

# 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*

**May 2020**

## The Gift of Liminal Space

Well Church, here we are in the In-between; the time between "what was" and "what will be," known in spiritual terms as "liminal space." Richard Rohr describes this place/time in this way, "Liminal space is an inner state and sometimes an outer situation where we can begin to think and act in new ways. It is where we are betwixt and between, having left one room or stage of life but not yet entered the next." We all pass through liminal space over and over again as individuals, but also, as we are now doing, as a world, as a society, as a nation, as the Church, as a church. We are all in this liminal space, in big ways and in small ones, together.

Sheryl Fullerton, an editor and author, speaks of the destabilization and disorientation that we find – mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually – in liminal space and imagines that, despite our deep discomfort and urge to pass through it as quickly as possible, we might discover in it "a place and state of creativity, of construction and deconstruction, choice and transformation." I have been reflecting on the opportunities that are opening up in this time for me, personally, for the Church universal, and for Centre Church. I don't have specific answers at the moment. Even though this "shut-down" of life as we knew it seems to have been going on forever already, it truly has been but a tiny wrinkle in time so far. So, for once, I am content not to try to control it. Instead, I am attempting to stay open to whatever new life might be found for us all. How about you? Can you see your way to sitting beside me in it and waiting?

I've heard much mention of the positive impact the slowing of life is having on our planet. I hope that means we will embrace the clearing of our vision, both literally and figuratively. Can you hear Johnny Nash singing "I Can See Clearly Now?" [listen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FscIgtDJFXg>

I pray we might keep our eyes open to what is coming into focus for us personally and communally. God, our Creator and Comforter, God our Shepherd, God our Advocate did not create this pandemic. But I believe that God can use it for good if we allow ourselves to be led. I believe we can and must harness its potential for good by tuning in and seeing what it has to teach us. Are you open to new possibilities?

Dear friends, I know this is an incredibly difficult and challenging time. I see the ripples of grief, loss, sadness, loneliness, and struggle moving through our lives. We did not jump into this liminal space of our own accord but were literally pushed off the cliff by this pandemic. However, there is new life beyond the crosses we bear and the tombs that try to hold us. I am not asking you to ignore your feelings or the feelings of others – and this pandemic sure is serving up a smorgasbord of feelings – I am asking you instead to feel everything honestly but allow yourself to wonder what you might learn from your feelings, your true experience in this liminal space, for yourself and for all of us.

Yours in the love of Christ,

*Rev. Nancy*

Find more from Richard Rohr and Sheryl Fullerton at <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

### **Adult Discussion Group**

Thursday afternoons at 3 pm with Rev. Nancy  
Schedule of Videos to be discussed:

**4/30** An Open-Hearted Response - Dale Ryan -  
about reading the Bible:

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/an-open-hearted-response>

**and** Abundant Life - NT Wright - what is  
abundance?

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/abundant-life>

**5/7** What breaks your heart open - Rowan  
Williams - children; music

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/rw-what-breaks-your-heart>

**5/14** Hearing the Voice of Love - Phileena  
Heurertz - self love, self care

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/hearing-the-voice-of-love>

**5/21** Love Gets the Last Word - Becca Stevens  
- it's all about love in the end

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/love-gets-the-last-word>

**5/28** Suspended Space - Peter Rollins -  
worship; no distinctions,

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/suspended-space>

### **News from Around the Parish**

The Richard and Nascembeni families thank everyone for the continued prayers for Karen and her recovery. Karen is making progress and has been moved to a rehabilitation facility. She has months of recovery ahead of her. They do not allow flowers at the facility and Karen has asked for no cards at this time. Her family will share an address for her in the future when she is ready to receive your expressions of love and support.

### **Parish Council Minutes**

The March 2 and March 30 minutes from Parish Council are available online at

<http://www.centre-church.org/Council>. If you would like a copy, please contact the church office and we will mail one out to you.

### **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 check your junk mail folder or contact the office ([office@centre-church.org](mailto: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](mailto:pastor@centre-church.org)). You are not bothering me! 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.

### **Mission and Outreach**

M&O is matching your donations The Mission and Outreach Ministries Team would like to encourage our congregation to help our neighbors in nearby communities such as Chelsea, where they've been hard hit by unemployment due to the pandemic shutdowns. We've pledged to match every donation our congregation makes to help people locally at this time. Please just send a receipt of your donation by mail or email to the church office and we'll match your donation to the organization of your choice.

Haven From Hunger Our next volunteer date is on May 25, Memorial Day. However, due to social distancing advice, we might not be volunteering for a while. Haven From Hunger has hired ten full time employees to get them through this very different time. It's a great move to have the same team working to their specific safety standards each day. They're

preparing and packaging take-away meals for more clients than usual, as well as packing pantry boxes for distribution from tents in their parking lot and to families who usually benefit from school meal programs. What they need most now is funds to help pay these new employees. The Mission and Outreach Team is brainstorming how we can help financially. Please stay tuned on that.

Green Team Our planned Centre Church book group on "Cathedral on Fire: Climate Crisis Handbook for Churches" has been replaced by an online Book Discussion being run by the UCC. Anyone can sign up at: [https://www.ucc.org/cathedral\\_on\\_fire\\_book\\_discussion](https://www.ucc.org/cathedral_on_fire_book_discussion). These sessions occur every Thursday effective 4/30/2020 until 6/4/2020 from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM. Please contact Linda Ladd if you are interested in joining and need a copy of the book.

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

Bread and Roses Check out the worship service on April 26th for an update on Bread and Roses by Margaret Waugh. <https://youtu.be/L-j0XKi6oo4>

### **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.

### **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](mailto:lwilson@centre-church.org).

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

### **Parent Support Group: Thursdays at 7 p.m.**

Jill and/or Laraine will lead a virtual support group for parents of school-aged children. Join us to build your circle of support through the Covid Crisis and beyond.

### **Under The Tent: Sundays at 4 pm**

Children up to Grade 4 are invited to join Laraine "Under The Tent" -- make a fort, tent or other cozy space in your living room or wherever you'd like and join in for a check-in, story and discussion on Sunday afternoons.

### **Youth Group: Select Sundays at 5 pm**

Middle School and High School Youth - Join Laraine on her back deck (weather permitting) -- you can be comfortable and casual inside or outside as we gather to share stories, play virtual games and "see" one another again!

For links to any of the above virtual gatherings, check the list attached to the All Church Email on Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>. Laraine has also been sending the link out via Facebook Messenger and email. Contact Laraine or Jill with any questions.

**Celebration Sunday:** Celebration Sunday (June 7th!) is only 5 weeks away. It looks like we will be celebrating virtually. Our theme is Creation Care and The Faith Formation Ministry Team will be partnering with Mission and Outreach on the service. Look for more information about ways you can participate!

## Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule

- **Sunday Morning** worship video – Premieres on our YouTube Channel each Sunday at 10am. Subscribe to our channel and set reminders at [www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/](http://www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/)
- Zoom Fellowship hour – **Sundays at 11am**
- Under The Tent: **Sundays at 4pm** – gathering for children with Ms. Larainne.
- Youth Group: Select **Sundays at 5pm**
- Midweek Prayer and Support Gathering: **Wednesdays at 4pm** with Rev. Nancy
- Adult Discussion Group: **Thursdays at 3pm** with Rev. Nancy (see inside for listing of videos)
- Parent Support Group: **Thursdays at 7pm** with Ms. Larainne and/or Jill DiGiorgio

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



## Get your Centre Church Tee Shirts here!

Send your request to Chuck Cotting at [chuck@thecottings.com](mailto:chuck@thecottings.com) and mail your check, or complete the order form below and mail **with** your check, to the church office.

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### *Tee shirt Order Form*

Please make check payable to **Centre Congregational Church** and send in with completed form.

Adult Tee shirt (\$7.00 each) How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Size(s)\_\_\_\_\_

Child Tee Shirt (\$6.00 each) How many? \_\_\_\_\_ Size(s)\_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_