

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

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Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 16, 2015

A Special Christmas

As you know, this is a special Christmas for me because it will be my last one with Centre Congregational Church. It will also be my last one before retiring from full-time Christian Ministry.

I felt the emotional charge of it yesterday as I started the service and looked out at our beautiful congregation. I felt it while the Choir sang a couple of beautiful Advent Anthems. I felt it while greeting everyone before, during, and after the worship service. I felt it during the Baptism. I felt it as I stepped up into the pulpit. I especially felt it seeing my girlfriend, Linda Hey, visiting with us yesterday. I am very happy that you are excited to meet her and make her feel welcome. She enjoyed talking with all of you.

Most of all, this Christmas is special to me because I can reflect upon all of the gifts that the one born on Christmas has made possible for me and for all of us.

The coming of the Christ child breaks away the barriers that once prevented us from knowing each other and leads us to a place in which we meet, pray, worship, and encounter God's call to follow Jesus. I think back to the time in my life when I was struggling with what I felt was God's call to me to pursue the vocation of ordained Christian ministry. I could have said "no" to this call, but I know now, that I would have deeply regretted it.

At the time, it seemed an impossible idea for me to successfully graduate from college, be accepted and graduate from Theological School. I was in way over my head, really! I had no clue what Theological School would be like. And then, there was this: how would God use someone like me, who grew up feeding cattle, driving farm tractors, and harvesting

crops? How would God use someone like me who was not a great student? How would God use someone who did not have a great self-image, someone who lacked self-confidence? Seemed impossible then, and even now. Part of the Advent message, as I said recently in an Advent sermon, is that God prepares the way, as the Prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist preached.

Christmas Worship Services



December 20, 2015

Fourth Sunday of Advent

10:00 Morning Worship

Christmas Pageant

Nursery in Room 11

6:30 p.m. Christmas Concert

December 24, 2015

Christmas Eve

5:00 p.m. - Sanctuary

Family Candlelight Service

11:00 p.m. - Chapel

Candlelight Service

December 27, 2015

First Sunday after Christmas

10:00 a.m. Morning Worship

In the Chapel

Yes, there are certain preparations that we can make, like having open hearts and minds to what Jesus brings. But the majority of the work is in God's hands, a work and a promise that we are called to trust and believe.

On many an occasion, at least weekly, I must trust that God will work through me in ways I hope for, but mostly I think, in ways I do not anticipate. What is more important for me to say to you is that on many an occasion, at least weekly, I trust that God will work through you in ways I hope for, but mostly, in ways I do not anticipate.

Throughout my whole career I have been witness to the light of Jesus Christ being born in people and places I did not expect. It has been for me just like the first Christmas when Jesus, Son of God, the Messiah, was born in an unlikely place, a stable. Who would have thought? Seemed impossible then, and even now.

While I have journeyed with you who read this, Jesus has been present to and through us in ways that only God can number and remember. Out of grief, unexpected and enduring friendships that have given our lives meaning and hope have developed. Out of broken faith journeys, many of you have returned to renew your faith and have shown an amazing willingness to let your light shine as disciples and leaders in Christ! Many of you have consistently been the light of Christ since your earliest years, providing a strong foundation for God's ministry. Many of you have had faith journeys in other places and now you are blessing us by bringing your light to bless our present. What I celebrate especially this Christmas is the joy of seeing so many of you grow in your faith and willingness to take the leap of that faith in new ways. I see Jesus being born in all of you!

Let's be prepared to see Jesus' birth in many places, many expected places, but mostly, if experience holds true, unexpected places and people. As Advent teaches us, let us watch, be ready, listen, and anticipate what God is sending and birthing. Things that seem impossible, unlikely, improbable, even foolish.

Yes, God sent a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, born in a stable, to be the Savior of the World. And yes, God has brought us together from some of the most unlikely and unexpected places, to be his followers. Who would have thought? Who, but God almighty, Creator, who loves us all, unconditionally.

Merry Christmas! Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
Proud to be Pastor of Centre Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Church of the UCC

Enjoy the Sounds of the Season!
Sunday, December 20 – 6:30 p.m.



We invite you to take a break from the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations and join us for our annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 20 at 6:30 PM. The Centre Congregational Church Choir, directed by Douglas Hodgkins, will be joined by members of the Lynnfield High School choral groups. The choir will present inspirational and reflective music to remind us all of the true meaning of Christmas.

There is no charge to attend, but a freewill offering will be taken to support the music program at Centre Church. Refreshments will be served after the concert. Join us for a relaxing evening of Christmas music!

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 20**. There is a part for everyone! Children who would like to sing a simple song are asked to arrive by 9:30 am to rehearse and learn where to stand and sit.

Sunday, December 27

There are no classes scheduled. Children and youth are invited to attend worship with their families. Children 5 years old and younger are welcome to go to the nursery for story and playtime.

Tower Day School is accepting applications for the 2016-17 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 8, 2016. Please download an application from www.towerdayschool.org or call the school office (781-334-5576).

Leah O'Brien, Director

**Do You Wish to Become a Member
of Centre Congregational Church?**

Several new members will be joining the church on Sunday, January 3, 2016 during the Worship Service. This will be the last opportunity to join while Rev. Bailey is still our pastor. If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact us as soon as possible: 781-334-3050, office@centre-church.org, or pastor@centre-church.org

Thus far, we are excited to welcome the following persons who have expressed a desire to join:
Sam & Sarah Crosbie, Deb Biggar, Sean Tainsh, Kamden & Sarah Mauser, Elmer & Paula Maxwell

Our Prayers are with Elaine Pyburn at Aviv, Charlotte Orrall, Annabel Aldrich, Helen Butcher, Marguerite Burns, Marge Cole, Marion Edkins, Bob Hanson, Parker Holloway, and Ed Potter, Edie Richard, Bob Shorey

We remember in our prayers Jamie Stone in Kuwait and Johnathan McCarthy deployed with the Marines.

Notes of Thanks!

I wish to thank everyone who contributed to a very successful Confirmation Retreat this past weekend. *I especially want to thank Barbara Langill*, Interim Director of Faith Formation because she was the organizational wizard who put all of the pieces together, with the supportive work of the Education Ministries Team. Most of all, the Confirmands and their Mentors were a great group who came ready to learn and grow in their faith. I am grateful and honored to know each of them and look forward to their Confirmation on Sunday, January 24, 2016.

I am grateful to Mr. Bob Wood, of Wood Trucking, Peabody, MA, for allowing me to, again, borrow three of his sheep for our Night in Bethlehem experience on Saturday, December 5th. It is very kind and trusting of him to help us add to the atmosphere of remembering life in the days of Jesus. I am also grateful to Scott DeSantis who helped me to pick up the sheep and transport them to and fro from Mr. Wood's farm. Given the sheep have grown over the last three years, I invited a friend of mine from Prince Edward Island, Canada, Reubin MacDonald, and his grandson, Cameron to help me move the sheep from trailer to pen and back again. Thanks to all!

Dennis



To Our Friends at Centre Church

*David Balser
Chuck and Debbie Cotting
Ed and Barbara Ericson
Phil and Sue Johnson
Ethel Leonard
Jack and Donna Marino
Marilyn McCarthy
Charlotte Orrall
Shep and Susan Spear
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 and Christmas card to the church office and your good wishes will be shared in the next *Tower Notes*.

News From Around the Parish

Our love and sympathy are extended to the family of Louise Marshall who died on Dec. 11. Her memorial service will be held at Centre Church on Saturday, Dec. 19 at 11:00 a.m.

Congratulations to Todd and Christina Boling upon the baptism of their daughter, Margaux Jane Lorene Boling on December 13. Her proud grandparents are Fred and Paulette Boling and Gerald and Betsy Brown.

Youth Group: Both Middle School and High School Youth Groups will be meeting on Sunday, January 3 from 6:00-7:30. We will be having an "Epiphany Party". Please bring a \$10 gift for Yankee Swap.

Christmas Caroling On Sunday, December 13, our ecumenical youth group, Giv2, met at St. Pauls' Episcopal Church for pizza, fellowship and a brief rehearsal. 20 youth and their leaders then headed to Sunrise Senior Living to sing Christmas carols for the residents.

If you would like to donate altar flowers on Jan. 3, 10 or 17 please contact the church office. 781-0334-3050 or office@centre-church.org

Our Opportunities

<p>Sun. Dec. 20</p> <p><i>4th Advent</i></p>	<p>10:00 am</p> <p>6:30 pm</p>	<p>Christmas Pageant – Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) Older Children & Youth in Church Christmas Concert – Sanctuary</p>
<p>Mon. Dec. 21</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>7:30 pm</p>	<p>No Boy Scouts Alanon– Fireside Room</p>
<p>Wed. Dec. 23</p>	<p>7:00 pm</p>	<p>Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside</p>
<p><i>Christmas Eve</i></p>	<p>5:00 pm</p> <p>11:00 pm</p>	<p>Family Candlelight Service – Sanctuary Chapel Candlelight Service</p>
<p>Fri. Dec. 25</p>		<p><i>Merry Christmas!</i></p>
<p>Sun. Dec. 27</p>	<p>10:00 am</p>	<p>Morning Worship - Chapel Nursery (up to age 5) Older Children/Youth in Church</p>
<p>Mon. Dec. 28</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>7:30 pm</p>	<p>No Boy Scouts Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.</p>
<p>Wed. Dec. 30</p>	<p>7:00 pm</p>	<p>Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside</p>
<p>Fri. Jan. 1</p>		<p><i>Happy New Year!</i></p>
<p>Sun. Jan. 3</p>	<p>10:00 am</p> <p>11:30 am</p> <p>6:00 pm</p>	<p>Holy Communion – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 11 Godly Play – Todd Hall Stage Older Children/Youth in Church Confirmation Class – Kitchen Youth Epiphany Party - Kitchen</p>