

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Estelle Margarones, Interim Pastor, RevEstelle@centre-church.org

The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

Barbara Langill, Interim Director of Faith Formation

Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director

Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear, Secretary

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 2016



Prepare

The Advent Season is one of expectant anticipation as we wait for Christmas and the birth of Jesus, our Savior. We're told that in Biblical times, Jewish people were oppressed and marginalized. The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) foretold a savior who would emancipate and redeem them.

It's not a surprise that in our culture of 'on-demand' downloads and 'one-click' online shopping, many of us eschew waiting. When things are going well, waiting isn't a big deal. Yes, we count down the days to our vacations, but we fill the time with distractions such as buying new luggage and sunscreen. When you're scared, or lonely, or hurting; waiting can seem interminable. Just think back to a time when your child was injured and you waited to see the doctor...or for the results...or for the healing to take place. I've just described times of uncertainty. During these times of waiting, we pray and we lean upon our faith for strength and direction.

For us to truly understand the Advent Season, we must put ourselves in that place of uncertainty and prayerful expectation. Over the next four weeks, we'll be lighting candles of peace, hope, joy and love. The candles signify that Christ will bring his light and these gifts into the world.

The real spirit of Christmas doesn't lie in the presents or the parties. It lies in the hope we read about in the gospel. "The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord". (Luke2:10-11)

In this holiday season, let us prepare ourselves to again feel a renewed sense of hope. Jesus saves us, but not by waving a magic wand. He saves us by letting us know that we are accepted, forgiven and loved. Let us wait expectantly upon the Christ who lives, cares, and is steadfastly alongside. Jesus doesn't save us by changing things. He saves us by changing us.

Blessings for a peaceful Advent and a joyous Christmas,

Rev. Estelle Margarones, Interim Pastor

December Worship Services



December 4, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.

Second Sunday of Advent

Holy Communion

Sermon by the Rev. Estelle Margarones
Nursery & PreK–Grade 5 Class
Advent Workshop

December 11, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.

Third Sunday of Advent

Morning Worship

Sermon by the Rev. Estelle Margarones
Nursery & PreK-Grade 5 Class
Heifer Marketplace & Cookie Swap

December 18, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Morning Worship

Children's Christmas Pageant
Nursery

Christmas Concert – 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve

5:00 pm Family Candlelight Service-Sanctuary

11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service - Chapel

Christmas Day

10:00 a.m. in the Chapel

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. Pagers are available to ensure Nursery Caregivers can easily communicate with parents.

Faith Formation

Sunday, Dec. 4: Children in PreK-Gr5 will worship briefly with their families, then leave to attend Godly Play. They will be hearing the Story of Advent. Children return to the Sanctuary to sit with their families for Communion. It is very important that during this time, children remain seated with an adult so that they can model what is expected during this holy sacrament. The children's corner will be closed on Communion Sundays so that children are not tempted to spend the time playing. We will plan on providing a coloring sheet and crayons that they can use at their seats.

Sunday, Dec. 11: Children will worship briefly with their families and then head to their class to prepare for the Christmas Pageant.

Sunday, Dec. 18: Christmas Pageant. Children will remain in worship for the entire service. The Christmas Pageant will take the place of the sermon. All children are invited to participate.

Heifer Marketplace

On Sunday, December 11 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 or 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 items to go along with your gift of hope.



Winter Weather/Church Cancellation Policy

Winter weather is coming and every effort will be made to hold regular church services. However, if conditions present that are deemed to be unsafe, we will cancel church by 8:30 AM on Sunday morning. Cancellations will be posted on the church website, church Facebook page, and the church answering machine. Your safety is our top concern. If we hold church, but you feel the conditions are too challenging for you to make it in, please stay home and request that a copy of the bulletin and sermon be sent to you.

Advent Workshop/Wreath Making

Education Ministries invites you to start the season of Advent by coming to the Advent Workshop on Sunday, December 4 right after worship. There will be crafts and activities for all ages and (back by popular demand) *wreath making with fresh greens!*

Fill the Ark Challenge: During Advent, we will be handing out "Fill the Ark" banks and calendars. Each day of this four-week calendar includes information about Heifer International's work to end hunger and poverty in communities around the world. There is a daily giving challenge to help guide families and faith communities to raise funds that will help lift families from poverty to self-reliance. This giving calendar is perfect way for families to reflect on their blessings and focus on generosity during Advent.



Angel Tree for City Mission's Christmas Shop

We will be collecting gifts for the City Mission Society's Christmas Shop on Dec. 4 and Dec 11. CMS distributes these to hundreds of families in their Homelessness Prevention program. Gifts should be NEW and unwrapped.

Please take a suggestion "Angel" from the tree in the narthex, or bring in any non-food gift. Items most needed are: winter coats, sweaters and sweatshirts (large sizes), hats, mittens, gloves and scarves, socks and underwear, blankets and backpacks, toys, books, and games for all ages, Gift cards from Target, Walgreens, Marshalls, CVS, Kohls or other merchants. Thank you for being generous in your giving this Christmas.

Calling All Bakers!!

Cookie Swap: One of the best ways to get into the holiday spirit is baking cookies and treats, and even better than that, is eating them!

We are having a cookie swap on Sunday, Dec 11 directly following worship and would like to invite all willing bakers to whip up a batch or two of their favorite holiday cookies or treats. It can be an old family recipe that you make every year, a classic year-round favorite, or something new you saw on Pinterest and want to try out.

There will also be cookie decorating for the kids, and kids at heart! We will have a sign-up sheet for anyone who would like to participate and just ask that the recipe (or simply the ingredient list for those of you with secret family recipes) is sent to Lisa Gerbick the week before so we may have the ingredients clearly labeled. All are welcome to bake and all are welcome to join in the cookie swap to take some home. Please find Lisa Gerbick in the Narthex following service to sign up or e-mail lisagerbick@hotmail.com

Youth Opportunities

Sunday, Dec. 11 6-7:30 pm Middle and High School Youth will meet downstairs in the kitchen for food, fellowship and fun.

Sunday, Dec. 18 Youth in grades 5 -12 are invited to join Giv2 for Christmas Caroling at Sunrise Assisted Living. We will be meeting at St. Paul's for pizza and practice beforehand.

Deacons Breakfast - December 11th

Join us for bacon, eggs, pancakes, fruit salad, juice and coffee before church on **Sunday, December 11, 2016 from 8:30-9:45 am.**

We will be serving up our delicious breakfast to raise money for the Organ Maintenance Fund. The cost is \$10/person or \$25/family.

Get Together to Party

The Get Together Wheel will be meeting on Tuesday, December 6 in the Fireside Room at one o'clock to enjoy a Christmas Party. *All women of the church are invited to come and celebrate with us.* Please bring a \$5 wrapped gift to participate in our Yankee Swap. I keep repeating to others "Where has the year gone?" which is always something I remember hearing growing up. Come join us as we think about the year past and celebrate the year ahead. Life IS such a gift!

- Donna Marino

Christmas Concert

The Centre Church Choir will present its annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 18 at 6:30 p.m. They will perform a festive selection of Christmas music, organ prelude and postlude. During the concert, the congregation will have an opportunity to join the choirs in singing Christmas hymns. No admission will be charged for the event, but a freewill offering will be taken. The concert will be held in the sanctuary and is open to the public. Refreshments will be served after the concert.



Ways You Can Help on Sunday Mornings

Make someone happy on Sunday in less than a minute with just one dime! Truly, you can spread joy to 100 people in just one hour with just \$10.00 for some creamer and cookies. We are looking for people who would like to help out with Coffee Hour after the service. If interested, just ask for an information sheet with the details to be sent to you. For more information talk to John Sievers after the service or email jsievers77@gmail.com.

If you are willing and would like to read Scriptures on Sunday mornings, please contact Doreen DiFillippo at 781-334-6981. There are openings for December Sundays. Lend your voice to our Advent worship.

New Church Directory Coming!

Our *People Book* will soon be updated with photos! In an effort to simplify the process and make it more personal, we're offering a few ways to participate. We'll be taking photos before church on select Sundays in December. If you prefer, we invite you to email your digital photo to events@centre-church.org. If you can't make it to church and don't have a digital picture, you may send your picture on photo paper. We will scan it and return it to you. The new *People Book* will be available in early 2017.

Plastic Sleeping Mats for the Homeless

Your help is needed more than ever to help turn plastic grocery bags into sleeping mats. We will meet every other Thursday evening in December (Dec. 1, 15, & 29) at 7 pm to make "plarn" (plastic yarn.) We have received lots of donated bags, now we need help smoothing and sorting the bags, cutting the bags into strips, and connecting the strips together and rolling into balls. Join us in the church library to work together to get as much plarn made as possible so that those who are crocheting the mats will have the supplies they need. Contact Kathi Martin or Barbara Langill with any questions about this project.



Thank you to everyone who brought in canned goods, paper products or made donations to help support Ma Duke's And Friends Tenth Annual Thanksgiving Dinner. Special thanks to the kids in Faith Formation and the Tower Day School for their beautiful cards and paintings.

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.

Dear Friends, My many thanks to my friends at Centre Church whose prayers and good wishes have seen me through this. I feel better and stronger with each new day. To quote my daughter's stewardship message, "you are a support system unlike any other." Special thanks for your uplifting visits, cards, and flowers, and for sharing your wisdom and guidance with me every day! I look forward to seeing you all soon!
- Scott DeSantis

Let's Paint the Church....WHITE!!

Just over half of our church was painted last spring. Now it's time to complete the project. Please do what you can to support this effort. If everyone participates and donations average \$600 per pledging unit, we will meet our goal of \$60,000 – the amount needed to complete the painting project. We can't all give the same dollar amount, but we can all give with the same level and spirit of generosity. You can spread your contribution out over 3 or 4 months or you may prefer to give in one lump sum. If you'd like to donate online, visit the church website, www.Centre-Church.org, click on the link to Online Giving, and choose "Painting Project" from the menu. Remember that all donations made before December 31, 2016 are tax-deductible for the 2016 Tax Year. We would like to raise the funds needed to complete the painting project by March 31, 2017 so we can paint the rest of the building in the spring.

By now, you should have received a letter outlining the scope of the painting project. If you did not receive the letter, or if you have questions, please call Debbie Cotting, Bruce Weaver, Rev. Estelle, or Chuck Cotting.

*We take pride in our beautiful church –
let's finish painting it!*

With gratitude, Debbie Cotting
Stewardship Ministries

Missions Pantry: Shaw's Stamps

If you shop at Shaw's and are not collecting their cookware stamps for yourself, we can direct them to an organization which will put them to good use by various homeless shelters for their clients. Please just put them in the "Shaw's Stamps" envelope in the Missions Pantry. Collecting through Jan 8.

We are also collecting the box tops for education from various food products (cereals, soups, etc.) for Tower Day School. Look for the basket in the Missions Pantry,



Tower Day School is gearing up for the 2017-18 enrollment process. If you are interested in learning about the Preschool and Kindergarten classes at Tower, please call them at 781-334-5576.

Pastoral Search Committee Survey

Please find [enclosed](#), a survey developed by the Pastoral Search Committee formed in September. Its purpose is to gather the thoughts of our congregation on what we each appreciate about and desire in, our church experience. This information will guide our committee as we explain Centre Church to pastoral candidates and prayerfully search for our perfect ministerial match. Each individual should fill out their own survey and return it to the church office or drop it into the sealed box in the narthex. Multi-person households can find more surveys in the narthex, or make copies of this one. Please use extra paper for longer answers and feel free to express yourself at length! Now is the time to share your ideas, joys and concerns. *Please complete your survey by Dec 15th.*

Thank you from your faithful Pastoral Search Committee 2017: Ann Decker, David Bjorkman, Jeff Langill, Jeff Law, Kathi Martin, Linda Ladd, Randy Russell, Sarah Crosbie, Bruce Weaver, Church Moderator and Estelle Margarones, Interim Pastor

Save the Date!

Trivia Night and Silent Auction

Saturday February 4, 2017 @ 6:30 PM

We are also looking for donations for the Silent Auction.

Please contact Chuck Cotting or the Church Office with any questions.



POINSETTIA ORDER

I would like to order for \$8.75 each: _____ red poinsettia

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ made payable to Centre Congregational Church.

These flowers have been given by _____

in memory of _____

in honor 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 18.

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

*******Friday, December 9 is the deadline for placing orders.*******

Our Opportunities

Sun. Dec. 4 <i>2nd Advent</i>	10:00 am 11-12 11:30 am	Holy Communion Nursery – Room 11 PreK-Gr5 – Faith Formation Advent Workshop – Richards Hall Diaconate – Pastor’s Outer Office
Tues. Dec. 6	1:00 pm 4:00 pm	Get Together Wheel – Fireside Room Care Team – Pastor’s Office
Wed. Dec. 7	8:30 am 7:00 pm	Bread & Roses – Kitchen Search Committee – Pastor’s Office
Thurs. Dec. 8	7:30 pm	Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 9	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2 nd Floor Office
Sun. Dec. 11 <i>3rd Advent</i>	8:30-9:45 10:00 am 11-12 6-7:30 pm	Deacons Breakfast – Richards Hall Morning Worship - Sanctuary Nursery – Room 11 PreK-Gr5 – Faith Formation Heifer Marketplace – Narthex Cookie Swap – Library Youth Group - Basement
Thurs. Dec. 15	7:00 pm 7:30 pm	Planning Workshop - Library Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 16	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2nd Floor Office
Sun, Dec. 18 <i>4th Advent</i>	10:00 am 6:30 pm	Children’s Pageant - Sanctuary Nursery – Room 11 Choir Christmas Concert - Sanctuary
Thurs. Dec. 22	7:30 pm	Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Fri. Dec. 23	10:30 am	Bible Study – 2nd Floor Office
Sat. Dec. 24	5:00 pm 11:00 pm	Candlelight Service – Sanctuary Candlelight Service - Chapel
Sun. Dec. 25 <i>Christmas Day</i>	10:00 am	Morning Worship - Chapel

Our thoughts and prayers are with: Barkey Gulezian who is recovering from a stroke; Doug Hodgkins as he heals from a fractured rib; and Jeff Stevens recuperating from knee surgery.

Capt. Michael Bruce, USMC, (Barbara Becker’s grandson) has been deployed to Iraq for ten months to work with the Military Expeditionary Unit. His family asks for your prayers during this time. Thank you to everyone at Centre Church.

In addition to our scheduled church activities, Centre Church hosts Boy Scout Troop #48, Cub Pack #48, Girl Scouts, Alanon, Alateen, Women’s AA, BKP Book Packing Group, Essex Society of Genealogists, and the New England Pastoral Institute Counseling Services. Please feel free to contact the church office if you would like more information about any of these activities or groups.

Church Office Hours are 9-3 Monday – Friday.
The next *Tower Notes* will be the week of January 1.
