

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey, Pastor, Pastor@Centre-Church.org

The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

Barbara Langill, Interim Director of Faith Formation

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 2, 2015

Advent = Preparation

The preparations are officially underway! We had our annual Advent Workshop last evening at Centre Church: We celebrated by making Advent crafts and the making of our own Christmas wreaths. It is always fun to have fresh greens so that we can attempt to make our own wreaths.

What does it take to make your own Christmas wreath? It takes greens, metal rings, green florist wire, shrubbery clippers, red ribbon, work, and a willingness to risk doing something you are not accustomed to doing! It also takes someone with a little bit of knowledge and experience to show you how to get started. (that's where I come in, thanks to the late Herbert Enos, who once lived in Jamaica Plain and was a member of First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain, who showed me how.) And, it takes a willingness to get your hands dirty from the tree sap and sometimes, cuts on your fingers from the florist wire.

Like people, every wreath comes out different, some lopsided, some uneven, some looking pretty good, and some, great! I only do this once a year so every year, my wreath comes out different.

The best part for me, is that we all leave with a great deal of satisfaction, having made our own wreath. I leave with the satisfaction of how we worked together, learning and sharing with each other in a very unique Advent activity, all brought about, of course, through our ties in our Church.

This is how we make Advent! We do it together, sharing the traditions, songs, scriptures, and meanings of Advent so that by the time Christmas arrives we have a greater and deeper understanding of what it really means to prepare for the birth of Jesus.

As we light the four candles of Advent over the course of four weeks, I am reminded of those many others who have helped us prepare. I think of John the Baptist who reminds us to prepare the way

through returning our hearts, minds, and souls to God for renewal so that we are open to the gift God brings. I think of the humble shepherds, filled with wonder, the heavenly hosts or angels who announced to Mary that she would bear a son, Jesus, and those who sang of it to the shepherds. I think of the prophets who helped keep hope alive that a Messiah would be born, Savior of the world, when many others doubted and laughed at the thought.

Now it is our turn, to keep hope alive, to tell the story, to turn our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls back to God so that we help the world prepare



In the Sanctuary

December 6, 2015 – 10:00 a.m.

Second Sunday of Advent

Holy Communion

Bibles to Confirmands

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Nursery and Godly Play

Heifer Marketplace after Worship

December 13, 2015 – 10:00 a.m.

Third Sunday of Advent

Morning Worship & Sacrament of Baptism

Nursery, Godly Play & Breakfast Club

December 20, 2015 – 10:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Christmas Pageant

Christmas Concert – 6:30 p.m.

to celebrate the birth of the Christ-Child. Advent preparation is no longer the charge of someone else. It is our calling to proclaim “prepare the way,” “peace on earth,” “comfort, comfort,” and “Come, Lord Jesus, come!”

We can stand in lines, growing frustrated, trying to purchase just the right gifts for our loved ones and friends. Most of us will. I know I will, also. We can also turn our face, and our hearts and minds, to look for the coming of God. We can help others look for the presence of God in their lives, through the time we take to be attentive to the needs of others, especially those who wait for someone to spend time with them, to assure them that their lives are important to us, and, therefore, important to God.

I know that some of us help each other decorate our homes. I know that my late mother appreciated it when family stopped by to help her decorate her home each year. She really looked forward to that visit, and, sometimes, made special foods for the occasion.

This year I am especially thinking of those, our military personnel, scattered about the world, in places of conflict, or potential conflict, who need to know that we are thinking of them and praying for their well-being. I am thinking of those who have served, our veterans, who need to know that we love them, appreciate them, and will never forget what they have done to keep hope, peace, and freedom alive. I am especially thinking of those who experienced great loss due to acts of terrorism. I am thinking of those who are battling a chronic illness. Lest we forget, these cherished ones, they need us to keep hope alive, to keep telling the story of a God who does not desert us, who keeps loving us no matter what.

I invite you to join with me, in our preparations, via Night in Bethlehem this coming Saturday, December 5th, 3 to 6 pm, our Advent worship services, especially for the Lighting of the candles on the Advent Wreath each Sunday, for a Baptism on Sunday, December 13th, for our Christmas Pageant, Sunday, December 20th, for our Choir's Christmas Concert, also, December 20th, and for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Services, 5 pm and 11 pm.

Together, we prepare the way for the coming of our Lord! Together, we proclaim the good news. Together we are the church, the Body of Christ. And, together we serve to bear the light of Christ Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

Dennis

A Hands-On Holy Land Experience

Join us for Night in Bethlehem on Saturday, December 5 from 3-6 pm. The event consists of a walk-through live nativity and a marketplace of crafts for kids to experience a bit of what life was like on the first Christmas.

Sunday Morning with the Children

Nursery

Our Church Nursery is fully staffed and ready to receive infants and children up to age 3 on Sunday mornings during worship time. Pagers are available to ensure Nursery Caregivers can easily communicate with parents

Godly Play (Age 4 – Grade 4)

Children age 4 and up are invited to attend Godly Play. The focus for December will be on Advent. Children begin in worship with their families and then leave as a group to go to their classroom which is on the stage in Todd Hall. Parents are asked to pick up their children at 11:15 am at the side door of the stage where doorkeepers will dismiss children one at a time.

Breakfast Club (Grades 5 and up)

Communion Sun., Dec. 6 youth are invited to attend worship with their families.
Sun. Dec. 13 – Breakfast Club in the kitchen.

Volunteers Needed

Christ Candle Lighters for Christmas Eve

Rev. Bailey needs volunteers to light the Christ Candle at the 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. Christmas Eve Services. If you would enjoy this honor, please contact the church office, 781-334-3050 ASAP. Whoever calls first will be given the opportunity. He will give you the material to be read.

Audio-Visual Helpers Needed

We need a few people to help set up and operate our audio-visual equipment on Sunday mornings. We would like to continue videotaping our services, especially Baptisms, choral concerts and special services such as the Christmas Pageant, Children's Sunday, etc.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Rev. Bailey at the church office or Margaret Waugh at 781-334-4031. We will arrange for training.

News From Around the Parish

Our congratulations to Sean and Lindsey Tainsh of Danvers upon the baptism of their son, Liam George Tainsh on November 29. His proud grandparents are Wayne and Beverly Perkins.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Martha Emerson who died on November 19. Her memorial service was held at Centre Church on November 28.

Our prayers are with Louise Marshall at Kaplan House in Danvers, 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.

Youth Opportunities

Saturday, Dec 5: Youth volunteers are needed at Night in Bethlehem to help with crafts. Please plan to arrive at 2 pm to get into costume and learn your assignment.

Sunday, Dec 13: Youth in grades 5th -12th are invited to join Giv2 for Christmas Caroling at Sunrise. We will be meeting at St. Paul's Episcopal Church for pizza and practice beforehand.

Shopping Cards

Are you looking for a gift for that hard-to-buy-for person on your Christmas list? Why not buy a gift card for a favorite store or restaurant? Gift cards to Dunkin Donuts, Starbucks, or Panera make great stocking stuffers and teacher gifts. Those cards and a variety of others are available at the Shopping Card table on Sunday mornings. If you are ordering cards for Christmas, please place your order by **December 13**. Check out the full list of retailers by visiting www.glscrip.com.

Simplify your Christmas shopping **and** raise money for Centre Church!

Looking Ahead



December 5: 3-6 p.m. - Night in Bethlehem
December 6: After Worship - Heifer Marketplace
December 11: 12 pm – Deadline for ordering Poinsettias
December 20: 10 a.m. – Christmas Pageant
Poinsettias Displayed
6:30 pm – Christmas Concert
December 24: 5 p.m. Family Candlelight Service
11 p.m. Chapel Candlelight Service
December 27: 10 a.m. First Sunday after Christmas

In Lieu of Christmas Cards. Instead of sending out many individual paper Christmas Cards to your church friends, why not send one card to the church (5 Summer Street) along with a donation that will go to the Boston's City Mission Society for their continuing work to help families avoid homelessness, bring meals to the elderly and work with at-risk teens. The cards will be displayed on the Christmas tree in the narthex and your greeting will be passed along through *Tower Notes*.

Thanks Everyone! Many thanks to the members of Educational Ministries for leading the crafts at the ***Advent Workshop***. Those who attended enjoyed a delicious potluck dinner. Special thanks to Rev. Bailey for once again leading the wreath making.

Turkey Drive: Thank you to everyone who brought a frozen turkey or made a donation to help support Haven from Hunger and their efforts to provide Thanksgiving dinner for those in need.

Thanks to all who have participated in our ***Yankee Candle Fundraiser***. We have raised \$454 for Centre Church! There is still time to place an order online by visiting:

www.yankeecandlefundraising.com and entering our Group Number: 990016890. Online orders can be placed until the end of the year. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Debbie Cotting at 781-593-3120.

Our Opportunities

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| Sun. Dec. 6 <i>2nd Advent</i> | 10:00 am 11:00 am 11:30 am | Holy Communion – Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) - Room 11 Godly Play (age 4-Gr. 4) - Stage Grades 5-12 in Church Heifer Marketplace – Narthex Confirmation Class - Kitchen |
| Mon, Dec. 7 | 7:00 pm 7:30 pm | Boy Scout Troop 48 – Todd Hall Alanon – Fireside Rm. |
| Tues. Dec. 8 | 7:00 pm 7:30 pm | Education Ministries – Library Diaconate – Pastor’s Office |
| Wed. Dec. 9 | 7:00 pm | Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside |
| Thurs. Dec. 10 | 6:00 pm | Weight Watchers – Fireside Rm. Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room |
| Fri. Dec. 11 | 10:30 am 5:00 pm | Bible Study - Fireside Room Confirmation Overnight Retreat |
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| Sun. Dec. 13 <i>3rd Advent</i> | 10:00 am 2:00 pm | Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery & Godly Play Breakfast Club - Kitchen Giv2 Youth Caroling at Sunrise |
| Mon. Dec. 14 | 7:00 pm 7:30 pm | Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr. |
| Wed. Dec. 16 | 7:00 pm | Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside |
| Thurs Dec. 17 | 6:00 pm 7:30 pm | Weight Watchers - Fireside Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room |
| Fri. Dec. 18 | 10:30 am | Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office |
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| Sun. Dec. 20 <i>4th Advent</i> | 10:00 am 6:30 pm | Christmas Pageant – Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) Older Children & Youth in Church Christmas Concert – Sanctuary |

Next *Tower Notes* is the week of Dec. 14
