

# 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

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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 2020**

## Finding God in the Emptiness

*Apprehend God in all things,*

*For God is in all things.*

*Every single creature is full of God.*

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*All hiding places reveal God.*

*If you want to escape God,*

*God just runs into your lap.*

*For,*

*God is at home.*

*It is we who have gone out for a walk.*

- Meister Eckhardt

As I reflected in worship this past Sunday, pandemic living had me feeling pretty empty on Saturday. It felt, if I'm being honest, a lot like that hollow feeling you get in your tummy when you're really hungry. I was feeling completely poured out – no joy left. But, what I have discovered through 57 years of living is that rushing to fill the emptiness – whether in my growling stomach or in my soul – is never a good idea! When I rush to eat "all the things" because I'm so hungry, I invariably end up with a stomachache. I actually feel much better when I slow down, let some of the ache pass, choose one thing that will satisfy and eat it slowly. When it comes to spiritual emptiness, I've discovered it's even more important to wait, because the emptiness is an illusion; something that 13<sup>th</sup> century German theologian and mystic Meister Eckhardt knew as well. Every single creature is full of God. Even me. God is even in the emptiness. Even when we try to flee from God, God just runs into our laps [insert feeling of a dog on your lap here]. So, when that hollow

empty feeling comes, I wait. I wait in silence. I wait in rest. And I listen. Because God is in the emptiness, waiting, too! Waiting for us to sit still and silent long enough to hear what God needs us to know, to do, to be, to live.

This past weekend was a threshold weekend for Centre Church. The remediation work is done and the reconstruction ready to begin. But for the weekend, so much hollow, empty space. A rare moment in our 300-year history when multiple spaces within our current structure are stripped back to their bones. Over the next month(s), those empty space will be filled again with the things needed to make them functional, and yet still, they will be empty of our presence in person for worship, fellowship, faith formation, mission. While that is so, I hope we can all linger in the uneasiness and vulnerability of the emptiness and silence and listen. I hope we can dwell for a while in possibility. Rather than wishing for what was, I pray we can live in the hope of what can be. Not a single one of us is excluded from sharing God's imagination. Oh, we can try to hide. We can pretend it's not "our thing," that praying, mystical, spiritual transformation thing. We can try to leave it to others and just go on making our own way in this crazy time. But God is still right with us, in us, and hoping to act through us. God is still at home at Centre Church. God is still at home in each one of us. What might God be hoping to do with us, after the flood?

In the hope of new life in Christ,

*Rev. Nancy*



**You are invited to  
our Parking Lot  
Communion  
Services!**

Don't forget to reserve your spot for our parking lot communion worship service next **Sunday, August 2nd at either 9:30 am or 10:30 am.**

You can reserve a spot at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E094EAEAC28A0FF2-parking>, or by calling the church office at 781-334-3050.

(Note of caution: because of construction and COVID-19 concerns, our building will not be open for restroom or other use during the service, so please plan accordingly).

**When It Rains Inside - Update**

After much hard work, the asbestos abatement is complete in the sanctuary and basement (Richards Hall floor and ceiling, and the floor in the bathrooms, stairway/foyer, and kitchen).

Reconstruction begins this week. On our YouTube channel:

[youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/](https://www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/) you can find a video tour that Rev. Nancy did over the weekend to show everyone what things look like “undone.” We will continue to share videos of the progress as each space is put back together. Chuck Cotting continues to put in many, many hours coordinating all of the contractors and overseeing each project as it is completed (a full-time job!). Meanwhile, Chuck and Scott DeSantis are working with Leah O’Brien on making the necessary accommodations to our Tower Day classrooms so that school can open and operate safely in the fall. Please stay-tuned as we continue to write this chapter of our life together as Centre Church.



**PLEASE SEND  
US YOUR FAVORITE  
HYMN**

Would you like to hear your favorite hymn sung during a Sunday Service? Starting August 23, 2020 we will be including someone’s favorite hymn in each worship service until we can gather again in person. Please email your hymn

requests to Annmarie Pendola at [annmarie.pendola@gmail.com](mailto:annmarie.pendola@gmail.com). It can be from any season or theme. If you are willing, please share why this is your favorite hymn.

**Mission and Outreach**

**Matching Covid-19 Donations**

We are matching donations our church members make to organizations hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Checks to the organizations below were sent in July as part of this program. Please send your donation receipts or check images to the church office for matching.

Charity	Amount
Bread & Roses	\$103.63
The Food Project	\$150.00
Chelsea Collaborative, Inc.	\$133.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$387.23</b>



**Reid's Ride 2020**

Reid's Ride, an annual bike-a-thon which raises funds to fight cancer in Adolescents and Young Adults, went “virtual”

this year! Participants could do any activity, anywhere by July 19<sup>th</sup> which was to be the date of the 2020 ride. The Centre Church Cyclers did three different rides. A Ladd family contingent rode the traditional route to the halfway point and back to Lynnfield. Randy Russell went in the opposite direction from home and looping around Lake Quannapowitt. Judie and John Potter got in 28 miles riding bike trails in NH, including the Franconia Notch trail which they discovered starts with a 2 mile uphill climb! Judie said “only with the prayers and support of family and friends, and God's Grace was I able to accomplish this”. She’s a cancer-beating inspiration to all of us. You can still help us reach our fundraising goals at <https://www.firstgiving.com/team/401536>. These are unusual times, but young people are still being diagnosed with cancer.

## Stewardship Update

We have received 72 pledges so far, but we still have a few outstanding pledges - people who pledged last year, but have not done so yet this year. We understand that these are challenging and uncertain times, but we hope that if you are able to pledge, you will return your pledge card as soon as possible. Accurate pledge data is essential for developing the FY 2021 budget. Our building may be closed, but our church is still OPEN! Our staff is working hard to provide Sunday morning worship and coffee hour via YouTube and Zoom. They are also leading mid-week discussion and prayer groups for adults as well as programs for children and youth. We aren't able to make meals for Bread and Roses or volunteer at Haven From Hunger, but we continue to support those organizations and others with financial contributions. The work of the church continues despite the pandemic. We encourage everyone who can to please return your pledge card and continue supporting the ministry of Centre Church. If you need a pledge card, please call the church office and one will be mailed to you.

**Note to people who give on line: If you want to increase your pledge, you will need to go to the church website: [www.Centre-Church.org](http://www.Centre-Church.org) and click on "Online Giving" to change the dollar amount.**

## News from Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to Dick Carter and his family upon the death of Carol on July 22. Services have been postponed until a later date.

It is with sadness we report the death of Rev. Dudne Breeze on July 5. He was our Interim Pastor in 1999-2000.

Our best wishes to Fred Boling who celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on July 4 and to Jo Farnsworth who celebrated her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday on July 8.



## Parish Council Minutes

The May 26, 2020 minutes from Parish Council are available online at <http://www.centre-church.org/Council>  
Please contact the office if you would like a copy.



## Faith Formation Ministry Updates

### **Parent Support Group:**

**Thursday, August 6th at 7:30 p.m.**

Jill and/or Larainne 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. Message Larainne for the link.

**Mini-Message:** We invite our Centre Church Families to join Worship on our YouTube Channel at 9 a.m. on Sunday mornings (or watch later if you are sleeping in!). Each service will have a mini-message for the children.

**Church To Go Boxes:** Currently being distributed! Email Larainne ([lwilson@centre-church.org](mailto:lwilson@centre-church.org)) if you haven't gotten one!

**Parking Lot Popsicles:** DATE/Time TBD!

The Faith Formation ministry Team will host families in the parking lot for popsicles! We are thinking about August 2nd at 11:30 (after the communion services). Let us know your thoughts about days and times!

**Next FFMT Meetings:** August 11th at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom., September 8th at 7:30 p.m.

**Under the Tent and Youth Group:** Resuming in September, watch the Tower Notes or Friday Emails for more Information.

## **Parking Lot Communion Service: Sunday, August 2**

Join us as we gather, socially distant style, in our parking lot for a worship service of Holy Communion, prayer, and music. You can reserve a spot in the parking lot for **9:30 am or 10:30 am**.

## **Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule**

- **Summer Schedule: Sunday Morning** worship video – Premieres on our YouTube Channel at **9 am each Sunday** morning. Subscribe to our channel and set reminders at [www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/](http://www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/)
- Zoom Fellowship hour: **Sundays at 9:30am**  
*(with the exception of August 2)*
- Midweek Prayer and Support Gathering: **Wednesdays at 4pm** with Rev.Nancy.  
*(with the exception of August 19)*
- Parent Support Group: **Thursday August 6 at 7:30 pm** with Ms. Larainne and/or Jill DiGiorgio. Contact Larainne for the link
- FFMT Meeting: **August 11th at 7:30 p.m.** via Zoom.,



While our building might be closed, our church has been open for 300 years and counting!