 vouchers are distributed among both the poor, landlords and the towns that zone housing and their low-income tenants. We can figure out that we need not broad-brush our neighbors with assumptions about their beliefs, politics, religion, and education without first engaging with them in discussion about who they ARE right now, not who we **THINK** they've become.

JOY TO THE WORLD. Our challenge this year at TCC is to better live into The Bridge Initiative. To **LOVE** our neighbor as ourselves, inquire after someone who is not like us, encounter others who seek us out but know not how to engage us on our own privileged terms. Because our joy in God depends upon our encountering the world around us, as strange and crazy as it may be, and the realization that it's never too late to start anew and afresh in the Kingdom of God. Our joy depends on our understanding that only by emptying ourselves through compassion for others do we get what we seek—loving our neighbor as we would love ourselves—can we then achieve the completeness and wholeness Christ promised in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

So this year, my brothers and sisters, be not afraid of anyone, for any reason. Be the Bridge. Because for us at TCC, Joy to the World, the Lord is Come.

Pastor Mark

A NEW YEAR WISH FOR 2018

May the New Year bring us:

Enough **happiness** to keep us sweet;

Enough **opportunities** to keep us strong;

Enough **hope** to keep us lively;

Enough **assurance** to keep us reliant upon God;

Enough **success** to keep us eager;

Enough **love** to share;

Enough **friends** to give us comfort;

Enough **wealth** to meet our needs;

Enough **enthusiasm** to keep us looking forward;

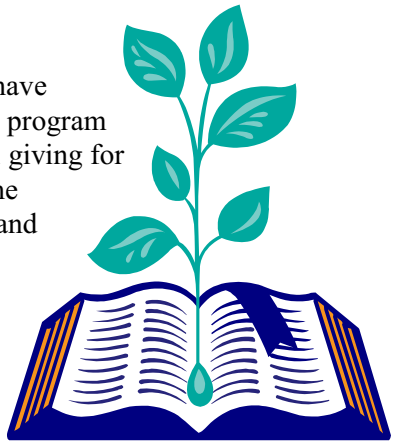
Enough **faith** to overcome despair;

And enough **determination** to use every day and every situation for good.

~ submitted by the Rev. H.V. "Skip" Lloyd

Revitalization Update

by Jennifer Davidson



As many of you know, we have undertaken a Revitalization program for TCC that entails special giving for the purpose of expanding the programs we offer to TCC and the community, such as: Christian education, youth retreats, Youth Group, Sunday School, events for children, Be the Bridge Initiative, adult Christian education, special music programs, expanding music knowledge, substitute organists and much more.

In 2017 (through December 15), we collected the following amounts to fund this Revitalization:

$3,114 from the congregation
$5,000 from VCCC
$1,000 from the Gustafson Fund
$3,000 from the Burnham Foundation
total $12,114

Without these donations, none of the above would be possible. Thank you to all who gave.

Please consider making contributions to Revitalization in 2018, so we can continue these programs. Any unspent Revitalization funds carry over to the next calendar year.

3-Linda Modica; 7-Jessica Swift; 8-Nicole Beauchesne; 9-Carol Clark and Bill Wilkinson; 12-Michele Busler; 13-Jason Goyette and David Wilson; 14-Rob Gosselin; 17-Louis DuBreuil and Bob Lorenzen; 18-Jane Misner; 22-Alison Wright; 24-Nancy Lee; 28-Linda Hatch

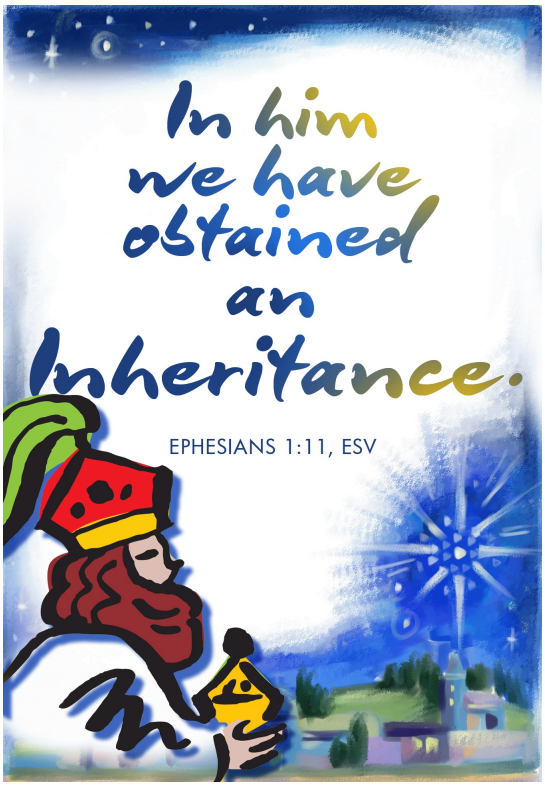
Looking for a new way to help TCC? Consider taking charge of our April supper! There are many people who would be willing to guide you through the steps.

Please leave a message with John Mims in the church office if you would like to speak with someone about this.

FREE! LARGE ROUND TABLES

With contributions from our members and friends, we were able to replace all the round tables from Fellowship Hall – THANK YOU!

We disposed of the ones that were very damaged, but there were a number that were just a little beat-up, but still structurally sound. If you could use one of these tables, they are being stored in the shed behind the church. Just contact John Mims in the church office, or Michelle Enright, if you would like to take one home.



GIFTS OF ALL WHO ARE WISE

Biblical texts: Micah 6:8 and Matthew 2:11

1) **GOLD** is the standard of commercial exchange, and the giving of it is a symbol of the obligation to DO JUSTICE.

2) **MYRRH** is associated with suffering and death, and the giving of it is a symbol of the obligation to LOVE MERCY.

3) **FRANKINCENSE** rises from the altar fire when the prayers of the people are offered, and the giving of it is a symbol of the obligation to WALK HUMBLY WITH OUR GOD.

~ submitted by the Rev. H.V. "Skip" Lloyd

NEW YEAR'S NOISE-MAKERS

Ring in the New Year with these fun noisemakers!

What you need:

- Wooden craft sticks
- Metallic paint (gold and silver)
- Paint brushes
- Jingle bells (gold and silver)
- Hot glue gun
- Metallic ribbon
- Scissors
- Adult help

What you do:

1. Paint half the sticks gold and half silver. Let dry.
2. Glue three bells to each stick.
3. Cut a six-inch piece of ribbon for each stick. Tie a bow and glue it to the noisemaker. Celebrate!

The Birthday Fund

This is a fun way to contribute above and beyond your regular giving to the church to something above and beyond our normal operating budget. Simply make a donation on (or around) your birthday in the amount of your age (Memo: Birthday Fund)! If everyone participates, this will add up to a significant amount. Please participate and watch our gifts grow!

Village Common Children's Center

Hello TCC Friends!!
Happy New Year from VCCC!!

Welcome to 2018!!! Well we hope you all enjoyed the holiday season and made many new memories. December brought special gifts to VCCC with the births of three beautiful babies! Our congratulations and best wishes go out to our Gallant and Verma families, and to our Infant teacher, Laura Gustafson! We look forward to welcoming these little ones to our new infant program in the upcoming weeks.

The month of December found all the children well immersed in all things "Holidays"!! The Preschool/PreK classroom's Dramatic Play Center was transformed into a cozy holiday "living room" complete with fireplace and Christmas tree! The gallery of holiday art activities on both ends of the building clearly contributed to the festive atmosphere all month - Christmas trees and stockings, gingerbread men and holiday wreaths, handprint menorahs, gingerbread houses and candy canes!! All these activities were not only fun for the children, but helped to enhance and promote positive fine motor skills as the children cut, painted, glued and collaged all their beautiful creations. The children also had lots of fun creating special cards and gifts for their parents! To celebrate Hanukkah the children had lots of fun playing the Dreidel

game, and after reading a story about Kwanza they made necklaces from red, black and green colored pasta! The delightful scents of the holidays had us all "taking a sniff" as the children participated in fun cooking projects making gingerbread cookies, peppermint play dough, and anise cookies! January's curriculum will find the children focusing on Winter and Hibernation, BRRRR!

The big highlight of December was our "Breakfast With Santa" event!! To promote a sense of friendship and community, all the families donated something to our breakfast and all were invited to attend this holiday affair! After feasting on delicious (if I do say so myself - I was the pancake chef!) pancakes, orange wedges, mini muffins and juice, we read Christmas stories and sang carols until we were "surprised" by a visit by the man in the red suit!! All of the children got to have their picture taken with Santa (PreK teacher Josh's Dad - THANK YOU Kevin!!) and each received a holiday goodie bag to take home!

We also celebrated the holiday with two Pajama Days, one highlighting the "Polar Express" and the other highlighting the "Winter Solstice"! It was a VERY busy and fun-filled month!!

Our Butter Braid fund-raiser was very successful, and we would like to thank those TCC friends who ordered from us! We most appreciated your support and hope you and your families enjoyed those yummy treats!

Sophia's Pizzeria continues to support our "Pizza Tuesday" fund-raiser by donating their delicious pizza to the children for a special lunchtime treat. They always very generously send enough so that the staff can have a special lunch as well. We most appreciate their kindness and generosity. Please help us thank them by giving them your business.

Like the blank pages of an unwritten book, the start of a brand-new year is always filled with new opportunities, new choices, new ideas and new dreams. We are looking forward to all of these gifts in this new year and hope all of you are too! From all the Staff, the VCCC Board of Directors and myself, we wish you all a healthy, happy and prosperous 2018!!

Carol Ciccolini, VCCC Director

Fear and Joy

by Jennifer Davidson

"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver". (2 CORINTHIANS 9:7)

Some people experience a lot of fear when it comes to giving (what if I don't have enough next month? Is anyone else giving this much?) and keep their money close to their vest. When we do give, we worry - have we given too much? We are not greedy for thinking this, we are scared. We have become fearful givers.

Fear associated with giving to God's kingdom is irrational. We trust God with our eternal life but not with the financial resources that He has given us? God has provided us all with resources, and it is our job to be a faithful steward of these resources. God will make sure we have enough - not too much; just enough. I have seen this in my own life, in those around me, as testimony for this to be true.

It is easy to forget that all our blessings, including our money, come from God and all He asks is that we send a portion of it back to the church. Often times, the subject of tithing is forbidden to discuss; it is the elephant in the room. If the church asks for donations, what if people feel intimidated and leave? The truth is, it is never the church asking for donations - it is God.

Think about this. What if God called you to give beyond your comfort level? How would that make you feel? Would you be afraid? Consider it impractical? When we respond with fear to an invitation from God, we forfeit the rewards of being faithful stewards. Sowing our faith results in a fruitful crop; cowering in fear results in empty fields.

The next time you give to your church, think of all the people your gift will help. Think of the children you see at church and how they are experiencing the love of God. Think of the people and families that are caught up in hard times that all of us have experienced at one point in our lives, and how the church is able to be there in their time of need. Become a joyful giver. Know that your gift, no matter how small, has immense meaning. Remember the widow who gave her last penny. Jesus said that she gave the most, because she gave generously and with a pure heart. The widow was a joyful giver.

PRAYERS of the CHURCH

Our Blessings:

We offer heartfelt thanks to both Pastor Skip and Pastor Brad for jumping in to cover worship and special services while Pastor Mark recovers from his injuries. We join with the Genoter family in giving thanks for all the good things that are happening for them right now. We celebrate the times when family and friends are able to offer hospitality to visitors. The Hersey family gives thanks for the help they received while their parents (Louis and Dorothy DuBreuil) were both recovering from surgeries. We give thanks that Steve Cloutier's friend, Bob, was mis-diagnosed and does not have cancer. Brad Bauer gives thanks for the time spent in FL with his family; also for how quickly a medical emergency with his mother was resolved; she is healing well. Lily Goyette gives thanks for her grandfather, who recently celebrated his 92nd birthday. We celebrate with the extended Gustafson family as Laura gave birth to her son, Andrew Robert, on Dec. 3; both mother and baby are doing well. Bailey Mulrenan gives thanks for being able to visit with Pastor Mark and for how well he is doing. Heather Nixon gives thanks for having extended family visiting from North Carolina; it's been a great experience. Chris Clish gives thanks for all the prayers and support she received when she went into the hospital on 12/10. We give thanks for Lee McTighe once again organizing the caroling; thanks also to all who participated, these visits are greatly appreciated by all the recipients.

A Wedding Anniversary:
John and Elaine D'Angelillo
celebrate 59 years together on January 3

Our Concerns:

We pray for Lyn Bennett's friend George who is 97 and about to go into hospice care; we also keep his family and friends in our prayers. We offer prayers of consolation for the family and friends of Gary Clarke who passed away unexpectedly on Nov. 17. We pray for Meg Genoter's mother who is struggling with the problems associated with memory loss. We pray for all those who struggle with the darker emotions during this time of celebration. We keep the Emerson family in our prayers. We pray for Steve Cloutier's friend, Mark, whose beloved mother is dying. We keep Rebecca's brother, Brian, in our prayers as he continues to struggle with the repercussions from his fall and seizures. We offer prayers of consolation for Kathy Duckett's good friend, Toni, whose father passed away recently. We pray for peace for a friend of Kim Emerson whose mother is dying. We pray for Louise Coalter's sister who is struggling with feelings of loss as this is the first Christmas since her husband died. We keep Tad Rochette in our prayers as he is about to go through a partial knee replacement that will have recovery period of many weeks. We keep Kathy Perkins in our prayers as she undergoes testing for possible skin cancer. We also keep Lorraine M in our prayers as she continues with her new chemo treatments, and join her in praying that they are successful in slowing the effects of her skin cancer. We pray for Chris Clish as she goes through more testing procedures. We pray for all those who cannot be with their loved ones during this holiday season.

Our Healing Prayers:

We offer healing prayers for Peg Matthews as she recovers from a bad fall and not being discovered until next day; for Debby Coalter as she recovers from a small stroke; for Cathy Hill's mother-in-law, June, as she recovers after her stay in the hospital; for Pastor Mark; for Brydon Emerson as she heals from a surgical procedure; and for Meryl Winslow who is recovering from a broken foot and is in a lot of pain.

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. Dorothy DuBreuil, breast cancer; Bill, who is the husband of Heather's birth mother; Susan Riggins; Karen Baer's friend, Cathy; Lorraine M, cutaneous T cell lymphoma; Cathy Hill's sister, Morag, who has lymphoma; Lyn Bennett's mother, colon cancer; Mary Lou, a close friend of Pastor Mark; Louise Coalter's friend, Sherrie, lung cancer; Ashley Peroni (Karen Lee Peroni's sister-in-law), brain cancer; Carol Clark; Meg Genoter's friend, Heather; Kathy Duckett's friend, Caroline, jaw cancer; Paul Martineau's mother; Joe, a young friend of Carole Gustafson, skin cancer; Charlie Hersey's Dad, Fred; Steve Ciccolini (Carol's husband), liver cancer; Sarah (friend of Steve Cloutier), brain cancer; Cindy Miller's mother-in-law, breast cancer; Brian Cormier's dad, who has been diagnosed with stage 1 prostate cancer.

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

Looking for some cheer this January?

Stop by the Townsend Public Library to see over 65 decorated trees in the 8th annual **Festival of Trees** event. The trees will be up until the end of January.

The library is open: Tuesday - Thursday 10am to 9pm; Friday 10 am to 5 pm; Saturday 10 am to 2 pm; and Sunday 1 pm to 5 pm.

Some other events you might like are: Vintage Vocal Quartet on Sunday, January 14 at 2 pm; Rubber Soul Concert (Beatles) on Sunday, February 25 at 2 pm; and Mini Golf is back on March 3 and 4! (Saturday and Sunday.)

ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS

A World Uprooted: Responding to Migrants, Refugees and Displaced People

Friday, April 20 - Monday, April 23, 2018

Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2018 - a weekend of faith-rooted worship, learning and advocacy in our Nation's capital - will focus on the uprootedness of our world. We will analyze current policy and envision ways to more fully and justly respond to the global and local needs of displaced communities. Together we will seek policy changes that advance hope and overcome the devastating impacts of conflict, climate change and corruption on God's people.

REGISTER - Early-bird registration rates available through March 17th.

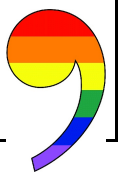
SCHOLARSHIPS - Justice and Witness Ministries has designated funding for UCC young adults (ages 18-35) to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) in 2018.

For more information, go to:

http://www.ucc.org/2018_ecumenical_advocacy_days?utm_campaign=jpanet_dec08_17&utm_medium=email&utm_source=unitedchurchofchrist

January 2018

TO CONTACT THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR, CATHY HILL:
email: chill01469@gmail.com

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

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

LECTIONARY, JANUARY 2018

January 7, 2018
- First Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm: Psalm 29
Second reading: Acts 19:1-7
Gospel: Mark 1:4-11

January 14, 2018
- Second Sunday after the Epiphany

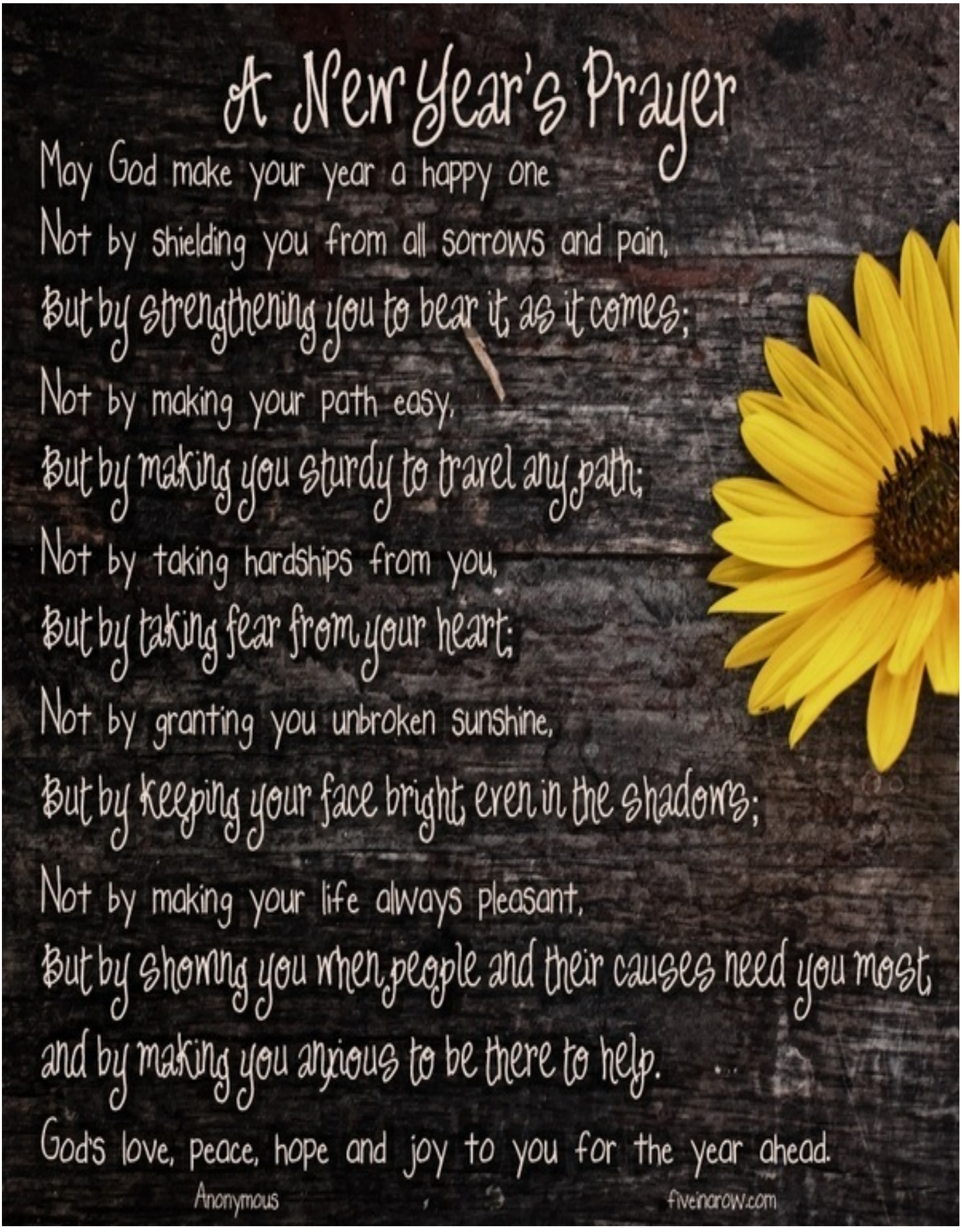
First reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)
Psalm: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
Second reading: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
Gospel: John 1:43-51

January 21, 2018
- Third Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm: Psalm 62:5-12
Second reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Gospel: Mark 1:14-20

January 28, 2018
- Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm: Psalm 111
Second reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Gospel: Mark 1:21-28


A New Year's Prayer
May God make your year a happy one
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you when people and their causes need you most
and by making you anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you for the year ahead.
Anonymous
fiveinarow.com

Townsend Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
3 Brookline St., PO Box 487
Townsend MA 01469-0487

Sunday School at 9 am & Worship at 10:15 am

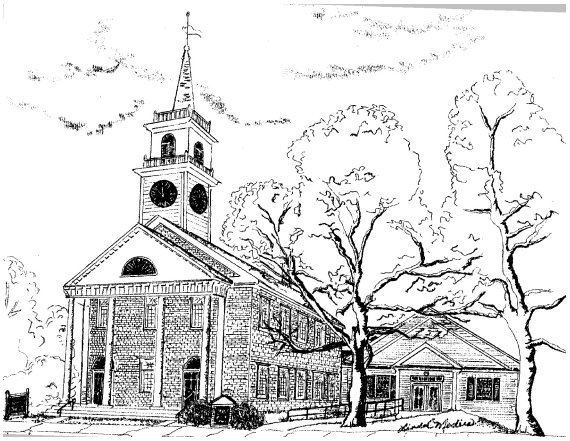
SHARING OUR SPACE WITH THE COMMUNITY AND FRIENDS

Weddings, Child Dedications, Holiday Parties, Baby and Wedding Showers, Family Reunions, Organization Meetings

We are blessed with a beautiful sanctuary and great space within our building for use that we are able to share with others. If you or someone you know is looking for a location for an event, contact our church secretary at 978-597-8925. This use of our building helps support the maintenance of our facility.

OUR COMMON PURPOSE STATEMENT

Being in an intimate relationship with God in the present, we are an ever-learning, action-oriented, justice-seeking, community-caring church. Our purpose is to use our gifts to make God's love real and alive for everyone.

We are committed to ministering through the use of our gifts, learning to live the Christian way of life, and being together in Christ by seeking to fulfill these three commandments of Christ:

- *To love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30)*
- *To love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31)*
- *To love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34)*