

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

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Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

March 25, 2015

Practicing for Easter

I've been thinking about Easter this year given that we have had so much snow and I look forward to the Easter Sunrise Service in **Newhall Park, Lynnfield**. So, last Saturday I went to Newhall Park and this is what I saw, snow covered fields and a sun that seemed to be blocked by the acrimonious (or unrelenting) nature of our winter. On the positive side, I could easily walk across the snow to the opposite end of the field where we have our sunrise service.



Yesterday, March 22nd, I saw a different sun, rising in the east, off the deck of my house. There were no blocking forces except the screen in my doorway.

It was clear to me, that this sunrise was practicing for Easter and surely, knew what it was doing!

Are you practicing for Easter?

The disciples and followers of Jesus were not prepared for the first Easter. While Jesus had tried to explain something of it to them in advance, they didn't comprehend. God is preparing for our Easters even if we are not. God is always looking to give us new life, even when we are not looking to receive it.

It is my experience that we are often more inclined to think and talk about what is wrong with our lives, with our businesses, our world, our communities, our schools, our politics, and our churches, than we are inclined to think and talk about what is good and blessed.

In the Sanctuary

Palm Sunday

March 29, 2015 10:00 a.m.

Holy Communion

Sermon by the Rev. Dr. Dennis C. Bailey

Nursery open in Room 11 (up to age 3)

Godly Play (older children)

Maundy Thursday

April 2, 2015 – 7:30 p.m.

Service of Tenebrae



Easter

April 5, 2015 6:00 a.m.

Sunrise Service in Newhall Park

April 5, 2015 10:00 a.m.

Easter Cantata – Sanctuary

Child Care in Room 11 (ages 5 & under)

Yesterday, at the end of the worship service, our Stewardship Ministries Team invited people to come forward to share with the congregation how they felt blessed to be part of Centre Congregational Church.

The blessings spoken of were like a cup overflowing! People shared about the welcoming and accepting nature of our congregation, the blessings of serving on Mission Trip experiences, the blessings of our Christian Education and Youth Group Ministries, the blessings of our Music Ministry, etc. Each person who shared of their blessings, received a helium filled balloon because such sharing lifts all of us up!

One parishioner spoke to me afterward saying she wanted to get up and give thanks for the blessings of our Prayer Ministry because it has touched her and a member of her family, personally.

Speaking for myself, I think sometimes I miss the opportunities to recognize the new life that God is preparing for me because I'm too busy doing what I think is important, instead of spending time asking God to fill me with the new life, and to fill me with the more important plans God is making for me and the church. Perhaps I spend too much time analyzing, calculating, and trying to get my work done, instead of being open to the Spirit and the Easters God gives to me.

Perhaps, though, I am ahead of myself. I say this because before there was Easter, Jesus had to endure the suffering of denial, betrayal, arrest, trial, torture, crucifixion, and death. I wonder what in me and in us needs to die before we can be ready for what the Easter God desires for us? Are there old ways that must go before the new ways God intends can be discovered and celebrated?

I invite you to join me as we ponder these things:

Palm Sunday, March 29th, 10 am, as we share Holy Communion and celebrate Jesus' journey into Jerusalem on a humble donkey, symbolic of his humble and life-giving nature. The children will hand out palms to aid us in our celebrations of Jesus.

Maundy Thursday, April 2nd, 7:30 pm, in our Sanctuary, to ponder these things of the journey of Jesus to the Cross, and how it relates to our own personal and corporate journeys. We will share Holy Communion and the Office of the Tenebrae, reading and hearing the scriptures depicting Jesus' journey to the grave.

Easter Sunday:

6 AM Easter Sunrise Service, Newhall Park, Oak Street, Lynnfield, followed by breakfast at Red's, 131 Newbury Street, route 1 north, Peabody. In the event of rain, we will meet in the Meeting House, Lynnfield Town Common.

10 AM Easter Sunday Service, Centre Church, 10 AM, featuring our Choir's beautiful cantata, "Kingdom, Power, Glory."

I hope that we are ready for the Easters Jesus brings our way, the birth of children, grandchildren, new opportunities, the blessings of each and every day, friendships that make life joyful, and unexpected, grace-filled moments. May we welcome them. Let us be careful not to destroy them with negativity and futility.

Let us allow God to lead us through the sorrows and challenges to the resurrection Christ brings.

Happy Easters to you all,
Yours in Christ, Dennis

Easter Plant Orders: Deadline is Friday, March 27. Please call or email the church office with your order. Choose from tulips, lilies, or kalanchoe plants. \$7.75 each.

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. Pagers are available for all parents.

Church School News:

Godly Play is our church school curriculum for children in Pre-school and above. Children begin in worship with their families and after Children's Time will be escorted to the Godly Play Worship Center which is located on the stage area in Todd Hall. Parents are asked to pick up children at 11:15 am by coming to Todd Hall.

Schedule for Palm Sunday & Easter

This Sunday, March 29 is Palm Sunday and also Communion Sunday. Children will begin in worship for communion and then help pass out palms before heading out to Godly Play.

On Easter Sunday, April 5, children are invited to remain in worship with their families for the Easter Service.

Childcare will be available for children 5 and under in room 11.

Youth Group: Seven youth and 3 adults volunteered at Cradles to Crayons in Boston on Sat. March 14. We checked bins of children and infant clothing to be sure they were acceptable and free from rips and stains. We then sorted by size and season. Five outfits for each child will be made into packs along with toys and books and distributed to children in need across Massachusetts. Thanks to everyone who contributed donations and to Ruth McMahon and Rosemarie Sacco for volunteering to help chaperone.

Sunday, March 29 Youth Groups meet 6-7:30pm
Sunday, April 5 Easter Sunday, no youth group

Sharing Our Blessings

With the removal of our record breaking snowfall this year, our deficit will be even larger than expected. Please keep the Let's Rock the Boat Supplementary Drive donations coming in!! Thank you for your support!!

Sunday was Stewardship Sunday. If you were not able to be there, please mail in your pledge cards or drop them in the offering plate on Sunday! Thank you to everyone who helped with this year's campaign. A special thank you to Cindy Trayers, Annmarie Pendola, Scott DeSantis, Camille Hodgkins, Julia Seelig, Deb Biggar, Phil Fisher, Jill DiGiorgio, Katherine Decker, and John Sievers and to all who shared their blessings on Sunday!!

Carrie Pericola, for the Stewardship Comm.

From the Mailbox

Thank you to Centre Church friends. Judith Doe delivered the beautiful altar flowers to me last week. I miss you all and know the good work that you are doing. I have no real problem. Cold, snow and ice slows one down, but then what else is new. Plus the fact that I have an energy problem. Looking at your flowers, I see all your faces.

In friendship, Barbara Ericson

Kid's Korner

In the sanctuary we have a special area just inside the first pews with quiet activities for children who may find it difficult to sit still during the worship service. Parents are asked to remain with their child in this area.

Saturday, May 16, 2015

Flea Market Items

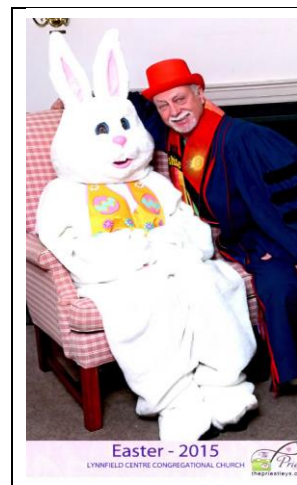
Have you been "spring cleaning"? Trying to find somewhere to donate your gently used "treasures"? Centre Church is sponsoring a flea market on our lawn as part of "Townscape's Geraniumfest and Field Day" celebration on Saturday, May 16, 2015. The event takes place from 8 AM to 2 PM. Rent a 10X10 flea market space for \$35.00 or contribute items to Centre Church's section. Vendors must provide tables.

Bakers Wanted

We will also be holding a Bake Sale. Baked items must be individually wrapped before bringing to church for the bake table. In addition, volunteers to help for the day are needed! In case of inclement weather, space will be provided inside the church. What a great way to support Centre Church and have fun at the same time! For information contact Dotty Whittier or Barbara Langill in the church office.

Crafters Wanted

We are looking for crafters to participate in "Crafters on the Common" on Saturday, May 16 from 8 AM to 2 PM. If you are a crafter, please join us. If you know a crafter we should contact, please let us know. Cost is \$35.00 for a 12 x 12 space. Crafters must provide their own tables. Contact Debbie Cotting or Margaret Waugh for more information.



We welcomed the Easter Bunny to Centre Church while he patiently sat for pictures with the children who came to see him Saturday, March 21st. We are grateful to Priestley Photography and our Membership Ministries for arranging the Easter Bunny's travel plans to be with us for the day of pictures.

Take Stock in 2015 Mission Trips

This April, the High School Youth Group will be traveling to Heifer Ranch in Perryville, Arkansas for a Learning and Serving Mission Trip. . We invite you to “share” in these experiences by purchasing stock. For just \$20.00 per share, you will help make this trip possible. All shareholders will receive a stock certificate and an invitation to a shareholder dinner later this Spring where mission trip participants will give a presentation of their experience. Please use this order form and return it to the church office with checks made payable to “Centre Church”. Thank you for saying: Yes! I would like to “share” in the Mission Trip experience.

Name _____

Address _____

Number of Shares _____ at \$20.00 a share, Total enclosed _____
 (checks may be made payable to Centre Congregational Church with Mission Trip noted)

Our Opportunities

Sun. March 29 <i>Palm Sunday</i>	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:20 am 6:00 pm	Holy Communion – Sanctuary Nursery (up to age 3) – Room 11 Godly Play Class – Todd Hall Youth Group - Basement
Mon. March 30	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop #48 – Todd Hall Alanon – Fireside Room
Tues. March 31	7:00 pm	Parish Council – Pastor’s Office
Wed. April 1	8:30 am 7:00 pm	Bread & Roses Group - Kitchen Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside Room
Thur. April 2 <i>Maundy Thursday</i>	6:30 pm 7:30 pm	Weight Watchers – Fireside Room Worship Service - Sanctuary
Fri. April 3	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. April 5 <i>EASTER</i>	6:00 am 10:00 am 10:00 am	Sunrise Service – Newhall Park Easter Cantata - Sanctuary Childcare (up to age 5) – Rm 11, older Children in Church
Mon. April 6	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Boy Scout Troop 48 – Richards Alanon – Fireside Room.
Wed. April 8	7:00 pm	Women’s 12 Step Mtg – Fireside
Thurs. April 9	6:30 pm 7:30 pm	Weight Watchers – Fireside Room Senior Choir – Choir Room
Fri. April 10	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sat. April 11	2:00 pm	Musical Hysterics Concert – Sanctuary
Sun. April 12	10:00 am 10:00 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery & Godly Play

Office Hours - 9-3 Monday – Friday.

Next Tower Notes is the week of April 6.

Our prayers are with Marguerite Burns (Nancy Miller’s mother) at Prescott House, North Andover; Joy Smith (Gladys Carter’s daughter), Roger Lauzon, Annabel Aldrich, Marion Barnes, Helen Butcher, Harvey Card, Marge Cole, Marion Edkins, Parker Holloway, Edie Richard and Barbara Warburg.

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