

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

April 2020

Worshipping at Home in a Pandemic

As I sit here at my kitchen counter drinking coffee in what is becoming a new routine, I feel like I have so much to share with you, and nothing at all. What I mean by that is, I feel so in need of connection and completely flooded with too much information. The constant stream of information that comes at us in "normal" times is too much. In this pandemic, it is a firehose. But instead of dousing the fire, all it is doing is fueling it. And I am learning that it is up to me to step out of its reach. I can't turn it off, but I can certainly take myself out of harm's way.

Just as I was hitting a real low in both mood and energy yesterday, I was reminded about the heart of all things and reminded that it is within my power, and yours, to tap into the heart of all that matters. In this holiest of weeks, I can't imagine anything more pressing to share with you. So here goes.

The first reminder came to me from author and activist Glennon Doyle in her new book, *Untamed*. As I read Glennon's account of her own liberation, I am reminded of my own. It is in the mutuality of our lived experience that I was reminded that I carry Knowing within me. Glennon discovered this when a friend sent her a card that said, "Be still and know." This simple and yet profound phrase led her to 10-minute daily sessions of sitting in silence. As she says, "If you just stop doing, you'll start knowing." I learned this in seminary when I took on the spiritual practice of centering prayer. I quickly discovered that when I got very still, I was able to connect with the deep knowing within me that I call God.

Glennon's description of what it feels like to sink beneath the chaos into the place where all is quiet and clear matches what I feel. And reading it last night reminded me that I haven't been still and known in a while. So, this morning I invited myself to return to my own stillness and knowing. And I am inviting you. In this particularly chaotic, noisy global crisis we are trying to live through, I can think of nothing more lifesaving than taking time to be still and know!

The second reminder came from an article by Stephanie Lape, a Lutheran (ELCA) pastor in California. She wrote an article for *livinglutheran.org* on 6 April titled, "My Take: Why are we doing this, anyway?" As religious educators at both the high school and college level, Lape and her husband, Eric, shared the pastime of critiquing every worship service they went to. Immediately after worship, they critiqued everything from the sermon to the coffee, the sense of mission to the friendliness of the people. They went on this way, Sunday after Sunday, until one particular Sunday when their two-year-old son said, "I want to go where the man is." Of course, "the man" was not a particular pastor or friendly congregant, the man he was referring to was Jesus. "I want to go where he is." He then described the church where he thought Jesus was, and when they arrived for worship, Lape shares, "That morning, for the first time in decades, I worshipped. I went there to be with 'the man.'"

Ultimately, we are not consumers of worship. We are makers of worship, we are worshippers. All of us! You and me, alike. Lape said beautifully what I want you all to know. "We worship leaders aren't trying to produce Hamilton; we're trying to

help people encounter Jesus Christ.” And doing so in this time of social distancing, stay-at-home, remote worship means that more than ever, we are each responsible for connecting to our own Knowing, the heart of all things – the Spirit of God that is within us in the deep silence, and attending worship with the intention of encountering “the man,” Jesus the Christ. All of us who are creating digital worship experiences are giving our all to offer you avenues for encountering Jesus, for authentic worship. None of it is perfect, because none of us is perfect. But it is offered out of our own deep love of God, our connection to the heart of all that is. It is an invitation. An opportunity to “go where He is.”

On behalf of everyone who has and who will participate in creating our worship experiences, I invite you to see and hear with your heart and your own deep Knowing. Come to worship Him!

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Nancy

Find *Untamed* here: <https://momastery.com/get-untamed/>
Find Stephanie Lape’s article here:
<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2020/04/my-take-why-are-we-doing-this-anyway/>

News from Around the Parish

A Grieving Congregation

Our hearts are so heavy with grief over the deaths of Steven and Earl Richard and worried over Karen Nascembeni’s ongoing battle with COVID-19. Doreen DiFillippo wants you all to know how touched she, her brother Glenn, and her whole family are with your expressions of love and sympathy. For the avalanche of cards, the baskets of food, and the flood of prayers offered, they are thankful. Many of you have asked about plans for memorial services for Earl and Steven. At this time, the family is unable to make any decisions due to the current restrictions on such gatherings and because we all await Karen’s recovery and participation. In the meantime, your prayers, your on-going participation in our evening candlelight vigil, your candles in your windows, and your expressions of love, sympathy, and solidarity are so very much appreciated.

While We Are Sheltering in Place

We are doing all we can in this time to communicate regularly and thoroughly – about worship plans, about opportunities for connection, and about the joys and sorrows we hold as a congregation and community. We are trying to reach as many as possible via email because it is most efficient. If you are not receiving our email communication – please contact the office (office@centre-church.org or 781-334-3050).

If you have a prayer concern, a question, a joy to celebrate, or just need to talk, PLEASE contact me by phone, text, or email (603-930-1889 or pastor@centre-church.org). You are not bothering me! One of the lessons we can all learn during this time is to stop comparing! Just because someone else has what you might consider a “bigger concern” doesn’t stop yours from being legitimate, in need of your attention, and worthy of my/our prayer. Your feelings are your feelings and they are real. They are there for you to feel. Acknowledging them by sharing them with a trusted person allows you to then work through them. And none of that stops you from being there for someone else. In fact, being honest about your own feelings allows you to be more fully present for someone else. Our own feelings and experiences are the storehouse for our empathy. So, good people of Centre Church: call, text, email, write! I want to hear from you!!

And thank you for all the ways you are being there for each other!! Whenever I hear from one of you, I hear about everyone you have been in touch with. It brings me such joy to witness our beloved community, alive and thriving, even while we are apart.

Contributions/Pledges

With the church building being closed, and Sunday services happening online, some of our members have been asking about the best way to make contributions. You can always mail your Pledges/contributions to the church office. Or you can go online to the church's website and click "Online Giving" on the right-hand side and contribute that way. Also, it's that time of year when we ask members to help defray the cost of UCC Conference and Association dues. The church pays \$23.32 for each church member - so please help if you can.

Mission and Outreach

Many recently scheduled events did not happen due to our Covid-19 closure, but a few did!

Haven From Hunger Linda and Becky Ladd volunteered at HFH on Monday, March 23. Gloves, cleaning, and keeping our distance from each other were the rules. Bags of groceries were packed for morning pickup. Then take-away meals were packed and distributed from 4-5pm. All distribution is being done outside. Their stocked food was from the Boston Food Bank as store delivery has stopped. They are not accepting any food donations from churches for now. Our next regularly scheduled volunteer date is on April 27.

Green Team A Lenten movie series focusing on Creation Care happened on the first 2 Wednesdays of Lent. Groups of 8-10 people gathered to watch Care for Creation and portions of Renewal on March 4th and then Bidder 70 on March 11th. Evenings included a soup supper before the movie and plenty of discussion. Thank you to Perry Hayden for a delicious Lentil soup!

Climate Crisis Book Group A weekly Book Group on "Cathedral on Fire: Climate Crisis Handbook for Churches" was planned for 4/19 - 5/31. Perhaps we can still have a discussion by Zoom? Linda Ladd has some copies of the book. Please contact her if you'd like one dropped off.

Heifer International Thank you to Larainne and the Faith Formation Ministry Team for baking Heifer Muffins during Lent (while we could!). They raised \$218 in two weeks.

Love Packages We will continue to collect Bibles and Christian literature for another month once we get back to church.

Bread and Roses They have suspended their daily food service until further notice. We will not be providing our beef stew meal for April. When we receive notice that they have resumed daily meal service, we will begin our meal preparation the first Wednesday of each month. In lieu of preparing our monthly meal, Centre Church has sent a check to help support Bread and Roses outreach community efforts of purchasing and supplying bulk food items to shelters that remain open in the area.



Centre Church Connects with Kids!

Centre Church Families,
During the COVID-19 Crisis, I have been heartened at the ways that we have been able to connect with one another -- email, text, FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook and more! We are practicing being "Together Apart" and we would love to collect stories about the ways your family is still connected to church beyond the "brick and mortar"! If you have one to share, send it to me at lwilson@centre-church.org.

Blessings of hope,
Larainne (339-226-0544)

Weekly Emails: Please check and read your e-mail from the church weekly! I also send out additional information (Lessons, Activities etc...) to families with children in our Faith Formation Program.

Online Video "Chats": We have been doing these weekly and have gotten some feedback that folks would like to do them more often. If you are interested in leading an online meeting/chat, let us know. We can take care of the technology part and talk about ideas with you. I have enjoyed seeing your faces at coffee hour.

Young Families Group: Please reach out to Jill (jilldigiorgio@yahoo.com) if you'd like to meet virtually.

Worship: Larainne is doing a mini-message for worship every week. Please subscribe to our YouTube Channel and tune in. We try to have it posted by 10 a.m. Please let Nancy know if you or your child has an interest in participating in worship! We would love to have parents and children involved! If you'd like to try your hand at the mini-message, let's talk! We can brainstorm ideas for a future date --- you'll upload your video by Saturday at noon, and we will be good to go!

Youth Group: We will have a Zoom meeting soon, as our April 5th meeting was postponed. Save the date of Sunday, April 19th at 12:30 for now!



Do you knit or crochet? Time on your hands? Looking for a little something to do?

Plans are underway for the 2020 Holiday Fair scheduled for November 7, 2020. The fair committee wants to reach out to the folks in our congregation who knit or crochet to see if they would like to create items to donate to the church craft table. Given our space limitations, it might be best to focus on smaller items like mittens, hats, and scarves for children and adults. If you are interested in knitting or crocheting for the fair, please contact the church office so we can allocate appropriate space on the church craft table. We check messages daily, so you can leave a message on the church answering machine or call Barbara Langill at 781 334 5504.



Easter Plants have been Given By:

Annabel Aldrich

Angela Fell

Paul & Karen Harrington

Dottie Holden

Jean Lambe

Lynne Lowry

Marilyn M. McCarthy

In Loving Memory Of:

My late husband, Harold Aldrich and our parents

Hartley Fell

Donald Blanchard, Beatrice Annis and
Lincoln & Phyllis Harrington

Carl Holden


Harry Lambe and Robert Kobler

Ken Lowry

Jean & Harvey Card, William G. McCarthy

As we are unable to gather for worship on Easter Sunday, we will plan to display flowers on the first Sunday that we gather back together.

Our Opportunities

Thursday, April 9	6:00pm	Maundy Thursday Service of Tenebrae Centre Church YouTube Channel
Sunday, April 12 	10 am 11am	Easter Sunday Centre Church YouTube Channel Also on our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/centrechurchucc/ Zoom Coffee Hour
Sunday, April 19	10am 11am	Sunday Worship Centre Church YouTube Channel Zoom Coffee Hour
Sunday, April 26	10am 11am	Sunday Worship Centre Church YouTube Channel Zoom Coffee Hour

The church building remains closed, but voice mail and e-mails are checked daily.

During Holy Week, we will share a recorded Maundy Thursday service of Tenebrae. It will have the feel of our usual Maundy Thursday service with some innovations to adapt to our home setting. You will see and hear some familiar voices during this service, and I hope and pray that offers you some comfort and connection. In order to prepare for watching this service you will want to gather candles (7 would be great if you have them – real or electric) so that you can gradually extinguish the light as we move through the story. This service will be available on our YouTube channel no later than 6 pm on Thursday, April 9th

You can find our worship videos on our YouTube Channel. We invite you to “subscribe” so you won’t miss anything. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5KOmI3mi8KLFddpMzfDmTg>