THE VISITOR

TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

April 2021

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9:00am - 1:00pm

PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS:
Mon-Wed 9-1, or by appointment.

Visit our web page at www.tccucc.org and visit us on Facebook

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: SUNDAY, APRIL 25

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Zoom AND Facebook With Us on Sundays!

So many of us are missing that feeling of family and community that came with coming together for worship on Sunday mornings. Starting March 21 our worship service will be broadcast via TCC's Facebook page!

We still have Christian Education before worship and a time of fellowship afterwards that uses our Zoom connection. **See page 4 for more details and connection information.**

If you're not certain how to go about it, call the church office - there is bound to be someone who can help! Hope to see you soon . . .

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

BEHOLD,
CHRIST HAS RISEN!

Pastor's Newsletter

Dear Friends,

Easter is about to be upon us! At this time last year almost all churches were vacant. While I don't expect (or, to be honest, want) a packed sanctuary on Palm Sunday or Easter, I do know that we will have a handful or so of people in the sanctuary and many more watching the Facebook Live presentation. It will be a season of Joy and Hope and Resurrection! The schedule for Holy week is as follows:

PalmSunday

8:45 am Blessing of the Palms

Father Jeremy and I will be blessing the palms on the common. This will be a brief and informal service during which we expect those gathered to wear masks and keep socially distanced.

9:00 am - 9:30 am Drive Through Palm Distribution

I will stand in front of the church and hand palms to anyone who drives by and wants one.

10:00 am Worship

This will be a traditional worship service. There will be some special music from the Bell Choir. Renee will be playing "The Palms" as is the tradition here.

MaundyThursday

7:00 pm Video Only Worship

This will be a Facebook only event. The sanctuary will NOT be open. It will be a traditional service including communion and the extinguishing of the lights. Although the service will be broadcast beginning at 7 pm, you can watch it whenever you would like.

GoodFriday

12:00 pm Video Only Worship

Once again, this will be a Facebook only event. The video will begin at noon but you can watch it whenever you want.

EasterSunday

5:00 am Community Sunrise Service

in St. John's parking lot.

I honestly don't know much about it except Father Jeremy invited me to participate.

10:00 am Worship

Special music from both the bell choir and the choir. Live flowers. Communion and the joy of the resurrection! Invite a friend to watch.

Yes, it is going to be different than Holy Weeks of the past, but a lot better than that of last year!

Join us for any, or better yet all, of these services as we remember the glory, the passion and the resurrection of our Savior Jesus the Christ!

Peace,

Greg

P.S. You can find the link to the Facebook page on page 4 of this newsletter.

Please Help Townsend Congregational Church's Light Shine!

The stimulus relief check is a gift from God through the government and, hopefully, to Townsend Congregational Church! I have figured out that if 100 people donate 1/10 of their check to the church, we have the potential of raising $14,000, which would significantly improve the fund-raising portion of our budget! 1/10 of the check would be $140, which, after donating, would still leave you over $1,200 for your needs.

Think of all the things to be thankful for - even in this pandemic. If you are reading this, you have avoided or survived COVID-19. If you have a roof over your head and people who love you, you are blessed. If you have repeatedly found reasons to smile and enjoyed the warm days as they occur, you must be hopeful for everything good that life continues to offer.

Let's see how much we can raise through the stimulus check fund-raiser! This is a chance to replace the same amount to the budget as all our dinners and part of the auction we would have had in normal times! This is extra money for most of us and a safe way to have a fund-raiser in these difficult times.

Your donation can come to the church in person, through Breeze as a digital donation, or the mail (Townsend Congregational Church, PO Box 487, Townsend MA 01469). Please write Stimulus Fund-raiser on your check or envelope so we know!

Three thoughts ...

- If you truly need all of your check, bless you. We truly don't want to take anything from anyone who might find this fund-raiser prohibitive. We understand.
- If you can't afford much, but could donate some of your check, bless you. Any donation amount will be joyfully accepted.
- If you are fortunate enough to donate more than the amount we are thinking of, bless you. Your church will appreciate your extra effort.

Can we do this? I pray that we can if we all work together! Please prayerfully consider the amount you can share. David and I plan on starting this event by donating a significant portion of our check to the Townsend Congregational Church as soon as it arrives. We hope everyone will join us!

Thank you for your time,

Wanda Wilson
Townsend Congregational Church Council

Looking For Help With Updating Our Church's Web Page

We are looking for people who are interested in helping us give our TCC web page a much needed and well-deserved makeover. If you have experience in graphic arts, or web design or just know what you are doing with building a web page, now is the time to give your time and talents to TCC. Please email the Worship team at katduck54@outlook.com and join the fun.

TCC Worship Task Team

Sunday School Families - and Beyond:

Thank you to those of you who have joined us for our *Picture the Bible* Christian education program that runs Sunday mornings at 9 am.

All are welcome. This program is open to anyone who wants to open up their faith conversation beyond the Sunday sermon.

Amanda Caprigno

Editor's note - The Zoom link for Sunday school is the same as the one used for after worship fellowship and can be found in the next article, and in the weekly *Spirit*.

Also, Amanda has supplies set up in Fellowship Hall on Sunday mornings for those who wish to join in with the fun and art in person. Masks and social distancing are still required.

Our Christian Ed, Worship and Fellowship is Now a Digital Sandwich on Sunday Mornings!

On March 21, we moved our worship service from Zoom to Facebook live. We believe this will provide a better audio and video presentation for those of you watching online. You do not need to have a Facebook account to watch the service (although you will if you want to "chat"). On Sunday morning simply go to the church Facebook page which can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/TownsendCongregationalChurch

You will see the worship service beginning at 10 am. It is that easy. It is a presentation-only transmission. There is no two-way interaction like there has been, unless you want to type something into the chat. You do not need to worry about your microphone or camera being on or off. No one will be able to see you sitting in your pajamas!

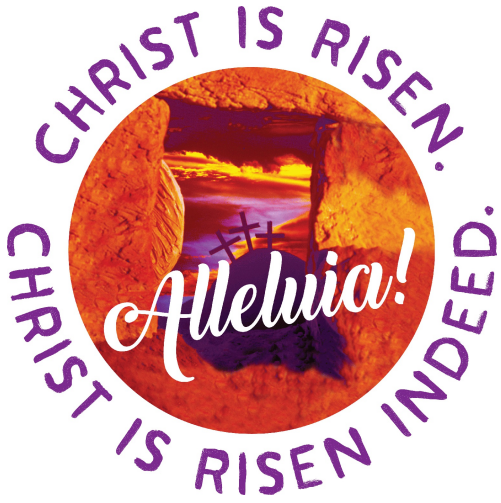
We still use Zoom for the Christian Education program (for all ages) **before** worship and for the fellowship time **after** worship. The Zoom link for these two events is copied in below and included in the weekly Spirit.

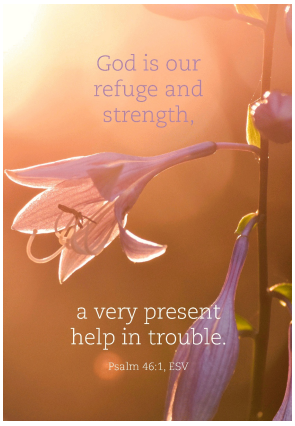
https://zoom.us/j/96280207284?pwd=SDBYK2hBVjlWOGJvQjRIdVYvbkhtUT09

If that is not working, the meeting ID is **962 8020 7284** and the pass-code is **174445**

And lastly, if you need to dial in (where you will then need to enter the meeting ID and Pass-code on your phone), the number to call is **1-646-876-9923**.

Thanks to the Worship Team for setting up this entire thing!





A Vital Church!

While we are certainly in strange times during this pandemic, we know that this will pass and our Christian ministries will resume, or expand. The TCC Governance Council has two vital positions open (or soon to be open) that are calling out to be filled:

Moderator - and -
Minister for Christian Education.

What is our purpose in being a Christian church if we are not being serious about our leadership and growing spiritually through ongoing education?

I know these two positions are broader than what I just stated, but it's a place to start. Please take time to pray and take an honest look at what role you wish to play in the future of TCC. Our church is nothing without you and all the people who support this house of God.

Submitted by Cathy Hill
on behalf of the TCC Council

Village Common Children's Center

Hello TCC Family,

On behalf of the VCCC Board of Directors, Staff and myself, I would just like to say a big THANK YOU for your continued support and belief in our future success. I know we are all looking forward to VCCC re-opening at the end of August, and I promise you that we will be more than ready to continue providing high quality educational programs and childcare services to our Townsend community and the surrounding towns. While our plan is to start out with a "soft" opening, I totally anticipate being back up to pre-COVID-19 enrollment numbers soon thereafter. If any of you are looking for enrollment space for

the upcoming new school year or may know someone who may be looking, please do not hesitate to contact me at my email address for enrollment information. (Because the school is currently closed, I am more easily reached at my home email: dragonfly8265@aol.com)

On a personal note, I would just like to also thank everyone for your thoughts, prayers and kind words regarding my husband and his medical issues, we have most appreciated it.

Sincerely,

Carol Ciccolini,
VCCC Director

2-Donald Hunt; 11-Pamela Allen; 13- Samantha Miller and Heather Rochette; 14-Nick Zielenkievicz; 15-Lucas Davidson; 16-Tina Bauer; 18-Aidan Canfield and Dorothy DuBreuil; 20-Peter Hunt; 23-Olivia Rochette; 24-Dominic Capone; 25-Renee Fossey; 28-Karen Baer

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. We appreciate those who have participated so far. Simply make a donation on (or around) your birthday in the amount of your age (Memo: Birthday Fund)! Participate and watch our gifts grow!

An Update from Our Minister for Finance

- Contributions for March, through the 21st, totaled $2,882.
- Contributions year to date totaled: $13,767
  - This breaks down as: General Fund received to date $12,890; Outreach received to date: $595; Birthday Fund received to date $82; UCC Member Dues received to date $200
  - Arrearage year to date total $(22,233)

2021 Stewardship Update (as of March 8):

- A second stewardship request was emailed to members and friends of TCC.

  General Fund - $49,626 Pledged (18 Pledges)

  Outreach - $2,500 Pledged

The 2020 contribution statements were mailed out at the beginning of March. If you did not receive your statement, please reach out to Karen in the church office and she will be able to help you.

OUR BLESSINGS:

We offer prayers of thanksgiving for the following people who no longer have Cancer! Charlie Hersey's dad, Fred. Dorothy DuBreuil, and Meg Genoter's friend, Heather. We celebrate with Nick and Julie Zielenkievicz, and their extended family, on the upcoming birth of their fourth grandchild, who will be their first granddaughter. We give thanks that the North Middlesex School District has found a way to allow our children to safely attend classes full time; this is a joy for the children as well as the parents. Jessie Marshall has shared with us the joy of having her TCC family with her in her heart, and she is thankful to be receiving correspondence from many of us.

Wedding Anniversaries:
Jock and Pamela Snaith, 49 years on April 14
Doug and Karen Baer, 43 years on April 15

OUR CONCERNS:

We offer prayers of consolation for Pastor Greg and his family whose mother passed away on Feb. 25. Prayers for everyone working at the COVID Vaccine site and also pray for patience for all those still waiting. We keep Grant Swenor in our prayers as he continues to receive hospice care. We also keep Carol Swenor in our prayers as she cares for Grant and deals with the difficulties that face her each day. Prayers for a close friend of Mo Tremblay who recently broke his ankle and is looking at a long recovery. We continue to pray for all those affected by the pandemic. We pray for Kathy Duckett who is about to undergo a medical procedure. We continue to pray for Carol Ciccolini's husband, John, who is back in the hospital. We keep Bob Lorenzen in our prayers and hope that he may complete his physical rehab and return home soon. We keep Clareese Caprigno and her family in our prayers. We ask for a mixed prayer on behalf of Pam Snaith; we pray for healing for her elderly aunt, Janet Myers, who fell and broke her hip on 3/14, and offer a prayer of gratitude for the person who volunteered to foster her little dog while she can't take care of him.

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. Lorraine M, cutaneous T cell lymphoma; Cathy Hill's sister, Morag Graham, and Barbara Goodwin's step son, Tyler who both have Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; Kathy Duckett's friend, Caroline, jaw cancer; John Ciccolini (Carol's husband), liver cancer; Cindy Miller's mother-in-law, Lynne Donnelly, breast cancer; Tricia (friend of Paul Martineau), breast cancer/brain cancer; Bill Jordan (Carole's brother), chronic lymphocytic leukemia; Kerry Thrasher; Tracy Winslow's Aunt Sylvia, breast cancer; Kathy Perkins' friend, Jerry Quince, brain cancer; Bob (friend of the D'Angelillo family); Ken (friend of Lee McTighe); Cheryl Borko's dad, throat cancer; Nattie (friend of Moe Tremblay), Multiple myeloma; Moe Tremblay's oldest brother, Ray, prostate cancer.

LECTIONARY, APRIL 2021

April 4, 2021 - *Easter Day*
First reading: Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Second reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43
Gospel: John 20:1-18 or Mark 16:1-8

April 11, 2021 - *Second Sunday of Easter*
First reading: Acts 4:32-35
Psalm: Psalm 133
Second reading: 1 John 1:1-2:2
Gospel: John 20:19-31

April 18, 2021 - *Third Sunday of Easter*
First reading: Acts 3:12-19
Psalm: Psalm 4
Second reading: 1 John 3:1-7
Gospel: Luke 24:36b-48

April 25, 2021 - *Fourth Sunday of Easter*
First reading: Acts 4:5-12
Psalm: Psalm 23
Second reading: 1 John 3:16-24
Gospel: John 10:11-18

This following article is a bit long, but when I read it the first time (just prior to the start of the pandemic), I thought it was just such a interesting concept. So, instead of more COVID-19 news that I suspect you are thoroughly tired of hearing and seeing, take a few minutes and read about a quiet community outreach project that one church has been doing for about 30 years . . . Cathy

Southern New England Conference
United Church of Christ
Living the Love & Justice of Jesus

SPOTLIGHT on local church innovation – Food Pantries That Come in Snack Size

Fairhaven Church Offers a Food Blessing Box to the Community

Millions of books are shared through the Little Free Library boxes that seem to be popping up in cities and towns across the country. If you are not familiar with them, they are wooden boxes on posts, much like an oversized mailbox, that act as a neighborhood book exchange where everyone is invited to take or leave a book. The main reason these were started was to give greater access to books to those who did not have any.

The First Congregational Church, UCC, of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, took that concept and turned it into a little free food pantry to give access to food to those who may be going without.

Donna Perry, one of the members of the church's Missions committee, read about the program online, and after the committee approved the idea, she and her husband built the box. The Blessing Box, as it is called, sits outside the church and is available 24/7.

"For more than thirty years, we have had a food pantry that is totally stocked by our generous congregation," said Perry. "It is not an advertised pantry, but people in need seem to find us."

"Our regular food pantry is only open during office hours (MTW from 9-1) and is meant really for emergencies, to supplement what folks might get regularly at other places," explained The Rev. Bette McClure, pastor of the church. "The Blessing Box allows us to have food available when we are not here, and is also a way that folks can donate food when we are closed."

The church tries to stock the box with 20-25 various nutritious items. During winter, they are careful to limit items that will not be adversely affected by freezing weather. Some of the pantry items include tuna in a pouch, cereal/oatmeal, packages of mac and cheese, rice, pasta, and snacks. To help those who may be living on the street, they include items like fruit cups, peanut butter, and crackers – items that don't require cooking or preparation. They even try to include some health aids like soap, toothpaste, and lotions.

The box has been up only a couple of months and based on how often they refill it, the pastor believes about 15 or so people use it weekly.

"I think it gets used because it is so visible," explained McClure.

They are in the center of town, right across from town hall and the library. Also, the church hosts many groups that meet in the facility on Monday night – like AA, Alanon, Alateen, and the Scouts – and on Tuesday morning, they find that the pantry has less stock. Also, another church uses the building and their folks come in and out of the building often so they can also make use of it.

"The Blessing Box is just that, a Blessing for our needy and homeless," wrote church members Jim and Ann Cochran in an email. "We have had a great deal of activity in the Little Food pantry, both give and take, from our community. What a great idea it was."

"The anonymity of it is helpful because for some folks coming into the pantry can feel demeaning," McClure said. "While the blessing box is very visible during the day, someone could easily come after dark and maintain anonymity."

At this time, more people are taking than giving, though there certainly have been donations left in the box. McClure predicts that once it gets more known around town, the donations will increase. In addition, some local businesses, one of the nursing homes, parishioners, and random folks continue to stop by the church when it is open and donate food.

"Throughout the Bible we are told about helping others," said McClure. "In the Hebrew Scriptures reaching out to the stranger, feeding the hungry, caring for the poor is a clear mandate. Certainly Jesus teaches us to feed the hungry and this is a small but important way that we can do that. In a wealthy country like ours, no one should go hungry and if we do not do whatever we can to help keep people fed I think that we fail as Christians."

"By blessing others, we become blessed ourselves," said Perry.

You can reach Rev. Bette McClure at the church office at 508-993-3368 or email pastorfirstcong@gmail.com. Visit their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/firstcongfairhaven/

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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

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)*