

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 18, 2013

Christmas Signs

How do you know that the Christ Child comes and is born, again, in our world? There are signs in some of the most unexpected places.

A very pregnant Mary and Joseph, forced to put up in a barn for the birth of their child, with only the barn animals as witnesses. There Jesus, the Savior of the world, is born. Who would have thought it?

John the Baptist, living in the wilderness, eating locust and honey, dressed in the most basic of wardrobes. There, Jesus comes to ask him for baptism. Who would have thought it?

Later, the same Christ Child, now an adult, is found stopping to visit society's illegal aliens, Samaritan women, people with incurable illnesses, called "leprosy," pushed to the outskirts of towns. Who would have thought it?

Jesus visits a man with paralysis, a woman who has been with many men, a blind man who calls out to him along the side of the road. On another occasion, he welcomes a child with a few fish and a couple loaves of bread and makes it possible for that small gift to feed thousands, with many baskets leftover. Who would have thought it?

The same Christ Child, invites twelve men, eleven fishermen and a tax collector, to join him as he travels, heals, preaches, casts out demons, and even heals on the Sabbath, getting into trouble with the religious authorities who are more concerned with the rules than with their religious purposes of serving the poor. Who would have thought it?

I sometimes think that we should not shop for Christmas until after the Christmas Eve and Christmas day services. Focus on the purpose of Christmas, first. Go to worship, hear the story, kneel, pray, that God's purpose will fill us in all of

our actions, words, and giving for and through Christmas. Then, do our shopping filled with God's story and purpose. Who would dare to try it?

The Christmas story reminds me of how the birth of Jesus, itself, took place in such meager surroundings, in the simplest of places. There were no great and grand sound systems (unless you consider angels singing to Shepherds God's heavenly

In the Sanctuary

December 22, 2013 – 4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Christmas Pageant

Nursery open in Room 11.



Christmas Eve

5:00 P.M. Family Candlelight Service

In the Sanctuary

11:00 P.M. Candlelight Service

In the Chapel

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



December 29, 2013

10:00 A.M. – Morning Worship in the Chapel

First Sunday after Christmas

Message by Gary and Cindy Bayer

Sharing Their Unique Perspective on Jerusalem

Child Care for children up to age 5

sound system). There were no fireworks or flashing laser light shows (unless you consider the star that guided the Magi God's heavenly light show).

I hear people telling me of their Christmas signs via how their most meaningful Christmases have been experienced:

when they spent their Christmas Day helping to feed the hungry,

when they saw a child portray Jesus in the Christmas pageant,

when they heard a child tell them about seeing Jesus in the manger (portrayed by a real child),

when they gave gifts that help others provide for themselves, like Heifer International gifts, Haven from Hunger, or City Mission Society gifts,

when they received something special and unexpected from someone expressing appreciation to them,

when they received an anonymous gift of kindness,

when they were reconciled with a loved one and/or friend,

when they were forgiven,

when they were told, in a note or in person, how special they are,

when they were called on the phone by a relative or friend,

and when they were not forgotten.

And yet, we continue the madness of spending in order to have and give the expensive and grand Christmas when we admit, that is not where we find the best of Christmases.

Who would dare to do something different?

I pray for you this Christmas wherever you are, that you will experience the sign of the birth of Jesus.

I am hoping that Jesus will be present to those who are serving in places of conflict, our service women and men, all over the world. May God keep them safe, bless them this Christmas. We thank them and their families for their sacrifices on our behalf!

I am praying for our first responders that while they seek to save lives and protect us, they will not be harmed themselves, returning safely home to their families.

I am praying for those spending their Christmases in hospitals, that Jesus will visit them and bring them healing.

I am praying for those spending their Christmas in shelters, and those spending their Christmas in the streets, without home, food, or family, that Jesus will come to them and keep them warm, fed, company.

I am looking forward to greeting Johnathan McCarthy, who is presently finishing his basic training at Parris Island, becoming a United States Marine. He plans to appear with his mother, Mary (Yes, that's her real name), to light the Christ Candle, this Christmas Eve, at the 11 pm service. Mary, a single mother, has done such a great job raising her son, a son who has decided to give his life to the preserving of our freedoms and protecting the lives of others all over the world, risking his own life, if necessary.

There, that is a Christmas sign! Who would have thought it?

Thank you, Johnathan!

Merry Christmas,

Dennis

Sunday Morning With the Children

Nursery

Our Nursery, located in Room 14, is open each week for infants through age 3. Experienced staff and volunteers are on hand to welcome children for story time and play. Pagers are available for all parents. The nursery will be open on December 22 and December 29. (for children up to age 5)

Rotation Sensation



Our pageant is being held this **Sunday, December 22**. There will be no workshops. We invite all the children and youth to participate in the pageant. There is a part for everyone.

Rehearsal for children in grades 1st-8th will be this Saturday, December 21 in the Sanctuary from 10-11:30 am. On Sunday, December 22, all participants should be here by 9:30 am. We will meet in Todd Hall for last minute preparations and to take pictures.

Sunday, December 29

There are no workshops scheduled. Please plan to attend worship in the Chapel with your family. Children 5 years old and younger are invited to go to the nursery for story and playtime.



Christmas Concert
December 22 – 6:30 p. m.

Enjoy the Sounds of the Season presented by our Sr. Choir, Youth Choir and Soloists. Congregational singing of favorite carols will be included and a time of refreshments will follow. A freewill offering will be taken which will benefit the music programs at Centre Church.

Don't miss this opportunity to relax and enjoy the beautiful music.

Youth Group

There is no youth group scheduled on Sunday, Dec. 22. Please plan to attend the church's Annual Christmas Concert with your family at 6:30 p.m.

Our next scheduled meeting is Sunday, January 5 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. We will be having an "Epiphany Party". Please bring a \$5-10 gift to swap.

The City Reach overnight planned for January 10-11 will be rescheduled to a later date. Details will be sent home.

From the Mailbox

My thank you to Mary McCarthy for all her visits to the sick – in hospitals and nursing homes. I especially appreciate her recent visit to me.

Barbara Ericson

A special thank you to Barbara Becker for delivering the lovely bouquet of altar flowers several weeks ago. They continued to light up our living room for many days.

Sincerely, Clayton Conn

Tower Day School Accepting Applications
for 2014/2015 Academic Year

We have 2 or 3 day classes for 3 year olds, 3 or 5 day classes for 4 year olds, a Transition Class for students before Kindergarten and a full day Kindergarten program.

Centre Church members have priority for enrollment before January 10, 2014. Please download an application from towerdayschool.org or call the school office after the holidays (781-334-5576)

Sally MacDonald, Director



Christmas Greetings
To All our Friends at Centre
Church From:

David Balser

Dick and Carol Carter

Chuck and Debbie Cotting

Ginny Daniels

Ed and Barbara Ericson

Henry and Sally Flickinger

Betty Hayter

Wendy Hollett

Lola and Stephen Leggett

Ethel Leonard

Jack and Donna Marino

Shirley Orr

Charlotte Orrall

Steven, Carrie and Hazel Pericola

Shep and Susan Spear

Bradlee and Larry Troy

Edith Wendt

It's not too late to send Christmas/New Year's Greetings to your friends at Centre Church and make a donation to support the work of Boston's City Mission Society. 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*. Your card will be displayed on the tree in the narthex.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Dec. 22 Fourth Sunday In Advent	10:00 am 10:00 am 6:30 pm	Christmas Pageant – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 11 Christmas Concert - Sanctuary
Mon. Dec. 23	7:30 pm	Alanon/Alateen – Richards Hall
Tues. Dec. 24	5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Family Candlelight Service – Sanct. Candlelight Service – Chapel
Wed. Dec. 25		<i>Merry Christmas!</i>
Fri. Dec. 27	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 29 First Sunday after Christmas	10:00 am 10:00 am	Morning Worship - Chapel Nursery - Room 11 (up to age 5)
Mon. Dec. 30	7:30 pm	Alanon/Alateen – FR & Library
Wed. Jan. 1		<i>Happy New Year!</i>
Thurs. Jan 2	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Jan. 3	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office

Our prayers are with Jean Card at Rosewood; Andrew Warburg, at home; Lee Clarke at Braeburn Gardens Rehab. 400 Brooksby Village Drive, Peabody; Rose Giunta, Parker Holloway, Ginny Davis, Marion Barnes, Marge Cole, Ray and Arlene Thorn, Helen Butcher and Marion Edkins.

We remember in our prayers Cody Ryan and Dan Neary who are serving in Afghanistan.

The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of December 30.
