

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

November 20, 2013

Giving Thanks

When I have thanks to give, when I'm feeling especially grateful for the people and blessings in my life, I turn to the Psalms to help me find meaningful ways to express my gratitude. There are many Psalms, for example, that remind me where to start expressing my gratitude:

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." (*Psalms 118:1*)

"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." (*Psalms 100*)

I especially like Psalm 100 because every time I read it I feel like hiring a brass band to accompany the reading. A laser light show would be nice also, not to mention a few fireworks.

This Psalm is important to me because it reminds me that God is the source, the starting point of all of our blessings. It is through God that we are created. It is through God's breath that we breathe. It is through God's blessings and work that I have come to find the greatest meaning in my life, the source of my hope and love. It is through God's guidance and work that I have come to find all of my friends and partners in ministry inside and outside the church. And, I am grateful for them all, grateful to God!

When I have a hard time giving thanks, when I'm finding it hard to be in a grateful state of mind, I, again, turn to the Psalms to help me. The Psalms remind me of how Israel, like me, often forgot how God had saved them. It reminds me of how Israel, like me, was often impatient with God's timing and plan.

"When our ancestors were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your (God's) many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. Yet he (God) saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up; he led them through the depths as through a desert. He saved them from the hand of the foe; from

the hand of the enemy he redeemed them. The waters covered their adversaries; not one of them survived. Then they believed his promises and sang his praise. But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his plan to unfold." (*Psalms 106*)

The Psalms also remind me to give thanks for those in my life who have and are answering God's call, serving as dedicated followers of God and of Jesus Christ. We often call such people saints, but in reality, they are ordinary people like you and me, who risk a lot of themselves, give a lot of themselves, in order to keep the faith alive, maintain the ministry of the church, and add meaning to our worship and ministry.

In the Sanctuary

November 24, 2013

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship
Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
Nursery (up to age 3) in Room 11
Pre-K Class in Room 14
Grades 1-8 - Rotation Workshops

November 24, 2013

7:30 P.M. Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service
Sermon by the Rev. Joel Anderle
Special Music by the Thanksgiving Choir

December 1, 2013

First Sunday of Advent
10:00 A.M. Morning Worship
Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey
Nursery (up to age 3) in Room 11
Pre-K Class in Room 14
Grades 1-8 in Church

“Happy are the people whose God is the LORD.” (Psalm 144:15)

“For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory. Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds” (Psalm 149)

(and my personal favorite) “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” (Psalm 133)

I pray that this Thanksgiving, we will continue to be a grateful people, grateful to God, and grateful for and to those who serve the Lord, day and night, even through fear and fright.

I pray that our gratitude will show itself in words, worship of God, songs of praise, and a persistent and dedicated action. I pray that our gratitude will show itself in our generosity to God’s work in the church. I pray that our gratitude will also show itself in the ways we make choices, to serve the Lord first in our lives, every day.

When I have chosen to serve the Lord first in my life, it has not always been easy. It has often meant great sacrifice on my part. I assure you, choosing to serve the Lord first in your life, is not a popular choice, not the choice most people make. But, it is the most rewarding choice.

Happy Thanksgiving Everyone!

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service

Centre Church is pleased to host the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, November 24 at 7:30 p.m. The message will be delivered by Rev. Joel Anderle of Community Covenant Church in Peabody. Representatives from seven different area churches will participate and special music will be provided by the combined church choirs. The offering will be designated for Haven from Hunger in Peabody. Please join us as we give thanks to God for our abundant blessings and celebrate our opportunities to join together in the worship of God and our Lord.

Sunday Morning With the Children

Nursery

Our Nursery, located in Room 11, is open each week for infants through age 3. Experienced staff and volunteers are on hand to welcome children for story time and play. Pagets are available for all parents.

Sunday, November 24

Rotation Sensation- Moses. 3-5 year old class in Room 14 at 10 am. Nursery open in Room 11 at 9:45 am.

Sunday, December 1

Children in grades 1-8 attend worship with their families. 3-5 year old class in Room 14 at 10 am. Nursery open in Room 11 at 9:45 am.

Advent Workshop/Spaghetti Dinner

Sunday, December 1 – 5-7 p.m.

Please join us for our annual Advent Workshop which will be held Sunday evening, December 1st in Richards Hall. Join us at 5 pm for a delicious spaghetti dinner. (Please bring a dessert to share.)

There will be activities for all ages. Rev. Bailey will be leading wreath making with fresh greens. We will also provide the materials for you to make an Advent wreath for your home. There will be hands-on activities, making ornaments, crafts, and more.

In addition, we will be asking for your help in making 100 Holiday cards as well as fleece scarves for City Mission Society. This is a wonderful way for both children and adults to focus on the true meaning of Christmas and the Advent Season.

Turkey Drive: Thank you to everyone who brought a frozen turkey or made a donation to help support Haven From Hunger and their efforts to provide Thanksgiving dinner for those in need. We were able to collect 26 turkeys.



A Night in Bethlehem

is approaching quickly. Please invite your family and friends to join you on

December 7th for an amazing experience as the Christmas story comes to life. See the shepherds with their live sheep, the living nativity, and experience the marketplace of Bethlehem. There will be various crafts for children and families as well as demonstrations. There will be a photo area where you can pay a nominal fee to have a picture taken with a scenic Bethlehem background and costumes. Hours of the event are 3:00-7:00.

If you would like to help with any aspect of making this special night come to life, please contact Carrie Pericola at 781-231-0954. Volunteers are welcome!

Heifer Marketplace

During church school on Sunday, Dec 8, the children will be learning about Heifer and how each of the animals helps families around the globe end hunger and poverty. We will be holding the Heifer Marketplace after worship. Here you will be able to give a gift of hope in honor of your friends and family by purchasing a share of an animal. Honor cards will be provided. Your gift will be part of making a positive difference in the world. This will be a lively event in the Narthex following the worship service where you will be able to learn more about the animals Heifer provides.

Youth Group Update

There are no youth group meetings scheduled for Sunday Nov. 24. Please join us for the Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at 7:30 pm in the Sanctuary.

Please plan to attend the Advent Workshop/Spaghetti Dinner on Sunday, Dec.1 from 5-7 pm. There will be crafts and activities for both High School and Middle School Youth. Invite your family to attend



Our *Raise the Roof Supplementary Drive* has begun. Please look for your packet in the mail if you did not pick it up after the service on Sunday. And please return the pledge cards soon. When making a donation, you may indicate that it is for the roof either on the check or the envelope. Thank you!

Preacher Needed, Sunday, December 29

Rev. Bailey will be away on Sunday, December 29. Rev. Bailey and the Deacons would welcome someone to offer a message on that Sunday and share in the leadership of the worship service. If you, or someone you know, would be interested, please contact Rev. Bailey. pastor@centre-church.org or 781-334-3050.

Recommended Reading for Advent

Education Ministry would like to encourage you to read the book "Mary's Little Donkey and the Escape to Egypt" by Gunhild Sehlin. This book tells the story of a stubborn, dirty little donkey who is of no use to anyone in Nazareth but becomes a quick and willing helper under Mary's care. The other animals in Mary's stable like him and together they wait for the birth of Mary's child. But Mary and Joseph have to leave Nazareth obeying Caesar's decree, and the donkey carries Mary to Bethlehem where the child is born. The donkey hopes to carry Mary and her son quickly back to Nazareth but instead they have to flee to far-away Egypt. Willingly, the donkey makes this journey through the desert. Only after a long time could they return home where the other animals in Mary's stable welcome them.

This book can be read aloud to children as well as enjoyed by adults. One family has suggested breaking the book into 24 sections and reading one section each night during Advent. One reviewer writes, "It's simple and sweet and magical and based on the Gospels and set in nature and really brings the Christmas story and its characters to life. We hope you find time to give it a read.

News from Around the Parish

We rejoice with Edie and Earl Richard upon the birth of their great-grandson Alexander Craig Richard on November 4 to Derek and Carolina Richard in San Diego, CA.

From the Mailbox

Many thanks for all the get well cards sent from my Centre Church friends. I am grateful for the visit from Pastor Dennis my first evening in the hospital and Marian Orfeo's visit with the beautiful altar flowers after church on Sunday. They made for a speedy recovering. I am thankful for all that my church friends did for me.

- Barbara Ericson

A 'thank you' to my friends at Centre Church for the flowers, cards and calls during the last few weeks. A special thanks to Dennis for his more than welcome visits at hospital and rehab – they meant a lot.

-Clayton Conn

Dear Friends,

I have been "granted a year of favor from the Lord." [Isaiah 61] Yet, I thought it was going to be much longer. This past year at Centre Congregation Church, Lynnfield, was filled with more blessings than I can list here. From Dennis, the Deaconate, and each and every parishioner, young and "seasoned," I received caring, love, encouragement, support, and fun...lots of fun!

However, recently, when I asked my God to guide me on the right path, I was led into experiences/miracles that clearly told me I needed to take all I received from all of you, and move towards urban volunteer work [The Little Sisters of the Poor, Somerville], and worship with American Catholics. [Most of my friends are American Catholics, as I am.]

I have also been hungering for more frequent Eucharist. I had this same experience 17 years ago in Billerica, when Dennis supervised me in a Minister-in-Training Program at Andover Newton Theological School.

This decision has not been made lightly. Yet, I know now that I am able to make it because of all of you. You have welcomed me with open arms and hearts. I will treasure each and every one of you, pray for you daily, and be forever grateful for the privilege of doing some pastoral visits and leading worship services.

I will be here for the Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service on 11/24. I also hope to come back once in a while, to worship with you, and participate in some of the fun events that bring you even closer together as a faith community. Please keep me in your prayers.

Blessings and Love,

Elizabeth A. Walsh

You Are Cordially Invited to Participate in City Mission Society's 2013 Christmas Shop

City Mission Society's **Christmas Shop** once again celebrates its partnership with local churches, businesses and individuals who give gifts of the heart to honor the birth of Jesus Christ and to help families and children in need. The CMS Christmas Shop brings the joys of giving and receiving to many people in the Greater Boston Metropolitan area annually. In 2012 over 4,200 adults and children benefited, thanks to the generosity of hundreds of members of more than 40 local churches, groups and organizations.

In 2013 we expect the need to be even greater.

Gift Suggestions: We accept only **NEW** items. These are listed by priority.

- ❖ **Winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts (large sizes especially)**
- ❖ **Hats, mittens, gloves and scarves**
- ❖ **Socks and underwear**
- ❖ **Blankets and backpacks**
- ❖ **Toys, games, and books for all ages**
- ❖ **Gift cards from Target, Marshalls, Walgreens, CVS, Kohls, Walmart, Stop and Shop, Shaw's and other merchants**

CMS Identifies Families in Need: Throughout the fall, CMS staff identifies children and families in need within CMS programs and partnerships. Together we assess the needs of the Boston community and identify persons in need of holiday assistance.

Partner Churches Donate Needed Items: **NEW** clothing, toys and other items including store gift cards come from over 40 churches, groups and organizations. They are purchased or hand-made by individuals and families who believe that Christmas is an important time to share hope, joy and love with others.

Volunteers Sort and Pack Gifts for Their Neighbors: More than 10,000 items are delivered to **First Church in Winchester**. They are sorted and repacked for distribution by volunteers from church youth groups, women's fellowships and other groups, including families who want to help.

You may bring your donations for the Christmas Shop to church on Sundays Nov. 24, Dec. 1 or Dec. 8. A Christmas Tree will be set up in the narthex. Centre Church's donations will be delivered to First Church in Winchester on December 8 by our youth group who will help with sorting.



In Lieu of Christmas Cards. Instead of sending out dozens of paper Christmas Cards to your church friends, why not send one card to the church (5 Summer Street) along with a donation that will go to the Boston's City Mission Society for their continuing work to help families avoid homelessness, bring meals to the elderly and work with at-risk teens. The cards will be displayed on the Christmas tree in the narthex and your greeting will be passed along through *Tower Notes*.



POINSETTIA ORDER

I would like to order for \$8.50 each: ____ red poinsettia

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 one of the services on Christmas Eve. (5 pm or 11 pm)

___ I wish to donate my plant(s) to the hospitalized, bereaved or shut-in.

Plants will be displayed in the sanctuary on Sunday, December 15.

A list of donors will be printed in the bulletin on that day.

Thursday, December 5 is the deadline for placing orders.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Nov 24	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 7:30 pm	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 11 Preschool Class – Room 14 Grades 1-8 - Rotations Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service
Mon. Nov 25	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop 48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Richards Hall
Tues. Nov 26	700 pm	Council – Pastor’s Office
Wed. Nov 27	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – Fireside
Thur. Nov. 28		<i>Happy Thanksgiving</i>
Fri. Nov 29	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 1 First Sunday In Advent	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 5-7 pm	Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery - Room 11 Preschool Class – Room 14 Grades 1-8 in Worship Advent Workshop/Spaghetti Dinner
Mon. Dec. 2	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – FR & Library
Wed. Dec. 4	8:30 am 7:00 pm	Bread and Roses - Kitchen Women’s 12 Step Meeting - FR
Thurs. Dec. 5	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 6	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sat. Dec. 7	9am-3pm 9am-5pm 3-7 pm	Art Guild Show & Sale Gingerbread House Display Night in Bethlehem Activities

Our prayers are with William DiGiorgio at Children’s Hospital; Jean Card at Salem Hospital; Wendell “Red” Hollett at Winchester Hospital; Rose Giunta, Parker Holloway, Ginny Davis, Marion Barnes, Marge Cole, Ray and Arliene Thorn, Helen Butcher and Marion Edkins. We remember in our prayers Cody Ryan, and Dan Neary who are serving in Afghanistan.

We rejoice that Bruce Bennard is home from Afghanistan.

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