

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

January 2021

Happy New Year, Centre Church!

Welcome to 2021! While these first days of January might not feel any different than 2020, I am hoping you'll accept an invitation to try something with me in this new year. It is as simple and as complicated as this: Commit to showing up for yourself, so that you can show up for others. While that will mean something different for each of us, I offer what it means to me as a jumping off point for your own reflection.

I recently heard author, researcher, and Socratic advisor Jim Collins answer this query from podcaster Tim Ferriss, "You have a billboard to get a message, a quote, a question, anything you like to billions of people. What might you put on that billboard? Doesn't have to be one thing, but what might you put on it?" And Jim's answer was, "How have you changed the lives of others?" ("The Tim Ferriss Show," tim.blog/podcast) He had just spent the better part of two hours sharing about his life and work and the mentors who have shaped him, invested in him, inspired him, so his answer in the form of a question was an apt summation, an ultimate question for the full arc of a life, if you will.

As I've turned that question over in my mind, I homed in on the most important lesson I learned in 2020: I am better able to show up for others when I first show up for myself. Oh, I have paid lip service to that lesson plenty, but I believe the last time I actually lived it was when I was a new mother, and then only in part. Yes, this is akin to the "first put on your own oxygen mask before you help others" metaphor but truly it goes much deeper in my experience. It is not just showing up for yourself in one way, but in every way. It is attending to your WHOLE self – mind, body, AND spirit. And each of those in their complexity. It is stopping to focus on your breath when you are stressed. It is savoring the

experience of eating a ripe and juicy orange and thanking God for it. It is cultivating your spiritual practice, showing up for yourself on your yoga mat, your prayer chair, your daily walk. It is tending to your sleep, removing the obstacles that keep you from getting quality rest. It is putting boundaries around your Sabbath. And it is tending to yourself with curiosity and wonder rather than harsh judgment, learning to love all that you are and forgiving all that you are not.

No, we are, none of us, good at tending to all and everything, every minute of every day. Yes, you could get lost in just looking after yourself and ignoring the world. But in a culture where we are only as good as what we produce, by ourselves, showing up for ourselves first is countercultural. When we are depleted, physically, spiritually, or mentally, we're not much use to someone else. But, when we tend to our whole selves with intention, we can show up with our whole selves for others. When we have tended our own needs for nourishment, our needs don't get in the way of our service. We, as Christians, have such a gentle AND fierce mentor in our brother Jesus. The stories of Jesus tending to his own very human needs are sprinkled all through the Gospels. Take a look and see what you find!

In this new year, I invite you to join me in showing up for yourself, so you can show up for others. Only you can decide what that means for you. The world is hurting, deeply. There is so much pain and brokenness that needs our help and healing. Let's offer the best of ourselves to that work.

In love and light,

Rev. Nancy

Let's Connect This Winter **Become a Centre Church Pen Pal**

COVID-19 has some of us feeling especially isolated and others of us wishing there was more we could do to help. This program is being designed to connect and/or reconnect us as we move into the new year and toward life beyond quarantine. You can sign up to be a Pen Pal by filling out this Google Form (<https://forms.gle/jcqucBjJmWoZ7W8BA>) or by calling or emailing the office (office@centre-church.org, 781-334-3050). Participants will receive postcards and the address of someone to write to. Sign-ups are ongoing through the month of January so feel free to opt in whenever you are ready and able. This is an all-ages activity, appropriate for children through adults. If you can color and/or write and listen and/or read, you can participate! Won't it be a delightful surprise in the middle of winter to find mail in your mailbox? Sign-up to be a Centre Church Pen Pal today.

Mission and Outreach



Angel Tree gifts 2020 style

Thank you all for participating in our first ever drive-through drop-off of Angel Tree gifts for City Mission. Outreach Ministries teamed up with Tower Day School families to collect, sort and inventory donations. Together, we packed and labeled everything in bags and boxes so neatly and compactly, that the collection JUST fit exactly into every bit of space (but the driver's area) of a 2013 Hyundai Santa Fe. The count came out to 750 items and applying standard prices per item, close to \$8,000 of brand new clothes, toys, gifts and wrapping supplies which surely brought joy on Christmas for many families served by City Mission of Boston. These totals include 61 gift cards totaling \$1,180 to CVS, Old Navy, Target, TJMax, and Walmart. Thank you for being generous givers in 2020, as need has recently been greater than ever.

Heifer Living Gift Market

Many people chose to honor loved ones with gifts to Heifer International this Christmas season, and Outreach Ministries will match these gifts! To date, donations total \$2,390.50 (before the M&O match). Donations can still be made by mailing a check with memo "Heifer" to the church office or donating online at:

<https://fundraise.heifer.org/campaign/living-gift-market-centre-congregational-church/c312746>.

Tribute cards to present to your honored loved ones can be picked up at church or requested directly from Heifer if your donation is made online.

Passing on the (Heifer) gift

Boy Scout Troop 48 donated some wreaths to the church and we, in turn, sold them and donated the proceeds to Heifer International in honor of the children of Centre Church! Our church youth usually bake and sell muffins during Lent and fill the goat tube with quarters year-round to benefit Heifer. These activities help us consistently support Heifer whose tenet is to "Pass on the Gift" and thus, Outreach Ministries felt compelled to pass on this gift from BSA #48 to honor our church school children's annual efforts. We hope all children enjoyed Heifer's card of activities. We're looking forward to when we'll all be back at church enjoying worship, church school, Scout meetings, and fellowship together.

Shopping Card donation match

Thank you to everyone who gifted money and shopping cards for our local mission partners with the intent of making Christmas wishes come true. The Mission and Outreach team gathered information on which gift cards are most useful for each of the communities we serve. Your gifts combined with the M&O match allowed us to present the following as well as \$338 distributed to other charities.

Bread & Roses - \$600 check for them to convert to local food and laundry cards

Chelsea Collaborative - gift cards totaling \$690 to CVS, Target and Walmart

City Mission - gift cards totaling \$1,180 to CVS, Old Navy, Target, TJMax, and Walmart

Citizen's Inn - \$500 check for them to convert to appropriate client gift cards

Equal Exchange Fair Trade

It felt good to revive sales of fair trade goods through Equal Exchange for holiday treat enjoyment and gifting. We'll be placing another order on Feb 5th to be delivered before Valentine's Day. The Valentine's Day Order Form includes Extra Virgin Olive Oil (which is good for the heart), "Love Buzz" coffee and "Spicy Hot Cocoa". Please return the order form found at www.centre-church.org or call your order into the church office by noon on Feb 5, 2020.



Faith Formation Ministry Updates

Godly Play Transition: The Faith Formation Ministry Team wants to thank Lisa Gerbick for her many years of faithful service to Centre Church as a Godly Play Storyteller. We will miss her gift of storytelling and wish her the best! Ms. Allison Barbieri and Ms. Katie Swayne Gerrish will share the storytelling and "doorkeeper" roles through the remainder of the church school year.

Impromptu Christmas Pageant: On Sunday, December 27th we held an impromptu, reader's theatre style pageant. We are grateful for the participation of our Church School children and their parents. Thank you to the Ragalevsky, Wilson and Gaskins Families for their participation and playing a variety of different parts to make the story come alive!

We have a NEW link for Church School for the NEW year! Church School takes place via Zoom on Sundays at 10 a.m. Please see the latest email from Larainne (dated Saturday, January 2nd) for the link OR contact Larainne at: larainne.wilson@gmail.com

1/10: Godly Play: Baptism!
Join Ms. Allison and Ms. Katie for the Godly Play story of Baptism. It is an opportunity for you to remember your baptism, hear about other kids' baptisms and/or ask your family about yours or theirs!

1/17: Godly Play: Parable of the Good Shepherd

1/17: Youth Group Service Project/MLK Weekend: More information to come! We are thinking of coloring cards for the PenPal Program and making "Birthday Bags" for the Sunrise Senior Center.

1/24: Godly Play: Parable of the Good Samaritan

1/31: Join Ms. Larainne for the story about Zaccheaus from our Illustrated Ministries Curriculum! The story can also be found in Luke, Chapter 19.

2/7: Join Ms. Larainne to talk about the coming season of Lent (getting ready for Easter!). What is it? How do we get ready? Note for Parents: Lent begins on 2/17/21.

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

News from Around the Parish

Our love and sympathy are extended to Dwight Decker and family upon the death of Dwight's mother, Jean Decker. A Memorial Service will be held at a later date.

Our love and prayers are extended to Phyllis Ciampa upon the death of her grandson, Christopher Fowlie. Funeral Services will be private.



Dear Church Friends,
Thank you so much for my beautiful poinsettia, it brightened my heart and my day. I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. Let's pray we can all see each other soon at worship. Thank you again.

Nancy Lauzon

God is Holding Your Life

Life is a series of exclamations from "O No!" to "Help!" to "Oh Yeah!" We can swing between disappointment, helplessness, and gratitude on a daily basis. The Book of Psalms knows all about this. Written over a span of time from exile and isolation to the rebuilding of the community, the poetry of the Psalms will accompany us in this series, reminding us that through it all, we can trust that God is, indeed, holding our lives. Through the season of Epiphany, our worship will allow us to simplify and slow down for a time. We will lean on prayer, reflection and sharing with one another. We will feature testimonies each week as we reflect on our personal epiphanies, prompted by our "Star Words" from last year or by our experiences during 2020. Join us for worship on Sunday mornings at 10 am on our YouTube Channel, www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/. If you have an epiphany to share, please reach out to Rev. Nancy by phone, email, or text. Let's build each other up in faith in this new year.



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.



The minutes from the most recent Parish Council meetings can be found at <http://www.centre-church.org/Council>

PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

There have been recent questions about the purpose of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC). Please review the information below for the description of the committee.

Given the ongoing COVID-19 virus restrictions, if you need to contact the PPRC for any questions about the committee or with specific issues, please send an email to PPRC@centre-church.org or contact any of the members directly. The current members of the committee are Sarah Crosbie, Gary Muise and Margaret Waugh. You can find the contact information for the members in the Centre Congregational Church People Book.

WHAT IS A PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE?

A *Pastor Parish Relations Committee* is a small group of church members who provide support for the pastor and offer a regular channel of communication between the pastor and the congregation.

WHY HAVE A PASTOR PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE?

There are two main reasons for a congregation to have a *Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC)*:

1.) The first reason for a congregation to have a PPRC is to serve as an advisory group - sharing ideas, hopes, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the Pastor. This committee will take the lead in seeking to improve communication and cultivating an open, affirmative and creative relationship between the pastor and congregation.

If needs arise, the PPRC will serve as mediators to assist with negotiation and resolution.

PPRC is a confidential committee that requires a high degree of trust among members, the pastor, and congregation. The committee will meet regularly and will provide an annual report to the congregation.

2.) The second reason to have a PPRC is to provide focused, consistent support for the pastor. The PPRC is a way in which a congregation is intentional about providing support for its pastor and family.

The PPRC helps interpret functions, roles, and the needs of the pastor to the congregation. The committee will be responsible for encouraging the pastor to plan time for recreation, relaxation, family need, and solitude. The Committee shall conduct a formal performance review of the pastor and be an advocate for personnel policy, continuing education, and sabbatical leave.

Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule

- **January Schedule: Sunday Morning worship video**
Premieres on our YouTube Channel at **10 am each Sunday** morning.
Subscribe at www.youtube.com/c/centrecongregationalchurch/
- **Church School takes place via Zoom on Sundays at 10 a.m.**
There is a NEW link for Church School for the NEW year! Please see the latest email from Larainne (dated Saturday, January 2nd) for the link OR contact Larainne at: larainne.wilson@gmail.com
- Zoom Fellowship hour: **Sundays at 10:30am**
- Midweek Prayer and Support: **Wednesdays at 4pm** with Rev. Nancy.
- Parent Support Group: **Thursdays at 7:30pm** with Larainne and/or Jill DiGiorgio. Contact Larainne for the link

DRIVERS NEEDED

Both the Chelsea Collaborative and the New Lynn Coalition are in need of drivers to deliver groceries/supplies to families in the community. COVID-19 continues to impact these communities disproportionately and there is an ever-growing need for food aid. Read about the New Lynn Coalition at <https://www.newlynn.org/programs/grocery-delivery-program>.

More information about La Colaborativa (formerly known as the Chelsea Collaborative) can be found at <https://www.la-colaborativa.org/covid19>. To volunteer with La Colaborativa, please call the church office for the contact of the Volunteer Coordinator.



Church office hours are
9 am to 12 pm, Mon.-Fri.

Tower Day School is in session
Monday to Friday
from 8 am to 3 pm.