

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Nancy Rottman, Pastor

The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

Laraine Wilson, Director of Faith Formation

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Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear & Barbara Langill, Secretaries

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

August 5, 2019

More on God's Grace

Yesterday, August 4th, my sermon was a continuation of a conversation about grace that began with a question about the nature of grace. Given the way grace has been argued about, misunderstood, and misapplied over millennia, I found that in my attempts to imagine and define God's grace, I ended up a bit mired in the mud of grace and works myself. In order to get myself "unstuck" I began reading a wide variety of personal reflections and other forms of writing on the subject from within the Judeo-Christian tradition. At its core, grace is the gift of God, the gift of God's presence with us. And this gift of divinity is free. It is not a reward or payment. It is undeserved and unmerited as well as being unconditional. And as much as we try to describe it, it remains mysterious and unutterable.

However, there are two aspects of grace that I hope I can manage to shine some light on. Both aspects have resonated in my life. The first is that while we can cultivate fertile ground for God's grace and our ability to "see" it working in our lives, it still tends to show up unbidden and unexpected. As Reinhold Niebuhr said, "It is the fruit of grace that frees us from the prison house of self-concern." When I traveled to Israel with my mother, I was very clear with myself and others that my primary interest in the trip was making sure my mother had the experience she was hoping for. And yet, I have received grace upon grace from that time! I don't believe

it is an exaggeration to insist that discernment of my call would have been very different, if at all, without my uncharacteristic lack of self-concern on that trip. Which brings me to the second aspect I want to highlight: not all that grace works in our lives appears "good," to our eyes and our hearts, at least initially. Barbara Brown Taylor points to this when she talks about giving in to grace. "If God is God, then grace is just as active in the things that threaten and reduce me. It is God's presence that makes grace whatever the circumstances." "To give in to grace is to surrender our ideas about who God should be in order to embrace God's idea of who we are and to have the good sense to say, "Thank you." "[Barbara Brown Taylor, "Giving in To Grace," *The Living Pulpit*, Jan-Mar 1995, 10] There was a lot of giving in that I had to do in order to allow grace to work its mysterious way with me; to allow grace to work God's purpose in and through my life.

How about you? Where has God's mysterious, unfathomably generous gift of grace been at work in your life? In what terrible, amazing, precious, disrupting moments in your life can you discern God's grace at work? What impact have those moments of grace had on your walk of faith? As always, I'd love to hear your stories.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Nancy

In the Chapel

August 11, 2019

10:00 am Morning Worship – Chapel
Guest preacher- Genna Beatty
Nursery & Faith Formation for Children

August 18, 2019

10:00 am Morning Worship – Chapel
Guest preacher-Genna Beatty
Nursery & Faith Formation for Children

August 25, 2019

10:00 am Morning Worship – Chapel
Nursery & Faith Formation for Children



Christmas in July a Fun Success!

Our Christmas in July Service on July 28th was a great success! Thank you to everyone for their generous donations of toys and pajamas.

Mission and Outreach

Haven From Hunger: Linda Ladd, Frank Scott and Rev. Nancy helped to prepare and serve a meal on Monday 7/22. Ideally, 4 or more volunteers are best. Anyone 14 years or older can be involved, making this a great activity to do with your teenagers! Upcoming dates are: 8/26, 9/23. Please email events@centre-church.org to confirm when you can join us. — Linda Ladd for the Mission and Outreach Team.

Food donation items for the Summer are: Pasta, canned tomatoes and sauce.

News from Around the Parish

We rejoice with Katie and Eric Castriano whose son Linden Frederick was baptized on August 4. His big sisters are Delia and Charleigh.

We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of Ginny Daniels who died on July 5. A private Memorial Service will be held at a later date.

Our love and sympathy go out to Susan Spear and family upon the death of her husband, Shep on July 16. His memorial service was held on Saturday, August 3.



From the Mailbox

Thank you to Rev. Nancy for her visit to me at MGH before my recent cardiac procedure. Her prayers with my family were very much appreciated and her positive thoughts put me at ease. The procedure went very well and I ended up with a stent in one artery. I am resting for 7-10 days, then working from home for a week before resuming a normal working schedule.

Thanks again Rev. Nancy for your prayers and support.

Gary Muise

Dear Friends,
During this time of sadness there have been many blessings. The first was meeting Rev. Nancy when she was visiting Carmine in his hospital room. We received a beautiful poinsettia from the Christmas service. Three weeks later we received a beautiful bouquet of altar flowers and a catch up visit with David and Diane B. An Easter plant was later delivered by Marion.

Rev. Nancy was called and was gracious to agree to the funeral and burial services. Carmine had requested a private service, family only. We carried out his wishes and agreed it was a very nice and a beautiful day to go with it.

Love to all,
Phyllis Ciampa

Faith Formation

Vacation Bible School: Centre Church and friends from the Community are going to “Mars and Beyond” for Vacation Bible School (VBS) from Monday, August 12th– Friday August 16th from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. See Kristin Kadera or Lisa Gerbick with questions. We still have a few openings – there will be stories, crafts, music, recreation and SO much fun! Children will take home something fun every day and we will gather on Friday morning at 11:15 to celebrate the week together. Orientation for staff and volunteers is Sunday, August 11th at 11:30 and we will be setting up after that if you’d like to join us!

Young Families Group: Friday, August 16th after VBS ends at 11:45, meet up with your Centre Church friends for a "bring-your-own" picnic lunch on the church playground. We will then meet up at Richardsons in Middleton at 1:30 p.m. for ice cream! (Rain location: Richardsons, Reading). You are invited even if your child didn't attend VBS! See Jill with questions.

Church School 2019 – 2020:

We are gearing up for a great church school year! Footprints, Godly Play and Brick-by-Brick teachers are getting excited. We will be putting together groups for the fall, so please see Larainne with questions/feedback about groupings. Registration for Church School will start on Sunday, September 8th and parent orientation sessions will take place on Sunday, September 8th and Sunday, September 15th, which is also “Welcome Back Sunday” and our first day of Church School for the 19-20 year.

Church School Assistant(s)/Volunteers:

We are in need of folks to assist our teachers in the Church School classrooms. Having a second adult present is critical for meeting the diverse needs of our children and to comply with best safe church practices. This position doesn’t involve any planning, just come & enjoy!

Typically, Church School is held on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays of the month (excluding holidays and special events). We plan out the calendar for the year, so you will know ahead of time when the dates are. Our priority is to find several folks to commit to one Sunday per month. One time opportunities are also still available. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an assistant, speak with Larainne or Jill.

Joyful Noise: Does your child love to sing? Ms. Lauren Donadio will continue her great work with our pre-school and elementary-aged children next year. They will share their songs at Thanksgiving, Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day. Typically, we rehearse after church the week before and before church the morning of. The time commitment is small, but the gain is HUGE! See Lauren with questions.

FFMT and the “300th”: The FFMT plans to partner with the community for the Trunk or Treat event in October and a Disability Awareness event in April. If you are interested in helping with either of those events, please let us know. We are putting together a group of folks for each event!

Middle School Youth Group: Is your child in Grade 5 or above? We have a few families at Centre Church who are interested in starting a MS Youth Group. This group will meet once monthly on Saturday or Sunday evening. The group will brainstorm service projects and other ways to help their community. We may also have some youth from the Methodist Church interested in joining us. We need a parent host for each month who will provide the “goodies” for the group and be the second adult in addition to the Faith Formation Team Member who is present.



Our Opportunities

Sun. Aug. 4	10:00am	Holy Communion – - Chapel Nursery & Faith Formation Activities-Rm 10
Wed. Aug 7	8:30am	Bread & Roses-Kitchen
Sun. Aug. 11	10:00am	Morning Worship – Chapel Nursery & Faith Formation Activities-Rm 10
	11:30am	Orientation for VBS leaders
Mon. Aug. 12 to Fri.. Aug 16	8:30 am	Vacation Bible School
Sun.Aug. 18	10:00am	Morning Worship – Chapel Nursery & Faith Formation Activities-Rm 10
Sun. Aug. 25	10:00am	Morning Worship – Chapel Nursery & Faith Formation Activities-Rm 10
Mon. Aug. 26	3:00pm	Serve at Haven From Hunger
Tues. Aug. 27	7:00 pm	Parish Council- Pastor’s Outer Office
Sun. Sept. 1	10:00am	Morning Worship – Chapel Nursery & Faith Formation Activities-Rm 10

Summer Office Hours – 9-12. **The next Tower Notes will be on August 26**

In addition to our scheduled church activities, Centre Church hosts Boy Scout Troop #48, Cub Pack #48, Girl Scouts, Alanon, Alateen, Women’s AA, and the Essex Society of Genealogists.

Please call the church office if you would like more information about these groups (781-334-3050)