

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 17, 2014

How Blessed are the Messengers of the Good News

In the words of the prophet Isaiah: "*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*" (Isaiah 52:7)

Messenger/Prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming good news: "*A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'*" (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Angels have been messengers of the good news, appearing to Mary, a virgin, telling her that though she is a virgin she would give birth to the Son of the Most High and that she would name him Jesus. When she asked the angel how can this be since I am a virgin, the angel's response was, "*Nothing will be impossible for God.*" (Luke 1:26-38)

An angel messenger appeared to Joseph, Mary's betrothed, saying, "*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" (Matthew 1:20-21)

An angel messenger appeared to Zacharias, husband to Elizabeth who, though barren, would give birth to John the Baptist. Again, nothing is impossible for God. (Luke 1:11-13)

Angel messengers appeared to the Shepherds watching the flocks, telling them of the birth of Jesus.

Have such messengers appeared to you, telling you of such good news? Are there such messengers in your life? I hope so!

Early in my life my Sunday School teachers proved to be such messengers, telling me the stories of Jesus with the message written all over their faces and hearts, loving me into faith. My parents and grandparents were such messengers, unselfishly bearing the good news of God's unconditional love to me. And even now, I have some special close friends who bear the Good news of God every day into my life, affirming my call to bear the Good News in faith and work.

In the Sanctuary

December 21, 2014 - 4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 a.m. Morning Worship

Christmas Pageant

Nursery in Room 11

6:30 p.m. Christmas Concert

Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m. Candlelight Service in the Sanctuary

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service in the Chapel

December 28, 2014 – 1st Sunday after Christmas

10:00 a.m. in the Chapel

Sacrament of Baptism

Nursery (up to age 5) – Room 11

Now, it is our turn to hear the call to also become messengers of the Good News of Jesus' birth. In Advent we hear stories of other messengers who call us to prepare the way for the Good News. In Christmas, we receive the gift of the birth of God's Son, Jesus, who comes to save the world with his Light, Word, Hope, and Peace.

As messengers we can remember how it is written in the Gospel of Luke, "(God) has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted the lowly; (God) has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty." (Luke 1:52-53) This is to remind us, in part, that Jesus was born into a humble setting and became the Light of the world, the one who could change the world not through traditional means, but through the power of love.

Each of us, also, can be a messenger in our own humble way, changing the world through one act of kindness at a time, changing the well-being of one person at a time, through our attentiveness, kindness, listening, and acts of loving-kindness (this latter, a noble Jewish tradition).

Remember how Moses, with no earthly power, depending solely on God's power, led his people to freedom? If we depend solely on God's power, we too can spread the message of God's Light into the world, through what we say and do.

Pray for those who need help, and see what happens. Ask God's Spirit to be upon you and upon those for whom you pray.

God calls us not simply to receive the light at Christmas, but to carry it wherever we go, being the good news. That means that we thoughtfully reflect upon how we interact with our family. Do we speak with kindness and warmth, or do we speak with shouting and screaming, when frustrated? Do we model forgiveness and mercy, or do we model resentment and grudges?

And, before we make decisions in our lives, do we pray, read the Bible, attend church and reflect, or do we simply take the advice of our peers and friends without consulting God? To be a messenger of God, it is helpful to let God's Spirit into our lives so that we get the message right and communicate it in an effective way.

I pray that like me, you do have messengers of God's good news in your life. I also pray that you are willing to be such a messenger, in words, actions, thought, and prayer.

Merry Christmas to you all!

Dennis

Let us gather as a community of faith to hear the message in the following ways:

On Sunday, December 21st, 10 am, through our Christmas Pageant; and 6:30 pm, through our Annual Christmas Concert, Directed by Douglas Hodgkins;

On Wednesday, Christmas Eve, 5 pm Candlelight service in the Sanctuary, where Becca Sievers will portray the person of Mary, Jesus' mother, and tell her story, along with familiar Carols and Choral music;

On Christmas Eve, 11 pm, Candlelight service in the Chapel, where I will share the message and we will sing familiar carols, bringing in the day of Jesus' birth, Christmas;

And, on Sunday, December 28th, 10 am, in the Chapel, where we will gather to begin to spread the good news through the Sacrament of Baptism of Enzo Luca Curiale.

Sunday Morning With the Children

Nursery

Our Nursery, located in Room 14, is open each week for infants through age 3. Experienced staff and volunteers are on hand to welcome children for story time and play. Pagers are available for all parents.



Our Pageant is being held this Sunday, December 21. We invite all the children and youth to participate in the pageant. There is a part for everyone! Rehearsal for children in grades 1st-8th will be this Saturday, December 20 in the Sanctuary from 1-2pm. On Sunday, December 21 all participants should be here by 9:30 am. We will meet in the Narthex for last minute preparations and to take pictures.

On Sunday, December 28 there are no classes scheduled. Please plan to attend worship with your family. Children 5 years old and younger are invited to go to the nursery for story and playtime.

The Sounds of the Season

Enjoy the beautiful music of the Christmas season on Sunday, December 21 at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The Senior Choir will present a number of Christmas selections along with vocal solos and organ prelude and postlude. The Lynnfield High School Chamber Singers will be guest artists. During the concert, the congregation will have an opportunity to join in singing Christmas carols. Refreshments will be served.



Christmas Greetings To Our Friends at Centre Church

Chuck and Debbie Cotting

Ginny Daniels

Ed and Barb Ericson

Henry and Sally Flickinger

Dottie Holden

Marcia and John Imbrescia

Sue and Phil Johnson

Jack and Donna Marino

Shirley Orr

Susan and Shep Spear

Bradlee and Larry Troy

Edith Wendt

It's not too late to add your greetings to the list and contribute to the ongoing work of Boston's City Mission Society.

Please send your donation to the church office and your name and good wishes will be shared in the next *Tower Notes*.



Youth Group

There is no youth group scheduled on Sunday Dec. 21. Please plan to attend the church Christmas Concert with your family at 6:30 pm. Our next scheduled meeting is Sunday, January 4 from 6:00-7:30. We will be having an "Epiphany Party". Please bring a \$10 gift for Yankee Swap.

Thank you to everyone who baked and donated cookies for the Cookie Swap. And thanks to everyone who purchased a box or bag of cookies. With your help we were able to raise \$300.00 for this year's Mission Trip.

News From Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to Clayton Conn and his family upon the recent death of his grandson, Timothy Clayton Conn of West Barnstable, formerly of Milton, MA.

Our love and prayers are extended to Janet Ross and her family upon the death of her husband, John Ross on December 8. A Memorial Service will be held at Centre Church on December 20.

Tower Day School is accepting applications for the 2015-16 academic year. We have 2 or 3 day classes for 3 year olds, 3 or 5 day classes for 4 year olds, a Transition Class for students before Kindergarten and a full day Kindergarten program. Centre Church members have priority for enrollment before January 10, 2015. Please download an application from www.towerdayschool.org or call the school office (781-334-5576).

Leah O'Brien, Director

Habitat for Humanity Volunteers Needed

Our next Habitat Build Day is Saturday, January 3. If you are unable to volunteer at the work site, but would be willing to provide a hot meal for the group, please let us know. (Youth must be 16 years or older.)

Please contact Barbara Langill for details.

From the Moderator...an Important Matter

First, I wish to thank all who have faithfully continued their support of the ministries of Centre Congregational Church!

At our most recent Parish Council meeting, however, it was noted that pledge receipts are well below budget expectations. It is hoped that any past pledges due may become up-to-date as soon as possible. Given that income tax season is just around the corner, all donations and pledge monies received before 12/31 will be recorded as a charitable contribution and deductible on your 2014 income tax return. We greatly appreciate you for your review of this matter! Thank You, Bruce Weaver

Notes of Thanks from the Pastor

I am grateful to all who made the wonderful *Night In Bethlehem* possible this year. I especially thank our leader, Carrie Pericola, who organized the effort.

I thank our Josephs and Marys: Michael and Jill DiGiorgio, along with baby Jesus, Bryan Williams, loaned to us by his parents Alicia & Seth; and Jerome & Duyum Ryan, and their daughter, Lara, for being baby Jesus under the watchful eye of her brother, Aiden.

I also especially thank Bob Wood, of Wood Trucking, Peabody, who generously let us borrow three of his sheep for *Night in Bethlehem*. I had a blast and hope all who participated and attended, did also.

In gratitude, Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Our Opportunities

Sun. Dec. 21 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i>	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 6:30 pm	Christmas Pageant - Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) - Room 11 Older Children & Youth in Church Christmas Concert - Sanctuary
Mon. Dec. 22	7:30 pm	Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Dec. 24	5:00 pm	Family Candlelight Service – Sanctuary
	11:00 pm	Candlelight Service - Chapel
Thur. Dec. 25		<i>Merry Christmas!</i>
Fri. Dec. 26	10:30 am	Church Office Open 9-12:00 Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 28	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am	Morning Worship - Chapel Nursery (up to age 5) – Rm 11 Older Children in Church
Mon. Dec. 29	7:30 pm	Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Dec. 31	7:00 pm	Women's 12 Step Mtg – Fireside
Thurs. Jan 1		<i>Happy New Year!</i>
Fri. Jan 2	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sat. Jan 3	All day	Habitat for Humanity - Lawrence
Sun. Jan 4	10:00 am 6:00 pm	Holy Communion Youth Epiphany Party - Basement

Our prayers are with Barbara Warburg at Rosewood. Annabel Aldrich, Roger Lauzon, Marion Barnes, Helen Butcher, Harvey Card, Marge Cole, Marion Edkins, Parker Holloway, Edie Richard.

We remember in our prayers Michael Bruce in Bahrain and Johnathan McCarthy who is in training with the US Marines.
