

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. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey, Pastor, Pastor@Centre-Church.org

The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

Jill Couillard & Barbara Langill, Co-Directors of Christian Ed & Youth, ChristianEd@Centre-Church.org

Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director

Sally MacDonald, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 16, 2009

Incarnation

Oh, what a big word to describe the coming of God into the world in human form, in the form of Jesus.

- Incarnation is like bringing to reality a dream that you have had.
- It's like taking a recipe on paper and cooking it, and then, seeing it come to life before you for your enjoyment. The gift of the meal is only realized when it is eaten to provide nourishment and life.
- Incarnation is like visualizing winning the game and then doing it.
- It's like imagining you can make someone smile by what you do and then doing something that brings a smile to their face.
- In some ways it is like these things but it's not these things.

Roberta Porter writes:¹ *"We worship not a hidden God, covered, clothed in mystery, inaccessible. We worship God revealed -- a child, born of humble means, forsaking glory to be one of us, one with us, Emmanuel. We worship God reconciling, giving life for us, and raised to new life, calling us by the Spirit to give our lives away for love."*

We are all children of God, created in the image of God. Therefore, we are each a part of God's incarnation in the world. I am also my earthly father and mother's child. Therefore, to know me is to know, in part, my father and mother. I am also a product of the place, culture, schooling, teaching and people with whom I have lived. To know me is to know something of all that has been part of my life.

Many people see Jesus as a fascinating man and the founder of a religion. But many, if not most

of them, find it difficult to understand Jesus as the son of God.

I see Jesus as the son of God because only God could do what Jesus did, to live, to be vulnerable, to die, and to rise again.

The love of God is stronger than death and yet, it is more fragile than the weakest of twigs dried of all moisture. Jesus made himself more

In the Sanctuary

December 20, 2009

4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Christmas Pageant led by the children of the church.

The Pageant tells the story of the Birth of Jesus through our unique dramatic interpretation.

The Nursery will be open in Room 14.

Christmas Eve

December 24, 2009

5:00 p.m. Candlelight Service in the Sanctuary

Music by the Youth Choir

and a Christmas Message by the Rev. Dr. Bailey.

Familiar Carols, Christmas Scriptures concluding with "Silent Night" in candlelight.

Designed with Children in Mind.

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service in the Chapel

A joyful celebration of Jesus' Birth

with the aid of Scripture, Preaching,

Music by our Senior Choir and Familiar Carols.

The service concludes with

"Silent Night" in candlelight.

December 27, 2009

First Sunday after Christmas

10:00 a.m. Morning Worship

Luke 2:1-14 Colossians 3:12-17

Sermon: "About Passion"

Children's Message: "Put on Love"

Children may worship with families for entire service.

¹ Alive Now, November/December, 2003, inside cover.

vulnerable than most of us dare ponder. He teaches us that true strength is found in giving your life for another. True strength is loving someone else relentlessly, holding nothing back, and then having your heart broken when that person leaves you either in life or in death.

A friend once cried with me and for me as I went through a very challenging time in my life. There I saw Jesus, physically, and knew God was present, spiritually. Flesh and blood, and God's pure love for me. I would not know God if I had not seen Jesus in the boy of my friend. In that challenging time in my life I experienced the death of many of my hopes and dreams and yet, I eventually came to have new life through the love of God experienced most powerfully in the presence of such friends.

What is born to us in Christmas is not a nativity set. What is born at Christmas is a pregnant moment, full of possibilities, life, hope. It is the birth of a love that cannot help itself but to love far beyond all expectation and common sense. If we allow it, this Christmas birth is God, purely God, only God, entering into our hearts, minds, bodies and souls.

There is human love, measured, logical, carefully thought out with reason. Jesus knew that love while in his human form because it is that love that tempted him, wounded him, and killed him.

And then, there is God's love, that is not measured, illogical, and there is nothing careful about it. This love gives away everything we have and are in order to be a blessing and saving force in the life of another.

Well, Jesus was God's love and he lived his life, lost his life, but then, what looked like death was something greater.

Incarnation is, for us, when God enters our lives in the form of another human being who will do whatever it takes to love us, even if it means losing their estate, their future, their life. Incarnation is knowing that such love is not the end, but the beginning, the coming, and the Advent of God entering in.

Dare we, you and me, live in such bodies, be such bodies of Christ, and love with God's love?

Want to see Jesus in the flesh? See him in the person who works hard, travels far, and goes to great lengths to do something for you that you can never repay. Want to see Jesus in the body? See him in the person(s) who faithfully attend to your needs, no matter their own stresses.

Merry Christmas! Dennis

Christmas Concert – Dec. 20 – 6:30 p.m.

Join us at on Sunday, December 20 for Centre Church's Annual Christmas Concert with music by the Senior and Youth Choirs. A variety of anthems accompanied by piano and bass will be presented. Plan to come and enjoy singing some of your favorite Christmas Carols. Refreshments and a time of fellowship will follow the concert.

Rotation Sensation

Nursery Care: The Nursery is open each week for infants – age 3. Come to Room 14 to enjoy some playtime and stories with our trained volunteers.

Rotation Sensation: Our pageant is being held this Sunday, Dec. 20! There will be no workshops. We invite all the children to participate in the pageant. See details below.

Pageant Rehearsal will be this Saturday, December 19 in the Sanctuary. Animals and angels only need to come from 11-12. Everyone else needs to be there **promptly at 10:00 a.m.** If you have any questions, kindly contact Linda Ladd. (781-334-6170)

All participants should be here on Sunday by 9:15. We will meet in Todd Hall for last minute preparations and to take pictures. The pageant will be presented to the congregation during the worship service on Sunday, December 20th.

Youth News

This year our youth made over 100 cards to distribute to homeless people. We are asking that you donate any unused cards from this season to Jill Couillard or Barbara Langill. This will make our task much easier next year! Thank you.

Our next scheduled meeting is Sunday, January 10 from 6:00-7:30. We will be having an "Epiphany Party". Please bring a \$5-10 gift to swap. It promises to be a lot of fun. Details soon!

We invite all high school youth to attend a showing of "To Save a Life" on Sunday, January 24. We will meet in the church parking lot promptly at 11:15 a.m. The movie will begin at 12:00 noon. The cost is \$10.00 and tickets must be purchased **by January 10, 2010** from Jill Couillard. Permission slips will be distributed soon.

From the Mailbox

Dear Friends, Especially at this season I am more grateful than ever for your friendship, cards and prayers this past year. The church flowers were always beautiful and the visits with those of you who brought them were a joy. We are so fortunate to have Dennis as our minister. He was always there at the opportune time. I don't know how you do it, Dennis. It is amazing. Thank you. And thanks to each and everyone. - Charlotte Orrall

Dear Friends in Centre Congregational Church, My deepest appreciation for the kindness shown to me when I was operated on for a new hip. Thank you for all the cards and the loyalty shown me during my recuperation at the rehab center. A blessed Christmas to you and all your families. Priscilla Hahn (180 Marblehead St., N. Reading MA 01864)

News From Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to Shirley Orr upon the recent death of her brother, Bob King. A Memorial Service was held in Montana.

Our love and sympathy are extended to Spencer Campbell upon the death of his wife, Betty on December 4. A private service was held.

New Addresses:

Barbara Becker, 603 Essex Village, Lynnfield
781-342-5197

Margaret Markham, 407 Essex Village, Lynnfield
781-334-3649 (same phone)

Is Your New Year's Resolution to be Less Angry?

Or are you upset by angry people? Come to a one-hour presentation and discussion of anger management on January 3 at 11:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room. We'll look at anger in scripture and what advice the Bible gives in how to deal with anger. You'll be able to take a short confidential self test to assess your level of anger.

Jane Ross MDiv MEd, is on the clinical staff of New England Pastoral Institute with offices located at Centre Church. Jane counsels individuals and couples with relationship issues, depression, life transitions, trauma, & compulsive or addictive behaviors. She is leading a 12-week group on anger management for women starting Tuesday evening, Jan.12th. Check www.nepastoral.org or call 617-947-7209 (cell) for more info.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Sunday, December 20: Head Usher: Jeff Law. Greeters: Bjorkman Family. Coffee Hour: Kim and Kerry Morrissey. Advent Candles: Lowe Family. Lights Out beginning Dec. 18: Al Johnson.

Christmas Eve: 5 p.m. Christ Candle: Bjorkman Family.

Christmas Eve: 11 p.m. Christ Candle: Mary and Johnathan McCarthy

Holiday Festival Update

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of our festival in November. It was raining outside but you would not have known it from the atmosphere inside. People were buzzing around throughout the church. It was so nice to pass through the kitchen and dining area and see all the people sitting there. A time for enjoying all the delicious food, catching up with friends and also to make some new friendships. I heard from quite a few people about how they really had never had the chance to get to know someone until that day. Working, eating and chatting together brings out the best in people. A few people have already told me where they would like to work if we do it again next year as they had so much fun. I met some church members who were new to me just by picking up donations at their houses. The fellowship of doing something like this is so important to our church community.

Thank you to all of you that shopped, donated items, worked on the tables, picked up items, baked, made up baskets for the raffles, set up or cleaned up, priced items, etc. Our kitchen crew was so wonderful too. They did a great job and received many, many compliments. It is a lot of work but we couldn't have done it without all your help. Also, it was great having three co-chairs working on the fair too this year. Thank you to Kathi Martin, Nancy Miller and Carrie Pericola for remaining so calm and being so organized.

The committee is happy to report that between the money raised from renting out 19 craft tables and money raised at the festival, we made \$4,400.00.

THANK YOU!

Donna Marino, Kathi Martin
Nancy Miller, Carrie Pericola

Opportunities for Giving

To All Our Friends at Centre Church Christmas Greetings!

David Balser, Arno & Marilyn Bommer, Harvey & Jean Card, Chuck, Debbie & Jason Cotting, Ginny Daniels, Ginny Davis, Martha Emerson, Ed & Barbara Ericson, Priscilla Hahn, Betty Hayter, Marilyn McCarthy, Shep & Susan Spear, Bradlee & Larry Troy.

Consider making a donation to City Mission Society in Boston instead of sending out individual greetings to your church friends. Send a card to the church with your donation. The cards will be displayed on the tree in the narthex.

It's not too late! There will be another list of donors in the next *Tower Notes*.

Send along your greetings for the new year!

Christmas Offering

Each year Centre Church takes a special Christmas Offering which is divided between local Centre Church needs and recipients designated by Outreach Ministries. This year the Outreach portion of the offering will be divided 1/3 each among Bread and Roses, Centre Church Youth Missions and OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission.) Specially marked Christmas Offering envelopes are in your envelope packet or will be available at Sunday morning services and on Christmas Eve.

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 December 20. Articles of warm clothing such as socks, underwear, sweatshirts & pants, mittens and gloves in all sizes are needed and very much appreciated by the clients of the shelter.

Cookie Swap

The High School Youth Group will be holding its 5th annual Cookie Swap this Sunday, Dec. 20 in the Library. Please help with this fundraiser by baking 2- 3 dozen cookies and dropping them off in 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. Large containers will be \$10.00 /small containers \$5.00.

Heifer Ornaments

The sheep ornaments made by the PreK/K/1st Grade class will be available for \$1.00 at the Cookie Swap. These make great gift tags and are perfect for giving along with your Heifer Gift Cards.

Food of the Month: Canned Ham and Pineapple

Our Opportunities

Sunday - December 20	10:00 am 10:00 am 11:30 am 11:30 am 11:30 am 6:30 pm	Christmas Pageant – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 14 Cookie Swap – Library Youth Choir – Choir Room Confirmation Class – Kitchen Christmas Concert - Sanctuary
Christmas Eve - December 24	5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Candlelight Service – Sanctuary Candlelight Service - Chapel
Friday - December 25		<i>Merry Christmas!</i>
Sunday - December 27	10:00 am 10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Children in Church
Friday - January 1		<i>Happy New Year!</i>

Our love and prayers are with Muriel Badger 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 December 21-23;
9am-12pm December 24, 28-31.

The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of December 28.
