

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 3, 2014

Getting Our Attention

Retailers will do anything to get our attention, making us believe they have just the bargains for us, bargains that we just have to have, that will make us do anything to get. But, of course, they need to sell things to make money, and they need us to buy the things they have. So, if we do not respond to Black Fridays and Cyber Mondays, they will come up with other hooks to get our attention before and/or after Christmas.

Of course, things like snow storms that take out electricity directly impact the shopping agendas. Personal circumstances can also limit our willingness and ability to significantly participate in the retailers' agenda. Unemployment, illness, work, school, etc., can remind us that shopping and spending is not one of the ten commandments of Christmas preparation.

God will also do just about anything to get our attention. God has been known to commission prophets, singing angels, a shiny star, a tiny babe, a giant fish (whale), Jesus walking on water, feeding thousands, and turning water into wine (to name a few of Jesus' attention getters). Sometimes God gets our attention through the use of people who will love us unconditionally and do things for us that we do not deserve.

God has gotten my attention, on more than one occasion, when a person or people have done something special for me because they were able to see something in me that I did not see or believe about myself.

As we go about our Advent, preparing for Christmas, I would like us to remember that God sees things in us that no one can see. God wants our attention so that we come to realize just what we are

capable of, as God's creation! God is the biggest gift giver of all time. God gives us our lives, our breath, our water, food, and faith. God keeps giving to us every day and there is no way we can pay God back. God simply desires for us to follow God's example, giving without conditions.

Most of all, in Christmas, God wants our attention to focus on the birth of his Son, Jesus, born to be the light of the world. This is a light that not even death can diminish. Through this light, the evils of the world can be vanquished, if we allow the gift to work in us and through us, through our nations and

In the Sanctuary

December 7, 2014 – 2nd Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Holy Communion

Heifer Message

Nursery in Room 11. ARK (ages 3-6) in Room 14.

Older children and youth in church.

Followed by Heifer Marketplace

December 14, 2014 – 3rd Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Nursery in Room 11. ARK (ages 3-6) in Room 14.

Children over 7 – Rotations

Followed by Cookie Swap

December 21, 2014 – 4th Sunday of Advent

10:00 A.M. Christmas Pageant

Poinsettias displayed and distributed.

6:30 P.M. Christmas Concert

leaders. Like any gift, we need to receive it, remove it from its wrapping, and use it to its fullest. Perhaps each day of Advent, we can kneel in prayer to ask God to show us how we can give our attention to using the gift of his Son, Jesus, to reflect his light, to diminish the things that distract us away from the love Jesus intends for our lives and world.

For starters, I would like to suggest that we fast away from the use of our electrical devices during our family times, like meal times, and give to each other the gift of our full attention as God gives it to us. And, we can give the same gift to meetings and meals with friends, looking them in the eye, listening, talking, being fully present, at attention. How can we be a family and a loving community if we are all sitting together not looking at each other, but playing with our human made devices? God wants us to give our attention to what God has made and given to us, a Savior, the light and love in another human being, the blessings and needs of another in our midst.

And, let's get some rest this Advent season so that when God wants our attention we are awake and able to perceive it.

Let's remember these words spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, intended to get our attention:

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (*Isaiah 40:3-5, NRSV*)

Yours In Christ, Dennis

Heifer Marketplace

This year, the focus of our Christian Education program has been Heifer International. On Sunday, December 7, 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. You will also have the opportunity to purchase handmade ornaments to go along with your gift. There will be felted bunny rabbits, wooly sheep, and roly poly pig ornaments, all made by the ARK church school children.



Night in Bethlehem

A Hands-On Holy Land Experience

Join us for Night in Bethlehem on Saturday, December 6 from 2-6 pm. The event consists of a walk through live nativity and a marketplace of crafts for kids to experience a bit of what life was like on the first Christmas.

There are still places where we could use volunteers to make this event wonderful. We will be setting up Thursday and Friday starting at 3 p.m. and on Saturday starting at noon. Please come help. There are still jobs during the event as well.

Sunday Morning with the Children

Nursery: Our Church Nursery is fully staffed and ready to receive infants and children up to age 3 on Sunday mornings during worship time.

ARK All Remarkable Kids: Children ages 3-6 are invited to join us in room 14.

On Sunday, December 7, the children will be presenting their song, "Centre Church Built an Ark" and then helping at the Heifer Marketplace. The children have been learning about Heifer International and have made 3 different ornaments which will be on sale on at the Heifer Marketplace.

SPARK: For children and youth ages 7 and up.

Sunday, Dec. 7, the children will remain in worship and help with the Heifer message. They will be helping at the Heifer Marketplace after worship.

Sunday, Dec 14, Children will worship briefly with their families and then head to their class to prepare for the Christmas Pageant which will be held on Sunday, Dec. 21 during worship.

Habitat for Humanity Volunteers Needed

This summer, a group from Centre Church volunteered with Habitat for Humanity at 100 Parker Street in Lawrence, where a former convent is being renovated into 10 condominium units. There is still much work to be done. We have been asked if we could continue to send volunteers. We have committed to January 3, February 7, and March 7. Please contact Barbara Langill in the church office if you would like to participate on one, two or all three dates.

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the *Let's Rock the Boat* Supplementary Drive. Please keep the donations coming.

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.

Advent Workshop

Many thanks Kathi Martin and Laurel Caputo for a delicious Pasta Dinner at the Advent Workshop and to all the members of Educational Ministries for leading the craft tables. Special thanks to Rev. Bailey for once again leading the wreath making.

Youth Group News

Saturday, Dec 6 Youth should plan to volunteer at the Night in Bethlehem. There are two shifts available, 2-4 pm or 4-6 pm. Please let us know if you are available to help.

Sunday, Dec. 7 City Mission Society service project 1-3pm. We had originally planned to go to the Winchester Church to volunteer help at the Christmas shop, but where help is most needed is making fleece scarves, hats, and Christmas cards. We will meet downstairs in Richards Hall at 1 pm to work on these projects as well as decorating boxes for the Cookie Swap on Dec. 14. There are no evening meetings scheduled.

Sunday, December 14 Cookie Swap after worship. Please plan to bring your cookies to the library before worship. Youth Groups meet 6:00-7:30 pm.



Cookie Swap

On Sunday, Dec 14 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 \$10.00. This is a great way to have a variety of cookies on hand for the holidays, or perhaps even purchase an extra container or two to give away as gifts.

Looking Ahead



December 6: 2-6 p.m. - Night in Bethlehem

December 7: After Worship - Heifer Marketplace

December 12: 12 pm – Deadline for ordering
Poinsettias

December 14: After Worship – Cookie Swap

December 21: 10 a.m. – Christmas Pageant
Poinsettias Displayed
6:30 pm – Christmas Concert

December 24: 5 p.m. Family Candlelight Service
11 p.m. Chapel Candlelight Service

December 28: 10 a.m. First Sunday after Christmas

Shopping Cards

It's time to order shopping cards for all your holiday shopping. You can give them as gifts or use them for your own purchases. There are cards available for hundreds of retailers and restaurants; check out the entire list at www.glscip.com. In order to have your cards before Christmas, you must place your order by December 14. For more information, see John Sievers in the narthex after church on Sunday morning.

Bulletin Board

Church family has baby crib, toddler car bed, toys for ages 0-1, saucer play station and toy swing that they no longer use. Please call the church office (781-334-3050) if you are interested and we will put you in touch.
- Rev. Bailey

Please look to make sure you took the right navy blazer home after church on Sunday. We are missing one with buttons with the abbreviation ESB or B on them. We have found a navy blazer with off-white buttons. Please call the church office so we can arrange a swap.



You Are Cordially Invited to Participate in City Mission Society's 2014 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 2013 over 4,200 adults and children benefited, thanks to the generosity of hundreds of members of more than 40 local churches, groups and organizations.

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, etc.

Please leave your NEW, unwrapped gifts under the tree in the Narthex Nov. 30- Dec. 14



In Lieu of Individual Christmas Cards

Help us raise funds to support Boston's City Mission Society in their continuing work throughout the year. Instead of sending out dozens of paper Christmas Cards to your church friends, why not send one card to the church along with a donation equal to or greater than what you would have spent on cards and postage. Your card 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 21.
 A list of donors will be printed in the bulletin on that day.***

Friday, December 12 is the deadline for placing orders.

Our Opportunities

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| Sun. Dec. 7 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> | 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 11:00 am 1-3 pm | Holy Communion - Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) - Room 11 ARK (Ages 3-6) – Room 14 Older Children & Youth in Church Heifer Marketplace – Narthex Youth Group – Basement |
| Mon. Dec. 8 | 7:00 pm 7:30 pm | Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr. |
| Tues. Dec. 9 | 12:30 pm 7:30 pm | Get-Together Wheel – Fireside Diaconate – Pastor’s Office |
| Wed. Dec. 10 | 7:00 pm | Women’s 12 Step Mtg. – Fireside |
| Thur. Dec. 11 | 7:30 pm | Senior Choir – Choir Room |
| Fri. Dec. 12 | 10:30 am | Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office |
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| Sun. Dec. 14 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> | 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am 11:00 am 6:00 pm | Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) – Rm 11 ARK (Ages 3-6) – Room 14 Ages 7 & up - Rotations Cookie Swap - Narthex Youth Group – Basement |
| Mon. Dec. 15 | 7:00 pm 7:30 pm | Boy Scout Troop 48 – Todd Hall Alanon/Alateen – Fireside & Libr. |
| Wed. Dec. 17 | 7:00 pm | Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside |
| Thur. Dec. 18 | 7:30 pm | Senior Choir – Choir Room |
| Fri. Dec. 19 | 10:30 am | Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office |
| Sat. Dec. 20 | | Pageant Rehearsal |

**The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of December 15.
Church Office Hours are 9 am – 3 pm Monday-Friday.**

Our prayers are with Barbara Warburg at Rosewood. Annabel Aldrich, Roger Lauzon, Marion Barnes, Helen Butcher, Harvey Card, Marge Cole, Marion Edkins, Parker Holloway, Edie Richard.

We remember in our prayers Michael Bruce in Bahrain and Johnathan McCarthy who is in training with the US Marines.
