

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

5 Summer Street, Lynnfield, Massachusetts 01940 Phone: 781-334-3050 Fax: 781-334-6463

Email: Office@Centre-Church.org Web Site: www.Centre-Church.org

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

July 2020

Doing Justice, Loving Mercy, and Walking Humbly

Dear Centre Church,

Since some of you are unable to join us online for worship and/or receive and read our new email newsletter, I want to share some of the words I have spoken into this very tumultuous time we are living in. On June 4th, I participated in a Virtual Vigil for George Floyd hosted by the Town of Lynnfield and Lynnfield for Love. Here is some of what I said to all who gathered:

Welcome to everyone who is joining us tonight. I know that George Floyd's death and all that has happened since have deeply affected my spirit. I am grateful for this time together in which we can name our pain, our fear, our confusion, and our commitment, our solidarity, and ultimately our hope. My message for myself and for our community tonight is simple and at the same time, so obviously challenging. That message is #BlackLivesMatter. ALL BLACK LIVES MATTER! And here is why the reply to Black Lives Matter is not All Lives Matter. Because All Lives don't matter in our nation. But it feels like with George Floyd's death, a threshold has been crossed, far too late for our black communities, too late for George and Amaud, and Brionna, and so many more...but crossed nonetheless. People are done with their black and brown neighbors, their black and brown siblings, their black and brown children being murdered by the very ones sworn to protect them or by those whose hate has been sanctioned by our unjust systems and corrupt leaders. On the other side of that threshold, we are invited to hear the "too", the "also," when we hear #BlackLivesMatter. Black Lives Matter, too. Or in other words, All Lives WILL matter when Black Lives Matter. I say

this to you, very clear on who I am and who I am not. I am an ordained minister of word and sacrament in the United Church of Christ, whose faith teaches that each and every person is created in the image of God, loved by God, worthy and valuable. I am a Christian called to look at the world through the LOVE taught to us in the person and life of Jesus Christ. In addition to being a Christian pastor, I am a white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, married woman, a mother of 3 adult children, and many other identifiers. What I am not though, clearly: I am not Black. I cannot begin to describe to you the experience of being black in this nation. But what I can do is listen to those who are living Black in America. I can center their stories. I can open my heart and mind to their experience and believe what they tell me. I can claim boldly that Black Lives Matter and show up intentionally against all the machinations of our society that value supremacy, superiority, or complacency. And I can invite you to join me. I am not perfect. I don't get it right all the time. I am still learning. And I want to offer you safe space to do the same. To ask questions, to learn alongside one another, to work for justice and peace alongside each other and in solidarity with our black citizens, neighbors, and friends.

Friends, we have work to do. We are called to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Whenever I find myself thinking, "But, what about..." or "But, I can't..." "But, I don't..." when confronted with my own privilege and with injustice, with the horror of someone else's story, I have started to ask myself, "What are you afraid of, Nancy?" Fear drives anger. Fear drives hatred. Fear is at the heart of any person or system seeking power over. And that fear is largely irrational and ill-conceived, built on lies. Lies that one group is

superior to another. Built on bad theology that claims God loves me more than the other, or the other more than me. Built on misinformation and misdirection that exists to perpetuate the injustice that props up the few while disadvantaging the many.

Beloved, we have work to do. The work of educating ourselves. The work of leaning into really hard conversations. The work of standing with and for our neighbors of color, the poor, the mistreated. The good news is, Jesus, our redeemer, is right alongside us for this hard and holy work. We should never, however, fail to understand that he will leave us to go and find the one who is lost, who is terrorized, who is left out. Perhaps when that happens, rather than standing there feeling left behind, we should join his search party!

In the name of our God who is Love,
Rev. Nancy



You are invited to our first ever Parking Lot Communion Services!

Centre Church, we are going to have two opportunities this summer to gather, socially distant style, in our parking lot for a worship service of Holy Communion, prayer, and music. You will be able to reserve a spot in the parking lot for Sunday, July 12 and Sunday, August 2, at 9:30 am or 10:30 am. **You are invited to bring enough bread and juice for your family.** We'll bless and break with Rev. Nancy leading us.

Please let us know if you would like to pull into your spot in order to open the lift gate and sit in the back of your vehicle and/or sit in lawn chairs at the back of your parking space. You may do either or both as long as you remain in your parking space for the duration of worship. (Note of caution: because of construction and COVID-19 concerns, our building will not be open for restroom or other use during the service, so please plan accordingly). Please sign up at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E094EAEA-C28A0FF2-parking> Or call the church office (781-334-3050) to reserve your spot.

Mission and Outreach

Matching Covid-19 Donations

We are matching donations our church members make to organizations hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Checks to the organizations below were sent in June as part of this program. Please send your donation receipts or check images to the church office for matching.

Charity	Amount
Chelsea Collaborative, Inc.	\$174.00
Re-Member - Lakota people	\$100.00
My Brother's Table	\$50.00
Feeding America	\$30.00
Greater Boston Food Bank	\$30.00
Citizens Inn	\$30.00
Total	\$414.00

Heifer

\$1809 was collected for Heifer International during FY2020. Funds came from the Living Gift Market in Advent, Heifer Muffins during Lent and filling our goat tube with quarters throughout the year. Outreach Ministries voted to add \$1191 from our FY2020 budget to make a \$3000 donation to Heifer this fiscal year. It was sent on 6/18/2020.



Reid's Ride 2020

Things are different this year. Many fund-raising events have been cancelled or changed to follow social distancing guidelines. Reid's Ride, an annual bike-a-thon which raises funds to fight cancer in Adolescents and Young Adults, is "virtual" this year! Participants are encouraged to do any activity, anywhere by July 19th which was to be the date of the 2020 ride. The Centre Church Cyclers are each planning our own events. Please check out our team page at <https://www.firstgiving.com/team/401536> and join us, or donate to our efforts. We're in very unusual times lately but unfortunately, young people are still being diagnosed with cancer.

Stewardship Update

We have received 69 pledges so far, and we still have several outstanding pledges - people who pledged last year, but have not done so yet this year. We understand that these are challenging and uncertain times, but we hope that if you are able to pledge, you will return your pledge card as soon as possible. Accurate pledge data is essential for developing the FY 2021 budget.

Our building may be closed, but our church is still OPEN! Our staff is working hard to provide Sunday morning worship and coffee hour via YouTube and Zoom. They are also leading mid-week discussion and prayer groups for adults as well as programs for children and youth. We aren't able to make meals for Bread and Roses or volunteer at Haven From Hunger, but we continue to support those organizations and others with financial contributions. The work of the church continues despite the pandemic. We encourage everyone who can to please return your pledge card and continue supporting the ministry of Centre Church. If you need a pledge card, please call the church office and one will be mailed to you.

Note to those who give on line: If you plan to increase your pledge, you will need to go the church website: www.Centre-Church.org and click on "Online Giving" to change the dollar amount.

News from Around the Parish

Our love and sympathy are extended to Nancy Lauzon and her family upon the death of her husband, Roger on June 5. Services were private.

Our love and prayers are extended to Sheri Wilson and her family upon the death of her sister, Misty.

Congratulations to Jeff and Marcia Stevens who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on June 11. (Theirs' was the first wedding to be held in our sanctuary.)



Parish Council Minutes

The May 26, 2020 minutes from Parish Council are available online at <http://www.centre-church.org/Council>

Please contact the office if you would like a copy.



Faith Formation Ministry Updates



If you missed the Celebration Sunday Worship video on June 7, you can watch it anytime by heading over to our YouTube channel:

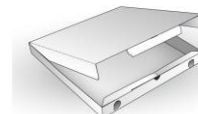
www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/

Parent/Child Worship Participation:

If you and/or your child are interested in reading, singing or otherwise participating in worship this summer, reach out to Larainne or Pastor Nancy. We'd love to have more/different voices!

Church-To-Go!

The Faith Formation Ministry Team will be delivering pizza boxes filled with lessons and activities for parents to do with their children over the summer. We are using the Whole People of God Curriculum.



Parent Support Group:

Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.

Jill DiGiorgio and Larainne Wilson continue to lead a virtual support group for parents of school-aged children. Please email them or contact them via Facebook for the link.

lwilson@centre-church.org and jilldigorgio@yahoo.com



Under The Tent: Sundays at 4 p.m.

Children up to Grade 4 are invited to join Ms. Larainne "Under The Tent" -- make a fort, tent or other cozy space in your living room or wherever you'd like (even outside if it is a nice day!) and join in for a check-in, story and discussion on Sunday afternoons. Please email Larainne at lwilson@centre-church.org for the link. You can also PM her on Facebook.

When it Rains Inside

As all homeowners know, there is always something inside or outside our homes that needs attention. And things break. On Saturday, May 30th, just after 6:00 am, that happened at Centre Church. Our building suffered under a torrent of water from a failed sprinkler head high up in the attic above the balcony and sanctuary. As good fortune would have it, Chuck Cotting was on his way by as the fire department arrived on scene to attend to the sprinkler system alarms. Once the source was located, mitigation began. Thank you to Chuck, Scott, Bruce, and Jeff for handling the details and arranging for the assessments and getting started on remediation and reconstruction. We give thanks to God that we are already sharing worship in another "space" as we attend to this mess.

The water cascaded down through the attic's insulation into the Sanctuary and Balcony, soaking ceilings, walls and floors, into Richards Hall and the closet to form Lake Richards.

This is now a very large insurance claim. Centre Church retained a Public Adjuster, Matt Alphen, to represent the Church. This was much too large and complex a claim to be handled only by our volunteers, most of whom work full time.

Chuck is working with Matt Alphen to line up all the contractors needed to complete our reconstruction project – painters, contractors, commercial kitchen firms, plumbers, electricians, flooring companies. The largest projects involve all of the flooring in the sanctuary, narthex, Richards Hall and the kitchen, as well as the ceiling in Richards Hall. In addition, the evaluation and repair of the sprinkler system is ongoing as we seek to make sure there are no repeat performances! Throughout this situation, we continue to ask ourselves, "What blessings can be found in and among this tragedy?" The Spirit of the Living God will most certainly be blowing through this church and her people amidst this tragedy, just as certainly the dehumidifiers and fans are drying and blowing the air inside our building. We must keep our ears, eyes, and hearts, open for what God would have us do in order to continue living the love of Christ in the world and for the world and how our building serves that mission!

Stay tuned! We will keep you updated through Tower Notes and the weekly email!

Parking Lot Communion Service: Sunday, July 12

Join us as we gather, socially distant style, in our parking lot for a worship service of Holy Communion, prayer, and music. You can reserve a spot in the parking lot for **9:30 am or 10:30 am**.

Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule

- **Summer Schedule: Sunday Morning** worship video premieres **each Sunday at 9 am**.
Subscribe and set reminders at www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/
- Zoom Fellowship hour – **Sundays at 9:30 am** (with the exception of July 12)
- Under The Tent: **Sundays at 4pm** – gathering for children with Ms. Larainne.
- Midweek Prayer and Support Gathering: **Wednesday at 4pm** with Rev. Nancy.
- Parent Support Group: **Thursdays at 7:30 pm** with Ms. Larainne and/or Jill DiGiorgio

While our building might be closed, our church has been open for 300 years and counting!

