

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

January 15, 2014

House of God

Genesis 35:1-15 tells the story about how God spoke to Jacob, telling him to get up and go to another place and settle there. He is told to build an altar to God when he arrives at his new home. He is also told to get rid of excess jewelry, bury it, and stop worshipping foreign and fake gods.

As Jacob traveled through different countries on his way to his new home, God protected him and kept him safe. God told Jacob to name his new home Bethel, meaning "House of God."

So, this makes me wonder. What comes to mind when people think of you, of your home, of your church? Do people think of you as a person of God, your home a place where God is welcome, and your church as a place where the voice of God is welcomed and remembered?

I remember how, on the first day of my ministry at First Congregational Church, Billerica, I decided to visit one person. I was advised to visit Maudie and so, I did. I will never forget how I felt about her, and her very small, simple home. She was a woman of God. Her small, simple home, a house of God. And, the words and thoughts she shared with me, echoes of God. She did not need anything fancy to be a person of God, just a sincere heart and a mind that read the scriptures and reflected on them every day.

Every day of her 100 years on this earth were days with God.

Whenever I wanted to experience God's presence, I would visit Maudie.

Whenever I wanted to reconnect with my spirituality, I would visit Maudie.

Whenever I wanted to be lifted up, I would visit Maudie.

Look around your house, are there places in your house that are like altars to God?

Look in your heart. When people think about you do they feel your heart is filled with God?

Hospitality is one way to build a home where God is felt to live. Whenever we welcome people into our homes and make them feel comfortable, we are setting a place at the table for God. Making a home where our family always feels safe and secure is another way of making our homes a house of God.

God gave Jacob specific instructions about how to make his home a place where God is present. Are we going to do it God's way or our way? We, in

In the Sanctuary

January 19, 2014

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Nursery (up to age 5) in Room 11

Older Children in Church

January 26, 2014

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Nursery (up to age 3) in Room 11

3-5 yr. old Class in Room 14

Grades 1-8 – Rotation Sensation

February 2, 2014

10:00 A.M. Holy Communion

Nursery (up to age 5) in Room 11

Older Children in Church

America, like to think that we can worship God our way. I like to think that is true, also. And yet, there are things that God reminds us we need to do if we are going to be God's people. We cannot be loose and free with our values. We cannot have materialism and spirituality.

And yet, God did not call Jacob to judge others. Rather, Jacob was to simply live as God instructed and to set an example so that God had a place where people knew God could be found. Not every home is going to be a house of God. But your home can be and thus, set an example. Not every person's heart is going to be experienced as a heart made by God. But, your heart can be a heart filled with God's love and thus, be a saving presence to those around you.

God called Jacob to be the person and place where God could be found. Perhaps God is calling you to also be that place. It would be nice. It would be a blessing. If not today, perhaps tomorrow. If not tomorrow, perhaps you will continue to ponder it and prepare a place for God to enter.

I pray today and every day, that our church will be such a place where people will turn when they are looking for God. I pray that when people are looking to find God's loving ways, they will know that in our place of worship and gathering they will find it. Perhaps it will not be such a place every day, but I pray it will be so most of the time.

May the Lord use me as one of the tools through which the house of God will be built. May the Lord use you to also be a builder of God's holy mountain, holy house, and holy home.

May we, together, be moved to be the house of God in our hearts, minds, souls, homes, churches, communities, words, thoughts, and actions.

Yours in Christ, Dennis

Sunday Morning with the Children

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. The nursery is open at 9:45 am.

Rotation Sensation (Gr. 1-8)

There are no workshops scheduled for Sunday, Jan 19. Children are invited to attend worship with their families.

On Sunday, Jan. 26, the children will be learning about life in Bible times and hearing the story of Jesus' visit to the Temple when he was a boy.

3-5 Year Old Class

Children ages 3 to 5 are invited to join us most Sundays at 10 am in Room 14 for a class just for this age group. There is time for free play, a Bible Story and a craft and/or activity to help reinforce the story.

- There is no class scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 19 due to the long weekend. Children may attend worship with their family or go to the nursery in Room 11 for playtime.
- On Sunday, Jan 26, the children will be hearing the story of Jesus in the Temple when he was boy.



Youth Group News

Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service

On Monday, Jan 20, High School and Middle School Youth will be volunteering with Boston Cares as we join Americans across the country on the King Holiday to serve our neighbors in need. Martin Luther King Jr. was an iconic civil rights leader who believed that every person can make a difference in their community. His teachings were about alleviating poverty, ending racism and uniting communities in understanding and love.

Boston Cares is looking for more than 400 volunteers to help meet community needs focused on children, education and homelessness.

We will meet in the church parking lot at 12:45 pm to car pool into Boston and will return around 4pm.

Meetings

There will be no Youth Group meeting on Sunday, Jan. 19.

On Sunday, Jan. 26, both youth groups will be meeting from 6-7:30 pm in the church kitchen for food, fellowship and fun.

There will be no youth group meeting on Sunday, Feb 2. Enjoy the Super Bowl!



Souper Bowl of Caring: On Sunday February 2, 2014 160 million Americans will tune in to the Super Bowl football game. There will be parties with abundant food, friendship and fellowship. At the same time, there will be people worrying about staying warm, finding shelter and a warm meal.

Please join young people around the country as they demonstrate God's love by loving their neighbors through the *Souper Bowl of Caring*. It's a simple, yet significant act of caring for others. Drop \$1 (or more) in the soup pot as you leave worship on February 2.

In addition, beginning Jan. 26, there will be a pot in the narthex to collect cans of soup which will be donated to Haven from Hunger in Peabody.

Our young people are developing hearts for giving that can last a lifetime. Please support their efforts.

News From Around the Parish

We extend our sympathy and prayers to Barbara Jensen and her family upon the death of her husband, Paul on December 30. Services will be private.

We rejoice with Paige and Eric Beckman upon the birth of their daughter, Charlotte Grace on January 14. Her proud grandparents are Gage and Dotty Whittier.

Office Volunteers

It takes many volunteers to help complete the work in the church office! My thanks to the following people who assist with *Tower Notes* on a regular basis:

Liz Baud, Grayce Kushmerek, Nancy Loyd, Marjorie Potter, Marcia Stevens, and Jane Vancor

Thanks also to Lola Leggett for her proofreading abilities and to Linda Ladd for posting *Tower Notes* to the church's web page.

Special thanks to Shirley Orr for her support in the church office in so many ways and over so many years. We miss you! (We can give you a glowing reference when you join a church in Pennsylvania!)

Church Secretary, Susan Spear

Paper Recycling

The paper recycling bin in the church parking lot will be removed in the next 2-3 weeks. It has been more than a month since it has been emptied and papers are now blowing throughout our parking lot and the Tower Day playground. Once the bin is empty, it will be taped shut and then removed.

Paper Retriever has other bins in the area for your paper recycling: Our Lady of Assumption, 17 Grove St, Lynnfield; Covenant Christian Academy, 83 Pine St., Peabody; Salvation Army, 209 Broadway, Saugus; and Peabody YMCA, 259 Lynnfield St., Peabody. Lynnfield residents can use curbside recycling, with pick up every other week.

We would like to thank everyone for their support in this endeavor. Your recycling efforts were very much appreciated.

"Lights Out" Volunteers

Our thanks to each of the people who volunteer (for a week at a time) to check the church at the end of the day to make sure it is secure:

Roger Batchelder, Ryan Batchelder, David Bjorkman, Scott DeSantis, Steve Furey, Al Johnson, Phil Johnson, Jeff Langill, Steven Richard, Bill Seelig, Bruce Weaver, John Walsh and Charlie Wills.

Schedule for January

January 17: Scott DeSantis

January 24: Steve Furey

January 31: Phil Johnson

Flower Delivery Volunteers

On Sundays when there are altar flowers donated, we have a dedicated group of people who deliver the flowers to shut-ins.

Our thanks to all of them for spreading the love of our church family to those who cannot join us for worship on a regular basis:

Barbara Becker, Laurel Caputo, Chuck Cotting, Judith Doe, Barbara Ericson, George and Perry Hayden, Marian Orfeo, Randy Russell and Margaret Waugh.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Jan. 19	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 5) – Room 11 Older Children in Church
Mon. Jan. 20	----- afternoon 7:30 pm	Office Closed – MLK Jr. Day Youth to Boston to Volunteer Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr.
Wed. Jan. 22	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg. - Fireside
Thurs. Jan. 23	6:30 pm 7:30 pm	Stewardship Comm - Library Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Jan. 24	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Jan. 26	9:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 6:00 pm	Confirmation Class - Kitchen Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery & 3/5 Yr Old Class Rotation Sensation Youth Group - Basement
Mon. Jan. 27	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 - Todd Alanon/Alateen – FR & Library
Tues. Jan. 28	12:30 pm	Get-Together Wheel – Fireside Rm
Wed. Jan 29	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg - Fireside
Thurs. Jan 30	7:30 pm	Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. Jan. 31	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office

Our prayers are with Lee Clarke at Braeburn Gardens, 400 Brooksby Village Drive, Peabody, 01960; Jean Card at Rosewood Nursing and Rehab Center, 22 Johnson St., W. Peabody, 01960; Rose Giunta, Parker Holloway, Ginny Davis, Marion Barnes, Marge Cole, Ray and Arlene Thorn, Helen Butcher and Marion Edkins.

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

The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of January 27.
