

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 12, 2012

The Joy of Christmas?

What is the Joy of Christmas that God wants for us?

Is it the joy of shopping?

- ▲ As one person tells me, "Oh the joy of shopping for my children when they will not agree to come with me to the store to try things on.
- ▲ Oh the joy of putting things together and wrapping when I'd rather be going to the Christmas Eve Service with my family, only to discover you forgot to get batteries.

Is it the joy of cooking?

- ▲ Don't you just find it exciting when you work hard to provide a good meal for everyone and then, when everyone comes, they try to take over your kitchen, tell you to rest and relax? O joy!

Is it the joy of decorating?

- ▲ "Oh the joy of climbing a ladder on less than level ground to hang the lights on the trees in the front yard, stretching beyond what is wise, risking falling and ruining my Christmas," says one of my parishioners.

Yes, there is real joy in being with family, celebrating and enjoying the love of God that has given birth and life to our families.

Yes, there is real joy in bringing happiness to our children, adult relatives, and friends through our gift giving.

Right along side of all "the baggage" of the Season we are challenged to hear, see, and experience the news of the greater joy of Christmas. The joy that God intends for us can be found in scripture:

In Luke 3, John the Baptist tells how we can prepare to experience the joy of the coming Jesus, when he says:

"Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we



Advent Services

December 16, 2012 – 3rd Sunday in Advent

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Christmas Pageant

Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy

Child care for children up to age 5.

December 23, 2012 – 4th Sunday in Advent

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Lighting the Advent Candle of Love

Child Care for children up to age 5.

Gr. 1-8 may worship with families

before going to the Library.



Christmas Eve

Lighting the Christ Candle

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

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

These Christmas Eve services will feature special music by the choirs, familiar carols, and conclude with "Silent Night" in Candlelight.

do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

In other words, be generous, and first, give to those who are in need, even if it requires a great deal of effort on your part. Give not simply to ease your conscience, but to know and understand where our Lord Jesus will lay his head, take his first steps, place his heart, share his teaching, give his love, bring his healing, share his miracles, place his hope, and... take his last steps, breathe his last breath.

In addition, do what is fair to all people. Do not get greedy and expect more than you deserve, says John. Put the Lord God first in your life, not just as a cute manger scene decoration on your mantel.

The joy of Christmas is intended by God to bring joy to us through a rebirth of our faith, a change in our hearts, and through different choices than we have been making.

For example, if I am to read Luke correctly, instead of doing things just for ourselves and just those closest to us, we are to give ourselves to the joy of the worship of God, setting aside time to hear his word and understand its intentions.

Then, we are to experience the joy of letting that word of God address who we are and what we do. No doubt, the joy comes when we let it take us in new directions, meeting new and different people, doing new and exciting things in service to the Lord Jesus, who comes to walk with us and talk with us via the Christmas story and message.

I see the joy in the faces and hearts of those who have been giving themselves to this message through Mission Trips, through visiting the homeless, learning, listening, and sharing, and through visiting and singing Christmas Carols to one, Priscilla, whose joyful journey of faith is nearing an end.

For me, the joy of Christmas that God intends is experienced when we go beyond the normal and the commercial. It is found when I take the time to step away, alone, and pray, asking God to guide me.

It is found for me when I witness people choosing a different path this Christmas, a path that will introduce them to new pilgrims, new wise ones, new shepherds, new angels who are on the way to welcome the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Do you wish to experience the joy that God intends for you, this Christmas? Then, perhaps, it is time for you to take the path that God intends, the one recommend by the messenger of preparation, John the Baptist.

Perhaps you will meet the one who is our Joy! Jesus, the Messiah!

Yours in Christ-mas! Dennis

Rotation Sensation

There will be a rehearsal on Sat. Dec. 15 from 10-11:30 for children and youth who would like an assigned part in this year's Christmas pageant. All are welcome to attend.

The Christmas Pageant will take place on Sunday, Dec. 16 during worship. Children and youth should plan to arrive at 9:30 am to get into costume.

There are no Rotation Workshops scheduled for Dec. 23 and Dec. 30. Childcare will be available in Room 11 for infants and children up to age 5. Children in grades 1 and up are invited to come to the library for an informal class with Mrs. Langill. We will continue working on our Flat Stanley adventures.

Nursery

The nursery, located in room 11, will be open at 9 am each Sunday for infants and children up to age 5. Experienced staff and volunteers are on hand to welcome children for story time and play. Pagers are available for all parents.



Cookie Swap

On Sunday, Dec. 16, the High School Youth Group will be holding our annual Cookie Swap. We would like to ask everyone in the congregation to help with this fundraiser by baking 2-3 dozen cookies and bringing them to 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 for just \$10 or a plate full of cookies for \$5.00. All proceeds will go toward this summer's Mission Trip.

Youth Group News

On Saturday, Dec 15, members of the High School Youth group will be meeting at 9:30 am to volunteer at the City Mission Christmas Shop held at the First Congregational Church in Winchester. The Christmas Shop brings hope and joy to children and families during the holiday season. CMS collects thousands of gift items which are made available to CMS Homelessness Prevention clients. In addition, several other community partners receive a portion of the donations and distribute them to their own clients. More than 4,000 people were served by this program in 2011. We will return to Centre Church by 12:30pm. Please let Mrs. Langill know if you plan to attend by Friday, Dec. 14.

Our high school youth, along with 2 other area youth groups, participated in Ecclesia Ministries City Reach Program Dec. 7-8. 27 youth and adults traveled into Boston where we heard first hand the stories of some of Boston's homeless population. We took a walking tour with our guides, Paul and Valerie, who showed us where they slept at night and answered our many questions. We participated in an outdoor worship service on Boston Common and then slept overnight on the church pews at St. Paul's Cathedral.

The next day we prepared lunches and sorted clothing and other donated items to be distributed to more than 150 homeless men and women. We are very grateful for the many items donated by our congregation. We would like to give special thanks to Matt Forgione who organized a collection at his college which resulted in an additional 10 bags of clothing.

Regular youth group meetings
will resume after the holidays.

Preacher Needed December 30th

Rev. Bailey will be away on the Sunday after Christmas, December 30th. We need someone who is willing to share a message and/or help lead the service that Sunday in his absence. If you are willing to assist, please contact Rev. Bailey and/or Linda Ladd as soon as possible: Rev. Bailey: Pastor@centre-church.org 978-375-0176 or Linda Ladd: Ladd@neb.com 781-334-6170

News From Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to Harriet Brown and the Sawin family upon the death of Cynthia Sawin on December 3. Her funeral was held in Wakefield on December 7.

We extend our love and sympathy to Carol White and her family upon the recent death of her father. His funeral was held on Dec. 11.

To all of our Centre Church Family,
On behalf of our Dad, John Wishart, and all of the members of our extended family, we would like to thank you for your support, encouragement and words of kindness after the death of our mother, grandmother and wife, Barbara Wishart. Centre Church provided us with a place to celebrate her life in a beautiful service and a place for us to heal. Special thanks go to Doug Hodgkins for the wonderful and uplifting music at the service. We are especially grateful to Rev. Dennis Bailey for everything he has done for us during this challenging time.

Ann, Dwight, Katherine and Andrew Decker

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. We could use some new able bodied church members to come aboard! 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 781-598-5678 or pcjohnson@meei.harvard.edu if you can sign up or have any questions.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

December 16: Head Usher-Jeff Law. Advent Candle-Bayer Family. Lights Out beginning Dec. 14-Steven Richard.

December 23: Head Usher-Dorene DiFillippo. Lights Out beginning Dec. 21-Jeff Langill.

December 24 5 p.m.: Head Usher-Linda Ladd.

December 24 11 p.m.: Head Usher-Linda Ladd. Christ Candle-Gage and Dotty Whittier.

A Journey to Bethlehem

On Sunday, December 2, approximately 50 travelers entered the ancient city of Bethlehem during the time of the census. Roaming the streets were a census taker, a tax collector, a roman soldier, numerous shopkeepers and a shepherd tending his flock and sharing the good news that a Savior had been born. Most importantly however, there was an opportunity to spend time with a very special family who was spending the night in a stable. Travelers had the chance to explore the busy marketplace of Bethlehem. Here one could make tambourines, headdresses, and pottery, leather bags or design their own wristbands. At the end of their weary journey, travelers each received a photo of their time in Bethlehem and then rested in the Inn Café to enjoy delicious refreshments. It is my hope that your experience in Bethlehem helped remind you of what the true meaning of Christmas is. I personally want to thank each one of you - whether you were a traveler who came to Bethlehem or a citizen of Bethlehem who helped make our first "A Journey to Bethlehem" a success.

God Bless and Merry Christmas! Kathi Martin, Education Ministries



Christmas Greetings

To All our Centre Church Friends

from:

Annabel Aldrich

David Balser

Arno and Marilyn Bommer

Chuck and Debbie Cotting

Ed and Barbara Ericson

Sue and Phil Johnson

The Pericola Family

Susan and Shep Spear

Bradlee and Larry Troy

Shirley Wendel

It's not too late to send Christmas Greetings to your friends at Centre Church and make a donation to support City Mission Society's work. You may send your card to the church (5 Summer Street) and your greeting will be passed on in the next issue of *Tower Notes*. It will also be displayed on the tree in the narthex.

All proceeds will go to Boston City Mission Society for their continuing work to help families avoid homelessness, bring meals to elderly shut-ins, and work with at-risk teens.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Dec. 16 <i>Third Sunday in ADVENT</i>	10:00 am 10 :00 am 10:00 am 11:30 am 11:30 am	Christmas Pageant – Sanctuary Nursery / 3-5 Year Old Class Gr. 1-8 Rotation Sensation Cookie Swap - Library Youth Choir – Choir Room
Mon. Dec. 17	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Dec. 19	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – FR
Thurs. Dec. 20	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 21	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 23 <i>Fourth Sunday in ADVENT</i>	10:00 am 10:00 am 6:30 pm	Morning Worship - Sanctuary Child Care up to age 5 – Rm. 11 Christmas Concert - Sanctuary
Mon. Dec. 24	5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Family Candlelight Service – Sanctuary Chapel Candlelight Service
Tues Dec. 25		<i>Merry Christmas</i>
Wed., Dec. 26	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Meeting - FR
Fri. Dec. 28	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 30	10:00 am 10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Child Care up to age 5 – Rm. 11

The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of December 31.

Our prayers are with Ginny Daniels at Rosewood; Tom Vancor; Diana Triffletti, Dana Richardson, Mary McCarthy and Edith Wendt at home; John Wishart at Sunrise, Braintree; Priscilla Hahn at Sunrise, Lynnfield; Ray and Arline Thorn, Charlotte Kilgore, Helen Butcher, Marion Edkins, Denis Edkins, and Priscilla Kress at Renaissance Gardens, Brooksby; Marion Barnes in Danvers, Ginny Davis in Amesbury and Carolyn Furey in Charlton.

We remember in our prayers Michael Bruce (Barbara Becker’s grandson), just deployed to the Far East; Dan Neary (Jo Ann Neary’s son) in Afghanistan, and Sam Schnare (Dick and Carol Carter’s grandson) in Germany.
