



# The Turnaround Church: Inspiration and Tools for Life-Sustaining Change

*Mary Louise Gifford*

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*The Turnaround Church* is the story of Wollaston Congregational Church United Church of Christ, a 130-year-old congregation that once was thriving in ministry, membership, mission, music, and money. For half a century, however, the church had slowly declined and was considering closing its doors. The two dozen remaining members knew they had to change, but did not know how. They had very little money left, but they were willing to risk it all. With few resources, members hired Mary Louise Gifford, a new seminary graduate, to be their full-time minister. Wollaston is now a vibrant, Spirit-filled faith community—a turnaround church. Changes in worship, stewardship, and priorities, combined with the congregation's resilience and Gifford's optimistic leadership, have transformed this church. Gifford tells us how. Addressing a wide audience, Gifford shows church leaders they have options and reason for hope. People in dying churches will find assurance that they are still a part of the body of Christ. Clergy serving these struggling churches will discover tools and resources to help them guide change. Judicatory leaders will appreciate an inspiring story they can tell about a church that turned around in spite of the odds. *The Turnaround Church*, while not a prescription for all churches, is a call to make long-lasting, life-sustaining changes.

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