



# TCC TRUMPET

## **A MESSAGE FROM Rev. Quentin Chin**

I announced my departure from TCC on October 27. For a couple of weeks prior to the announcement I was in conversation with the UCC congregation in Southamptton to serve them in an interim capacity. As such, my final Sunday at TCC will be November 24, and I will begin in Southamptton on November 25.

Contractually, my end date is November 15, but a couple of months ago we agreed that in the event there is no pastor after November 15, I could extend my time. However, I made a firm deadline of Epiphany. The situation in Southamptton arose at the beginning of October.

This was intentionally a short interim. When I looked at the profile and the accompanying material, I saw that this was an aging congregation, financially stressed, and declining in membership. TCC was not sustainable for the long haul. That was further confirmed when I met with the Executive Committee in April. I proposed a six-month interim period to help TCC figure out its options for its future. I also sought assurances that I would be working with leadership and the congregation. An additional factor in my decision was the absence of any obvious problems, such as deep divisions or residuals from trauma.

This was the first time I proposed a fixed term of a short duration for an interim situation. As a parenthetical, several people have been watching this interim as another possible model for transitional ministry.

We need to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge that local churches have their own lifespans. Typically, it is 70-100 years. The average lifespan for a congregation in the UCC is 93 years. Here in New England, though many of our UCC congregations measure their lifespan in centuries, none of them are destined to exist forever.

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving you as your interim pastor and teacher. You've opened your hearts to me. You've been a good partner with whom to do this work together. I'm also pleased that you have participated in this process with integrity and have done a lot of the necessary hard work.

I believe the outcome of this time has been met. The outcome was not to secure a settled pastor, but to awaken the Holy Spirit which dwells among you to take you into a new future. We did a serious re-assessment of TCC's ministry to see a new path for a more sustainable future. I believe TCC sees new possibilities and has a better sense of direction for its future.

Two significant shifts occurred. First, recognizing the importance and value of missional identity. That identity is not only supporting a mission, but living out that mission in the congregation's life together. Second, acknowledging that financially TCC needs revenue from this facility. There is too much underutilized space. Renting or leasing excess space will relieve the congregation of bearing the full costs to maintain this facility.

Another interim pastor and teacher will follow me to continue the work we began together. It will still be a lot of work. Figuring out missional identity will entail taking a deep dive into Northfield and the surrounding communities to learn of their needs and then listening to how God calls upon the congregation to respond. Finding organizations to rent portions of this building and preparing those spaces for rent will take a lot of work as well.

continued on back page



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We have restructured the bylaws to better reflect the congregation’s current reality, fewer people, and to respond more appropriately to current external realities, such as a generally eschewing membership in organizations. Living into them will take some adjustment as well.

These six months have gone by quickly, and I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to serve you. I believe TCC is poised for a new future. Though a specific vision has yet to form, the pieces are in place to let the Holy Spirit lead you. As I noted in my sermon on Sunday, “TCC stands at the threshold of a new beginning. The horizon stretches out before you. Where you go and how far you travel is up to you. Who you invite to join you as you step forth is up to you.”

I wish you well as you go forth on your journey. May God bless you. Thank you.

*Quentin*

**Change of venue:** The Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service will be held at the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Warwick on Tuesday evening, November 26th, at 7 p m.

**REMINDER to “FALL BACK”** - Before bed on Saturday, November 3rd, turn your clocks back 1 hour.

