



Information for Visitors and Prospective Members

Welcome to Talmadge Hill Community Church!

Your presence here matters to us. We want you to be able explore all aspects of our community so that you will more fully understand what we are doing here at THCC and how you might take part in the experience.

What follows includes information and materials to help you get more fully acquainted with our church community. Please visit our website, talmadgehill.org where you will find additional information and an up-to-date church calendar.

By now you have already attended worship, conversed with one of the ministers and other members. You have a feeling about what's happening here. We hope the following information will fill in some gaps for you and where it doesn't and you want more information please let us know.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Membership at THCC

Q. Why membership?

A. Connect. Engage. Discover.

By becoming a member of the church, we deepen our connection to the community. As members of the church community, we commit ourselves to one another for mutual growth and support. We want you to consider Talmadge Hill your church home.

Sixteenth-century reformers had the radical belief that people could discover for themselves their own relationship with God. In that spirit, we agree to interpret the Scriptures, both individually and together.

Q. What is the commitment?

A. Above all, it is a commitment to a community of people who desire:

- a deeper connectedness to God and to one another
- the fellowship of other seekers, and
- to make a positive impact on our world

Q. What do we believe?

A. Our church mission is *To Know the Love of God and Share It*. We stand in the Protestant tradition of Pilgrims and Puritans in the affirmation that each individual has the capacity to know God intimately for him-or herself. We use scholarship to understand the Scriptures and to embrace the mystery which is embodied in many church traditions. We believe that the spirit of God is found and experienced in many places and ways - through services performed, and in beauty found in art, music and nature.

Q. What makes THCC stand out?

A. THCC stands out through its blending of preaching, teaching, music, fellowship and commitment to outreach. At least 22% of all income is given to help under-served populations.

Q. How do you treat tithing?

A. Financial support of THCC is voluntary and welcome. We ask members to give what they can and with a happy heart. For planning purposes, we ask members to make annual pledges and the vast majority of the Congregation is able to do so, though it is not required. The average pledge is \$2000 per year, per family. All are welcome, regardless of financial contributions. As a member, you enjoy the support and services of what the church offers to the community.

Q. What does membership involve?

A. At THCC, it should be easy to feel welcomed. The most important requirement is that you would choose to make a commitment to the community of Talmadge Hill Church. All people are welcome to join, and the only requirement is baptism. If one has not yet been baptized, then a ceremony can be arranged.

Q. Why baptism?

A. By tradition, baptism is the mark of entrance into the Christian church. If one desires to be baptized, our ministers can arrange a ceremony that takes place during a church service.

Q. When can I join?

A. Membership Sundays take place approximately twice a year and are held during the 10:00am service. One's joining can be arranged by contacting our ministers, Carter Via and Cheryl Bundy, or a membership liaison, Lisa Michalski and Mary Tilghman.

Statement of Mission and Purpose

To know the love of God and share it.

We join together to enable individuals to develop for themselves a dynamic relationship with God as revealed through Jesus Christ, Biblical tradition, nature, the arts, and the community of the church.

We strive continually

- to practice radical acceptance;
- to articulate the Christian faith in fresh, exciting, and relevant ways;
- to renew the ways we practice and express our faith as followers of Jesus;
- to deepen our relationship with God in our common search for transformation and union with God;
- to welcome people of diverse origins, beliefs, experience and perspectives

We value

- experiencing the beauty and intimacy of our gatherings
- practicing the traditions and rituals of the church
- building the enduring and growing relationships that our faith encourages
- making, hearing and feeling inspiring music to glorify God in our worship
- striving to support diversity within the congregation
- being open and welcoming to all people
- sharing our enthusiasm about how God's love is being revealed to us

Principles

To guide our actions and maintain the integrity of what we have together, we have adopted the following principles:

- We serve God, the interests of the congregation, and the universal community.
- We desire to grow in all ways.
- We desire to preserve our intimacy even as we grow larger.
- We desire to maintain our fiscal stability and ensure there are resources, infrastructure, services, and leadership to meet our goals and objectives.
- We desire to avoid dogmatic formulations and glib answers to the great questions of life.
- We desire to make a lasting impact on our community theologically and practically.
- We desire actively to care for and to serve those less fortunate.

Church Leadership at Talmadge Hill Community Church

The Rev. Carter Via, *Minister*
The Rev. Cheryl Bundy, *Interim Minister*

Rob Silvan, *Director of Music*
Jeanne Altman, *Sunday School Teacher*
Linda DiMarino, *Church Administrator*

Unified Board

Chair ~ Jon Morgan

Missions	Betsy Wilson
Facilities	Barry Ludlow
Congregational Life	Kathy Monahan
Finance	Scott Bihl
Stewardship	Phyllis Schnepf
Education & Communications	Lisa Michalski

Special Committees

Altar Steward ~ Donna McKenna
Caring ~ Mary Tilghman
Community Outreach ~ Julie Kahn

The Missions Program at Talmadge Hill Community Church

"Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?"

Isaiah 58:7

Talmadge Hill Community Church (THCC) has always appreciated this simple truth – God's Love belongs to everyone. Yet every day, basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and healthcare are denied vast numbers of people around the world. In the face of these realities, we offer 22% of our budget as our response to these disparities.

In 2021, as Covid continued to impact our world, the Missions Committee remained committed to providing direct support to our partner organizations involved in feeding people, while also contributing to other organizations we have partnered with for many years. We also responded to the people of Kentucky after tornadoes ravaged their state, to Haiti when an earthquake struck and to Afghan families relocating to Connecticut. The following organizations received monetary support in 2021:

Local Organizations:

[A Better Chance House](#) – Darien, CT

[Bridgeport Rescue Mission](#) – Bridgeport, CT

[Building One Community](#) – Stamford, CT

[Department of Children and Family Services, Foster Care Unit](#) – Bridgeport, CT

[Homefront](#) - Stamford, CT

[IRIS](#) – Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, New Haven, CT

[Kids Empowered by Your Support](#) – Bridgeport, CT

[St. Joseph Parenting Center](#) – Stamford, CT

[Triangle Community Center](#), Norwalk, CT

National Organizations:

[Fraternite of Notre Dame](#) – Harlem, NY

[Mercy Chefs](#) – Portsmouth, VA

[The Midnight Run](#) – New York, NY

[Simply Smiles](#) – Children's Village on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation

International Organizations:

[CORE – Community Organized Relief Effort](#) - Haiti

[Children's Rescue Mission](#) - Honduras

[Crossing Thresholds](#) – Kenya

But distributing money is only part of the THCC Missions story. We are also a community who believes that relationships, both with members of our church community and with our partner organizations are at the heart of who we are as a community of faith. We build those relationships by identifying and participating in hands on opportunities that bring us in direct contact with the people our Mission partners serve.

During a lull in Covid cases, we were able to organize a Breakfast Run to feed the homeless poor in New York City, participate in the ABC House carwash which raises funds for graduating seniors as they go onto college and to revitalize the yard of a home in Bridgeport through Homefront. We also provided school backpacks and supplies for kids in Bridgeport, bags of candy for the annual Christmas party at the Fraternite of Notre Dame in Harlem, Stop & Shop and Walmart gift cards for foster families in Bridgeport and Christmas gifts for kids in Bridgeport.

We thank you for being part of this important work.

Christian Education at Talmadge Hill Community Church

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

-- Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Education is an essential part of religious, spiritual, moral and social development.

Children and Youth Education

Each Sunday morning at the 10:00 service of worship, children attend the service with their families. Before the sermon, children are invited to the front of the sanctuary for a message and prayer for the children. This ritual is intended to celebrate their presence before they proceed to Sunday School.

Our Sunday School program is geared for our younger children (Pre-K through the 5th grade). The **Godly Play** curriculum anchors the learning experience for the younger class, using interactive play, a spirit of curiosity and wonder, and storytelling to illuminate the essential teachings and lessons of our faith.

Sunday School classes will typically have 2 adult leaders and is taught by Jeanne Altman.

Adult Education

Throughout the year there is a Bible Study on Thursday mornings at 9:30am and a Contemplative Prayer in Community gathering over Zoom on Wednesday evenings at 5:00-6:00pm. There are also several Adult Ed series held on Monday evenings from 7:00-8:30pm that include book studies as well as teaching and discussion of topics such as Race & Racism, Forgiveness, and how the 12-Step model can be used as a framework for spiritual formation. *Please check the online calendar for our current offerings.*

Congregational Life at Talmadge Hill Community Church

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.
Acts 2:46-47

Congregational Life refers to all the activities of our church community that enrich and deepen our personal faith and our sense of community. We provide many intentional gatherings throughout the year that offer a context to reflect on and nourish our spiritual lives using study, contemplation, and community building assemblies.

Men's Cornfield - Meets the first Saturday of the month from 8:00-9:30am

Women's Circle - Meets the second Saturday of the month from 9:00-10:00am

Men's Annual Retreat

Women's Annual Retreat

Annual All Church Retreat

Annual Mother's Day Worship with the Good News Gospel Choir

Annual Father's Day Picnic

Women's Covenant Groups

Men's Covenant Groups

Women's Circle

We invite you to join our wonderfully diverse group of women whether you participate in the worship life of the church or not, you are welcome to join the women of Talmadge Hill for our gatherings. **All women are welcome!**

We meet monthly on Saturday mornings throughout the year between to share our lives and support each other on our spiritual journeys.

We have an annual retreat day in the Spring where we focus on deepening our spiritual connections to one another and to our God.

The Circle Leader is Rev. Cheryl Bundy.

Every year, there is an annual Women's Circle Retreat that usually takes place in late Spring.

All women are also welcome to join a Covenant Group. Covenant Groups consist of 3-8 women and meet regularly (approximately every two weeks) to share life in relationships characterized by safety, trust, vulnerability, authenticity and transparency. They are called "covenant" groups in order to establish that they are based on grace (not law), built on love (not fear), are nourishing (versus limiting), rely on mutual accountability and need affirmation in order to live

If interested, please contact our minister Cheryl Bundy.

Men's Cornfield

The men of Talmadge Hill have been gathering each month for nearly twenty years, warmly welcoming any man who wishes to have a deeper connection to his life, his work and his family. It has been called the "Cornfield" which is a reference to the book *Illusions* by Richard Bach in which two men landed their biplanes in a cornfield to learn the deeper mysteries of life through their conversation and personal exploration.

Meetings take place on the first Saturday of the month throughout the year and are open to Talmadge Hill members and non-members. **All men are welcome!**

Each meeting includes a welcoming that invites each man to "check in" and let the other men know what's happening in his life. Usually a question is posed to invite deeper reflection on our lives, our faith and our relationships.

Throughout the year the men of the church plan, organize or support activities for the greater benefit of the community.

- Organization for the annual HomeFront Day—refurbishing a home for a qualifying family in Bridgeport
- Hosting the annual Father's Day All Church Picnic

Every year, there is a Cornfield Men's Retreat Weekend that typically takes place in the Spring.

All men are also welcome to join a weekly Covenant Group. If interested, please contact Peter Kircher or our minister Carter Via.

Music Program at Talmadge Hill Community Church

*"Make a Joyful Noise all the earth.
Worship God with gladness.
Enter with singing!"*

At the heart of our music program is the joy that music can bring.

Our Music Director, Rob Silvan, now directing for over two decades, brings a unique spiritual perspective to all of our musical offerings.

Songs that Rob has composed and arranged, all unique to worship at Talmadge Hill, inspire our Sunday Worship each week.

Singers and other professional musicians often join Rob in his original compositions based on scripture and great literature, as well as the classical hymns. You might also hear a familiar song from the "secular" world arranged and presented to support the spiritual theme of the worship.

Join the choir! Rehearsals from September through May at 7:30 p.m., Thursday evenings.

Support our many offerings of concerts and recitals by attending.

Every year at Christmas, the children of our church in take part in "The Innkeeper" an original musical theatre presentation (written by Rob Silvan and our former minster Rev. Mich Zeman) of Jesus' birth narrative from the Gospels.

Sunday Ushering and Hospitality at Talmadge Hill Community Church

*"Welcome one another, therefore,
just as Christ has welcomed you,
for the glory of God."
Romans 15:7*

One of the ways to serve the community is by ushering and hosting the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Worship Service and Coffee Hour.

Your efforts make our church community the wonderful experience that it is. The responsibilities are listed below. Plan to arrive 15 minutes early to prepare the following:

- Please bring a simple arrangement of flowers for the altar. If you would like a person to be honored or memorialized by the flowers, please email Linda at talmadgehillchurch@gmail.com by the Wednesday prior to your commitment and identify the person to be honored. Please spell the name so we can print it correctly in the bulletin.
- Set up the coffee for after the worship service. Instructions are posted by the coffee machine.
- Welcome people and distribute bulletins. The last pew will be reserved for you. Please remain there to greet latecomers and watch the door. Extend a warm welcome to visitors and new members and if they are coming alone, please introduce them to a current church member that might invite them to coffee hour. Offer them a new member card to fill out if desired.
- Take the collection. Kindly wait with the plates at the back of the church until Rob plays the doxology.
- Serve simple refreshments after the service in the Merritt Room. Plan on 65-75 people from September to June; 50 people in the summertime.

Sample: Fruit or vegetable tray
Cheese & crackers
Bread, rolls, scones or muffins
Juice
A quart of milk or half & half for coffee

- Assist in the clean-up of the Merritt Room and kindly straighten up the pews and hymnals. Please see that the communion cups and coffee mugs are loaded in the dishwasher. Additionally, if you bring food or beverages in plastic containers please take them home with you to recycle since we do not have recycling service at the church.

Being a Steward

Supporting the Ministries of Talmadge Hill Community Church

Those who have followed Jesus have always seen themselves as stewards, just as Jesus himself claimed that he was here to serve. The word “steward” refers to someone who cares for the needs of the “household”. Naturally, as a part of our tradition we become those who care for our Household of Faith, to serve.

Why Support THCC?

A diverse group of individuals participate in, and enjoy, the program life at Talmadge Hill Community Church (THCC). We celebrate not only the diversity of our congregation, but also the spirit that draws so many of us into a deeper exploration of our spiritual lives.

When someone chooses to become a member of THCC, the ground shifts in subtle yet meaningful ways. Of course, one is free to be a part of anything, and everything, that we offer. But at the same time, one has intentionally joined the community of **stewards**. In other words, one is not simply a welcomed participant. One becomes necessarily more – summoned to support, protect, and contribute to the life of our church for its immediate and long-term well-being.

Stewardship has been part and parcel of the church’s vocabulary for a long time. Too often, the word has been reduced to a synonym of fundraising. This is ill conceived and misleading. Stewardship is primarily about **identity**, and our deepest calling to receive from God’s abundant grace while consciously and generously contributing to the same. In large measure, our contributions are channeled through the community of faith. The community of faith gives us a place to worship, a place to learn, a place for our children to be shaped, outlets for service to the marginalized of the world, and much more.

None of these gifts is sustainable without the generosity of our members. The impact of our church shrinks without the contributions of its summoned stewards. Those contributions include time, talent and financial resources. Are these contributions a requirement of membership at THCC? They are not. But as one of the great saints of the church once said, “Love cannot thrive with cautious observers. Love is an impassioned commitment of mind, body and spirit.” Stewardship is the same. It is the promise of a joyful and impactful living.

To What Are We Giving at THCC?

Your support of the ministries of Talmadge Hill Church makes all our ministries possible. The list of opportunities and services at THCC is impressive. We are proud of how we serve our members, friends, and the larger world. Here are a few examples:

- Weekly worship service at 10:00am on Sunday mornings
- Special worship services – baptisms, funerals, weddings, community events
- Inspired music for worship, and concerts throughout the year

- Pastoral care for individuals and families dealing with illness, grief and other crises
- Sunday School and Youth Group for our children through Grade 12
- Adult Education (Bible Study and Topical Studies) throughout the year
- Mission commitments to nearly 30 ministries – local, national, international

How Much Should I Give?

At THCC, we do not live by any fixed doctrine or pre-determined formulas. We acknowledge the freedom of every individual to give as a matter of conscience. Historically, the Christian tradition has suggested *tithing* as a guideline. Tithing is an integral part of the Christian tradition. We believe a meaningful financial commitment at any level is about owning a stake in the spiritual community that nourishes our lives and our families. What matters is the presence of thoughtful reflection, a willingness to play one's part, and a desire to be generous. A member (steward) of the church pledges to give as an act of love and a deeply felt sense of responsibility.

Our Hopes and Our Pledge

It is our deepest desire that you would make your home at this warm, dynamic and historic community of faith. Our promise is to offer you inspired worship, thoughtful educational opportunities, broad venues for serving the world, and companionship on this shared journey of faith.

Here is a short list of our hopes for those pursuing membership:

- Regular attendance at Sunday morning worship
- Participation in the Sunday School and Youth Group
- Involvement with one of our hands-on mission opportunities – serving the homeless in NYC, HomeFront day in Bridgeport, or one of our mission work trips
- A financial pledge according to your means

Together, we become stewards of God's way of being in the world and leave a blessed legacy for our children and their children.