

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 2, 2009

I'm Afraid!

I'm afraid! I'm afraid when I have an unusual feeling in my body that tells me I should see my doctor. I'm afraid when I listen to someone talk about their problem and suddenly find myself realizing that I have had similar symptoms. I'm afraid when my retirement funds lose one-third of their value due to the stock market crash. I'm afraid when I see the vehicle behind me closing in fast and I have no where to go because I have a car in front of me. I'm afraid when my phone rings after midnight because it is likely bad news about someone I care about. I'm even more afraid when there is a knock at my door after midnight.

Many years ago (before cell phones) when I was still in my late teens or early twenties, still living at home with my brother and mother, there was a knock at our door. With a great deal of hesitation I got out of bed. My mother and I spoke wondering who it could be at this hour. I went to the door and spoke through it asking: "Who is there?"

The voice on the other side of the door was a high pitched voice but not the voice of a woman. I wondered, "Should I answer the door or call the police?"

The voice explained that there had been a serious auto accident nearby and asked me to call the police.

I called the police and then felt guilty that I had not responded more quickly. And yet, I found the "voice" on the other side of the door to be unusual and it made me afraid.

What's knocking on our doors that causes us to be afraid?

Will our children find jobs after college?

Will the special challenges that some of us face ruin our holidays?

The list goes on....

God speaks into the fears we face. God speaks through the words of Joshua 1:9:

*"Be strong and courageous;
do not be frightened or dismayed,
for the Lord your God is with you
wherever you go."*

And yet, we are afraid. **And fear has something to teach us.**

What does fear have to teach us? It teaches us to stop, pause, and consider the risks. It teaches us that something is more serious than the normal stuff of life.

In The Sanctuary

Sunday, December 6, 2009

Second Sunday of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4 Luke 3:1-6

10:00 A.M. Holy Communion

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
"Jesus Is Introduced"

Children may worship with their families before going to Todd Hall for an Advent Workshop.

The Nursery will be open in Room 14.

Sunday, December 13, 2009

Third Sunday of Advent

Luke 1:39-45

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
"Welcome to Wonder"

Children's Message: "What to Prepare"

Children may worship with their families before going to Rotation Workshops.

The Nursery will be open in Room 14.

It's like having a baby. Fear helps us realize that we are accepting an enormous responsibility, that we cannot bear this responsibility, this gift of life alone.

Fear teaches us that our children are not under our absolute control; that we give them life and then gradually let them go.

Fear teaches us to pray: realizing that we cannot control everyone and/or everything. We need the Lord's help to calm the waters, to calm our fears, and to help us make the right choices.

Fear teaches us that what is on the other side of the door can be dangerous. Firefighters touch the doors in a burning building before entering to determine whether or not there is fire on the other side. If the door is hot to the touch, the dangers are real.

My own fears teach me to respect the fears of others, not brush them off. Never brush off the fears of your children, of your best friend, of anyone.

If Mary had brushed off Gabriel's announcement that she was to give birth to Jesus as some silly dream, perhaps Mary would have been dismissed by God as not capable of understanding the responsibility she was being given.

If Moses had not been afraid to be the one to lead the people, on God's behalf, out of the slavery and tyranny of Egypt, perhaps more would have suffered and died and we would be reading about the "one who failed to understand God's call for his life."

Yes, fear has the capacity to paralyze and incapacitate. When God asks me to take on a responsibility I am afraid. I am afraid that the words I say in prayer with someone will not be good enough, not sound sincere. I am afraid that the lessons I teach in Confirmation and in preaching will not be helpful. And yet, I am the one who God has called and placed in that moment. I need to trust that call, the training I have had, the experience of my 35 years of ministry, and the faith that the congregation I serve has placed in me and speak, act, and to take the leap of faith without fear.

Being afraid is not an excuse to turn down God's call to us. It is a gift, and it is an opportunity.

Mary was afraid when God called out to her. But, despite her fear she knew that the Spirit of the Lord rested upon her. When God calls to us, that same Spirit is with us too. And as we look fear in the face and move forward trusting God's call, our experience, and the others who walk with us, we, too, shall find that *"Gladness and joy will*

overtake us and our sorrow and sighing will flee away." (Isaiah 35:10)

Have a blessed Advent.

Yours in the coming Savior,

Dennis

Sunday Morning With the Children

Nursery Care: Our Nursery is open each Sunday for infants through age 3. Join us for playtime and stories in Room 14.

Rotation Sensation: Our Advent Workshop is this Sunday, December 6th. The children and youth will join together for a memorable morning in Todd Hall following a brief worship time with their families in the Sanctuary. Christmas crafts will focus around the theme of Advent and the Jesse Tree. Children and youth will also continue to prepare for the upcoming pageant. All are encouraged to attend. We look forward to this fun-filled morning!

Advent activities as well as pageant preparation will continue during Rotation Sensation on Sunday, December 13th. All children PreK – 8th Grade are encouraged to attend.

Youth Group News

There will be NO meeting on December 6th. All Middle School and High School Youth are encouraged to participate/help out at the Advent Workshop during church!

On Sunday, December 13 both groups will be traveling to Natick in the afternoon for a Christian Rock Concert by Jason and deMarco. Check out their website at: <http://www.jasonanddemarco.com> to listen to their music and read their bio. It promises to be a lot of fun and a really great time. **Permission slips must be returned to the church office by FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4th.** Anyone who did not receive a permission slip should log onto the church website and download a copy. Any parent who will be available to drive should call Barbara Langill or Jill Couillard in the church office.

Christmas Concert

Save the Date – December 20 – 6:30 p.m.
Special Music by our Choirs

The Heifer Marketplace – Dec. 6

Following worship on December 6 we will have catalogs and order forms readily available in the narthex to make your purchases of Heifer gift animals quick and easy. Please consider a holiday contribution in your name, the name of a family member/friend and help us to buy another Ark with \$5,000 of purchased animals.

Mary Ann and Allie Parker, Heifer Coordinators

Shopping with Spirit

You can take some of the stress out of holiday shopping and support Centre Church by purchasing shopping cards. The cards can be used as gifts, or you can use them to make purchases. Place your order on Sunday morning, and we will have your cards the following Sunday. For a complete list of retailers, visit www.glscrip.com. If you can't attend church, but would like to order cards, please call Debbie Cotting (781-593-3120) or Sandi Watson (781-334-7032). We'd be happy to help you. Since September, the church has earned \$1055.35 from the Shopping Card Program.

Sandi Watson, Phil Triffletti, Debbie Cotting
Shopping Card Coordinators

Bread & Roses

We all enjoyed hearing from Ted Hubbard on November 22 on the impact of our Congregation's work for Bread & Roses during the past 22 years when we have provided a meal every month. The cost to fund the meal is approximately \$300/month. Anyone or group of individuals wishing to fund or contribute to a meal can earmark a contribution accordingly or contact the Church Office for additional information. 100% of your contribution goes toward this worthy cause.

If anyone is interested in following up on other opportunities to assist Bread & Roses the telephone # is 978-681-8768, fax # is 978-237-5957 and the website is breadandroses@breadandroses1.com.

Christmas Tree & Gifts

Donated gifts under the tree in the narthex will go to the Crombie Street Mission in Salem, MA. These items will be delivered after the Sunday Service on Dec 20. Articles of warm clothing such as socks, underwear, sweatshirts & pants, mittens and gloves in all sizes are needed.

Christmas Cards

Did you know that Americans produce 5 million tons of trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's day? That's 25 percent more than we generate in a typical five or six week period during the rest of the year. To lighten the load and go green, consider making a donation instead of sending out individual Christmas cards. Send a Christmas card to the Church with your donation. The Christmas cards will be displayed on the Christmas tree in the Sanctuary and recognized in the *Tower Notes* newsletter. The proceeds will go to the City Mission Society in Boston – an organization founded by the Congregationalists.

Cookie Bakers Needed

On Sunday, Dec. 20, the High School Youth Group will be holding its 5th Annual Cookie Swap. We would like to ask everyone to help with this fundraiser by baking 2-3 dozen cookies and bringing them to the church library on Sunday morning. After worship, you will have the opportunity to purchase a decorated container to fill with your choice of cookies. This is a great way to have a variety of cookies on hand for the holidays, or perhaps even purchase an extra container or two to give away as gifts.

Toiletries Collected

The High School Youth Group is collecting basic toiletries to be made into "Spread the Joy" bags that will be given to the homeless during the holidays through the Boston City Mission Society. Basic items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, hand sanitizers, feminine hygiene products, tissues, etc. are needed. Small sizes are better, but all sizes are accepted. (please no mouthwash). There will be a basket in the Narthex for your donations on Sunday Dec. 6 and 13.

Christmas Offering

The Outreach portion of the offering will be divided 1/3 each among Bread & Roses, Youth Missions, and OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission). These are Outreach's top priorities.

You will find a specially marked Christmas Offering envelope in your envelope packet or in the pew racks as we approach Christmas.

Food of the Month: Canned Ham and Pineapple

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Sunday, December 6: Head Ushers: Bruce Weaver and Jeff Law. Greeters: Judi & Tony Lucia. Lay Reader: Rick Carey. Provide Altar Flowers: Charlotte Kilgore. Deliver Altar Flowers: Marjorie Potter & Carol White. Coffee Hour: Liz & Bill Seelig. Advent Candle: Couillard Family. Lights Out beginning Dec. 4: Dave Clough.

Sunday, December 13: Head Usher: Carrie Pericola. Greeters: Norma & Parker Holloway. Lay Reader: Annabel Aldrich. Provide Altar Flowers: Dick Evans; Deliver Altar Flowers: Chuck Cotting. Coffee Hour: Timmons Family. Lights Out beginning Dec. 11: Roger Batchelder.

Our Opportunities

Sunday - December 6	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:20 am 11:30 am 11:30 am 11:30 am	Holy Communion – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 14 Advent Workshop – Downstairs Youth Choir – Choir Room Confirmation Class – Kitchen Heifer Marketplace - Narthex
Tuesday - December 8	10:00 am 12:30 pm 7:30 pm	Caregivers – Fireside Room Get-Together Wheel – Fireside Rm Diaconate – Pastor’s Office
Wednesday - December 9	7:00 pm	Membership – Pastor’s Office
Thursday - December 10	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - December 11	10:30 am	Scripture Study – Pastor’s Office
Sunday - December 13	10:00 am 10:00 am 11:30 am 11:30 am afternoon	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Rotations and Nursery Youth Choir – Choir Room Confirmation Class – Kitchen Youth go to Concert in Natick
Thursday - December 17	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - December 18	10:30 am	Scripture Study – Pastor’s Office

Our love and prayers are with Muriel Badger (new address) at RiverCourt Residences, 8 West Main St., West Groton, MA 01450; Louise Allen at Beaumont Nursing Home, Westborough; Marion Barnes, Harborside: Cedar Glen, Danvers; Glady Davis, Haven Health Care, Derry NH; Carolyn Furey, Overlook Masonic Health Ctr., Charlton; Hal Holappa, Veterans’ Hospital, Bedford; Helen Miller, at the Meadows, Edgewood; June Rose, 37 Spring St., Lunenburg, MA 01462. Our prayers are with James Papagni serving in Afghanistan.

The Church Office is open 9am-3pm Monday – Friday.
The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of December 14.

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM on next page

deadline for placing orders in Dec 7th

POINSETTIA ORDER

I would like to order for \$8.50 each: ____ red poinsettia

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ made payable to Centre Congregational Church.

These flowers have been given by _____

in memory of _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

___ I will take my plant(s) home after one of the services on Christmas Eve. (5 pm or 11 pm)

___ I wish to donate my plant(s) to the hospitalized, bereaved or shut-in.

Plants will be displayed in the sanctuary on Sunday, December 20.

A list of donors will be printed in the bulletin on that day.

Monday, December 7 is the deadline for placing orders.