

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 30, 2009

New Life

While the New Year approaches we are inclined to think about making new plans, and/or following through with plans we have been thinking about. We also think about the year that is ending, the things that we have accomplished, friends and family that we have lost. We might also think about disappointments of this past year.

I think about how with the birth of Jesus we have been given new life through an act of God. This act of God is for our benefit, giving us an opportunity to see God face-to-face. It is an opportunity for us to see "what if." What if God was here. What would God do?

Well, God was here in the form of Jesus and we saw for ourselves what God would do.

For example, there is a crowd of people in a room. In that crowd there is a person that no one talks to for some reason. The person is forlorn, feeling ignored, not part of the "in-crowd." There are awkward glances as people pretend not to see the person and yet, everyone is staring, chatting about who it might be. What would Jesus do? What would God have us do? Well, Jesus would talk with the person, perhaps before talking to everyone else. Jesus might also make us aware of our hypocritical ways, how we make a person feel like an outcast through our behavior.

One New Year's resolution for us could be to learn how to make people feel welcome, no matter who they are, whether we have seen them before or not.

Our church is our community of practice. Each week we gather for worship to learn, to give thanks to God, to sing about what we believe, and to practice discipleship in a place and with people with whom we are safe. If we can do what Jesus would do there, then, we have a greater chance of doing it elsewhere. If we make mistakes in our interactions

in our church, hopefully, I pray, we will also practice making apologies and giving and receiving forgiveness. If we can do it in our church community, hopefully we can begin to do it elsewhere.

What would Jesus do if we offended him? He would accept our apology and forgive us. Of course, our willingness and humility to apologize and ask for forgiveness opens the door to God's forgiveness, and hopefully the forgiveness of others.

Years ago I had a parishioner who realized that she had offended many people, including many in the church community. She came to realize that her behavior had been hurtful and offensive to many people and decided to try to make things right by apologizing to as many people as she could. She cherished the people and the relationships she had with people. Yet, her poor self-esteem combined with her need to be accepted led her to tease and

In the Sanctuary

January 3, 2010

10:00 A.M. Holy Communion

Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon Reflection: "The Wise Men Worship Jesus"

Children's Message: "The Season of Epiphany"

Children may worship with their families for the entire service. The Nursery will be open.

January 10, 2010

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Luke 3:15-17; Luke 3:21-22

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

"Preview of Jesus"

Children may worship with their families before going to Rotation Workshops. The Nursery will be open.

joke with people in a way that was often hurtful. She realized that people were pushing her away because they had been hurt and she was getting very lonely.

Maybe Jesus noticed her one day, came to her, and told her that he loved her. Maybe Jesus told her that she didn't need to be hurtful to others in order to be accepted. Maybe she went to Jesus and asked for help and for forgiveness. I have no doubt that she was so troubled about her behavior that she prayed about it. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that she prayed about it a lot over the years.

At one point my parishioner came to me and asked if she had ever offended me? It was hard for me to tell the truth because I cared for her and didn't want to offend her. I didn't need to answer her because she could tell by my hesitation in responding to her that she had her answer. She said, "*Dennis, I want to apologize to you for anything I have ever done and/or said to offend you.*" Of course, I accepted her apology while in shock that she, or anyone, would take such extreme measures to clear the slate and start over again.

Then, she said to me that she was apologizing to anyone whom she had ever offended. She asked me, "Dennis, do you know anyone else I have offended so that I can apologize to them?" Still in shock, I said "no." Such extreme measures!

And yet, these are the kind of extreme measures that Jesus has taken and continues to take for us and with us to give us new life. Jesus said, in many ways, you can turn your life around, have a fresh start, have a new beginning, get right with God, and with the people who are important to you. In the words of John the Baptist, "Repent and be saved!"

I know, it's easier said than done. It takes a lot more humility than we think we have because first we must admit that we have done something wrong, that we have let someone down, said the wrong things, forgotten to say the right things, and then, we let too much time go by before making right a wrong and it just feels too hard, way too hard to turn it around.

What would God have us do in these situations? We can pray and reflect about it, which often helps me more than I realize. It's just hard for me to take the time, to trust myself to give it to God, and to wait and listen for God's answer. Realizing that God has put me in a community of faith, I can trust one or more of God's people to help me find the answer and the way. Again, that's another act of humility, not easy for me.

Happy New Year! Let's get a fresh start. Ask Jesus to forgive us, renew us, and allow us to keep company with those whom Jesus would keep company with, the honored guests at God's table. That's where we will find Jesus.

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Children's Corner

Nursery: Our church nursery is open each week for infants – age 3. Join us in Room 14 for playtime and stories.

Rotations: There are no Rotation Workshops scheduled for January 3. Everyone is invited to worship with their families in the Sanctuary where we will learn about Epiphany. Rotation Workshops will resume on January 10 when we will begin the story of "The Prodigal Son."

Youth Groups

There are no Youth Group meetings scheduled for January 3. Both Youth Groups will meet on January 10 for an Epiphany Party. Please bring a gift (less than \$10) suitable for a boy or girl.

VIP Showing: "To Save a Life": The confirmands, mentors and high school youth are asked to attend this movie on January 24. Tickets are \$10.00 and must be pre-purchased on or before January 10. We will leave the church parking lot at 11:15 for a 12:00 show time at Hollywood Hits in Danvers. Please see Jill Couillard for tickets and questions regarding the movie.

This movie is geared toward teens and is written by Jim Britts, a youth pastor who combines his film degree with his passion to reach youth. The movie is about Jake Taylor and Roger Dawson who grew up as best friends. But in high school, Jake becomes a star athlete who has it all; a college scholarship and the perfect girl, an ideal life that comes at the exclusion of his childhood friend. Roger, who no longer fits in Jake's circle of friends, is tired of always being pushed aside and makes a tragic move with repercussions that cause Jake's world to spin out of control. As Jake searches for meaning, he begins a journey that will change his life forever. The movie is about the real-life challenges of teens and their choices. It is also about finding God on your own terms in your own way.

Heifer Ark

Thanks to everyone who helped to buy either an animal or merchandise from Heifer's Overlook Farm. Through your generosity we raised \$5,480.54 in 2009 which is more than enough to qualify us for our 10th Ark. Thanks again to all who helped to make this possible.

Happy New Year,
Allie Parker, Heifer Coordinator

New Year's Resolution?

Is your New Year's Resolution to be less angry or less upset by angry people? Come to a one-hour presentation and discussion of anger management on Sunday, January 3 after church. We'll look at anger in scripture and what advice the Bible gives in how to deal with anger. This session will be led by Jane Ross, M.Div, M.Ed. who is on the clinical staff of New England Pastoral Institute which offers counseling at Centre Church.

A 12-week group on anger management for women will start on Tuesday evening, Jan. 12 here at Centre Church. Check www.nepastoral.org or call 617-947-7209 (cell) for more information.

Missions Pantry: Our ongoing collections include Aluminum Can Pull Tabs, Used Eyeglasses, Non-Perishable Food, Travel Size Toiletries, and Used Cell Phones (numbers erased with charger.)

Beyond Youth Group

Join with other young adults this Sunday, Jan. 3 at 6 p.m. for food, friendship and fun. Get together with some of your friends from Centre Church. Several of you have expressed an interest in a mission trip to New Orleans with the Mennonites. Let's discuss possible dates, fundraisers, etc. Please e-mail Mrs. Langill or call the church office to let us know you are coming. 781 334-3050 or christianed@centre-church.org.

Tower Day School Applications

Tower Day School is accepting applications for the 2010/2011 academic year. We have 2 or 3 day classes for 3 year olds, 3 or 5 day classes for 4 year olds, a Transition Class for students before Kindergarten and a full day Kindergarten program. Centre Church members have priority for enrollment before January 15, 2010. Please call the school office for an application (781-334-5576) after January 4.

Thank You! Thank You!

Cookie Swap: Thanks to everyone who baked cookies for the High School Youth Cookie Swap and to everyone who purchased a bag to fill with cookies. Despite the snowy conditions, we were able to raise \$150.00 toward this year's mission trip.

Pageant: Thank you to Linda, Emily and Rebecca Ladd and Carolyn LaRosa for running our Christmas Pageant this year. Many thanks to all of the children and youth who participated. Everyone did a great job and it was a lot of fun.

Poinsettias: The Sanctuary and Chapel looked so lovely on Christmas Sunday and Christmas Eve. We extend our thanks to all who purchased and donated poinsettias and to Joe Gallo of Plantscape Designs for providing them. A special thanks to the caregivers and flower delivery group who distributed the plants to our shut-ins and those recently bereaved. With much appreciation to all who helped things run so smoothly.

Laurel Caputo for the Flower Committee

From the Mailbox

"I would like to give a special thanks to Dotty and Gage Whittier for all their help during my recent surgery. Thank you for picking up Johnathan each Sunday for Service and Confirmation Class. It was a big comfort to me knowing that he didn't miss any of the classes. Also, a big thanks to Chuck Cotting for the Sunday visit and flowers, and to Rev. Bailey for the phone calls. Again, thanks to all."

Blessings, Mary McCarthy

Many thank you notes have been received for the poinsettias recently delivered. They are posted on the bulletin board outside the Library.

News From Around the Parish

We rejoice with Reilly and Jennifer (Waugh) Bayer upon the baptism of their son, Adam Rowen Bayer on December 27. The Bayer family lives at 4 Tedford Lane in Lynnfield.

Our love and sympathy are extended to Phil Triffletti and his family upon the death of his mother, Barbara Triffletti of Plymouth, MA. Her memorial service will be on Saturday, Jan. 2 in Plymouth.

To All Our Friends
At Centre Church

Greetings for the New Year!

*Annabel Aldrich,
Kathi, Bo, Victoria, Emma and Luke Martin
Steven, Carrie & Hazel Pericola
Shirley Wendel
Edith Wendt*

These additional donations to City Mission Society
in Boston are much appreciated
for their continuing work.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Sunday, January 3:

Ushers: Jeff Law, Margaret Waugh, Bruce Weaver,
Carrie Pericola
Provide Altar Flowers: Dottie Holden
Lights Out Beginning January 1: Steve Furey

Sunday, January 10:

Ushers: Bruce Weaver, Karen and Paul Harrington,
Al Johnson
Greeters: The Delaney/Law Family
Coffee Hour: Pinky Warnock and Marcia Stevens
Provide Altar Flowers: Lola Leggett
Lights Out Beginning January 8: Rick Carey

Our Opportunities

Sunday - January 3	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 11:30 am 6:00 pm	Holy Communion - Sanctuary Children in Church Nursery – Room 14 Anger Management Workshop-FR Young Adult Group - Kitchen
Tuesday - January 5	7:00 pm	Membership – Pastor’s Office
Wednesday - January 6	8:00 am	Bread & Roses Meal Preparation
Thursday - January 7	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - January 8	10:30 am	Scripture Study – Pastor’s Office
Sunday - January 10	10:00 am 10:00 am 11:30 am 11:30 am 6:00 pm	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Rotations/Nursery Youth Choir – Choir Room Confirmation Class – Kitchen Youth Groups – Epiphany Party
Tuesday - January 12	10:00 am 7:30 pm	Caregivers – Fireside Room Diaconate – Pastor’s Office
Thursday - January 14	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - January 15	10:30 am	Scripture Study – Pastor’s Office

Our love and prayers are with Debby Triffletti and Richard “Bud” Doremus recuperating at home; 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 Monday-Friday.
The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of January 11
