

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

January 13, 2020

Out Beyond...

At Christmas, I received a beautiful gift from Mike. It is a Spiritile, created with glass, copper, and wood by artist Houston Llew. We found it in a shop in Newburyport at the end of the summer and Mike tucked it away until Christmas.

Houston says, "Spiritiles are about positivity."

My Spiritile is titled, "Elysian," and it has a quote from a poem titled "A Great Wagon" by Rumi:

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.*

The poem goes on to say:

*When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.*

*Ideas, language, even the phrase 'each other'
doesn't make any sense.*

As is so typical of Rumi's deep wisdom, he says so very much in just a few words. I love that Houston called the Spiritile, "Elysian," because it is certainly a heavenly vision and the rest of Rumi's poem offers even more about the thin places between heaven and earth. But what this image of the field is for me is a vision of the kingdom of God right here on earth that we are called to create by living our lives in tune with God's will. God came to us in Jesus, in human flesh, so we would know the way to do this. His way is found beyond black and white, beyond our self-made ideas of right and wrong, out beyond or perhaps beneath any of our human ideas, in the "gray." And what makes this poem so powerful is that it paints the gray as a beautiful field. A place where we can know what Fr. Greg Boyle

calls "exquisite mutuality." The place where even "each other" doesn't make sense. Me for you and you for me. All of us for each other.

As is so often the case, these big dreams, these big ideas can seem so daunting or fanciful that we dismiss them and settle for life lived in the extremes of black and white, us and them, here and there. So, I want to offer you a suggestion of how we can live this vision, a way that is truly Christ-centered. In a reflection on Rumi's poem, author Elayne Youssef writes, "Thanks to Rumi, whenever I find myself quick to judge or label, I take a moment, create space in my thoughts and remember to head to that field." Out beyond our tendency to categorize, judge, label, or separate, is a place of exquisite mutuality. When we find ourselves stuck in dualistic, us/them thinking, taking a mental pause to visit that field can be a "kin-dom" moment that tunes us to God's will and allows us to meet each other and love each other as God loves us

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." ~John 17:20-21

Meet me out beyond ideas,

Rev. Nancy

In the Sanctuary

January 19, 2020

Morning Worship
Nursery Care
Church School

January 26, 2020

Morning Worship
Nursery Care
Church School

February 2, 2020

Morning Worship
Nursery Care
Creation Care Class

Breakfast – February 2nd



Please join us for bacon, eggs, French toast, pancakes, fruit salad, juice and coffee before

church on Sunday, February 2nd from 8:30-9:45 am. We will be serving up our delicious breakfast to raise money for the Organ Maintenance Fund. The suggested donation is \$10/person or \$25/family.

News from around the Parish

Our love and sympathy go out to Ruth Hyer and family upon the death of her husband, Don Hyer on January 7.

Mission & Outreach Ministries

Haven From Hunger 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.



Faith Formation

Upcoming Sundays:

1/19: Church School (MLK Weekend)
1/26: Church School/Young Families Group (Ice Skating @ 4p.m.)/Youth Group (5:30 p.m.)
2/2: Care for Creation /Joyful Noise Practice
2/9: Church School/Joyful Noise Sharing
2/16: Church School
2/23: Church School

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.

Middle School Youth Group (Grades 5 and Above):

The youth group is up and running! Our January meeting will be held on January 26th at 5:30. Save the date!

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 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

Upcoming dates:

Sunday February 2nd – rehearsal after worship
Sunday February 9th – rehearsal before worship and sharing of the song during the service

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 4-5:15 session at Burbank in Reading. Please get there early in order to rent skates and get suited up before the session starts. Questions? Please contact Jill DiGiorgio (jilldigorgio@yahoo.com)

Trip to the Holy Land

We are planning a tour of the Holy Land in celebration of the church's 300th birthday! In November 2020, we will fly to Israel for eight days where we will be led by Amir Or-ly, an amazing teacher and tour guide. The logistics of our trip are being handled by Keshet Educational Journeys, a well-known tour group that specializes in quality educational tour programs. This is an opportunity for your knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures to explode with all the layers of personal experience – the sights, tastes, sounds, and textures of the Holy Land.

Highlights of the tour include: Caesarea where St. Paul was arraigned before being sent to Rome for trial; Tiberias where we will stay on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and visit Capernaum, which was Jesus' home base for his ministry, the Mt. of Beatitudes where the Sermon on the Mount teachings were given, Nazareth, and more; Ein Gedi, where we will visit Masada, and Qumran to learn about the Dead Sea Scrolls; and then up to Jerusalem, where we will visit Mt. Zion, David's Tomb, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and other important locations in Jewish and Christian history. All along the way, we will be learning about modern day life in Israel as well. This tour includes eight full days of travel and education with ample time for self-guided side outings and personal prayer and reflection. There is a fair amount of walking (up and down as well; not all surfaces are level) so if you really want to go but have concerns about your ability to participate in all the activities, let's talk.

We have a growing group of interested participants and would love for you to join us. Based on a tour group of 15-20 people the base fee for each participant will be less than \$3,000 not including airfare. Airfare adds another \$1,200 or so. The deadline for signing up for this tour is mid-March 2020. Please contact our trip coordinator, Randy Russell to express your interest in joining the group or to ask any questions. He can be reached at randallhrussell@gmail.com or 781-799-8397.

Trivia Night, Silent Auction & Raffles

Saturday February 8, 2020 @ 5:30 PM

STILL \$15 per person

Trivia brought to you by Jason Cotting

**Appetizers, Beverages, Pizza, Finger Desserts,
Beverages & Coffee**

**Donations of Appetizers, and Finger
Desserts are very Welcome!**

Sign Up sheets in the Narthex each Sunday!

TEAM LIMIT: Eight people per table – Sign Up Soon!

**Questions: please contact Chuck Cotting!
@ 781-593-3120 or chuck@thecottings.com**



and



Our Opportunities

Sun. Jan. 19	10:00 am 5:00 pm	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 10 Church School Middle School Youth Group
Mon. Jan 20	-----	Office Closed in Observance of Martin Luther King Day
Tues. Jan. 21	6:30pm	Faith Formation Team
Thurs. Jan 23	1:00pm 7:30pm	Bible Study-Fireside Room Choir Rehearsal- Choir Room
Sun. Jan 26	10:00am 4:00pm	Morning Worship – Sanctuary Nursery – Room 10 Church School Young Families-Ice Skating
Mon. Jan. 27	3:00pm 7:00pm	Haven From Hunger-Peabody Parish Council- Outer Office

Office Hours – 9am – 3pm

**The church office will be closed on January 20
in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

The next Tower Notes will be on January 27

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)