

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

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Susan Spear & Barbara Langill, Secretaries

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 2020

I Believe Even When...

"Raise your voice...raise it; don't be afraid!"

~Isaiah 40:9

The history of humanity is fraught with pain – especially the pain that comes accompanied by fear and leads to oppression and violence of one people against another. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation. The opening words of an anonymous Jewish poet, "I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining," were, by various accounts, scrawled on a wall during the Holocaust. This theme for our season calls us to examine our penchant for annihilating fear by annihilating each other. The power of narrative and music will call us to a different response – transformation and reconciliation through hope, love, joy, and peace. This Advent and Christmas let us fill the night with music and light and affirm and act on the reasons why we can still "believe, even when" we are discouraged.

In hope, love, joy, and peace,

Rev. Nancy

Blue Christmas

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

~ Matthew 11:28

We have experienced unprecedented loss this year. Family and friends have succumbed to death in this pandemic, millions have lost economic security through loss of jobs, some have lost businesses they have built over a lifetime. We have lost the safety, comfort, and possibility of our church building. Most of us have lost our beloved rhythms of life that felt familiar and gave our lives the richness of gatherings and adventure. And we can name so many losses related to hatred and violence. We will

proclaim hope, love, joy, and peace this Advent as always, remembering that our faith story is grounded in the presence of God that came and dwelt among us in the midst of hardship. But this year, perhaps more than any other year, it is important for us to name that sometimes, maybe right now, hope, love, joy, and peace are distant feelings. Our Blue Christmas service is an opportunity to do just that, to name our losses and use ritual to help us move through these feelings. It is for anyone and everyone.

Our Blue Christmas service will be virtual this year. It will be posted on our YouTube Channel www.YouTube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/ from Tuesday, December 8th on so that you can access it whenever you need or desire to.

From the Moderator

Dear Friends,

As we get close to the conclusion of 2020, I want to mention a trend that has appeared in our recent monthly financial statements. As you know, a very important source of operation income is received through your generous pledging and other financial offerings. Our usual "to date" pledge receipts are well below typical amounts that we have seen in past years. I am sure that this is one of the many side effects of not being able to worship in person.

I ask, as a friendly reminder, that you all consider your personal situation regarding your 2020 – 2021 pledge. Please remember that online giving is an option for those who might find it easier than using the U.S. Mail. Also, remember that in order to receive tax donation credit for 2020 we need your payment made in December.

Thank you. Bruce Weaver, Moderator



Faith Formation Ministry Updates

Young Families Group

Hiking: We had a wonderful time on November 1st hiking and enjoying God's creation at Breakheart Reservation!

Next Event: Sunday, December 13, 2020, Caroling. We will be combining with Youth Group to carol OUTSIDE at Sunrise Assisted Living. Stephany Petrillo will work with us to develop guidelines for keeping everyone safe. We may be going around the outside of the building while residents open their windows to hear us!

Church School

Registration: 33 children representing 15 different families are registered! Thank you for using the online form.

Dec. 6 Illustrated Ministries, Ms. Larainne

Dec. 13 Godly Play, Exile and Return

Dec. 20 Godly Play, Advent

Dec. 27 Holiday Sunday, Ms. Larainne, The Grumpy Shepherd

Advent: Be on the lookout for some Advent Mail!
Advent Calendars and Luminary Bags.

Youth Group: 12/13/2020 (Caroling)

We will continue our Weekly Parent Support Zoom Meetings on Thursdays at 7:30 pm.

News from Around the Parish

Congratulations to Mariah Russell and Joseph Johnson who welcomed baby Charles Joseph into the world on November 4. He joins his big sister, Judith. Proud grandparents are Judith Doe and Randy Russell.

Mission and Outreach Ministry Team is bringing back normal for Advent 2020

Advent should be filled with gifting: Angel Tree gifts, Heifer animal tribute gifts, Equal Exchange Fair Trade goods and Shopping Cards! Covid-19 brought many of our typical Mission projects to a stop, but only briefly. We've come to the realization that we can still do this! And thank goodness, as the need is greater than ever. All of the above gifting opportunities are at your fingertips. We will be collecting donated Angel Tree gifts and offering curbside pickup of your other holiday purchases via parking lot drive-throughs on the following dates or by appointment, if necessary.

12/5, 9 – 10 am	Drop off "Angel Tree" gifts for City Mission Christmas Shop
12/6, 12 – 1 pm	Drop off "Angel Tree" gifts for City Mission Christmas Shop
12/12, 9 – 10 am	Drop off "Angel Tree" gifts (last call) Pick-up Shopping Cards Pick up Equal Exchange Goods Pick-up Heifer Tribute Cards
12/19, 9 – 10 am	Final Pick-up for Shopping Cards, EE goods, and Heifer Tribute Cards

See <http://www.centre-church.org/> for more details and order forms.

All orders for Shopping Cards or Equal Exchange must be in by noon on 12/4. Yes, that's really soon, so please place your orders today. Mission and Outreach will match Heifer purchases and Shopping Cards donated by you for us to give to City Mission, Bread and Roses or Chelsea Collaborative.

Heifer Living Gift Market

This year your Heifer tribute donations can be made virtually! Just send a check made out to Centre Church with memo "Heifer" and we will supply tribute cards for you. Or, new this year, you can use this link

(<https://fundraise.heifer.org/campaign/living-gift-market-centre-congregational-church/c312746>) to select your tribute gifts and pay by credit card. You can then select to send an emailed or printed card to those you are honoring, right from that website

Thanksgiving Meals for Haven

629 pounds of food were delivered to HFH on November 16 and November 23. This included 39 frozen turkeys and lots of other Thanksgiving food supplies. Tower Day School also collected Thanksgiving food for HFH this year and that collection looked like another car FULL! We've managed to put a lot of food on tables which might otherwise have been bare this Thanksgiving. As of Nov 16, HFH had already given out 200 turkeys to families in need. Thank you.

Ma Dukes' Thanksgiving Dinner

Thank you to all who donated cash and shopping cards for Ma Duke's. Mission & Outreach matched your donations of \$550 to this good cause.

The Power of Music in the Midst of Difficult Times
An Advent Film Festival

This Advent, as we fill the night with music and light, we are including a collection of documentaries all about the power of music in difficult times. Each week a film has been chosen that connects to the theme for that week and discussion questions are offered for your home study and reflection either individually or with your family and/or friends who might be watching with you.

<p>Week 1: Defiant Requiem Watch before Sunday, 11/29</p>	<p>Watch on Amazon Prime Video here: https://www.amazon.com/Defiant-Requiem-Lindsay-Hopper/dp/B07BLRJJKZ6/ref=sr_1_1?crid=DRTRGGB4TYRE&dchild=1&keywords=defiant+requiem&qid=1598832400&srefix=defiant+req,aps,214&sr=8-1</p>
<p>Week 2: Girls on the Wall Watch before Sunday, 12/6</p>	<p>Rent for \$1.99 on Amazon Prime Video: https://www.amazon.com/Girls-Wall-Heather-Ross/dp/B00GWQXB5C/ref=tmm_aiv_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=</p>
<p>Week 3: Following the Ninth Watch before Sunday, 12/13</p>	<p>You can watch the film in its entirety on the director's YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPWpV3BWLJs&t=5s</p>
<p>Week 4: Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice! Watch before Sunday, 12/20</p>	<p>Rent for \$1.99 on Amazon Video: https://www.amazon.com/Sweet-Honey-Rock-Raise-Voice/dp/B004QFSKCC</p>
<p>Week 5: The Singing Revolution Watch before Sunday, 12/27</p>	<p>Rent for \$3.99 on Amazon Prime Video: https://www.amazon.com/Singing-Revolution-Estonian-Chorus/dp/B003PH3RY6/ref=sr_1_1?crid=31SYP9ANXE2EQ&dchild=1&keywords=the+singing+revolution&qid=1598836937&srefix=the+singing+revolution,aps,202&sr=8-1</p>



Do you have a family Nativity Scene/Crèche that you display in your home every Christmas? We're planning on sharing a video montage of them for our virtual Christmas Eve service.

Send a photo(s) of your crèche or of your favorite figures along with any details you want to share to pastor@centre-church.org.

Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule

- **December 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 4 pm** with Rev. Nancy.
- Parent Support Group: **Thursdays at 7:30 pm** with Ms. Larainne and/or Jill DiGiorgio. Contact Larainne for the link
- Blue Christmas **Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 7:00 pm**



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.

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.

