



THE VISITOR

**TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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



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"At Bethlehem we see God with us. At Calvary we see God for us. At Pentecost we see God in us."

From Advent devotional by
O. S. Hawkins



Stamps!

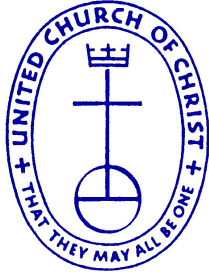
Don't forget to drop off your canceled postage stamps in the box at the back of the Sanctuary.

January Calendar

- 8 Council Meeting
 - 18 Free Community Dinner
 - 27 Turkey Supper
 - 28 Annual Business Meeting
 - 28 February Newsletter Deadline
- Choir Practice every
Wednesday at 7:30 pm

TCC Annual Business Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 28 after worship. Your attendance is necessary to pass the 2024 operating budgets for both TCC and VCCC. Hope to see you there!





JANUARY 2024

Volume 47 No. 1

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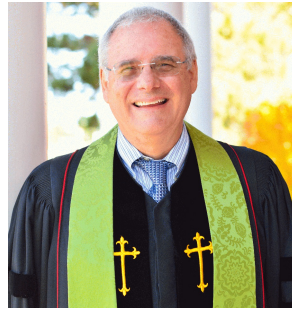
Village Common Children's Center: vccc@tccucc.org

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:
SUNDAY, JANUARY 28**



Pastor's Letter

We eat a fair number of pop-tarts in our house. By that I mean a box or two a week. What's not to love about them? They are quick and easy to prepare (mostly rip open the foil and eat them) and are simply delicious.

Sure there are those who toast them before eating, which I admit to doing once in a while, mostly the S'mores flavor because they do, in my opinion, taste better warm, just like the real s'mores. My top three flavors are: 3 - S'mores; 2 - Strawberry and, naturally, 1 - Cinnamon. All of these flavors are of the frosted variety for the added burst of scrumptiousness (a word I might have just invented to describe sugar).

Anyway, one thing I don't expect my pop tarts to be is nutritious. I have never read the label telling me what they are made of because I don't care. Evidently, however, someone recently read the label and decided to sue the Kellogg corporation claiming the company did not put enough



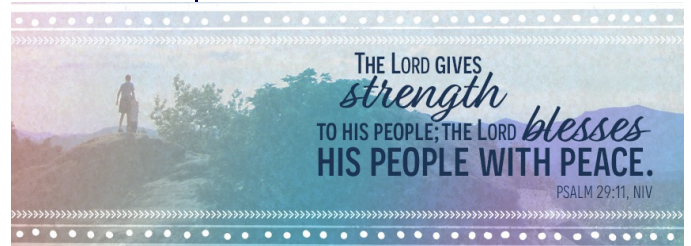
real strawberry in the pop-tarts. Enough real strawberry? How about any real strawberry? Do we really eat them thinking we are going to get our daily requirement of fruit? Come on! Really? Pop tarts are NOT toaster strudel, which might actually have some real strawberry as an ingredient. Sounds to me like this person just wanted their 15 minutes of fame by bringing a ridiculous law suit and jeopardizing the future of Pop-Tarts for all of us snack food connoisseurs. Or, basic gluttons like myself. What a cockamamie thing to try.

As we move into a new year, let's try to put some of the ridiculousness behind us. Let's stop the wars. Let's stand up to the smash and grab mentality. Let's give up the entitled behavior that we see too often on the news and the internet.

Jesus came to bring peace and harmony to a world tearing itself apart. Like in Jesus' day it is time for us to put what is considered "normal" aside (because it is anything but) and instead strive to welcome in a newness of all things. A newness of life, of love, of peace on earth for everyone for all time.

Happy New Year. Be a Blessing!

Greg



January Community Dinner

The January free Community Dinner will be held on Thursday, January 18 from 5 to 6 pm. The menu will include meatloaf, baked potatoes, a vegetable, bread and cookies for dessert. It will be a combined take away or eat in dinner. Water will be available for a beverage. A sign up sheet will be available in Fellowship Hall.



Please plan on joining us for the first supper of the new year!

We will be serving our famous turkey dinner on Saturday, January 27 from 5 to 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. The cost will be \$13 each or 2/\$25.00 and no more than \$30 for families with young children. Louise Coalter will be in charge of this supper and she is planning on serving Turkey, baked potatoes, corn, baby carrots, rolls and desserts. The sign-up sheets for donations of food and workers for that evening will be available in Fellowship Hall after church! If you know where you want to sign up, what you would like to donate, or have any questions, please contact Louise at lou48@comcast.net or the church office at 978-597-8925.



Holiday Fair Results!

Congratulations and thank you to all who participated in any way with our Holiday Fair in November. Dave Wilson kept getting late trickles of income coming in, but the total we raised was just over \$7,000 to support the life and ministries of our church; this represents a job well done for all of us!

Cathy Hill



January Diaper Fund-Raiser for TEO

Did you realize that many low-income families cannot afford to purchase enough diapers for their children; that infants use about 12 diapers a day and toddlers use about 8-10 a day; that diapers cannot be purchased with SNAP benefits (food stamps) or with WIC; that without a daily supply of disposable diapers, children cannot attend daycare, which results in parents unable to work or attend school; that if there are not enough diapers, children are not changed as needed and often suffer from rashes and urinary tract infections?

The Council is running a diaper drive throughout the month of January and all collections will be given to TEO for local distribution.

If you would like to participate in this drive, please drop off packages of diapers to the collection box in the church sanctuary. The greatest need right now is for diapers, sizes 4, 5 or 6, but any size is greatly appreciated. Deadline for this is January 28.



The Village Common Children's Center

Hello TCC Friends!! Happy January from VCCC!!

Well our school year has been rolling right along, full steam ahead! Very hard to believe we're now halfway done already! Guess that old saying, "time flies when you're having fun" is definitely true as we have been having so much FUN!! So throughout the month of November our classes found us focusing on the themes of "Life on the Farm", "The Harvest", "Colonial Days", "Colors and Shapes", and of course, "Thanksgiving"! Both the Toddler and the Preschool/Pre-K classrooms had fun exploring all aspects of the farm, especially painting with mud by driving toy tractors through a paint tray of mud and driving them all over paper to make cool designs! Cooking projects in both classrooms again allowed the children to work on math and science skills as they

made homemade cornbread and banana bread, YUM!!! While learning about how people lived in the early colonial days, the Preschool/PreK children tried writing with feathers! A special home/school connection was made when each child took home a big paper “turkey feather” to decorate with their families. When completed, they brought the feather back to school and it was attached to a big turkey on the classroom bulletin board!

The big highlight for November was a visit from “Animal Adventures” who came to the school with a variety of exotic animals. The children got to see and learn about alligators, snakes, chinchillas, ferrets, hedgehogs, bunnies, and different kinds of reptiles and even got to pet some of them!!

The month of December found the children participating in lots of activities that highlight how people all around the world celebrate their holidays. They read stories, played different games, created beautiful art projects, and of course continued with the cooking projects that the children always enjoy! The last week of school before our holiday break had all the classes participating in “Holiday Spirit Week” with each day’s activities focusing on a different fun theme which included the much loved “Polar Express Day” !! And then it was time for our annual Holiday Vacation which I think we all needed after living through a tough month of RSV, ear infections and strep throat!!

From all the Staff, the VCCC Board of Directors and myself, we wish our TCC family a Happy New

Year!! May 2024 bring much joy and happiness to everyone!!

Carol Ciccolini,  VCCC Director

Advent



Thanks to those who participated in our Advent worship this December: Don and Beth Klein, Karen Baer with Jody Burnham, and Amanda Caprino with Sterling Downs, and Pastor Greg. Thanks also for all the wonderful music and for the gifts of Renée Fossey in putting this aspect of our worship together so beautifully.



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-Linda Modica; 7-Jessica Swift; 8-Nicole Beauchesne; 12-Michele Busler; 13-Jason Goyette and David Wilson; 14-Rob Gosselin; 17-Louis DuBreuil; 18-Jane Misner and Skip Lloyd; 22-Alison Wright; 24-Nancy Lee; 28-Linda Hatch and Moe Tremblay

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



OUR BLESSINGS:

We give thanks for how quickly John D’Angelillo recovered after his surgery at the end of November.

We give thanks for all those who participated in our Advent worship this year, and for those who generously contributed to our beautiful flowering plant display.

As we look back on 2023, we give thanks for a spiritually rich year of worship and community. We give thanks for the spiritual leadership of Pastor Greg.

Wedding Anniversaries:
John and Elaine D’Angelillo, 65 years on Jan. 3

OUR CONCERNS:

Prayers for the family and friends of Ted May, who passed away at the end of November.

Beth Klein is asking for prayers for the family of her cousin, Paul Greg, who suddenly passed away on Thanksgiving morning.

Kathy Duckett would like prayers of healing for her friend who has advanced cancer.

We offer prayers of condolence for the family and friends of Jessie Marshall who passed away on December 1 at the age of 101 (and a half).

The Kleins would like healing prayers for their friend, Jim, who was diagnosed with a serious health issue.

Beth would also like prayers for the family of her friend, Susan B., who passed away at the beginning of December.

Prayers of consolation for the family and friends of Albert Stone who passed away on December 13.

Praying for kindness, mercy and understanding for those who suffer with addiction.

We offer healing prayers for Chuck Hafemann, Cynthia Tremblay’s first husband.

Pastor Greg is asking for prayers for Maddy Swegle who is on deployment in the Middle East.

June Beauchesne is asking for prayers for her granddaughter Anna.

Chris Clish would like prayers for her granddaughter, Victoria, who is in the ICU.

Beth Klein is asking for prayers for the family and friends of Jim W., who passed away in December.

We offer healing prayers for Nancy Clough, who is in the hospital after a bad fall on Dec. 23.

We pray for our world today. We pray for peace and hope to abound. Many are affected by natural disasters: floods, droughts and forest fires. Many are struggling with conflict, poverty and the global food crisis. O Lord, we pray

for your provision, peace and protection.

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.



Jessie Marshall



Just a quick reminder that, if we are in the midst (or aftermath) of a winter storm and you’re not sure if the church is open, there will be a message left on the church’s answering machine (if there is power) and on the church’s web site/Facebook. If the power is out in the center of town, then the church will be closed.

The Word of the LORD

LECTIONARY, JANUARY 2024

January 7, 2024 -

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, 2024 -

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, 2024 -

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, 2024 -

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Deuteronomy
18:15-20

Psalm: Psalm 111

Second reading: 1 Corinthians
8:1-13

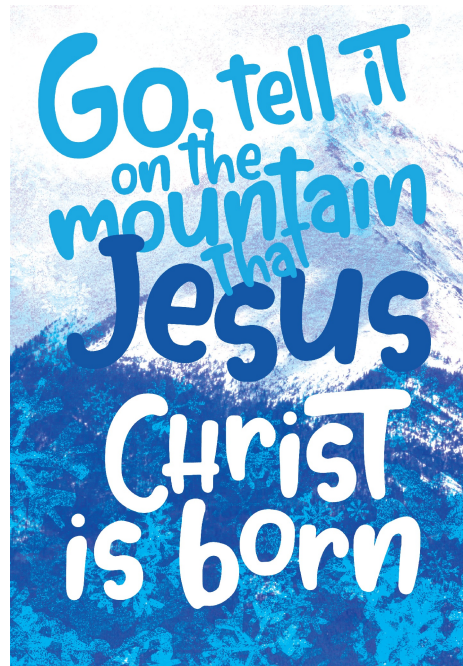
Gospel: Mark 1:21-2

COMMUNITY NEWS

Where can I drop off Christmas trees?

Residents may drop off their Christmas trees at the Highway Department, from December 26 - January 31. Please drop off your tree in the designated area. Residents MUST remove all foreign objects (lights, ornaments, plastic bags, etc).

[Taken from the Town of Townsend web site 12/27/23 - Cathy]



A letter to TCC from the Worcester Area Mission Society

Dear Friends of WAMS,

As we enter the week before Christmas, I want to tell you how grateful we are for all your support

of our mission during the past year. I am very proud to work with and for all the UCC churches in central Massachusetts. Together, we have accomplishments of which we can be proud. Thank you.

Some of our mission work lately has focused on supporting the hundreds of Haitian families that have joined our regional communities. There is a new opportunity to do exciting and very, very important volunteer work for these and other recent migrants: teaching English as a Second Language.

Millie Rao, Education Director of WRAP (Worcester Refugee Assistance Project), a respected local nonprofit, has asked us to help her recruit ESL teachers for a program that is starting on January 6th. There are different opportunities for experienced teachers, who would teach in person, and for people who would like to go through a brief training program to be able to teach a structured curriculum remotely.

Please contact Millie directly if you are interested in exploring this very impactful work with our new neighbors:

Millie Rao

Cell phone (508) 320-5819
millie@worcesterrefugees.org

Thank you for all your good work. Everyone at WAMS wishes you a warm, safe, and loving Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year.

Karen
Executive Director
Worcester Area Mission Society
6 Institute Road
Worcester, MA 01609
kludington@wamsworks.org



Looking for some cheer this January?

Stop by the Townsend Public Library to see 67 decorated trees in the 12th

annual **Festival of Trees** event. The trees will be up through Sunday, January 15.

The library is open: Monday 10 am-5 pm; Tuesday - Thursday 10 am to 8 pm; Friday 10 am to 5 pm; Saturday 10 am to 2 pm; and Sunday 1 to 5 pm (starting Jan. 7).

Check out our online calendar for scheduled events for all ages: www.Townsendlibrary.org

William James College INTERFACE Referral Service



INTERFACE is a mental health referral service that is available for all residents in Townsend, Pepperell, and Ashby. Just call 888-244-6843 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 is funded by the North Middlesex Regional School District. Check out the web site for the WJC INTERFACE Referral Service at interface.williamjames.edu.

Submitted by Pam Snaith



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

A letter to TCC from the United Church of Christ

Dear Friends at Townsend Congregational Church

Thank you for your generous donation to the United Church of Christ to support disaster relief in Hawaii. Your gift of \$1,195 was received on 10/20/23.

Your love of neighbor will be made tangible through your gift. Through your gift,

families who have been displaced and need shelter and necessities will receive support. We are working with the Hawaii Conference of the Untied Church of Christ, who are best equipped to assess and distribute for both short-term and long-term relief efforts. Please keep them in your prayers

Your gift enables the church to be present with people amid this life-changing catastrophe, offering immediate relief and providing long-term recovery and support. With the help of our partners, you will provide welcome, shelter, and respite for families. Through your giving, those in need will be provided with spiritual support and physical resources to rebuild their lives.

In faith,

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson

BLESS US
in this new year, Lord.



My future is in
YOUR HANDS.
PSALM 31:15, NLT

A Devotional from 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.

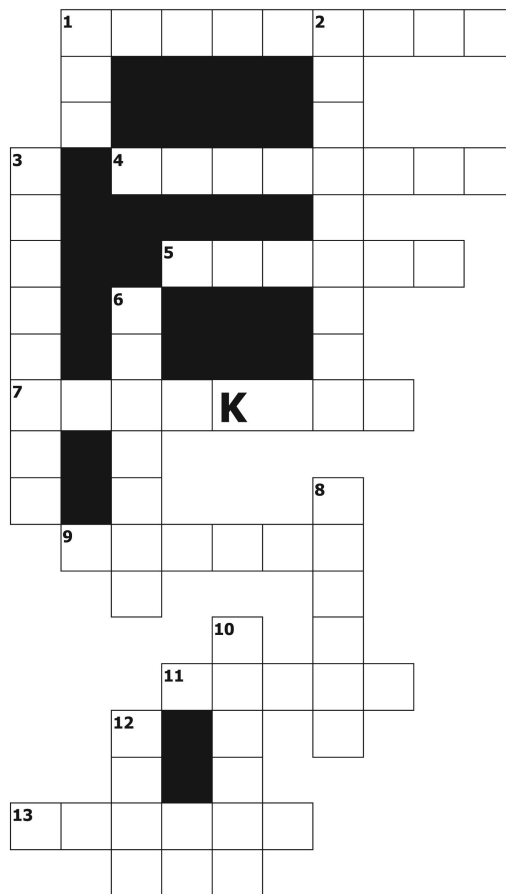
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Puzzle answers will be published in the February newsletter, or email me at chill01469@gmail.com



Puzzle!

Use the clues to complete this crossword about women in the Bible.



- 1. (across) Cousin of Mary (Luke 1:36)
- 1. (down) Mother of Abel (Genesis 4:1-2)
- 2. Mother of Solomon (2 Samuel 12:24)
- 3. Moses' wife (Exodus 2:21)
- 4. Lied about her giving to the church (Acts 5:1)
- 5. Saved her people from destruction in Persia (also a Bible book name)
- 6. A judge in Israel (Judges 4)
- 7. Mother of Esau (Genesis 25:21, 25)
- 8. The wife Jacob loved (Genesis 29:20)
- 9. Sister of Mary (John 11:1)
- 10. Sewed clothes (Acts 9:39)
- 11. Hosea's wife (Hosea 1:3)
- 12. Sat at Jesus' feet in conversation (Luke 10:39)
- 13. Sister of Moses and Aaron (Exodus 15:20)

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

(Need Not Come to End)

The spirit of Christmas came in with a bang,
The shopping, the parties, the carols we sang.
The spirit of Christmas invaded all beings,
Much laughter and loving was all we were seeing.
We spoke to our children.... Importance of sharing....
In helping the needy, we taught them of caring.
We focused on Christmas... the birthday of Christ
Who came into the world, to make the world right.

And now it is over, we'll take the tree down,
Pack up decorations, put away Christmas sounds.
The bells will stop playing, the carols will cease...
We'll etch in our mem'ries, our great Christmas feast!
The manger displayed, no longer will be
Set out as reminder of the Holy Family.

The spirit of Christmas need not come to end,
The spirit of loving our neighbors and friends
Could now live on as the months pass us by...
The spirit of Christmas can last if we try
To always remember why the Christ child was born.
Re-capture the feeling we had Christmas morn.

The spirit of Christmas can last through the year
If we practice our kindness and bring someone cheer.
A handshake, a smile, a loving remark..
Can be just the magic to touch someone's heart.
A meal to a shut-in can be someone's feast
That won't go un-noticed, no not in the least!
And a gift for no reason could brighten one's day
Who otherwise thought... "no-one loves me, I say".

Yes, the spirit of Christmas lives within me and you,
And is shown to all people from the good things we do!
So, take now this spirit which Christ meant to share
By living in love and showing we care.
And just as reminder of the spirit to keep,
When you take down the tinsel and ornaments so sweet....
Take one special item from your Christmas tree,
Hang it in a place where always you'll see -
And thus be reminded that Christ's love endures...
That the spirit of Christmas lives forever and more!

Christine Clish

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)*

