

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 7, 2011

The Hope of Advent

I find hope in the morning when, with my coffee in hand, I look out over the deck and see the bright sun coming up over my neighbors' roof tops.

I find hope when I am a first hand witness to the growing and glowing service of others in my congregation and community. I get especially hopeful when I witness how they respond to God's call, God's movement in their lives, and respond with overwhelming and life-changing generosity.

I find hope when I witness how others respond to an opportunity to give and grow through their own initiative. This has happened recently when someone offered to pay for the materials to repair the woodwork on the ramp entering the church from the parking lot. It has also happened recently when people and families have decided to contribute to the cost of the new heating system we are installing in Todd Hall, Tower Day, and the Chapel. Oh, how I thank you for these giving initiatives to help us maintain our beautiful and well-used church building.

I find hope when I witness how, *with humor*, others respond to my own life experiences. It happened, again, yesterday.

As some of you know, while I was gathering greens for the November 27th Advent workshop, I found myself in an uncomfortable predicament. The ground in the place where I was parked to trim greens was wetter than I had anticipated. After trimming the greens, loading them into my van, I got in to drive away and the tires on the front of my van turned but the van did not move! I was stuck in the mud! I tried all the usual things, like rocking back and forth, but, no good. Time to call for help.

I called a few friends, three of whom came, and we tried to rock the van out. A lot happened with that effort, mud flying all over the place, all over me, my shoes, my slacks, my shirt, and my van. The ruts my tires were in got deeper, and still the van was not free.

We called for a tow truck. It came. It attached a cable to my van and pulled me free. Alleluia! But, when the tow truck tried to leave, it found itself in the same "stuck in the mud" predicament. Finally, after an hour of additional frustration, the tow truck driver also had to call for help. Now, under the cover of darkness, the tow truck was pulled free, and, after the business transactions were performed, we all drove away wiser, I hope, for the experience. Of course, I felt the fool for what I had gotten myself, and others, into. I have been humbled.

But yesterday, after the church service, I found a gift as a result of this experience on the table in my office labeled, "*For Reverend Bailey. Open Immediately.*" No name. I opened it. What was it? A valuable gift: "*Tire Traction Runners: Instant Traction on Snow & Ice. Never get stuck in snow and ice again!*"

In the Sanctuary

December 11, 2011 – 3rd Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Children may worship with their families before going to Rotation Workshops.

The Nursery will be open in Room 11.

December 18, 2011 – 4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Christmas Pageant

Children will lead us in worship.

Cookie Swap follows the service.

December 18, 6:30 P.M. Christmas Concert

Vivaldi's "Gloria"

and other beautiful music of the season

Refreshments and Fellowship

will follow the concert.

Wow, I guess someone was listening to my sermon the week before in which I spoke of the disruptions that the coming of Jesus brings. Here I was, faithfully trying to prepare for Advent, when I experienced my own Advent disruption, getting stuck in the mud while gathering Advent/Christmas greens. Well, asking for help is also part of our spiritual experience, and an important lesson.

Thanks, whoever you are, who gave me my new "Tire Traction Runners" so that hopefully the next time I find myself stuck in the mud, or ice, or snow, I will be freed by means of your kindness.

Hope is when someone listens to and/or hears of the needs of others and responds with kindness and generosity!

Hope is not just a wish, a prayer, or a desire to help someone. Hope is realizing a need, visualizing and believing in what (with the help of God and others) can be done to meet the need and then doing something to make it happen.

Hope is like establishing a scholarship fund to aid in the educational endeavors of others believing that there will be students who seek to grow and become able contributors to our world.

Hope is like those who contributed to the construction and maintenance of our church believing that there would be others, like them, who would follow them to seek out and serve the Christ-child born on Christmas, the good news for all people.

Hope is like those who contribute now, to Heifer International, to the United Church of Christ's Our Church's Wider Mission, to Boston City Mission Society, to Haven From Hunger, Bread and Roses, and the 30-Hour Famine (World Vision). They are able to visualize and work to make a better world in which all people have enough to eat, safe places to live, safe schools and plenty of materials through which to learn and realize their potential, and a world in which we acknowledge our need for the loving God who has created us and called us to service for the sake of others.

This is where I see Jesus born, in the places where people are serving the least of these, those who need us to help them out of the places where they are stuck. I thank God every day for those who have helped me move forward, and I am so grateful that I can help others become what God wants them to be.

Bless you all, that you continue to be people of Hope, this Advent, this Christmas, and always.

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Many thanks to Kathi Martin and Laurel Caputo for a delicious Spaghetti Dinner at the Advent Workshop and to all the members of Educational Ministries for leading the craft tables. A good time was had by all!

Sunday Morning with the Children

Our Nursery, located in Room 11, is open for infants through age 3. Experienced staff and volunteers are on hand to welcome children.

Rotation Sensation

All classes will meet on Sunday, Dec 11 for a group lesson on Advent and to plan for the Christmas Pageant.



Christmas Pageant Sunday, December 18

Children should plan to arrive by 9:30 to get in costume. All children are welcome to participate, no rehearsal necessary. Please wear earth tones for shepherds and townspeople, white for angels, and jewel tones for wise men. Please contact Linda Ladd (781-334-6170) with questions.

Youth Group News

Middle School Overnight Dec. 9-10: Please plan to arrive at 7 pm on Friday, Dec. 9. We will watch a Christmas movie, play games (in the dark, of course) and help set up for the Breakfast with Santa.

On Saturday morning, you will be volunteering to help supervise crafts, the Kid's Only Gift Shop, and serving at the breakfast. Pick up will be at 11:30 am. There is no Middle School youth group meeting Sunday, Dec. 11.

The High School Youth Group will meet on Sunday, Dec 11 from 6:30-8 in the church kitchen. We will be decorating boxes for the Cookie Swap.

Sunday, December 18

There will be no evening youth group meetings. Please plan to attend the Christmas concert with your family. High School Youth are reminded to bring 2-3 dozen cookies (or more) to church and to help at the cookie swap at 11 am after worship.

On Sunday, Dec 4, seven members of the High School Youth Group volunteered to help set up at City Mission Society's Christmas Shop in Winchester. In addition to sorting and organizing donations, the youth put together orders and made Christmas cards. We were able to contribute the 100 cards made at the Advent Workshop and 33 polar fleece scarves, along with the generous donations of the congregation.

Many thanks to Cheryl Schedin Caron for driving and chaperoning at this event.

Breakfast with Santa

Santa will be coming to Centre Church on Saturday, Dec. 10 from 9-11 am. Children are invited to have a photo taken with Santa, make a craft, hear a story and enjoy a delicious buffet breakfast. The cost is \$5.00 per person. (Children under 2 years old are free.) There will also be a "Kids Only Secret Santa Shop" where children can shop for presents for their family and have them gift wrapped. Please call the church office for reservations by Friday, Dec. 9.

Christmas Giving Opportunity

Do you want to help make Christmas more meaningful for Boston area families in need? Here are two ways that you can help through City Mission Society in Boston.

1. **Donate a gift** – Take a tag with a gift suggestion from the Christmas tree in the narthex. Then bring back your new, unwrapped gift to put under the tree. **We will collect gifts through noon on Sunday, December 11.**
2. **Donate money** – Instead of sending a zillion paper Christmas cards, make a donation to support City Mission Society's work. Send one Christmas card to the church (5 Summer Street) with your donation. The cards will be displayed on the Christmas tree and your donation will be recognized in *Tower Notes*. All proceeds will go to Boston City Mission Society for their continuing work to help families avoid homelessness, to bring meals to elderly shut-ins, to work with teens to help them develop positive approaches to challenging situations, and more. Together, we can make a difference!

Questions? Contact Sandi Watson at 781 334-7032.

From the Mailbox

Thank you to my church family for all their cards, well wishes and beautiful flowers, and to Dennis for his many visits, encouragement and prayers. – Jean Card

A special thank you to "the friends of Elouise" who made the collation after her memorial service a very special time for our family. Betty Hayter was so gracious to get it all planned. We appreciate you all. -The Bjorkmans

Confirmation Class

The Confirmation Class will light the Advent Candle on Sunday, Dec. 11. Please plan to arrive by 9:45 am to run through the order of events. Students will then leave for class with Kathi Martin.

Gingerbread Cookie Decorating

Over 55 children (and several adults) participated in the Gingerbread Cookie decorating event held Sunday, Dec 3 in the church kitchen. Many thanks to Judie Potter, Mia Sievers and Zack Rogers for volunteering their time to make the event a success.



Cookie Swap



On **Sunday, Dec 18**, the High School Youth group will be holding our annual Cookie Swap. We would like to ask everyone in the congregation to help with this fundraiser by baking 2- 3 dozen cookies and bringing them to the church library on Sunday morning. After worship, you will have the opportunity to purchase a decorated container to fill with your choice of cookies for just \$10.00. This is a great way to have a variety of cookies on hand for the holidays, or perhaps even purchase an extra container or two to give away as gifts.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

December 11, 2011: Head Usher-Margaret Waugh. Greeter-Ginny Daniels. Reader-Margaret Waugh. Provide Altar Flowers-Dick Evans. Deliver Flowers-Barbara Becker and Chuck Cotting. Coffee-Al and Judy Johnson. Lights Out beginning Dec. 9-Drew Taylor.

December 18, 2011: Head Usher-Jeff Law. Greeter-Betty Hayter. Coffee-Bob and Carol MacKendrick. Lights Out beginning Dec. 16-Steve Furey.



Shopping Card Gift Ideas

Books and Music

Amazon.com	\$25, \$100
Barnes and Noble	\$10, \$25, \$100
iTunes	\$15, \$25

Just for Fun

AMC Theaters	\$9.50, \$25
Bath & Body Works	\$10, \$25
Dunkin' Donuts	\$10
Starbucks	\$10, \$25
Panera Bread	\$10, \$25

Clothing

American Eagle Outfitters	\$25
LL Bean	\$25, \$100
Lands' End	\$25, \$100
Macys	\$25, \$100
Talbots	\$25

More Favorites

99 Restaurant	\$25
CVS	\$25, \$100
Home Depot	\$25, \$100
T.J. Maxx	\$25, \$100

See a full listing at <http://www.glscrip.com>

Order by Dec. 11, and pick up your cards on Dec. 18. For more information, contact Sandi Watson (781-334-7032) or Debbie Cotting (781-593-3120) Shopping Card Coordinators.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Dec. 11 - 3rd Advent	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 6:30-8 pm	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Rotations/Nursery Confirmation Class – Pastor’s Ofc Sr. High Youth – Lower Level
Mon. Dec. 12	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Tues. Dec. 13	7:30 pm	Deacons – Pastor’s Office
Wed. Dec. 14	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – FR
Thur. Dec. 15	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 16	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 18 - 4nd Advent	10:00 am 11:00 am 6:30 pm	Christmas Pageant – Sanctuary Cookie Swap Christmas Concert - Sanctuary
Mon. Dec. 19	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Dec. 21	7:30 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – FR
Thur. Dec. 22	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 23	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sat. Dec. 24 - Christmas Eve	5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Candlelight Service – Sanctuary Candlelight Service - Chapel
Sun. Dec. 25 - Christmas	10:00 am	Morning Worship - Chapel

Our prayers are with Phyllis Ciampa at Renaissance, Brooksby; Muriel Nasson at Melrose-Wakefield Hospital; Jean Card at Rosewood; Al Farnsworth at Spaulding Rehab, Dove Avenue, Salem, 01970; Bob Shockley recuperating at home; Caroline Walsh at Essex Park Rehab Center, 265 Essex Street, Beverly, 01915 (978-927-3260); Helen Butcher, Marion Edkins, Denis Edkins, Harold Kress and Priscilla Kress at Renaissance Gardens, Peabody; Louise Allen, Marion Barnes, Carolyn Furey, and Olive Wood. We also remember in our prayers Bob Travers, David Tuttle (Kathy Delaney’s cousin), and Sam Schnare (Dick and Carol Carter’s grandson) in Afghanistan.

Church Office Open 9am-3pm – Mon.-Fri.

The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of December 19
