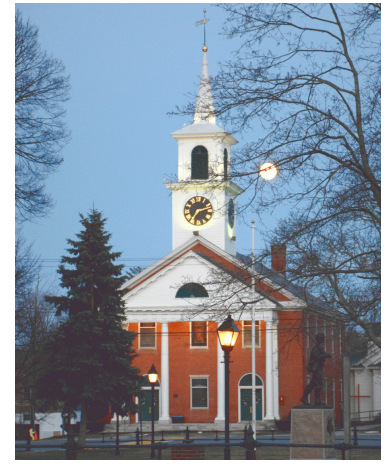


THE VISITOR

TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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



In this edition . . .

- ❁ Pastor's Monthly Column
- ❁ Christmas Plants
- ❁ Turkey Run
- ❁ Community Caroling
- ❁ Building Maintenance Fund
- ❁ Save Your Canceled Stamps
- ❁ Holiday Fair Thank-You's
- ❁ Birthday Fund
- ❁ Our Birthdays
- ❁ Our Prayers
- ❁ Monthly Lectionary
- ❁ Community News: Lions Club Christmas Trees; VFW Santa Claus Program
- ❁ UCC News: SNEUCC December Events; Good News? (a shared Devotional)
- ❁ Holiday Fair Photo Collage

December Outreach Collection

For the entire month of December, we will be accepting contributions to the UCC Christmas Fund. The money collected will go to a fund to help retired pastors whose income is not enough to live on. Pastor Greg has more details in his monthly message.



Tree Lighting on the Common - Dec, 3, starting at 4:30, followed by a music service and community stew at St. John's.



A special deadline for the January 2024 edition of our newsletter is Wednesday, Dec. 27 by noontime. I have some time off from work to get this done, so I hope you can all work with this date.

Cathy

December Calendar

- 3 First Sunday of Advent
- 10 Last date to leave TEO gifts at TCC
- 17 Sunday School Nativity During Worship
- 17 Community Caroling
- 24 Regular worship at 10 am, then a Christmas Eve Service at 10 pm
- 27 January Newsletter Deadline
- ★ Handbell Practice every Wed. at 6:30 pm until Christmas
- ★ Choir Practice every Wed. at 7:30 pm until Christmas
- ★ No Council Meeting (next meeting scheduled for January 8)

TEO Gift Tags

Thank you to everyone who collected gift tags for the TEO Christmas program. When you were all done, there were only 5 tags left! Since there are so few, and time is short, I will bring these tags to add to the ones at the Townsend Public Library. Thank you for your kindness and generosity!

Cathy





December 2023

Volume 46 No. 11

Pastor: Rev. Gregory Schmidt
Pastor's Line at TCC:
978-597-0157

TCC Administrative Asst.:
Judy Karkane
Office Line: 978-597-8925

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

Editor: Cathy Hill

TOWNSEND
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
UCC
PO BOX 487
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E-MAIL ADDRESSES:

Pastor:
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Church Secretary:
secretary@tccucc.org

Newsletter:
newsletter@tccucc.org

**Village Common Children's
Center:** vccc@tccucc.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

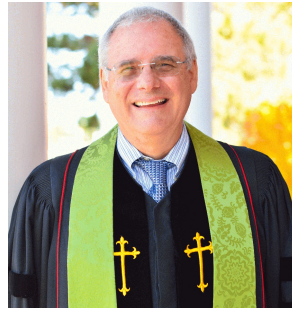
Monday-Friday: 8 am - 1 pm

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:
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27**



Pastor's Letter

Dear Friends,

“Have a holly, jolly Christmas, it’s
the best time of the year ...”

“Last Christmas I gave you my
heart ...”

“Chestnuts roasting on an open fire,
Jack Frost nipping at your nose...”

“I don’t want a lot for Christmas
there is just one thing I need...”

“Frosty the snow man, was a jolly
happy soul ...”

“I’m dreaming of a white
Christmas ...”

“Joy to the world, the Lord has
come ...”

Which of the first lines of these
popular Christmas songs is about
the Christian holiday called
Christmas? If you picked the last
one you are correct. The rest are
just a small sample of the
contemporary holiday songs for
what has come to be known as
Christmas.

What happened to the real
Christmas? What happened to the
amazing love story about God’s gift
to humanity and celebration of
Jesus’ birth? Somehow we lost
that part of the Christmas story.
They have been replaced by Santa
(and the greed associated with
him), Rudolph and the sappy love
songs (some of which I confess, I
love) about finding and losing love

which have become the standard
themes for this time of the year.
Our Christmas cards say Happy
Holidays instead of Merry
Christmas. We have ornaments
and decorated trees (now called
holiday bushes) as the symbols of
the season, rather than nativity
scenes.

I hope that in the midst of the
chaotic contemporary celebration
of this holiday, which has nothing
at all to do with the religious
holiday on which it is based, you
will make some time to remember
the birth of Jesus. God gave Jesus
to our world as a gift of love, grace,
mercy and salvation, not as a mere
decoration to our lives. We
shouldn’t be ashamed to proclaim
the wonder and glory of this act of
salvation.

It would be a shame if all of our
preparing, cooking, hosting,
rushing around and shopping in
preparation of celebrating the
secular holiday kept us from
experiencing the glory, the joy and
the hope of the Christian
Christmas. As always, I invite you
to join us in church as we anticipate
and celebrate the birth of Jesus into
our lives.

Our worship schedule for
Christmas Eve, December 24th, is
as follows:

★ At 10 am (our normal worship
time) we will celebrate the 4th
Sunday of Advent.

★ At **10 pm** we will gather once
again to celebrate Christmas Eve.
This will be a traditional service of
lessons and carols.

There will be NO worship service
on Christmas Day.

Throughout the Season of Advent
we will light the advent wreath and,

as always, I am in need of people to light the candles. If you would like to volunteer to read a sentence or two and then light one of the candles please let me know.

Our outreach collection for the month of December is the United Church of Christ Christmas Fund which used to be known as "Veterans of the Cross." The money collected will go to a fund to help retired pastors whose income is not enough to live on. As you may guess there are plenty of them out there as a pastor's salary is not enough to live on in the best of times. I hope you will give generously as maybe there are a few of your former pastors who are drawing from this fund.

Finally, as I try to do each year at this time, I remind you that we have a small deacon's fund which can be used to help people in need. If you are in need of assistance (food, oil, power, etc.) please reach out to me.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy new year. Join us for worship as we celebrate Jesus' birth!

Peace,

Greg



Christmas Plants for Our Sanctuary

With the closing of the business that supplied our holiday plants, we have a fun opportunity to directly purchase colorful plants for our Sanctuary this Christmas. I hope many of you will participate so we have a festive display for December 24 (or before).

The choice of plants is yours to make, and we ask only that you provide a base to catch any water (I will also bring in some clear plastic ones I have at home), and to avoid plants with strong scents. There are name stakes available if you want to be sure which plants are yours when you pick them up afterwards.

Thank you for your consistent, loving support of our church and its people.

Cathy Hill



TURKEY RUN!

'Tis the season for cheap

turkeys! Now is a wonderful time to buy your turkey for our future turkey dinners in the new year! If you do not plan on offering up a turkey, but are willing to provide freezer space to store a turkey or two, that would also be very helpful. Let us know.

Many thanks to all those who have volunteered to chair the 2024 dinners; we have them all covered; now we just need you to help make them all successes!



Community Caroling! Sunday, December 17 at 1:30 pm!

We are gathering once more to go out and bring some **Holiday Cheer** to our Townsend neighbors – and plan on having a good time while we're at it! Come gather in front of the church at 2 pm and be prepared to bring joy to the hearts of several people. Song books, filled with many of your favorite carols, are provided. This is a great family activity! In past years, we have culminated this ministry with a gathering together for casual refreshments and fellowship; our options for this are still being reviewed at the time of this writing – look for an email update closer to the event.

Warm-Up! – come a half hour early for a warming-up sing-a-long of your favorite carols. Lee McTighe will play the piano for us and it will be just the thing to get us started.

If you have any questions, please call Lee McTighe (978-790-5699).

Everyone is welcome!





We love our church!

Our church building is beloved by all of us, but she is at the age where things need repair and updating from time to time. We have faced issues with our HVAC systems in the addition we built 20 years ago, leaks have been repaired, and things that have broken have been repaired as needed. This process is ongoing, and we have a Maintenance Fund to partially cover issues as they arise. Our most current repairs we are facing are the replacement of the second heating/air conditioning unit in the addition next spring, the replacement of our water heater, and most urgently, the state mandated replacement of the antifreeze in our 23 year old sprinkler system this winter...a project that should have been completed last year. These combined projects are estimated at around \$26,000. All of which are required repairs to keep our building safe and functional. Please prayerfully consider donating to this fund! Anything we collect saves us from using our invested funds, the proceeds from which we use in our yearly budget. Any donation will be greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made:

1. Through the offering on Sunday or dropping it off at the church;

office (Please label envelope "Maintenance Fund")

2. By mail to Townsend Congregational Church, PO Box 487, Townsend MA 01469; or

3. Digitally via our web site.

Thank you for your time,

Wanda Wilson
Minister for Property



**Save
Your
Canceled
Stamps**

For 41 years, Townsend Congregational Church has been saving canceled stamps to send to the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown. The stamps are sold to collectors overseas and the proceeds fund a summer camp in Maine for the Perkins School's Boy Scout troop. This outreach service was first introduced at TCC in 1982 by Addie Kytta, a beloved church member. Lee McTighe became friends with Addie and took over this stamp program after Addie passed away. The collection box is at the back of the sanctuary. Stamps should be trimmed, leaving a quarter-inch border on all sides. Any and all donations of your canceled stamps are gratefully accepted and appreciated, as TCC continues with this ongoing tradition.



**Thanks
for An
Amazing
Holiday
Fair!**

I feel like I say this after every holiday fair, but even though we have fewer people helping at our events, I am amazed at what we all get done, and at how well our little fair is embraced by the community. Our crafters that come to sell their hand-made treasures each year often comment on how well they do at our fair, and I get asked at the library (where I work) if we are going to have our fair each year.

We are all getting older – there were many comments along those lines this year – but it seems we have what it takes to put this fair together and to make a memorable event for our community every year.

Michelle is going to keep our TCC crafts table up for a couple weeks, so if you haven't had a chance to shop, please do so after worship soon.

I'm also happy to report that we were able to raise about \$6,500 for our church ministries.

My thanks to June Cloutier for co-chairing the fair with me; I could not do half the things she does, nor half as well! We make a good team! Finally, I know I speak for June as well when I give a huge thank-you to all our church people who helped in so many ways to make this fair a success

**– THANK YOU – THANK YOU
– THANK YOU!!**

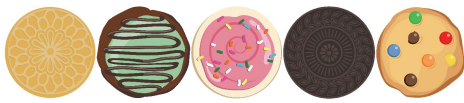
Cathy Hill



THANK YOU!

A huge thank you goes out to all those people who helped on the Greens Table. If you cut greens, made arrangements or bought anything on the table the day of the fair, your donation of time, talent, or funds is greatly appreciated.

Wanda



A special thank you to all who helped make Mrs. Claus's Bake Shop another success.

In addition to our pies, we had breads, cookies, fudge, candy, donuts, muffins, carrot cakes, coffee cakes and so much more. Once again during this very busy month, our talented church bakers came though to help make the bake table a huge success. Your baking talents are very much appreciated.

Karen Baer & Judy Russell



2023 GIFT BASKET RAFFLE THANK-YOU

Many, many thanks everyone who donated baskets for our raffle. This year there were 30 great baskets. They all were beautiful and generous donations. I appreciate everyone who contributed their time and talents to this part of the fair. Once again the raffle baskets were a great success!

Christine

Here is a list of all the people who won baskets:

1. Thanksgiving Harvest - Sharon Fontecchio;
2. Socks - Susan Ventura;
3. Handmade Cards - Sandra Smith;
4. Stampers Extravaganza - Patrick Burnham;
5. Warm Socks & Candle - Lindsay Klein;
6. Mrs. Fields Chocolate Cookies - Nancy Kariezis;
7. Chocolate & Popcorn - Barbara Black;
8. Candles for All Seasons - Mackenzie Soberg;
9. The Dog Basket - Sandra Mace;
10. Little Girls Basket - Jody Burnham;
11. Menagerie - Donna Shattuck;
12. Quilters Extravaganza - Tina O'Reilly;
13. Candy, Scratch Tickets & More - Heather Rochette;
14. Assorted 25+ Cards - Pilar Hughes;
15. Cancer Ducks - Brooklyn Taylor;
16. Bird Seed - Jody Burnham;
17. Stampers Extravaganza # 2 - Patti La Due;
18. 5 Puzzles - Patti La Due;
19. Red Ribbon 5 Puzzles - Donna Souza;
20. Stampers Extravaganza # 1 - Dena Ammendolia;
21. Gather Together - Lee Mctighe;
22. Assorted 25+ Cards # 2 - Betsy Czeria;
23. Indulge Yourself - Amy Harrington;
24. Wine, Candy & Candles - Kaitlyn Doucette;
25. Lantern W/candle - Angela Shepherd;
26. Time to Stamp -

27. Kids Kolor Kraze - Gavin Montagna;
28. Beginning to Look like Christmas - Sharon Fontecchio;
29. Relaxation Basket - Lisa Herget;
30. Girls Fun Basket - Kaitlyn Doucette



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!



- 3-Niles Busler;
- 5-Julianne Capone;
- 6-Michelle Enright;
- 7-Lorena Carlson and Steve Cloutier;
- 11-Joseph Cloutier;
- 12-Justin Gay and Kyra Genoter;
- 14-Cathy Parsons;
- 15-Melissa Gruber and Elsa Sedgewick;
- 17-Donna Howard;
- 18-Jock Snaith;
- 19-Nancy Clough;
- 20-Pam Snaith;
- 21-Carol Swenor;
- 23-Jillian Hersey;
- 25-David Butz

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



OUR BLESSINGS:

We give thanks that Homer's (a good friend of the Cutler family) heart surgery was less invasive than originally thought and he is recovering well.

We give thanks that Max Duckett was able to quickly find a new place to live.

We give thanks for our church family and for working together to create a fun event for our community.

Wedding Anniversaries:

Peter and Cathy Hill, 39 years on Dec. 25

OUR CONCERNS:

Healing prayers for Gary Hatch, who is in rehab after being hospitalized early in November.

Healing prayers for Cindy Miller's husband, Wayne, who is home

from the hospital but still needs to recover.

Continued healing prayers are needed for Lorraine M as she recovers from her health issues.

We offer prayers for all who struggle with mental health concerns, either for themselves or someone they love.

Karen Baer is asking for prayers for the family and friends of Sandra Croteau, who passed away this week.

Karen Baer is asking for continued prayers for Roni, as she begins treatments.

Carol Swenor needs prayers for her brother and sister-in-law as they mourn the death of their son in a motorcycle accident.

Greg is asking for prayers for his niece, Maddy Swegle, a Navy Pilot on deployment to the USS Eisenhower in the Middle East.

Prayer request for Karen Baer's sister-in-law, Barbara, who has been hospitalized.

We keep John D'Angelillo in our prayers as he prepares for surgery.

John and Elaine would like to have prayers for their friend Dianne whose mental health is deteriorating at a faster rate than expected. They would also like to have prayers for their son-in-law's father, John Delaney, who is in the hospital with an undiagnosed illness.

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.



LECTIONARY, DECEMBER 2023

December 3, 2023 -

First Sunday of Advent

First reading: Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalm: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Second reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Gospel: Mark 13:24-37

December 10, 2023 -

Second Sunday of Advent

First reading: Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

Second reading: 2 Peter 3:8-15a

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

December 17, 2023 -

Third Sunday of Advent

First reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm: Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55

Second reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 24, 2023 -

Fourth Sunday of Advent

First reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Psalm: Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Second reading: Romans 16:25-27

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

December 31, 2023 -

First Sunday after Christmas Day

First reading: Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Psalm: Psalm 148

Second reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40



COMMUNITY NEWS



The Lions Club Christmas Trees

The Lions Club, a wonderful community organization, and supporter of TEO, is holding their annual Christmas Tree sale on the far side of the town common.

Hours for tree sales:

Mon.-Thurs. 3-6 pm; Fri. 3-8pm; weekends 10 am-6 pm.

Textile collection hours the same as tree sales; clothes and shoes in separate bags. Closed during heavy rain.



Information and photo collected from their Facebook page

VFW Santa Claus Program

Townsend VFW Post No. 6538 and its Auxiliary is looking forward to bringing joy to numerous families in Townsend on Christmas Eve 2023 through its Santa Claus Program. The Townsend VFW Post and Auxiliary began having a Santa visit children in Townsend between 5:00 and 8:00 P.M. on Christmas Eve more than forty years ago. The Santa delivers a small gift provided by the family to the children who have been signed up for the Christmas Eve Santa Claus Program.

Although the Townsend VFW Post and Auxiliary do not currently have as many volunteer Santas as they have had in some past years, they will visit as many Townsend homes on Christmas Eve as possible. The homes to receive a Christmas Eve Santa visit will be determined based on the family having been previously involved in the program and on a first to sign up - first to be included basis until capacity is reached.



Any interested Townsend family should immediately complete the Townsend VFW Santa Survey which can be found at <https://forms.gle/PgkLehz3M5BKRWZX8>

Due to a limited number of Santa teams for Christmas Eve 2023, it is necessary to sign up and be confirmed for the program prior to turning in any gifts.

Those whose Townsend home can be visited on Christmas Eve 2023 will be advised that there will be a Santa available to visit them and the size and necessary preparation of the gift(s) and when and to whom to turn in the gifts.

Betty Mae Tenney

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NEWS

Every month, the SNEUCC has learning events, both in person and online. To view these events, go to: www.sneucc.org/events

SNEUCC December events

2023 Winter Solstice Women's Yoga Day Retreat at Silver Lake. Dec. 9, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at Silver Lake Camp & Retreat Center, Sharon, CT. Whether you're a yoga devotee or a novice, a seasoned singer or shy about your voice, we have a special place for you in our circle!

O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High: An Advent 2023 Online Retreat

Dec. 16, 9:30 am to 12:00 pm • Online. Guided by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, we will enjoy a morning of listening, prayer, and conversation as we open ourselves to the presence of Divine Love.

More details on the Southern New England Conference, UCC website, sneucc.org

Here is one of my favorite devotionals from December of last year...it is still a good message for this year's season.

Cathy

December 12, 2022

Good News?

Marilyn Pagán-Banks

John answered, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

- Luke 3:16-18 (NRSV)

Good news?! I guess it depends which side of the fork you are on. This is certainly not a vision of the baby born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling cloth.

John's idea of the Messiah was all about power and might and control. It is what the people wanted after centuries of oppression and colonization. "Finally, some justice!" I imagine some thinking.

But instead of a winnowing fork, Jesus comes with open hands, inviting all into right relationship. A relationship grounded in a love so expansive it became flesh so we can feel it. Touch it. Allow it to transform us.

Jesus comes and offers living water to all. He offers the bread of life to all. Jesus reminds us that we, too, are sourced from this love. Made from it. And can live into it more fully. This love will make us free!

Prayer

Thank you for this season of remembering, sharing the story, and inviting others into the possibility of your love. Amen.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marilyn Pagán-Banks

(she/her/ella) is a queer womanist freedom fighter gratefully (though not always gracefully) serving as executive director of *A Just Harvest*, Senior Pastor at San Lucas UCC, and adjunct professor at McCormick Theological Seminary. She is a joyful contributor to *The Words of Her Mouth*.

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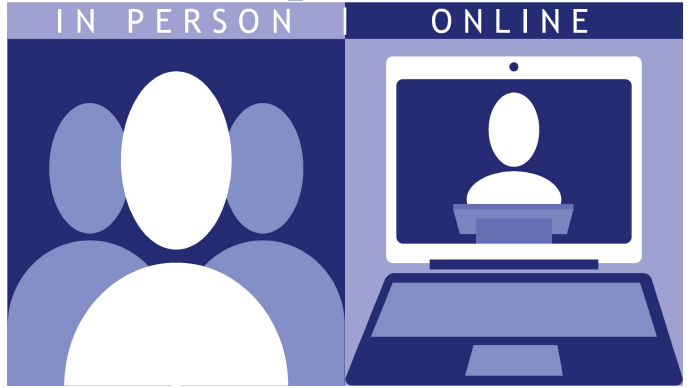
2023 Holiday Fair



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

Worship/Sunday School at 10 am

Worship With Us



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)*

