

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Nancy Rottman, Pastor

The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

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Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director

Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 15, 2017

Beloved of Centre Church,

I have been searching for what I would say to you in this first Christmas greeting as your pastor. In the midst of this season of expectant hope, deep peace, and exuberant joy, I have been walking with some of our own through the grittiest of life's experiences. I have been witnessing you being Christ for one another. Sickness and suffering, healing and death nearly always raise to our lips the deepest of life's questions. Questions of why, why not, and how come? Questions about God and God's deepest longings for God's own creation. Questions that are largely unanswerable with words. Questions that can only be heard and held so that, at least for a moment, in the presence of another, maybe they don't feel so heavy.

Then, this morning, the Annunciation and the Incarnation wove themselves together in my mind in a way they never had before. The preposterousness of an Angel appearing to a girl and telling her this amazing, terrifying thing was going to happen to her. And the equally amazing and perplexing knowledge that God was born in human flesh and experienced all the breathtaking joy and sorrow that earthly life holds for us all. That for Mary, the incarnation was not an "O, Holy Night" experience, but began nine long and short months before. Nine months of carrying Emmanuel within her.

In his book *The Manger is Empty: Stories in Time*, Lutheran Pastor Walter Wangerin, Jr. relates the story of how his daughter Mary came to know something of this great mystery. Through the love of a dying old woman, her funeral and burial on Christmas eve, and playing the role of Mary in the Christmas pageant, seven-year-old Mary declared, "Jesus doesn't have to be in the manger, does he? He goes back and forth, doesn't he? I mean, he came from heaven, and he was borned right here, but then he went back to heaven again, and because he came and went he's coming and going *all* the time, right?"

"We are all called to be mothers of God – for God is always waiting to be born." – Meister Eckart, 13th Century Christian Mystic

I hope that like Mary, the mother of Jesus, and wise Mary Wangerin, you will be open to Divine revelation, to what God is hoping to birth into the world through you. That in awe, you might accept that it is indeed true that Jesus is coming and going all the time, and also abiding in each one of us, accompanying us toward our potential in this world, toward seeing and knowing and being Divine love in this life. I hope that you might feel Jesus abiding within you and that like Mary, you might hold yourself in the perplexity of such a thing. That you might ponder it in your heart. And rather than clinging to the limits of human reason, you and I will step into the mystery, open ourselves to it, give ourselves over to it. For nothing is impossible with God!

Come, Lord Jesus, abide in and with us!

Gloria, *Nancy*



Worship Services
On December 24, 2017

10:00 a.m. In the Chapel

Advent 4 – Lighting the Candle of Love
Informal, Relaxed Worship
“Waiting in Bethlehem”
Nursery care provided

5:00 p.m. In the Sanctuary

Family Christmas Eve Service

11:00 p.m. In the Chapel

Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols

Missions and Outreach

Angel Tree: The last batch of Angel Tree gifts will be taken to City Mission Shops after church on Sunday, Dec 17. Thank you to all of you angels who donated gifts that others will be able to wrap up for their loved ones this year. Everyone should experience the joy of giving at Christmas! We delivered 285 gifts to City Mission of Boston last Sunday. Well done!

Heifer Living Gift Market: You can still buy a “living gift” in honor of someone this Christmas season. Please see Linda Ladd or call the church office if you’d like to donate to Heifer International this way. Each \$10 donation entitles you to an honor card to present as your gift. Share your philanthropic spirit with your children, parents and friends. It feels good to do good together. Animals given by Heifer International to families in need, help them to feed themselves, earn a better living and buy education. Thank you for being generous together.

Haven From Hunger: We’ll be helping to prepare and serve a meal at Haven From Hunger in Peabody on January 22. Kitchen volunteers are needed from 3-6:30pm. Please sign up to help on the Missions and Outreach bulletin board across from the Fireside kitchen, or email events@centre-church.org. Thank you.

News From Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to the family and friends of Marian Mosko Edkins who died on December 4. A Graveside Service was held at Pine Grove Cemetery in Lynn on December 8.

Our love and sympathy go out to the family and friends of Spencer Campbell who died on December 14. Arrangements are incomplete at this time.

Pledge Reminder

We want to remind folks that all contributions made to Centre Church during 2017 are tax-deductible for this tax year. If you are a bit behind in your pledge, you may want to catch up by the end of the year so you can include those donations in your 2017 tax return.

Stewardship Ministries



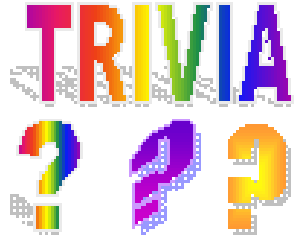
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Breakfast – January 21st

Join us for bacon, eggs, pancakes, fruit salad, juice and coffee before church on Sunday, January 21, 2018 from 8:30-9:45 am. We will be serving up our delicious breakfast to raise money for the Organ Maintenance Fund. The suggested donation is \$10/person or \$25/family.

New Member’s Luncheon

On Sunday, January 28th, Rev. Nancy will be hosting a luncheon after worship for those who are interested in learning more about membership at Centre Church. This is a no pressure, informational opportunity for fellowship and conversation about our life at Centre Church.

If you are interested in attending, please email Rev. Nancy at pastor@centre-church.org or call the church office at 781-334-3050.



2018 Trivia Night and Silent Auction

Please Save the Date: Saturday February 3, 2018 @ 6:30 PM

Trivia brought to you by Jason Cotting
 Silent Auction brought to you by our wonderful Donors!

This is our biggest fundraiser and we are looking for
Donations of Silent Auction items!
 Want to donate something, please contact Chuck Cotting!
 @ 781-593-3120 or chuck@thecottings.com

THANK YOU!

Our Opportunities

Sun. Dec. 24 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i>	10:00 am 5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Informal Worship in the Chapel Nursery, Older Children in Church Family Christmas Eve Service - In the Sanctuary Candlelight Service - Lessons & Carols in the Chapel
Sun. Dec. 31	10:00 am	Morning Worship – Chapel Nursery, Older Children in Church
Wed. Jan. 3	8 :30 am	Bread & Roses - Kitchen
Thur. Jan. 4	1-2 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study – Fireside Room Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Sat. Jan 6		Youth Epiphany Party
Sun. Jan. 7 <i>Epiphany</i>	10:00 am 11:00 am	Holy Communion - Sanctuary Nursery – Library/Nursery Faith Formation Activity Missions & Outreach Team – Libr.
Thur. Jan. 11	1-2 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study – Fireside Room Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room

Church Office Hours – 9 am – 12 pm Dec. 26-29.
Hours of 9-3 resume on Jan. 2.
The next issue of Tower Notes – Week of Jan. 8