

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

Barbara Langill, Director of Christian Ed & Youth Ministry, 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 20, 2011

It is Christmas

It is Christmas and it is about one thing, the birth of Jesus. It is about how God came in Jesus to show us the way, to show us love, to be the light of the world.

I came to understand the meaning of Christmas through my parents. I remember how excited my parents were to give my brother and I a nice Christmas. I remember my father sitting on the edge of his chair in the living room as we opened our presents, excited to see how we would react as we opened them. I remember how hard my mother worked to make cookies, candy, and other foods so that our Christmas would be warm and cozy. Oh, the smell of love as it moved through the air in our home.

I also came to understand the meaning of Christmas through life in the church. Each year teachers sought to teach us the Christmas story through the annual Christmas pageant. I remember the reaction of my cousin, Roxanne, when she ran up to the stage to see the baby Jesus and found only a baby doll. She cried in disappointment. And yet, the story was told and I have always wanted to have a real baby Jesus ever since. The first one was real, is real, and so, I feel we should always have a flesh and blood baby person to play the part.

I came to understand the meaning of Christmas when one year, immediately following the Christmas Eve service, a young man I knew

asked me if I knew where he could get a Christmas tree. He said his family didn't have enough money to buy one and wondered if I

(continued on pg.2)

Worship Services

December 24, 2011

5:00 P.M. Family Candlelight Service in the Sanctuary

Message by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
"Telling the Christmas Story"
Special Music by the Youth Choir
Familiar Carols, concluding with
"Silent Night" in Candlelight

December 24, 2011

11:00 P.M. Candlelight Service in the Chapel

Message by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
"Christmas Decisions"
Special Music by the Senior Choir,
Familiar Carols, concluding with
"Silent Night" in Candlelight

December 25, 2011

10:00 A.M. Christmas Service in the Chapel

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
"The Candle"

January 1, 2012

10:00 A.M. New Year's Service in the Chapel

could help. Of course, at 9 pm on Christmas Eve, I didn't feel that there was much of a chance of finding anyone selling Christmas trees at that hour. I had a thought: over my right shoulder, in the Sanctuary, was the church's Christmas tree. I offered it to the young man. After all, we didn't really need it anymore. An opportunity to share the meaning of Christmas, to make some family happy, fell right into my lap! A vulnerable young man gave me the meaning of Christmas that year!

Well, isn't that the way it happened? A vulnerable child came. He was the long-awaited Messiah and now, all these years later we are still worshipping him. We consider him the meaning of Christmas, the meaning of life, and the one who calls us to follow him. Warning, though, he made some people uncomfortable. He still does. If we follow him, his example, we, too will make people uncomfortable as a result of God's unconditional love.

But for now, let's just think about Christmas. God comes to us. God comes where we are. No matter where we are, who we are, or how we are, God comes to us, all of us. We may be too busy to notice, too focused on what we think is important, to see. God doesn't always come with angels singing, bushes burning, or large gusts of wind. Sometimes God comes without any effort on our part and is standing there right in front of us.

Let us focus on the gaze of a child, filled with love and great joy. That kind of love spreads and blesses all who experience it. Christ came on Christmas in just this way. See it, hear it, enjoy it, savor it, give thanks to God for it and see it for what it is: It is Christmas!

Merry Christmas! Dennis

Sunday Morning with the Children

There will be no Church School classes on Sunday Dec. 25 or Sunday Jan. 1. Rotation Sensation will resume on Sunday, Jan 8 and the Nursery will re-open in Room 11.

Youth Groups

Both the High School Youth Group and the Middle School Youth Group will resume meeting on Sunday, Jan 8.

Big Thanks on Behalf of City Mission Society

As many of you know, the City Mission Society of Boston works with at-risk youth and families in danger of homelessness. Two quick statistics tell you why this work is so important. In the neighborhoods served by City Mission Society:

- More than 40% of the children are living in poverty
- More than 80% of the families are single-parent households (mostly single mothers)

To each person who donated money to support the vital work done by City Mission Society – and to each person who donated a gift to make Christmas brighter and happier for our brothers and sisters – heartfelt thanks.

Sandi Watson, Outreach Ministries

From the Mailbox

Dear Friends at Centre Church,

Thank you so much for the beautiful bouquet of flowers that Chuck Cotting delivered. I appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely, Beverly Perkins

Dear Church Friends,

Thank you very much for the beautiful flowers that have been delivered to me. I enjoy the many visits from Dennis. Again, many thanks for keeping me in your prayers during my ongoing recovery.

Sincerely, Irene Allyn

Thanks to All!

Many thanks to Linda Ladd for her enthusiasm and dedication in directing this year's Christmas Pageant and to all the participants, young and old, for your willingness to take part and make this a very special event.

-Education Ministries

Thanks to all who donated refreshments for the Christmas Concert. Debbie Cotting

Thank you to everyone who baked and donated cookies for the Cookie Swap. It was great to have so many different, delicious cookies to choose from. And, thanks to all who purchased cookies. With everyone's help we were able to raise over \$300.00 for this year's Mission Trip.

Barbara Langill

A great big thank you to all who helped to make our sanctuary look so amazing on Pageant Sunday. Thanks to Joe Gallo and Plantscape Designs for supplying the beautiful poinsettias. And, thanks to those who donated their plants. We are especially grateful to the team of volunteers who delivered the plants to our shut-ins and the bereaved. Laurel Caputo
for the Flower Committee

To the many people who have volunteered to usher, greet, read scripture, provide altar flowers, deliver altar flowers, host the coffee hour and do "Lights Out" throughout the year, we appreciate you!

Our Volunteers for the Weeks Ahead

5:00 P.M. Christmas Eve

Lighting the Christ Candle –
The Whittiers

11:00 P.M. Christmas Eve

Lighting the Christ Candle –
Dave and Brad Clough

Lights Out beginning December 23 –
Steven Richard

Lights Out beginning December 30 –
Scott DeSantis



*Christmas Greetings
To All our Centre Church Friends
from:*

Annabel Aldrich

David Balser

Jean and Harvey Card

Chuck & Debbie Cotting

Ginny Daniels

Martha Emerson

Ed and Barbara Ericson

Betty Hayter

Phil and Sue Johnson

Marilyn McCarthy

The Pericola Family

Susan and Shep Spear

Bradlee and Larry Troy

Sandi, John and Allison Watson

Shirley Wendel

Edith Wendt

Consider making a donation to City Mission Society in Boston to help with their ongoing work.

Send a card to the church with your donation (check made out to the church.)

We will pass on your greetings for the new year in the next issue of *Tower Notes*.

Our Opportunities

Sat. Dec. 24 Christmas Eve	5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Candlelight Service – Sanctuary Candlelight Service - Chapel
Sun. Dec. 25 Christmas	10:00 am	Christmas Worship - Chapel
Mon. Dec. 26	----- 7:30 pm	Church Office Closed Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Dec. 28	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – FR
Fri. Dec. 30	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Jan. 1	10:00 am	New Year’s Worship - Chapel
Mon. Jan. 2	----- 7:30 pm	Church Office Closed Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Jan. 4	8:30 am 7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Bread and Roses - Kitchen Council – Pastor’s Office Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – FR
Thur. Jan. 5	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Jan.6	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office

Our prayers are with Betty Hayter, Jean Card, and Al Farnsworth recuperating at home; Phyllis Ciampa at Renaissance, Brooksby; Muriel Nasson at Winchester Hospital; Caroline Walsh at Essex Park Rehab Center, 265 Essex Street, Beverly, 01915 (978-927-3260); Helen Butcher, Marion Edkins, Denis Edkins, Harold Kress and Priscilla Kress at Renaissance Gardens, Peabody; Louise Allen, Marion Barnes, Carolyn Furey, and Olive Wood.

We also remember in our prayers Allan Marshall, Bob Trayers, David Tuttle, and Sam Schnare in Afghanistan.

Church Office Hours

December 27-30 - 9am-Noon

Regular Office Hours of 9am-3pm will resume on January 3.

The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of January 2.