

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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Susan Spear & Barbara Langill, Secretaries

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

October 2020

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." 1 John 4:7

Sounds sweet, doesn't it? A meme for Valentine's Day perhaps? Sounds easy, too, doesn't it, this LOVE message? Let us love one another. What a sweet sentiment and a gentle invitation on its face.

Over the next month, perhaps more than ever in our lives, we need to live the deep meaning of these words rather than the sweet and sentimental. The Lynnfield community has been struggling in recent weeks – struggling to have civil conversations; struggling to name deep truths that do not flatter; struggling to root out and bring to justice those who would harm others with their hate and anger. Struggling with increased cases of COVID-19. And those struggles are mirrored all across our nation. There is so much noise that it is nearly impossible to concentrate, to reflect, to consider, to learn, and to act. But we must! Hiding away, sheltered in our homes as we might be, or cautiously navigating community settings, we still must! And as weary as we are of "all the things," we still need to be of good courage and put our hearts into it.

When we dig into a hard, physical task, we say, "Put your back into it." What this verse from the First Letter of John suggests instead is, putting your heart into it; your head into it; your soul into it. Put your whole self into it. Into what? Into loving one another! This means putting the LOVE of Jesus on as the filter through which we examine everything; every question put

before us; every demand made of us; every incident that happens around us; every action taken with, for, or against us; every encounter we have; every deal we make. These words from 1 John call us to love in the way of Jesus. That kind of love can be as or more challenging when we find ourselves in a place of abundance and comfort as it is when we are struggling and suffering. When we recall who and how Jesus loved, it is easy for us to retreat into the sentimental and cut our field of vision, letting ourselves off easy. Instead, we need to be of good courage and put our hearts into it.

As we move through October and approach election day, winter and the unknowns about flu and pandemic, and the ever-changing landscape of home, school, and work, I pray we can all put our hearts into it. I hope we can spend some time reading God's word and recalling what the love of Jesus looks like in order to heighten both our resolve and our courage to live that love more fully. We're not going to get it right all the time and we're going to sometimes find ourselves between a rock and a hard place, trying to discern the loving way. But I have complete confidence that our hearts will know when we've succeeded and when we need to seek reconciliation and try again. And there's the good news. We are not alone! We are part of the communion of saints across time and beyond time.

Beloved, let us love,

Rev. Nancy



Sunday, October 4, is World Communion Sunday. Those who are blessing and receiving the sacrament at home, please prepare a slice or small loaf of bread, corn tortilla, or rice cake or what is sacramental and joyful to share and a cup or small cups of juice -- perhaps grape or cranberry -- or wine, with or without alcohol, or coffee, or coconut water all of which are used in worship in different places.

In addition, you are invited to spend this week praying for a country in the world which is not your own. Often on this occasion we celebrate the “world” in a particularly generic “global” way rather than actually thinking about real places. For the days leading to World Communion Sunday choose one country to pray for – it may be in the news or may be one that you have visited or may be part of your ethnic heritage or may be one with a cuisine you find delicious or a writer or artist who inspires you. There is no right or wrong choice. Read an online article on this country – its history, its products, its religious heritage, the challenges it faces right now, certainly including how it stands in this pandemic. Learn a word in one of its languages – maybe peace or gratitude or blessing. Google translate is a helpful resource and includes an audio pronunciation feature. You might even find a recipe to make sometime this week. This too will be communion.

We prepare our tables and our hearts.

News from Around the Parish

Birthday Wishes to Ethel Leonard who turned 99 in September.



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.



For many of us, our pets have comforted us through some lonely and challenging moments over the last 7 months. They are deserving of blessing and gratitude. You are invited to bring your beloved pet(s) of any species, or a photo of your pets(s) living or already crossed over the rainbow bridge, to the Centre Church Front Lawn to be blessed. While this event is in honor of the Feast of St. Francis, it is open to all pet lovers, regardless of faith tradition or belief!

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- 1) All pets must be on leash or appropriately contained/restrained. If you suspect or know your pet will struggle, please consider bringing a photo instead.
- 2) If you drive to the center, please park in the Town Hall lot or in the Centre Church lot and walk safely to the front lawn of the church.
- 3) Please maintain physical distancing from other family groups, approaching Rev. Nancy one family group at a time.
- 4) MASKS are required on the front lawn at all times.

Missions 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 \$2,504.71 in donations as part of this initiative. Checks to the organizations below were sent in September.. 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 Covid is having on their operations.

Charity	Amount
Habitat for Humanity	\$75.00
Wakefield Food Pantry	\$75.00
Grand Total	\$150.00



Ma Duke's Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

For over ten years "Ma Duke & Friends" have provided Thanksgiving dinners for individuals who otherwise would not have had one. Last Thanksgiving they served over 2,500 homemade dinners. Sadly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they will not be able to provide their annual dinner. Instead, they will be distributing gift cards to grocery stores and restaurants to those in need. To help in this effort, we will be collecting gift cards or you can make a donation on their GoFundMe account. The account information will be included in our next Tower Notes. Missions will match donations made by our church members. If you have any questions or you have a gift card to donate, please contact Annmarie Pendola at (617) 549-9164

The Feast of All Saints

This year! If ever we needed to remember that the communion of saints surrounds us, it is in 2020. In this time of displaced grief, national and worldwide mourning of the million souls lost to the pandemic, we need to remember! We need to tell the stories of our own saints: Earl, Steven, Gladys, Roger, Carol, Harriet, and all those we know from our families and among our friends who have died this year. And we need to recall the saints who embodied the love of Christ across the 300 years of Centre Church and our own family trees. Yet, we won't be gathered and have an opportunity to light a candle, tie a ribbon, or share a memory. But we can't let that stop us! We can and we will remember. This year let's put together a family photo album of our communion of saints. Over the month of October, you are invited to send photos of your beloved saints to the church to be included in a slide show that will be part of our worship on Sunday, November 1st. You can send your photos: 1) digitally. Please send digital images to Rev. Nancy at pastor@centre-church.org, 2) mail your photograph(s) to the Church to be scanned and returned to you, or 3) drop your photos (in an envelope) into the mailbox at the front door of the church. They will be scanned and returned to you. Please send your photos no later than Wednesday, October 28th. Remembering can break us out of our focus on our "unprecedented" present and remind us that we're part of a story much bigger than what one year can hold!



Faith Formation Ministry Updates

WELCOME BACK TO CHURCH SCHOOL

We are excited to welcome you back even if it isn't like any other welcome back EVER! Pandemic parenting is hard work and we've tried to stay close enough so that you know that we are here, but also give you space this summer to do those things you love to do, knowing that this fall would be taxing. There are a million reasons we all wish 2020 were different, but the love, care, kindness and hope of this community is something I would not change for a second! I have enjoyed our texts, Facebook messages, phone calls and Zoom meetings.

HERE'S THE PLAN:

- **Church School will start on October 4th. We will also have Youth Group at 12:30 pm and Blessing of the Animals at 2 pm in the afternoon! It will be a great day to come together online and in-person!
- **Church School and Worship will start at 10 a.m. Ms. Larainne will lead 1st and 5th Sundays. We will be using the Illustrated Ministries "An Illustrated Invitation" Curriculum. We will let you know by the Friday before what materials will be needed, but it is likely that the things you have gathered for school are sufficient.
- **Ms. Lisa will lead Church School on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sundays, online at 10 a.m. She will be assisted by some folks you might recognize, including Ms. Allison and/or Ms. Katie She will be telling Godly Play Stories and the "Work Time" where children respond to the story will use materials you have at home.
- **Children & Parents can join coffee hour as soon as Church School is over – we may do a "breakout room" if there are lots of children in coffee hour.
- **You should have received a Google Form for registration later this week. If you would prefer a paper copy, I can make those available as well.

We will continue our Weekly Parent Support Zoom Meetings on Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. We started those up again a couple of weeks ago -- if you are at your wits end and need to vent, we are here for you!



Centre Church 300th Anniversary Tee Shirts in Heathered Indigo

Children's Sizes XS, S, M and L - \$6
Adult Sizes S to XXL - \$7

Complete this order form and mail it to the church office.
Or send requests to Chuck Cotting at chuck@thecottings.com
and mail your check to the church office.

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) _____

Name _____ Amount enclosed _____

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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 at www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/
- Zoom Fellowship hour – **Sundays at 10:30 am**
- Midweek Prayer and Support Gathering: **Wednesdays at 4pm** with Rev.Nancy.
- Parent Support Group: **Thursdays at 7:30 pm** with Ms. Laraine and/or Jill DiGiorgio. Contact Laraine for the link

Church office hours are 9am to 12 pm, Mon.-Fri.
Tower Day School is in session Monday to Friday, from 8 am to 3 pm