

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: And "Open and Affirming" Church

November 2, 2015

Taking the Leap

In late August, 1971, I got into my newly purchased used green Toyota Corolla and left my mother's home in Maryland and drove north to Massachusetts. It was my first time in New England. This was the beginning of a new stage in my life. I was beginning graduate school and my journey into Christian Ministry.

While I didn't realize it at the time, I was never going to move back to Maryland again. I was scared at the thought of this new adventure. I wasn't sure that I was going to make it in a Theological Graduate School. I knew no one in New England to whom I could escape if this didn't go well.

I wondered if the people I would meet would affirm what I felt was a call by God to me to become a Pastor? In my five college years I had struggled with this call, having my doubts and yet, feeling over and over, that this was the plan for my life's vocation. Leaving everything and everyone I had known for 23 years felt like leaping off a skyscraper into an unknown abyss, depending only on God to break my fall.

The classes and studies were hard for me. There were theological terms and concepts that I had never heard of before. Fortunately, for me, I was not alone. I quickly discovered that like me, there were others of my peers in the school who, while they had come from different places, shared similar stories about how they felt called by God to serve in ministry. As we met and shared our stories we found common themes of how God was working in and through our lives.

One of my peers had been a math major in college and now, here he was also embracing God's

call. At least my major was Sociology, more attuned, it seemed, for preparation into parish ministry.

I found my way through Theological School in three years while many of my peers took a four year route. (Today, many who are studying take 5 to 7 or more years because they are continuing to support their families.) I had married between my 2nd and 3rd year of school. My wife was also in school, studying for a degree in Elementary Education.

In the Sanctuary

November 8, 2015

Morning Worship – 10:00 A.M.

Sermon by Jeffrey Langill

November 15, 2015

Morning Worship - 10:00 A.M.

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

November 22, 2015

Morning Worship – 10:00 A.M.

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

November 8, 15 and 22

Nursery (up to age 3) – Room 11

Godly Play (age 3 – Gr. 4) Todd Hall Stage

Breakfast Club (Gr. 5-12) – Kitchen

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

November 22, 2015 – 7:00 PM

I remember early on in my studies and in my career, when I found things particularly challenging, I would feel homesick and was very tempted to leave Massachusetts and return home to the safety and shelter of my mother, to the people and places I grew up with, and away from the risks of my journey of faith. I knew, though, that if I did that, I would regret it for the rest of my life, left wondering, "What would have been?"

So, asking for God's help and direction, I stayed the course, kept taking one leap of faith after another. Throughout those years in graduate school and early years in ministry I said my last farewells to my grandparents. My maternal grandparents lived long enough to see me through college, graduate school, and ordination. They were so supportive of me, believed in me, and excited when I was ordained.

Now, I think of so many of those with whom I have journeyed in ministry, who have been faithful partners in the places I have served. I think especially of those who, in humility, were willing to do anything that God asked of them, sometimes anything I asked of them, in order to see the work of the church accomplished. The good-byes spoken to these people have been very hard, full of mixed emotions. It is the recognition that life will never be the same again.

This is the case whenever we say "yes" to God's call in any time and place in our lives. God asks us, as God asked of Abraham and Sarah, to move to a new place of faith and service. While it is often not a physical move, it is always a spiritual move. It is often a move into a new position of leadership and service within the community of faith and sometimes outside the church community that we love, to a new place in the world where God plans to use us.

When I left home in 1971, I had no idea where God was leading me except at the time, to Graduate School. I trusted God and God has been faithful. This is the call that we all share. *"Where is God leading me, and you, and all of us? Are we willing to take the leap of faith, depending on God to secure our landing?"*

Life in the church depends upon people who are willing to take the leap into positions of leadership and service. Watching parishioners take these leaps has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career. I love seeing how people grow and lead, helping me, helping the church, and helping further God's work. Everyone brings something different and something unique, something helpful. I love experiencing the leadership of others who make me better, who give me confidence and helpful guidance. It is so great to be on a great team, in which we realize that we are called to work together, in harmony.

So, I ask you who are reading this now, "Where is God leading you? Are you willing to take the next leap of faith God is beckoning you to take?" Our Lord, Jesus Christ, needs his disciples. He needs you and me, all of us, to follow him, walk with him, taking risks, giving our all.

He needs some of us to stay the course that we have been following, not stepping back. He needs others of us to renew our faith and step forward into service, perhaps returning to service, perhaps taking a new step in the same direction that we have been following. I know from my own experience, there have been many times when I didn't feel that I could do it, that I didn't have the knowledge, strength, ability, and resources. And yet, God kept calling me, reassuring me, not letting me off with, "Oh well, I'll find someone else." No, God wanted me, Dennis. God wants you, calls you by name, like he has called all of those who have gone before us.

Hear my prayer: "Dear God, help my fellow travelers take the leap as you have helped me do the same. Give them encouragement and reassurance that you will secure their steps as you have secured mine. Give them the great rewards of following you into new life as you have so often given to me. I pray that they will never have to look back and say, "What might have been?" Rather, I pray they will be able to look back and say, with me, "Wow, thanks be to God!!!"

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Deacons Breakfast November 8: Join us for bacon, eggs, pancakes, fruit salad, juice and coffee before church on **Sunday, November 8 from 8:30-9:45**. We will be serving up our delicious breakfast to raise money for the Organ Maintenance Fund. The cost is \$10/person or \$25/family.

Join us at Bertucci's: Want a great, reasonable dinner for the family and have Centre Congregational Church get 15 percent of the proceeds? Come to Bertucci's on Walker's Brook Road in Reading on Tuesday, November 10th - anytime from **11AM to 10 PM!** **Bring your friends!**

No school the next day - a perfect night to go out!

It's Not Too Late! You can still order online by visiting www.yankeecandlefundraising.com and entering our Group Number:990016890. Online orders can be placed until the end of the year. Call Debbie Cotting at 978-593-3120 for more info.

Church School News

The Church Nursery is open for children up to age 3 in Room 11 each Sunday during worship time.

Godly Play and Breakfast Club will both be held on November 8, 15 and 22.

Trick or Treat for UNICEF

This past Sunday, the children at Centre Church dressed in costumes and went Trick or Treating for UNICEF, inviting the congregation to help fill their boxes. Members of the youth group also collected for UNICEF on Halloween. With your generous donations, we were able to collect \$79.00 to help kids in need around the world. UNICEF works to give children who need food, clean water or medicine healthier lives and brighter futures. Just \$5 provides 5 days of food for a malnourished child. \$15 provides a year of clean water and \$30 can provide measles protection for 100 kids.

Giv² Kicks Off in Lynnfield

We are starting a program similar to one run by the Connecticut UCC, called **Giv²**. It encourages local youth organizations and their mentors to work together in community service.

Our kick-off meeting will take place here at Centre Church on Sun, 11/8 at 6 pm. We will be making and enjoying a pasta dinner with some other youth groups. Then on Veteran's Day, we'll be raking leaves together!

--Linda Ladd and Denise Weaver,

Centre Church **Giv²** Coordinators



Got Leaves? Need help raking them? Our

Youth Groups, in conjunction with other local youth groups, would like to help you out! We will be spending Veterans Day, Wednesday, Nov. 11th, touring town in search of leaves to rake. If raking leaves is difficult for you, we'd like to help. Please contact the church office at 781-334-3050 or office@centre-church.org to get on our list.

Thanks to all who participated in the Youth Group Pumpkin Carving Fundraiser last Sunday. The cat pumpkin received the most votes, followed by the musical notes and then the ghost. \$79.00 was raised which will be used to purchase much needed children's clothing for Cradles to Crayons.

Turkey Drive: We will be collecting **frozen turkeys** for Haven from Hunger on Sunday morning, November 22 beginning at 9:30 a.m. We will have youth on hand to help carry your turkey to the Haven from Hunger truck. Please consider donating a turkey to help provide a Thanksgiving Dinner for those who might otherwise go without.

Pies! Cakes! Pies! Revisited Sunday November 22, 2015

APPLE Pie Sale –Carrot Cake Sale

A team of Centre Church bakers will be baking pies on Thursday Nov. 19, Friday Nov. 20 & Saturday Nov. 21, **for sale on Sun, Nov. 22.**

Rev. Bailey will be making his Carrot Cakes!

You must pre-order. Place your order by calling the church office (781-334-3050) or by filling out an order form after church.

Unbaked Pies are \$15.00

(Apple, Apple Crumb, or Apple-Cranberry)

Large Carrot Cakes are \$15.00

Small Carrot Cakes are \$8.00.

News From Around the Parish

Congratulations to Jean Cintolo who recently earned her BS Degree from Salem State University. She majored in Sociology and minored in Psychology.

We extend our prayers and sympathy to the family and friends of Suzanne Whitney who died on October 15. She was the grandmother of Sheila VanTwyver. Her funeral was held in Wakefield.

Our love and sympathy are extended to the Batchelder family upon the death of Elva Batchelder on October 25. Her funeral was held at Centre Church on November 1.

Be sure to mark your calendars so you won't miss some very special upcoming events:

Sunday, November 15

The Confirmation Class Heritage Tour

Sunday, November 22 Turkey Drive

Sunday, November 29 Advent Workshop

Wednesday, December 2 Salem Trolley Tour

Saturday, December 5 Night in Bethlehem

Sunday, December 6 Heifer Marketplace



Salem Trolley Tour's 'A Christmas Carol' Event



Journey with the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future as we tour through Salem, visit scenes from Scrooge's life and come to appreciate the real meaning of Christmas. This lighthearted version of Dickens' classic story is more comedy than drama and is suitable for all ages. The church has reserved a limited number of tickets for the 7:15pm tour on Wednesday, December 2nd. The non-refundable tickets are \$25 each. Car pools will be available from the church parking lot, departing at 6:15pm. Tickets will be available for sale in the Narthex after church through November 15th. Contact Heather or John Sievers with questions: 781-334-4390 or heather.sievers@gmail.com.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Nov. 8	8:30 am 10:00 am	Deacons Breakfast - Kitchen Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) – Room 11 Godly Play (age 3–Gr. 4)- Stage Breakfast Club (Gr. 5-12) - Kit. Youth Group Pasta Dinner
	6:00 pm	
Mon, Nov. 9	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop 48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Tues. Nov. 10	11am-10pm 7:30 pm	Fundraiser at Bertucci's/Reading Diaconate – Pastor's Office
Wed. Nov. 11	----- 7:00 pm	Church Office Closed Women's 12 Step Mtg – Fireside
Thurs. Nov. 12	7:30 pm	Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Fri. Nov. 13	10:30 am	Bible Study - Fireside Room
Sun. Nov. 15	10:00 am	Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) – Room 11 Godly Play (age 3 –Gr. 4)- Stage Breakfast Club (Gr. 5-12) - Kitchen Confirmation – Heritage Tour
	11:30 am	
Mon. Nov. 16	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon – Fireside Room
Wed. Nov. 18	7:00 pm	Women's 12 Step Mtg – Fireside
Thurs Nov. 19	7:30 pm	Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Fri. Nov. 20	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Nov. 22	10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 11 Godly Play (age 3-Gr. 4) - Stage Breakfast Club (Gr. 5-12 –Kitchen Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church
	7:00 pm	
<i>Turkey Drive For Haven from Hunger</i>		

Next Tower Notes is the week of November 16

Our prayers are with Martha Emerson at Masconomet Healthcare Center, Topsfield; Bob Shorey at Brightview Sr. Living, Danvers; Bob Hanson at Peabody Glen, Peabody; Annabel Aldrich, Helen Butcher, Marguerite Burns, Marge Cole, Marion Edkins, Parker Holloway, and Edie Richard. We remember in our prayers Jamie Stone in Kuwait and Johnathan McCarthy deployed with the Marines