

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

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Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

March 10, 2010

Face Toward Jerusalem

As we journey through Lent, toward Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter, I remember how Jesus had his face set toward Jerusalem. He told his disciples about how he was going to Jerusalem. "He took his disciples aside," it is written in the gospel of Matthew, "and said to them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!'" (Matthew 20:17-19)

People argue over whether or not Jesus had a choice about this. I believe that Jesus did have a choice and yet, he chose to do the only thing he could choose to do, given his nature. He chose to fulfill his purpose. He needed to give, to give of himself for the sake of others, for the sake of God's will, for the sake of our salvation.

We all face such choices. Some of us choose early in our lives to pursue a course that we are certain is intended for us. Others of us are less sure and take a longer time to figure out our course. Some of us change our life focus, a second career, our personal relationships, etc. Others of us miss the chance to accept an opportunity given to us because we are unsure, fear the risk, and want a more secure path. And in some cases, circumstances beyond our control change, forcing us to change.

I admire those who, like Jesus, choose a course for the sake of others, like those who enlist into the military to serve the cause of freedom knowing that it may cost their lives. They set their face, women and men, to submit to the demanding training of following orders that they do not understand for a cause they may or may not agree with. They choose to set their face to obey and trust the orders of others without question knowing that it

is likely that they will suffer and perhaps die.

What are you facing? Some of us face things that we have not chosen: a chronic and/or terminal illness, unemployment, financial debt, addictions, divorce, estrangement from family and friends, the loss of a close family member and/or friend.

Nations, like Haiti and Chile, face the ravages of earthquakes. Nations like Iraq and Afghanistan face the horrors of war. Such nations have no choice but to face these things.

In The Sanctuary

Sunday, March 14, 2010

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

"What Role Do You Play?"

Sacrament of Baptism

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

The Nursery will be open in Room 14.

Sunday, March 21, 2010

Fifth Sunday in Lent

John 12:1-8

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

"What is the Main Thing?"

Children's Message by Rev. Bailey

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

The Nursery will be open in Room 14.

I would like you to think with me about what you are facing and the choices you make. As a disciple of Jesus are you making choices that you feel are consistent with the person God has called you to be, created you to be and become? The choices that Jesus usually asks us to make are not easy ones. They are usually consistent with his statements like this from Luke 14: *"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'"* (vv. 28-30)

In 2004 I decided to build a new house, but first I had to demolish the old one and start all over. I thought about trying to update the old one but the thought of doing so would have produced a disappointing result at best, like trying to put new wine into old wine skins.

So, I decided to pursue the more challenging road: tear the whole thing down and build a new house, a lot more expensive and a lot more work. It was a risk because I wasn't sure I could find financing for it. I also knew that if I was going to build a new house I wanted to build it the way my father, grandfather, and uncle had taught, to build it strong, with high quality labor and materials, again, the more costly route. If I was going to be true to myself, I had to do my best to do it the way that was given to me. Fortunately, I found a contractor and skilled craftspeople who were of like mind.

Over the course of the project I realized that if I was going to fulfill my goal of building the house the way I wanted, I needed an additional amount of money. A friend of mine realized my dilemma and quietly loaned me the additional money. I completely fulfilled my goal! The house was fully built the way I wanted and exceeded my expectations! I eventually paid my friend back.

If I had chosen an easier course of action I would have regretted what was probably for me the only opportunity in my life to build the house of my dreams. Building that house was a parable of my life, to do the best job I can for every opportunity God gives to me, to never take the easier road, but the best road, the road consistent with who I am, who God created me to be, and who Jesus Christ has challenged me to be.

I set my face to build a house. I never looked back. I trusted God to help me and God sent to me the best builders and the best friends. If I had not chosen the path that I did, I would never have discovered what God had in store for me. The

challenge not only yielded a house, but a dream fulfilled, friends made, growth in me, and an accomplishment that my late father would have been extremely proud of (this, alone, was reward enough).

Jesus invites us to walk with him to Jerusalem this Lent. Can we make the harder, more costly choice, knowing the cost? Can we be the people who God created us to be, who Jesus Christ invites us to be? I know, it's not easy, but you can do it. What is God asking you to face?

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Rotation Sensation

Nursery: Infants through age 3 are invited to join our trained staff in Room 14 for fun and stories each Sunday morning. Pagers are available for all parents.

Rotation Workshop: Children and youth through Grade 8 are invited to join us for Rotation Sensation Workshops which will focus on Holy Week.

Special Note: Grades PreK/K/1st should meet in the kitchen promptly at 10:00 to bake muffins for a special Heifer International project.

Youth Group News

The Middle School and High School Youth Groups will meet on March 14 from 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Laser Quest

All youth group members in Grades 5-12 are invited to a night of fun at Laser Quest in Danvers on Sunday, March 21. We will meet at the church at 5:30 p.m. and car pool over to Laser Quest. No meal will be provided so please plan to eat dinner before you come. Parents should pick up at Laser Quest at 8:00 p.m. If you plan to come, you must RSVP to the church office no later than **Friday, March 12th.** The cost for this event is \$20.00.

Looking Ahead

Palm Sunday: March 28 –
10:00 a.m. Morning Worship
Choir Cantata, Heifer Ark Award

Maundy Thursday:
April 1 – 7:30 p.m. Service of Tenebrae

Easter: April 4 - 6:00 a.m. Sunrise Service at
Newhall Park at Suntaug
10:00 a.m. Morning Worship in the Sanctuary

30 Hour Famine

Fourteen youth from the High School Youth Group went 30 hours without food to raise \$1,681.00 for World Vision and their relief efforts in Haiti. The generosity of family, friends and the congregation is very much appreciated. Special thanks to Sandi Watson for coming in to help with hunger awareness and chaperoning a special trip to the grocery store. Also, thank you to Liz DeSantis and Linda Ladd for preparing the meal to break the fast.

(This amount is in addition to the over \$3,000.00 raised previously for Haitian Relief by the congregation.)

Heifer Sunday

On Sunday, March 28, we will celebrate receiving our 10th Heifer Ark Award! It will be presented to our Heifer Coordinators, Allie and Mary Ann Parker. Heifer has become such an important part of the ministry of Centre Church and we are so proud of it, especially how every one can play a part.

On that day, we will also celebrate that Centre Church member, Heifer International Volunteer, Sandi Watson, will be going to Peru on a Study Tour from April 10-18, 2010. Please plan to attend worship for this special celebration.

Easter Sunrise Service

You are invited to join with me and others for an Easter Sunrise Service at Newhall Park at Suntaug, Oak Street, off Moulton Drive, behind the Bali Hai Restaurant, Lynnfield, MA on Easter Sunday, April 4th from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. The sun is scheduled to rise at 6:21 am. We will sing, have live acoustic music, and celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Everyone is invited. Come as you are. Breakfast will be served at Centre Church following the service. In case of rain, we will hold the service at Centre Church at the same time. Parking is available at Newhall Park and in the adjacent parking lot of the Bali Hai restaurant.

If you would like to assist with acoustic music, singing, reading, etc., please call Rev. Dennis Bailey: 781-334-3050, office; 978-375-0176, cell; pastor@centre-church.org. The public is invited.

News From Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to the family of Johanne Skelley who died on March 4. A Memorial Service will be held at Centre Church on March 13 at 11:00 a.m.

Celebrating a Ministry

Please save the date of Sunday, May 16, 2010. On this Sunday in worship and through a reception immediately following the service, we will recognize and celebrate the ministry of Susan Spear, our Church Office Administrator, on the occasion of her 25th anniversary in that position. Susan has been a valuable, very valuable, and consistent presence at Centre Church for 25 years. She faithfully serves and assists all of us on staff and in the parish, as well as many people outside of the parish. We are grateful to God for her and her work. You may help us prepare for this special occasion in the following ways

Through a gift to Susan. Contributions can be made to "Centre Church," in care of Jeffrey Law, Treasurer. Make sure you make note in the memo: Susan Spear.

Through helping with the reception: you may contact: Jane Vancor, 781-334-4777 and/or Grayce Kushmerek, gmkushmerek@comcast.net, or 781-334-2545. You may contact me, Rev. Dennis Bailey, 781-334-3050, pastor@centre-church.org for further information.

(Yes, Susan is aware we are planning something.)

Bits 'n Pieces

New Address:
Priscilla Hahn, Windsor Place,
92 West Street, Apt. 211
Wilmington MA 01887
978-447-1912

We thank the Lynnfield Girl Scouts for providing the altar flowers on March 7. This donation of flowers was in thanks for the use of Centre Church for Girl Scout troop meetings and activities throughout the year.

UCC New England Regional Youth Event

All High School youth are invited to join hundreds of UCC youth and adult leaders from all over New England for this exciting youth event, June 24-27 at Boston University. The cost is \$350.00 and includes registration, lodging in BU dorms, workshops and meals. Please let Mrs. Langill know if you are interested in attending. For more details, check out: <http://www.macucc.org/youth/NewEnglandRegionalYouthEvent.htm>.

Shopping With Spirit

Have you been thinking about purchasing a shopping card, but just can't decide which one to buy? The Visa card may be the one for you. It's extremely versatile because you can use it anywhere that Visa is accepted. If you grocery shop at Hannaford or Market Basket, you should know that both stores accept the Visa card. The Visa card is available in denominations of \$25, \$50, and \$100.

If you have questions, please see us in the Narthex before or after church.

Shopping Card Coordinators,
Sandi Watson, Debbie Cotting, Phil Triffletti

From the Mailbox

To my friends at Centre Church,
Thank you very much for the Valentine card and also for remembering my birthday with another card. It is always nice to know I have so many kind, thoughtful friends at Centre Church.

In appreciation, Marge Cole

Thank you for the flowers delivered to our home on the 21st. The beautiful flowers and the young couple who delivered them was a reminder of how important our church family is to us.

Olive and Carl Wood

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Sunday, March 14:

Head Usher: Bruce Weaver
Greeters: Parker and Norma Holloway
Lay Reader: Chris Lambe
Provide Altar Flowers: Grayce Kushmerek
Deliver Flowers: Chuck Cotting & Barbara Becker
Coffee Hour: The Lowe Family
Lights Out Beginning March 12: Phil Johnson

Sunday, March 21:

Head Usher: Jeff Law
Greeter: Ginny Daniels
Lay Reader: David Bjorkman
Provide Altar Flowers: Get-Together Wheel
Coffee Hour: Vanessa Holz & Carol MacKendrick
Lights Out Beginning March 19: George Hayden

Lights Out Program

We have about a dozen faithful souls who volunteer to make sure the doors are locked, the heat is set, the windows are closed and all the lights are turned out every evening at Centre Church. Please consider volunteering. Generally it takes no more than 20 minutes per evening and the sign-up is for a week at a time. More volunteers makes for light work. Please contact Phil Johnson at 781-598-5678 or pcjohnson@meei.harvard.edu if you can sign up or have any questions.

EASTER PLANT ORDER

I would like to order for \$7.50 each:

___ lilies ___ red tulips ___pink tulips ___kalanchoe

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 the 10:00 A.M. Easter Service on April 4.
___ I wish to donate my plant(s) to the hospitalized, bereaved or shut-in.

Thursday, March 25 is the deadline for placing orders.
(you may call the church office with your order – 781-334-3050)

Our Opportunities

****Set Clocks Ahead One Hour on Saturday, March 13****

Sunday - March 14	10:00 am	Morning Worship - Sanctuary
	10:00 am	Rotations/Nursery
	11:30 am	Youth Choir
	11:30 am	Confirmation Class – Kitchen
	6:00 pm	Youth Groups – Lower Level
Wednesday - March 17	7-9 pm	Lenten Bible Study – Library
Thursday - March 18	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - March 19	10am-12	Lenten Bible Study – Library
Sunday - March 21	10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary
	10:00 am	Rotations/Nursery
	11:30 am	Youth Choir – Choir Room
	11:30 am	Confirmation Class – Kitchen
	5:30 pm	Youth Groups to Laser Quest
Tuesday - March 23	12:30 pm	Get-Together Wheel – Fireside Rm
Wednesday - March 24	7-9 pm	Lenten Bible Study – Library.
	7-9 pm	Council – Pastor’s Office
Thursday - March 25	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Friday - March 26	10:00 am	Lenten Bible Study – Library

Our love and prayers are with Barbara Bean at Rosewood Rehab., Room 332, 22 Johnson St., Peabody, 01960; Muriel Badger at RiverCourt Residences, West Groton; 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, North Andover; June Rose, 37 Spring St., Lunenburg, MA 01462. Our prayers are with James Papagni serving in Afghanistan.

The Church Office is open 9a.m.-3p.m. Monday – Friday.
The next issue of *Tower Notes* will be the week of March 22.
