

# 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

Laraine Wilson, Director of Faith Formation

Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director

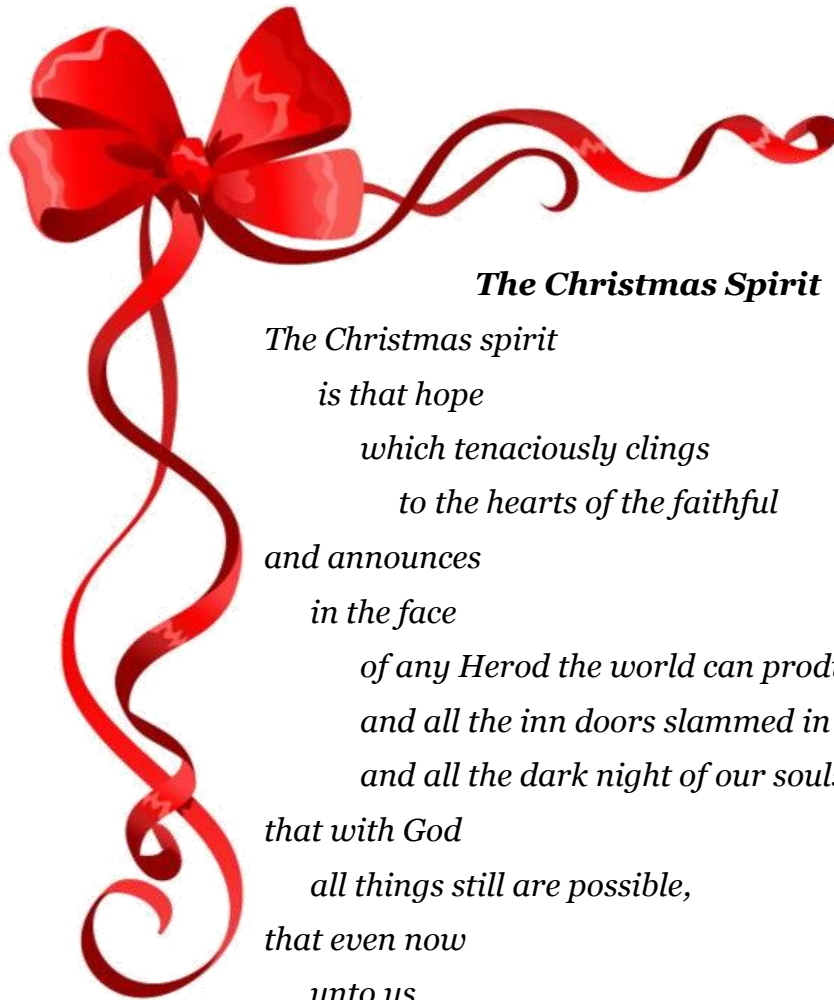
Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear & Barbara Langill, Secretaries

*We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church*

**December 10, 2018**

Here is a poem from Ann Weems' *Kneeling in Bethlehem* to stir your thoughts as we move through the second two weeks of Advent.



## ***The Christmas Spirit***

*The Christmas spirit*

*is that hope*

*which tenaciously clings*

*to the hearts of the faithful*

*and announces*

*in the face*

*of any Herod the world can produce*

*and all the inn doors slammed in our faces*

*and all the dark night of our souls*

*that with God*

*all things still are possible,*

*that even now*

*unto us*

*a Child is born!*

## Advent and Christmas

December 16, 2018

*Third Sunday of Advent*

10 am Morning Worship

Sacrament of Baptism

Nursery Care

Faith Formation-Pageant Practice

5pm Blue Christmas- Chapel

December 23, 2018

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

10 am Morning Worship

Christmas Pageant

Nursery Care

6:30pm Christmas Concert

December 24, 2018

5pm Christmas Eve

Family Candlelight Service-Sanctuary

11pm Christmas Eve- Chapel

Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols



### Christmas Concert – Dec. 23

The Centre Church Choir will present its annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 23 at 6:30 p.m. There will be a festive selection of Christmas music, organ prelude and postlude. During the concert, the congregation will have an opportunity to join the choirs in singing Christmas hymns.

No admission will be charged but a freewill offering will be taken. The concert will be held in the sanctuary and is open to the public. Refreshments will be served after the concert.

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

Trivia Night and

Silent Auction

Saturday MARCH 2, 2019

## Faith Formation

**Sunday, 12/16:** Pageant Practice DURING Church School

**Saturday, 12/22:** Pageant Practice at 9 a.m. for ALL roles - mandatory for speaking parts. We will be done by 10:30!

**Sunday, 12/23:** Our Pageant, *A Mary Carol, A One Act Play & Christmas Pageant* by Katherine Willis Pershey will be presented during worship. Be in touch with Jill, Lisa or Larainne about Pageant Parts and details. A printed copy of the script is available at the church office or on the table in the Narthex starting 12/9. For speaking roles, no memorization will be required, children can use index/cue cards. If your child would prefer a non-speaking role, we have several of those (angels, shepherds, barn animals)

**Sunday, 12/30:** "Service Sunday" **ALL** Ages Activity. We will have a "food devotion" and Church School children will be in charge of coffee hour and families are asked to contribute a food (sweet or savory) and/or a beverage (lemonade, juice etc...). We will assemble these items during the service.

### Sunday, January 5th - Worship And

**Sacraments Class:** This class is for children of all ages and will be held throughout the year on the 1st Sunday of the Month during Worship. The next class is on Jan. 6. We will use the themes of "gathering", "praying", "singing", "reading", "listening", "speaking" and "sending" to understand more about the different parts of worship and the sacraments of Baptism and Communion. We will share our learnings during Celebration Sunday on June 9th! Our Director of Faith Formation, Larainne Wilson, will be teaching the class.

**Registration Forms:** We still have a few outstanding forms. Blue registration folders are available in the Narthex!

## Mission and Outreach News

### Fair Trade Shopping



Thank you to everyone who ordered Equal Exchange goods during our sale. We were happy to spread the word about how sustainable farming and buying “Fair Trade” helps to support small farmers, sustainable farming and support healthy families around the world. They say eating dark chocolate is good for your heart. Buying these organic Fair Trade chocolates is also good for your soul! We still have some dark and milk chocolates available for cash and carry sales at just \$8 for a bag of 30 mini-bars. Please see the Mission and Outreach bulletin board for more information about Fair Trade chocolates, coffees and teas. Profits from this fundraising have gone directly to our Missions and Outreach budget and will be used to fund future outreach activities.



Heifer Living Gift Market What to give that person who has everything? How about honeybees, given in their name to help support agriculture in much poorer communities than ours. Chicks, ducks, rabbits, llamas and many other animals can all help a family rise out of poverty. A \$120 donation to Heifer International provides a goat to a family who will drink and sell its milk, and then pass on the gift of its kids to other needy families in their community. Talk about a gift that keeps on giving! Members of our Missions Ministry Team will be in the narthex on Sundays after worship, with Heifer animal information and order sheets. For each donation, you can pick a beautiful greeting card to give to your loved one, explaining your gift. Heifer International has been ending hunger and poverty in 25 countries for over 70 years. Your donations make their work possible. Thank you.

Haven From Hunger Our next food donation will be Canned and Boxed meals. These will be blessed in worship and taken to HFH when we serve there on January 28<sup>th</sup>



### Angel Tree

Angels have been flying off the tree in the Narthex and now gifts are appearing beneath it. It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas! It will be a blessed one for many people because of you. City Mission of Boston gathers these donations to stock their Christmas Shop with gifts for homeless and poor in the greater Boston area. Please return UNWRAPPED gifts to church **by December 16**. Gifts will be loaded into our Green Wagon and blessed in worship that day, then delivered for distribution before Christmas. Thank you!



### **COATS – ABRIGOS – MANTEAUX**

No matter what language you speak, if you don’t have a coat, you are cold! Winter Coats for Mission of Deeds are being collected in the Missions closet off of the church’s front entry way, until Feb 15<sup>th</sup>. Needed are: New and Gently Used Warm, Casual Everyday Coats and Gloves, as well as New Hats for both Children and Adults. These will be distributed to MOD clients.

## A Christmas Letter

Good People of Centre Church,

One of the most important ways that I hear God's voice is through music, and I know that I am not alone in that. Music soothes, challenges, hopes, swells, and carries all possible emotion. And this year, as we read through Advent and Christmas in the Gospel of Luke, we are treated to some of the most beautiful hymns in scripture. In Luke we find both Zechariah's Song and Mary's Song and we hear the Angels singing to the shepherds.

I have long been drawn to Mary. I have dreamed of her, prayed with her, wept with her. I have visited the Church of the Visitation that stands on the supposed ground where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived and where Mary visited, pregnant with our Savior; the place where she sang her beautiful hymn of praise for what God has done for her and what God will do through her. Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46b-55) carries echoes of the song Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, sang in thanksgiving as she relinquished her son to minister to the Lord, in the presence of the priest Eli. Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) is thought to have been added into the story of Samuel by the biblical editors and dates to at least the time of King David. It is also probable that it predated that time in some form in the oral tradition of ancient Hebrew worship. Thinking of Mary singing a well-known hymn at a time of profound activity in her life actually rings true for me. And singing it each Christmas connects us in time and across time to all of God's people and to the truth of God's holy and saving love born into the world through a poor, young woman from Nazareth.

There is a beautiful song by the Wailin' Jennys called *One Voice*. This year the USAF Band performed it for the holiday season as a reminder of the power of unity. In it I hear Hannah and Mary, boldly singing their song of God's love and justice in the midst of their own fear and awe. In it I hear you and me, singing in the midst of our own time and the knowledge of the joys and sorrows of our own lives. In it I hear all of us singing with all people who recognize that together we magnify the light and love of the God of ALL!

*One Voice* music and lyrics by Ruth Moody of The Wailin' Jennys

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| This is the sound of one voice        | This is the sound of voices three          |
| One spirit, one voice                 | This is the sound of voices three          |
| The sound of one who makes a choice   | This is the sound of all of us             |
| This is the sound of one voice        | Singing with love and the will to trust    |
| This is the sound of one voice        | Leave the rest behind it will turn to dust |
| This is the sound of voices two       | This is the sound of all of us             |
| The sound of me singing with you      | This is the sound of all of us             |
| Helping each other to make it through | This is the sound of one voice             |
| This is the sound of voices two       | One people, one voice                      |
| This is the sound of voices two       | A song for every one of us                 |
| This is the sound of voices three     | This is the sound of one voice             |
| Singing together in harmony           | This is the sound of one voice             |
| Surrendering to the mystery           |  |

I hope that your Christmas season rings with the music that lifts you up. I hope that our Christmas season gathers our voices together, singing the songs of hope, peace, joy, and love that fill us to overflowing so that we can sing them in a world that desperately needs to hear them. It is our faithful response modeled after Hannah and Mary and all who sang before us. It is our hopeful practice to pass these songs on to those who will come after us. One people, one voice!

Blessed Christmas, *Rev. Nancy*

## *Our Opportunities*

|   |                                      |   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Sun. Dec 16</b><br><i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>   | <b>10:00am</b><br><br><b>5:00 pm</b> | <b>Sunday Worship - Sanctuary</b><br>Nursery – Library/Nursery<br>Pageant Rehearsal<br><b>Blue Christmas - Chapel</b> |
| Wed. Dec. 19  | 7:00 pm                              | Bible Study-Pastor's Outer Office   |
| Thurs. Dec. 20  | 1:00 pm<br>7:30 pm                   | Bible Study- Library<br>Rehearsal- Choir Room   |
| Sat. Dec. 22  | 9:00 am                              | Pageant Practice  |
| <b>Sun. Dec. 23</b><br><i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i> | <b>10:00 am</b><br><br>6:30 pm       | <b>Sunday Worship-Sanctuary</b><br>Christmas Pageant<br>Nursery – Library/Nursery<br>Christmas Concert - Sanctuary    |
| Tues. Dec. 24<br><i>Christmas Eve</i>                 | 5:00 pm                              | Family Candlelight Service<br>in the Sanctuary<br>Candlelight Service of Lessons &<br>Carols in the Chapel            |
| Wed. Dec. 25  |                                      | <i>Merry Christmas</i>  |
| <b>Sun. Dec. 30</b>                                   | <b>10:00am</b>                       | <b>Sunday Worship- Sanctuary</b><br>Nursery- Nursery/Library<br>Faith Formation Activity                              |

In addition to our scheduled church activities, Centre Church hosts Boy Scout Troop #48, Cub Pack #48, Girl Scouts, Alanon, Alateen, Women's AA, and the Essex Society of Genealogists. Please call the church office if you would like more information about any of these groups. (781-334-3050)

***Church Office Hours – 9 am-3 pm Mon.-Fri.***

***The next issue of Tower Notes – Week of January 7, 2019***

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