

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

January 13, 2010

Vine and Branches

We had a small grape vine on our farm. It was behind the ground cellar and just below the smoke house, in the yard behind our house. I had to carefully mow the yard around it so as not to damage any of it. My mother would have us pick the grapes when they were ripe and she would can them in Mason quart jars. We would put them in the ground cellar for safe storage and enjoy them throughout the year. The grapes and the grape juice were very delicious.

Jesus talked about grape vines and branches as he compared our relationship to him and God (See John 15). Many times in scripture we hear of vines and other agricultural images. Sometimes such images were used to remind us of the ideal in which everyone who worked hard would enjoy the fruit of their labors and even, on occasion, bask in comfort. This ideal included the vision of Shalom in which people who followed God's commands, who lived together with others in peace and justice would benefit via abundant harvests and fair and equal treatment.

In the agricultural setting in which I grew up we did work hard. Part of that work was to store the resources we harvested from the land so that we continued to have what we needed for food through the winter and fall. Canning was a big part of my mother's work: grapes, peaches, pears, vegetables, pickles, etc. We also stored resources in the huge family freezer: meats, vegetables, fruits, etc. As a family we worked to provide what we needed for ourselves. It was fun sitting around the family table enjoying what we had grown and stored. I felt so connected to my family and to the land.

It is this connection that Jesus seeks to encourage in our relationships with each other and with God. Reading the Bible reminds us of the importance of this connection. When leaders of the

people of God, the Hebrew people, gave attention to God, what God commanded and to doing justice with regard to the people, they did well. When the leaders and the people did not honor and remember their connection to God, they faltered. Their society fractured into social classes (see the book of Amos or Jeremiah 23 for examples).

King Solomon is a good example. While most of us remember the wisdom of Solomon as is mentioned in the Bible, he had weaknesses which led to sad consequences. Solomon's extravagant lifestyle placed economic hardships upon the people and country. All of the luxury he enjoyed (lavish meals, luxurious palaces) took lots of money and heavy taxes. Solomon forgot that his true loyalty belonged to the God of Israel. His actions led to the idolatry of power and wealth.

Losing our connection with the source of all that we have in God, leads us to forget about loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. We then forget

In the Sanctuary

January 17, 2010

John 2:1-11 Isaiah 62:1-5

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
"God Comes To Us"

Children's Message: "Put On Love"
Children may worship with their families
for the entire service.

January 24, 2010

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Luke 4:14-21

Guest Preacher, the Rev. Nancy W. Strickland
Children may worship with their families
before going to Rotation Workshops.
The Nursery will be open in Room 14.

how important it is to connect with our neighbors. Solomon's pleasures came at a great expense to others. Remembering that we are all branches attached to the true vine, in God's love, will help us to avoid hoarding and, instead, to care for each other.

If I wasn't careful in my mowing and damaged the vine, the whole body of the grape vine would suffer. If I didn't do my part on the farm, the whole farm and family would suffer. In fact, when my father became sick, our sense of family expanded. Our church friends came to our aid and helped us through the tough times. They recognized themselves as part of the same vine in God. They were willing to lay down their own time and resources to help us, a form of laying down your life for the sake of another.

The grape vine reminds me of God's vision of Shalom for us. To some it may seem like the dream of utopia, but I do not believe it to be a sentimental dream. Rather, it is the promise of one vine, the promise of enough for everyone, enough work, enough food, and enough hope. It is the promise in which no one person succeeds at the expense of another. Every branch of the vine is treated equally, valued, and no one is allowed to fall through the cracks. Only then can we live and work in peace.

I am thankful that you are a branch attached to the same vine as me, the love of God.

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Sunday With the Children

Nursery Care: On Sunday, Jan. 17 parents with infants through age 3 are welcome to worship together in the sanctuary or watch the video feed in the Fireside Room. Our Nursery in Room 14 will re-open on Jan. 24 for stories and play time. Pagers are available for all parents.

Rotation Sensation: We are happy to say that we have started a new Rotation Unit: The Prodigal Son – Luke 15: 11-32. Cheryl Caron is leading the Movie Workshop, Kathy Delaney is leading the Art Workshop and Sandi Watson is leading the Upper Room. Many thanks to all our volunteers!

Confirmation Class: There is no meeting on Jan. 17. On Jan. 24, plan to travel with your mentor to the movie, *To Save a Life*, and meet up with everyone in the main lobby – Danvers, Liberty Tree Mall (meet between 1:20 – 1:30).

Youth News

There are no meetings scheduled for Jan. 17.

January 24

Middle School will meet at the regular time, 6-7:30. High School to meet in the church parking lot at 1:00 to travel to Danvers, Liberty Tree Mall to see the movie, *To Save a Life*.

Permission Slip Deadlines

January 22: For Snow Tubing on Jan. 31.

January 24: For Zip Line Adventure on May 22

“Living Rooms for Lent”

The Educational Ministry Team is offering a small group study during Lent called “Living Rooms for Lent”. Each group will consist of at least 6 – 10 people that will meet once a week during Lent in someone’s home. It is the hope to have at least four groups offered on different days and times. Hopefully there will be a group that will be meeting at time that is convenient for you. This year, Lent begins in mid-February.

Several different studies are being considered and the Educational Ministry Team will be making a decision in a week or two. To do this event at least 3 more people are needed to volunteer as leaders and who are willing to host this study in their homes. More information will be coming in the next few weeks. If you are interested in becoming a leader or joining a small group please contact Kathi Martin at mkm9291@verizon.net or 781-245-2409.

Trivia Night at Centre Church **Friday, February 5 – 6:30 p.m.** **Richards Hall**

Pizza, salad, wine, beer, soft drinks - \$15/person

Trivia brought to you by Jason Cotting.

Prizes for the best two teams!

(Team limit six people – plan ahead.)

Come on down for a nice evening of fellowship.

Rides will be available.

Donations of Dessert are very welcome!

Contact Susan Spear at the Church Office
office@centre-church.org or 781-334-3050,

or Chuck Cotting – 781-593-3120

or sign up in the Narthex!

Help Needed at Nametag Table

Is anyone interested in helping staff the Nametag Table in the narthex on a Sunday morning? This is a quick and easy job that lets you say hello to lots of people! You will arrive around 9:30, assist folks with finding their nametags, attend worship and close up the nametag cases afterwards. One Sunday morning is all that's needed. If interested, please call 781-334-2876 or email lambe_1@msn.com.

Thank you! Sue Lambe

News From the Women's Groups

The 8 O'Clock Wheel met in December and voted to make generous donations to both Bread and Roses in Lawrence and City Mission Society in Boston for their on-going work.

The next meeting of the Get-Together Wheel will be Tuesday, Jan. 26 at 12:30 p.m. in the Fireside Room. The program will be "A Trip to Israel with Christine Kimball."

Bits 'n Pieces

Our thanks to Wil Russell for all his help with the Bread and Roses meal in early January.

Would you like to donate the flowers for the altar on January 31 in memory/honor of someone or in celebration of an event? Please contact Susan Spear in the Church Office – office@centre-church.org or call 781-334-3050.

News From Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to John Harris and his family upon the recent death of his father, John C. Harris, Jr. of Andover.

We bring you news of the death of former Centre Church member, Faith Wyer of Port Charlotte, FL in August. She is survived by her husband, Harold E. Wyer of Port Charlotte and daughter, Judith Wyer of Venice, FL.

We rejoice with Michael and Kristen Goodwin whose children, Raphael Anthony Pagarigan and Alyssa Leann Goodwin were baptized on January 10. Proud grandparents are Bruce and Eileen Goodwin.

From the Mailbox

Time marches on but folks from Centre Church are never far from our thoughts. You have been most generous attending to our needs with calls, visits, and help with winter's gifts of snow, sleet and rain. We have continued to be blessed by the friendship and generosity of the congregation. The healing power of your prayers has been working overtime at our house. I continue to get stronger and look forward to worshipping with my church family on Sunday mornings. With thanks - George Hayden

Shopping Card Update

Why not kick off the New Year by resolving to participate in the Shopping Card program? To date, we have earned \$1774.31 for Centre Church. We are slightly ahead of our January 2009 total, but with greater participation we can earn even more for our church.

Do you buy gas for your car? You can order cards for Gulf, Shell, or Exxon/Mobil. Do you shop at CVS? Do you buy books from Amazon, Borders, or Barnes and Noble? Do you have a college student? You can order cards for the Barnes and Noble College Bookstores. The list of participating retailers is extensive. You can view the list at: www.glscrip.com. If you'd like some help to find a card that fits your needs, we'd be happy to assist you. Just stop by our table in the narthex before or after church.

Debbie Cotting, Sandi Watson, Phil Triffletti
Shopping Card Coordinators

Thanks To Our Volunteers

Sunday, January 17: Head Usher: Jeff Law. Greeters: Al & Jo Farnsworth. Reader: Chuck Cotting. Coffee Hour: Betty Hayter. Lights Out Beginning Jan. 15: Bill Seelig.

Sunday, January 24: Head Usher: Linda Ladd. Greeter: Ginny Daniels. Reader: Jeff Langill. Provide Altar Flowers: Langills. Deliver Altar Flowers: Barbara Ericson and the Aslanians. Coffee Hour Donna and Jack Marino. Lights Out Beginning Jan 22: Drew Taylor.

Deacons' Pancake Breakfast – 8am on January 31st

Back by popular demand – made-to-order pancakes for YOU! Mark your calendars for another morning get together meal to support our Organ Fund. What better way to start your Sunday than eggs, bacon, coffee, juice, fruit and...made-to-order pancakes! Your next opportunity for such a fine Sunday breakfast happens on January 31st. The Diaconate will be cooking this up for you starting at 8am and serving until 9:15am. Food will be found in the downstairs kitchen, and dining tables in Richards Hall. All are welcomed! This will be a Diaconate fund-raising event to benefit the repair and maintenance of our church organ. We hope you will come to enjoy a breakfast out, and to support the music portion of our worship services. Suggested donation is: \$10/person, \$25/family. Pancake plans are: plain, blueberry, banana, chocolate chip and buckwheat! If you have other favorites, please let us know. (Deacons wear red name tags). We're looking forward to seeing you there.

--Your Faithful Diaconate.

Our Opportunities

Sunday - January 17	10:00 am	Morning Worship - Sanctuary
	10:00 am	Children in Church
Monday - January 18	-----	Church Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Wednesday - January 20	7:00 pm	Council – Pastor's Office
Thursday - January 21	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - January 22	10:30 am	Scripture Study – Pastor's Office
Sunday - January 24	10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary
	10:00 am	Rotations/Nursery
	11:30 am	Youth Choir – Choir Room
	1:00 pm	Confirmation Class & High School Youth to Movie
	6:00 pm	Middle School Grp – Lower Level
Tuesday - January 26	12:30 pm	Get-Together Wheel - Fireside
Thursday - January 28	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - January 29	10:30 am	Scripture Study – Pastor's Office

Our love and prayers are with Richard "Bud" Doremus at Lawrence General Hospital; 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 25.
