

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

Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director

Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear & Barbara Langill, Secretaries

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 30, 2019

"Once upon a time...there was the simple understanding that to sing at dawn and to sing at dusk was to heal the world through joy. The birds still remember what we have forgotten; that the world is meant to be celebrated." ~Terry Tempest Williams

I literally stumbled over the quote above just moments after reading a story from a book by William J. Lederer called, *A Happy Book of Christmas Stories*. Every story in the book, Lederer says, "...concerns someone who has discovered the joy of being alive, which, of course, is what Christmas is all about." The story I read, "Timothy's Song," was about a poor, hunchbacked, orphaned child who hawks newspapers near the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City. Despite his circumstances, Timothy lives joyfully. He greets everyone cheerfully, and helps everyone, including the four stray dogs who faithfully follow him everywhere he goes. "He was happy when he helped others because when he did he heard wonderful music, and the whole world became more beautiful."

Timothy heard his "heart music" whenever he was healing the world through his joyful helping. And it turned out that he wasn't the only one who could hear the heavenly choir that rang in his heart. God could hear it, too, and God said, "Come close to Me, and do not stop singing. Your songs – which are good deeds that come from the heart – they are the melodies that I love best of all."

Choosing joy is what Christmas is all about!
Choosing joy is an act of resistance against all

the forces that want to drag us down and keep us in darkness. And like gratitude, it is a practice that we're reminded of at Christmas but that we need to live all year long. You may not hear joy as "heart music" like Timothy. Maybe for you joy tastes like your favorite meal, or looks like your favorite place on earth, or smells like your favorite memory, or feels like your mom's hug. While we may experience joy in different ways, what is the same always is that our joy is contagious and pleasing to God!

How will you go about healing the world through joy?

Joyful New Year,
Rev. Nancy

In the Sanctuary

January 5, 2020

10:00 am Holy Communion
Star Sunday
Nursery Care
Creation Care Class

January 12, 2020

10:00 am Morning Worship
Nursery Care
Church School

January 19, 2020

Morning Worship
Nursery Care
Church School



January 5th we will be celebrating Epiphany with our "Star Sunday". You will enter the sanctuary adorned with stars and be invited to choose a star inscribed with a guiding word for the coming year. During worship, you may choose to reveal the ways in which last year's star has become a guide for you, and you can listen to others share their stories. Please join us for this special worship experience

News from Around the Parish

Our love and sympathy are extended to Bradlee Troy and her family upon the death of her brother, George Robinson Jr., son of the late Dr. George and Dorothy Robinson.

Our prayers are extended to Dorsey Holappa and her family upon the death of her brother-in-law, Dr. Paul Cull of Corvallis, OR.

Flower Delivery

We received many notes of appreciation for the poinsettias that were delivered to shut-ins and those recently bereaved. We would like to thank the team of people who deliver the flowers after church each Sunday and at Christmas and Easter. They are: George and Perry Hayden, Scott and Liz DeSantis, Chuck Cotting, Marian Orfeo, Laurel Caputo, Judith Doe, Randy Russell, and David and Diane Bjorkman.

We extend a special thanks to Laurel Caputo and family for arranging the poinsettias on the altar for our Christmas services.

**Great Pie Challenge
Sunday, January 12th**



Love to make pies? Have you been told you make the best pies ever? Please bring your pie/pies and your appetite to The Great Pie Challenge on Sunday, January 12th after the Service. Pies can be dropped off that morning. Please sign up in the Narthex.

Mission & Outreach Ministries

City Mission Christmas Shop Thank you to everyone who shopped for, purchased and brought in Angel gifts. We blessed two green wagons overflowing with these gifts as part of the worship service on Dec. 15th and then delivered all items to City Mission Boston to be sorted that afternoon. There were many warm coats, hats, gloves and mittens as well as a tremendous amount of socks, other clothes, games and household items. Thank you all for providing these gifts for others this Christmas.

Haven From Hunger We recently served at HFH on Monday Dec. 23. Our next volunteer date is on Monday Jan 27. Please sign up on the bulletin board across from the Fireside Kitchen. In January, our suggested donation for Haven From Hunger is cereal and shelf-stable milk.



Heifer International Many of you honored your loved ones this Christmas with donations to Heifer. Gifts of honeybees, chicks, rabbits, a pair of alpacas and even a water buffalo were bought at our "Heifer Living Gift Market". Although we set up shop for this in December, you can make a donation and pick a card to present to a loved one at any time of year. Please see Linda Ladd for more information.

Fair Trade Goods Thank you all for supporting small farmers around the globe by purchasing Equal Exchange's fairly-traded goods through our Mission and Outreach Ministries Team this Christmas season. Your purchases of these fine chocolates, coffee and tea help to sustain family-owned farms. Sales also allowed us to provide a tree for the church's Festival of Trees fundraiser and to boost our M&O budget by almost \$200. At last count there were a few very dark chocolate bars as well as some tea still available for sale. Please see Linda Ladd to purchase.

Faith Formation

January Sundays:

1/5: Creation Care Class (All Ages K-6),
Communion, Star Sunday
1/12: Church School
1/19: Church School, MLK Weekend, Youth
Group at 5 p.m. (Grades 5 and up)
1/26: Church School, Young Families Group at
4 p.m. (Ice Skating)

Faith Formation Ministry Team:

The next meeting of the Faith Formation Ministry Team will be Tuesday, January 21st at 6:30 p.m. We have recently had a couple of folks step down, so we'd love to welcome another member or two. Much of our planning is done remotely, but we meet in person once per month.

Church School Assistant(s)/Volunteers:

We are in need of a few more folks to assist Ms. Alicia in Nursery with our littlest ones. This position doesn't involve any planning, just come & enjoy! 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 Jill:
(jilldigiorgio@yahoo.com)
or Laraine (lwilson@centre-church.org)

Middle School Youth Group (Grades 5 and Above)

The youth group is up and running! Our next meeting will be held on January 19th. Save the date!

Young Families Group:

Young Families Group will meet for an ice skating adventure on Sunday, January 26th at 4 p.m.! If it is a nice day, we will meet at Market Street in Lynnfield. If the weather is inclement, we will go to the 4:00-5:15 session at Burbank in Reading. Please get there early to rent skates and get suited up before the session starts!

Questions? Speak with Jill:
(jilldigiorgio@yahoo.com)

Christmas Caroling:

We want to thank all of our adult and youth participants in the Christmas Caroling at Sunrise on December 8th. What a way to bring the joy of the season to those in need during the holidays. We had 10 youth participants and almost 10 adults as well -- what a spirited group! Thank you to David and Diane for the Santa hats!

Joyful Noise

Does your child enjoy singing? Ms. Lauren Donadio will continue her great work with our pre-school and elementary-aged children into the new year! Valentine's Day is likely our next singing opportunity. Typically, we rehearse after church the week prior to sharing and then a 2nd time before church on the morning of. The time commitment is small, but the fun is HUGE! Email Lauren with questions at: laurendonadio@gmail.com

Christmas Pageant:

We want to thank all of our adult and youth participants in the pageant! Parents, thank you for helping your children with their costumes and for getting them to the practices. It is such a fun way for them to hear the Christmas story each year. Thank you to Lauren and Doug for the music, Dom for the sound, Sarah, Betsy, Andrea and Lisa for cueing the children to enter, Sheri for the last minute flexibility and the congregation for all the words of praise for the children following the pageant!

Christmas Cookie Fundraiser

Many thanks to Lisa Gerbick and Annmarie Pendola for all their hard work in coordinating the wonderful, and very tasty Christmas Cookie Fundraiser. And thank you to everyone who supported this fundraiser in its inaugural year. We raised over \$570.00 to support the ministries of Centre Church.

Our Opportunities

Sun. Jan. 5 <i>Star Sunday</i> 	10:00 am 11:30 am	Holy Communion– Sanctuary Nursery - Room 10 Creation Care Class Deacons Meeting – Sanctuary Israel Trip Meeting – Pastor’s Ofc.
Thurs. Jan. 9	1:00 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study - Fireside Room Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Sun. Jan. 12	10:00 am 11:30 am	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery - Room 10 Church School Great Pie Challenge – Richards Missions and Outreach meeting – Richards
Thurs. Jan. 16	1:00 pm 7:30 pm	Bible Study – Fireside Room Choir Rehearsal – Choir Room
Sun. Jan. 19	10:00 am 5:00 pm	Morning Worship – Chapel Nursery – Room 10 Church School Middle School Youth Group
Mon. Jan 20	-----	Office Closed in Observance of Martin Luther King Day

Office Hours – 9am – 3pm

The next Tower Notes will be on January 14.

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 any of these groups. (781-334-3050)