

THE VISITOR

TOWNSEND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



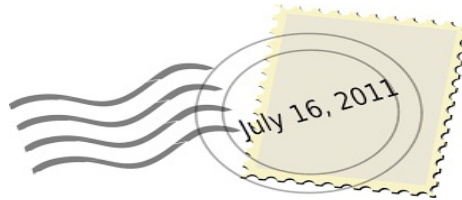
☺ *At the Heart of the Community - With the Community in Our Hearts* ☺



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The TCC Annual Business Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 25 after worship (snow date Feb. 1). Your attendance is necessary to pass the 2026 operating budget. Hope to see you there!



Stamps!

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

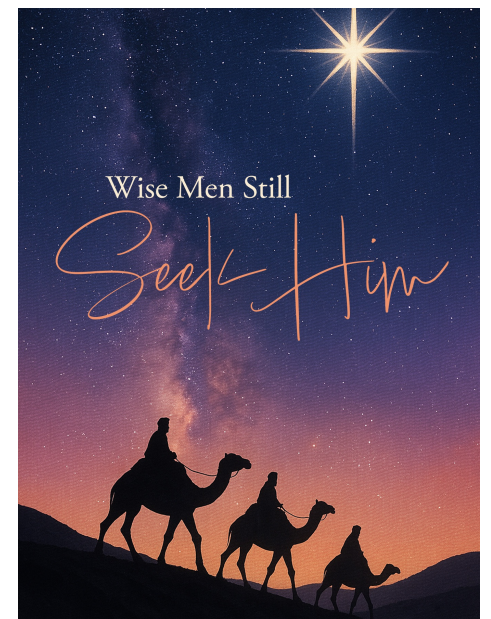


We welcome our New Beginnings friends who are joining us for worship through the end of March.

January 2026 Calendar

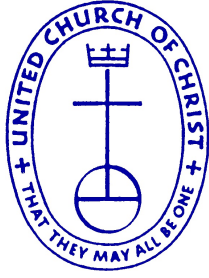
- 12 Council Meeting
- 15 Free Community Dinner
- 24 Regifting Yankee Swap
- 25 Business Meeting
- 25 February Newsletter Deadline
- 31 Turkey Supper

Choir Practice every Wednesday at 7:30 pm



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





JANUARY 2026

Volume 49 No. 1

Pastor: Rev. Gregory Schmidt

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
TOWNSEND MA 01469

E-MAIL ADDRESSES:

Church Secretary:
secretary@tccucc.org

Newsletter:
newsletter@tccucc.org

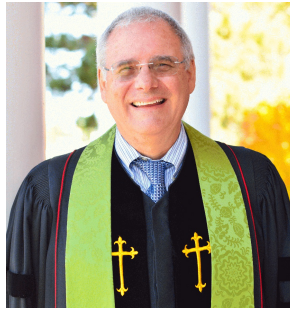
**Village Common Children's
Center:** vccc@tccucc.org

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:
Monday-Friday: 9 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 25**



Pastor's Letter

Having been asked to compose something for this newsletter I opted to Google things about New Years. This is the first thing that popped up: "Example Resolutions for 2026

Mindful Living: Practice daily gratitude or start a meditation habit.

Digital Detox: Set limits on phone usage or take a social media-free vacation.

Skill Building: Learn to cook a new cuisine or take an online course.

Community: Volunteer locally or start a monthly game night with neighbors."

I'll be honest and say I have no interest in any of these. My nightly gratitude journal will never become a reality in my life. I'm too lazy to make that much effort.

What is it about the new year that brings forth the compulsion to change something about our lives? In my mind (which is deteriorating rapidly) resolutions are nothing more than a wish for what will never be. Almost all those resolutions made this week will be broken, usually within the first few days, but certainly by the end of the month. Real change, change that matters, takes time. It won't happen overnight. It demands tremendous amounts of support from others. Most of us do not

have the commitment to follow through on that change.

Still, the New Year does offer the promise of a wealth of fresh opportunities and renewed hope. Frankly, that is what Jesus brings to our world with his birth - promise, hope, newness. When Jesus came to earth, "the Word became flesh and lived among us." His life was clean, pure, life giving and life changing as he lived among us as one of us. The Word of God is like that first event inscribed on a pristine calendar page. There is no ego, there are no distractions, no anger, just hope and joy.

It's no wonder the church has struggled, throughout the centuries, to capture the miracle of Jesus' Incarnation in human terms. We never quite succeed. Like keeping a resolution, it takes effort, work and stamina to fulfill. Our words only sag and break under the weight of sheer divinity, and true humanity. And we are, ultimately, too lazy to work that hard.

In the Incarnation, God gives us not mere words but The Word. Resolving, in this new year, to know that singular Word better could make all the difference. So maybe our resolution this year should be to deepen or faith and get to know Jesus better, more faithfully, more fully. I can get behind that whole heartedly. If we could maybe do that even a few days a month, we might find that, like Jesus himself, we might become a blessing to those we encounter.

***Happy New Year. Resolve to
deepen your faith and Be a
Blessing!***

Greg



Turkey Dinner- January 31

Please plan on joining us for the first dinner of the new year! We will be serving our famous turkey dinner on Saturday, January 31, from 5 to 6:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. The cost will be \$14 per person and no more than \$30 for families/young children. 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 and Bill Coalter or the church office at 978-597-8925.



Our Advent Volunteers

Thanks to those who participated in our Advent worship this December. Our candle lighters: Karen Baer and Jody Burnham; Amanda and our Sunday School crew; the Mulrenan/Rochette family; Christine Clish and Cathy Hill; Kathy and Lee Duckett.

Thanks also for all the wonderful music from the Choirs (bells and vocals) and for the gifts of Renée Fossey in putting this aspect of our worship together so beautifully, as always.



Free Community Dinner-January 15

The first free community dinner of the new year will be held on Thursday, January 15, from 5-6 pm. The menu will include meatloaf, baked potatoes, vegetables, rolls and cookies for dessert. This is a take-away or eat-in dinner provided for all those in the community who are hungry or lonely. Water will be provided for a beverage. For those who would like to donate their time or food to the dinner, sign up sheets are available in Fellowship Hall during coffee hour after the service on Sundays.

Pre orders for the dinner can be made by calling the church office (978-597-8925) or contacting Wanda Wilson. Please join us for a delicious meal and a chance to visit with friends during this cold, wintry month!

Thank you for your time,

Wanda Wilson



Regifting Yankee Swap - January 24

At our Spring Planning Meeting in June, Heather Rochette agreed to bring back our super fun regifting Yankee swap event. It will be held on Saturday, January 24. The precise details will be sent out in an all-church email after January 12, but it will be an evening event and will most likely include a potluck dessert.

For those who were not here when we held these before the pandemic, you will select something that was recently gifted to you that you have *no use for* (not something you bought yourself), gift-wrap it to conceal what it is, then bring it to Fellowship Hall on the night of the event. Then a Yankee swap will be held to see who ends up with what crazy gift. You will have no idea what you will be taking home with you! Warning: There will be much laughter!

Plan on being there!

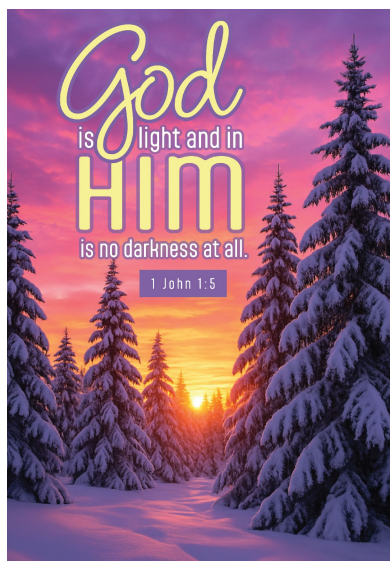


Fund-Raiser Concert in our Sanctuary

A local resident composer, and occasional church attender, Rudy Anger, will be presenting his 7th symphony at our church. This solo performance will be held on Saturday, March 21st at 10 am. Rudy has designated this to be a fund-raiser for the church so there will be a free-will offering, otherwise there is no cost to attend. Tell your friends and come hear this WORLD PREMIER performance.



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 definitely be closed.



Thanks to all who were able to contribute fiscally in 2025; we did well! Jody gave us a brief comparison of 2024 and 2025 giving and I thought it was worth sharing with everyone. In the report below, the first figure is always 2024 and the second is 2025.

General Fund: \$77,924 / \$90,206

Heifer: \$1,355 / \$1,265

TEO Gift Cards: \$555 / \$1,165

UCC Dues: \$40 / \$740

UCC Offerings:

NIN: \$457 / \$508

OGHS: \$464 / \$747

Christmas Fund: \$135 / \$681

Thank you for caring so much about TCC and the wider world!



January Birthdays

Jessica Swift; Nicole Beauchesne; Michele Busler; Jason Goyette; David Wilson; Louis DuBreuil; Jane Misner; Skip Lloyd; Nancy Lee; Linda Hatch; Moe Tremblay



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!



OUR BLESSINGS:

Carole G is filled with joy after sharing Thanksgiving with Andy's siblings, nieces, nephew and cousins; this has not happened in a long time.

Lee McTighe and Cathy Hill give thanks for everyone who was able to join them for caroling in December. We were able to share the joy of Christmas with a number of people in Townsend. We are also grateful for the Wilsons for inviting us into their home afterwards for hot cider and fellowship.

We are thankful for Pastor Greg Schmidt and Lay Pastor Steve Pierce for creating a meaningful and uplifting Advent season for us.

OUR CONCERNS:

Carole G has a prayer request for two relatives, Beth and Jim who are recovering from cancer surgeries.

Deb R is asking for prayers for her dear friend, Stephanie who underwent emergency heart surgery before Christmas.

Prayers for the family of Shirley Coit (former choir director at New Beginnings) who passed away in early December.

We offer healing prayers for all our friends who are in the midst of medical treatments, recovering from surgery, or dealing with mental anguish.

We pray for all those who are unemployed or underemployed.

As we look beyond the walls of TCC, we hold in prayer all those feeling the impact of so much violence in our broken world. We mourn for the students killed and wounded at Brown University. We remember the lives lost and the families devastated 13 years ago by the Sandy Hook shootings. And we grieve over the massacre at a Hanukkah celebration in Australia.

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, JANUARY 2026

January 4, 2026 -

2nd Sunday after Christmas Day

First reading: Jeremiah 31:7-14 or
Sirach 24:1-12

Psalm: Psalm 147:12-20 or
Wisdom of Solomon
10:15-21

Second reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Gospel: John 1:(1-9), 10-18

January 11, 2026 -

First Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

Psalm: Psalm 29

Second reading: Acts 10:34-43

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

January 18, 2026 -

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm: Psalm 40:1-11

Second reading: 1 Corinthians
1:1-9

Gospel: John 1:29-42

January 25, 2026 -

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

First reading: Isaiah 9:1-4

Psalm: Psalm 27:1, 4-9

Second reading: 1 Corinthians
1:10-18

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

COMMUNITY NEWS



Looking for some cheer this January?

Stop by the Townsend Public Library to see 75 decorated trees in the 14th annual **Festival of Trees** event. The trees will be up through the middle of January.

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.

Check out the online calendar for scheduled events for all ages:

www.Townsendlibrary.org



Thy word is a
lamp unto my
feet, and a light
unto my path.

PSALM 119:105, KJV

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 few that caught my eye are:

Engaging Our Sacred Scripture's Story

Feb. 7, 9 am to 12 pm • Online

An overview of the formation, contents, structure, and flow of the Bible, presented by Rev. Don Remick.

Intro to Gender & Trans/Nonbinary Affirmation

Feb. 11, 6 to 9 pm • Online

Beginning from the assumption that all people have a relationship to gender, participants will explore their own experience of gender and learn basic concepts and terminology related to gender, as it relates to transgender and nonbinary people as well as cisgender (non-trans) people.

Not Too Little to Lead: The Value of Children as Leaders in our Worship

March 4, 12 to 1:30 pm • Online



[From a recent devotional]

Plot Twist

by Jennifer Ruth Lynn Garrison

After this [Jesus] said to [Simon Peter], "Follow me!" - John 21:19b (NRSV)

The calling of the disciples varies somewhat from Gospel to Gospel, but basically Jesus shows up and says, "Follow me." Without hesitation, they do! They drop whatever their work was before and take up the only work that suddenly seems to matter: the work of following this shiny new messiah.

But that was like, so twenty chapters ago. Jesus and Peter have been through some stuff since then. It's been healing and laughter over here, and teaching and tears over there, and betrayal and new life everywhere you look.

Finally, here at the end of the party known as following Jesus, Peter does what we all do after a

celebration season. He squares his shoulders and goes back to work.

But, wait, plot twist! Jesus is here after all! He's no longer the shiny new savior he once was, but he must be the same old Jesus, because he's saying the same old thing: "Follow me."

Well, here we are. It's the day after the day after the Big Day. Time to square our shoulders and get back to the life and work we knew before the Incarnate One burst irresistibly onto the scene. Or is it?

Because—spoiler alert—here's Jesus, holding out a warm and real hand and saying it again. And still. And always. "Follow me."

Prayer

Brother Jesus, call us. And then give us the will and the courage to follow. Amen.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Jennifer Garrison (formerly Brownell) is a writer, spiritual

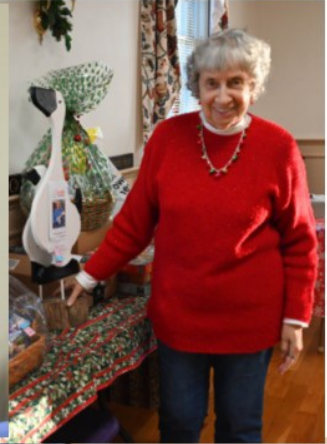
director and pastor living in the Pacific Northwest. Her published work most recently appeared in the book *The Words of Her Mouth: Psalms for the Struggle*, available from The Pilgrim Press.



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2025 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)*

