

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

September 2020

Why Worship?

I recently purchased a new daily devotional which came highly recommended and was just published this year. It is called *Liberating Love: 365 Love Notes From God* by Sandhya Rani Jha, an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who serves as founder and director of the Oakland Peace Center. In the preface of the book Jha says, "It takes a village to understand God's word, and it took a village to create a devotional. ... At its best, that is how we connect with the divine as well: in and through and with one another" (Jha, 2020, p. viii). Each devotion is written as if God is the one addressing the reader, which is powerful and effective. While I have experienced other devotionals that attempt this, they so often fail to draw me in because the biblical interpretation that informs the devotional falls short of my understanding of the liberative love and justice of God made known to us in Jesus. This is exactly where Jha's *Love Notes* deviates and delights.

The devotion for August 27th concerns Joshua 22:26-27 which speaks of rituals and offerings as a witness between God's people and God. And God says, "Every time you participate together in any sort of act that honors me, you are saying to each other and to your children, "we are a people in relationship with our loving God"" (Jha, 2020, p. 240).

Our worship life, like so much of our daily lived experience, has been reshaped and relocated in this time of pandemic and flood. For all of you there has been the adjustment to worshipping online. Unlike when we are gathered together in the sanctuary, when we worship online you have the ability to get up, multitask, "change the channel," or turn it off all together. And our worship participants are separated from all of you as we audio and video record liturgy, prayers, sacred music, scripture, and message. Have

I mentioned how strange it is to preach to my phone camera rather than to all of you in the pews? That's why this devotion stood out to me! In the midst of the steep learning curve with all of the technological skills needed for us to be church together in this time, I've had to call myself back again and again to the purpose of worship as I understand it. Our worship is a witness to our relationship with our loving God. And my second and also central understanding of worship is that it is the heart of faith formation. It is in our worship together that we remind each other and ourselves who and whose we are. The purpose of our worship is not to appease God. No. It is a reminder of relationship, the relationship at the heart of all life. Our relationship to the Living God in whom we live and move and have our being.

Let each of us, each time we participate in worship in any way, recall our sacred purpose. "We are a people in relationship with our loving God." May the Word and all of the words spoken and sung, the silences, the bread and the cup, the giving and the receiving, be a reflection of the Love that is always on the move between Creator and creation, between our God and All of Us!

You are loved, *Rev. Nancy*



PLEASE SEND US YOUR FAVORITE HYMN

Would you like to hear your favorite hymn sung during a Sunday Service? 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. It can be from any season or theme. If you are willing, please share why this is your favorite hymn.



**PARKING LOT WORSHIP ON SUNDAY,
SEPTEMBER 6TH at 10:00 am**

Centre Church, it's time to gather again, socially-distant-style, in our parking lot for worship including Holy Communion. You will be able to reserve a spot in the parking lot for Sunday, September 6th at 10:00 am. You are invited to bring enough bread and juice for your family. We'll bless and break together with Rev. Nancy leading us. We've missed you and know you have missed each other. Come and share in this oasis of time and beloved community where we worship our God who loves us with an everlasting love! Please wear masks and maintain social distance. (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). Please sign up at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E094EAEAC28A0FF2-parking1> Or call the church office (781-334-3050) to reserve your spot. See you soon!

Welcome Back Tower Day School

It is with joy (and every appropriate and necessary safety measure) that we welcome Tower Day School staff and students back to our building. We have every confidence in Director Leah O'Brien, her staff, the Tower Day Board, and Chuck, Scott, and José, as they prepare for the students' first days of school next week. We are so grateful for their faithful dedication to preschool education and the opportunity that we are able to provide to these children and their families. It will be a daily delight to once again hear the children's voices filling our classrooms and hallways.

News from Around the Parish

We extend our love and sympathy to the family and friends of Harriet Holt who died on August 25. A private interment will be held.

Mission and Outreach

Matching Covid-19 Donations

We are matching donations our church members make to organizations hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. To date, we have matched \$2,354.71 in donations as part of this initiative. Checks to the organizations below were sent in August. Please be generous when responding to those who need our help during this pandemic, and send your donation receipts or check images, to the church office for matching.

We've received many nice thank you notes from the organizations receiving these donations to date, all reiterating how helpful extra funds are at this time as they help their communities and deal with the effects that this pandemic is having on their operations.

Charity	Amount
Citizens Inn/Haven From Hunger	\$100.00
Chelsea Collaborative	\$24.67
First Church Chicopee Loaves & Fishes	\$100.00
Grand Total	\$224.67

Reid's Ride 2020

Thank you for all of your donations to Team CCCyclers in support of our Reid's Ride efforts this year. Our team raised \$2,395 to support Adolescents and Young Adults in their fight against cancer.

Tower Notes – Stewardship Update

We still have a few outstanding pledges. 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 and various groups and activities during the week. We continue to support our missions partners 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 the church website: www.Centre-Church.org and click on "Online Giving" to change the dollar amount.



Faith Formation Ministry Updates

WEEKLY Parent Support Group **Resumes, Thursday** **September 10th at 7:30 p.m.**

Join Larainne, Jill and others to talk through your beginning of the year worries, your school's plan and how that is (or isn't!) working with your own plans and needs. Parenting is always hard, but parenting in a pandemic --- WHOA!

Contact Larainne for the link.

Blessing of the Backpacks and Parking Lot Popsicles: September 12th at 2:00 p.m.

The Faith Formation Ministry Team is inviting parents of children and youth to join us for a blessing of their backpacks, backpack tags and popsicles. We will have a more formal sign up so that we are adequately prepared, but we will ask that you only park every other space and that you bring your own seating. Everyone should wear masks and use social distancing guidelines of 6 feet from anyone who isn't in your "bubble"/family! RSVP by September 8th at Noon. See you then!

Here is the link for the event:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E094EAEAC28A0FF2-backpacks>

Church School (Up to Grade 8): Fall 2020

The Faith Formation Ministry Team will be discussing this topic on September 8th at our Monthly Meeting. Please weigh in - would you prefer Sunday mornings or Sunday afternoons? If coffee hour had a break out room for the children, would you come? Let me know your thoughts! If you want to join us on Zoom, contact Larainne for the link.



Church School (Grades 5 and up!): **Fall 2020**

Parking Lot Pizza! October 4th at 12:00 Noon!
Drive through, say hello, pick up a pizza, catch up with your friends (distanced with masks)!

When it Rains Inside (A Building Update)

The pace of this large project has slowed as our insurance claim is settled, but some work continues to be completed each week. New sprinkler heads were installed in the sanctuary ceiling. The attic was prepared for new insulation. The old, broken bubbler near the elevator was removed and a new handwashing sink installed for Tower Day School. Scott repaired and painted all the damage from the second leak on the first and second floors.

Chuck continued coordinating all of these efforts with an exceptional attention to detail – AND he and Debbie got away for a week's vacation in Maine! José has returned full-time and spent his days preparing the classrooms for school to open while keeping up with the cleaning of our office spaces and bathrooms. Chuck has worked closely with Leah O'Brien on obtaining all of the cleaning supplies needed for Tower Day School to operate. We now have automatic paper towel dispensers in all of the bathrooms and hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the building.

Over the month of September, we hope to begin the big reconstruction pieces of this project. We will keep you up to date with photos, videos, and reports.

The most important thing you can do to help is PRAY! Thank God for God's accompaniment with us through this challenge. Pray for all who are working to see us through. Pray!

Parking Lot Communion Service: Sunday, Sept. 6

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 the 10:00 am service by contacting the church office at office@centre-church.org. or 781-334-3050.

Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule

- **Fall Schedule: Sunday Morning worship video** – Premieres on our YouTube Channel at **10 am** each Sunday morning. Subscribe to our channel and set reminders at www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/
- Zoom Fellowship hour – **Sundays at 10:30 am**
(with the exception of September 6)
- Midweek Prayer and Support Gathering: **Wednesdays at 4pm** with Rev.Nancy.
- Parent Support Group: **Resumes September 10 at 7:30 pm** with Ms. Laraine and/or Jill DiGiorgio. Contact Laraine for the link
- **FFMT Meeting:** September 8 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom.,



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