

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

5 Summer Street, Lynnfield, Massachusetts 01940 Phone: 781-334-3050 Fax: 781-334-6463
Email: Office@Centre-Church.org Web Site: www.Centre-Church.org

The Rev. Nancy Rottman, Pastor

The Rev. Mark Freeman Strickland, Pastor Emeritus

Laraine Wilson, Director of Faith Formation

Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director

Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School

Susan Spear & Barbara Langill, Secretaries

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

February 2021

Looking Back to Look Ahead

It has been almost eleven months since the pandemic came screaming into our lives, we closed our building, and stayed in our homes. It has been eight months since a broken sprinkler head wreaked havoc on our building, insuring we wouldn't be gathering for worship whether we were ready and able to or not. Add to that: financial hardship, job loss, loneliness, "never aloneness," lack of physical contact, unpredictable or unknown timelines for vaccination, a million configurations of school, and we need a minute or a year to stop, catch our breath, and scream, cry, or whimper! But to whom?

There are at least two constructive paths for letting go of all of that and letting it bless us. The first and always primary is to the Source of Our Being, our God, who can hold all that we are, all that we feel, and all that consumes us. But the trick for making it successfully down this avenue is TRUST. Do you trust God? Do you trust God enough to truly pray from the depths of yourself? Do you trust that God's not only able but actually willing to listen, to anything and everything that you breathe out to God? And do you trust yourself to be honest, first and foremost, in the space in your life that you and God share? I encourage you, if you haven't already, to take a step, then maybe two or twelve or twenty down that avenue. See if you feel lighter and lighter the further you go. Stop every few steps to check in with yourself and see how you're doing, what's coming up, explore the actual shape of your loss and heartache. Make note of it all, either mentally or by actually writing it down. Sometimes that will be enough. Sometimes that process is enough to allow us to let go and live into the future God is hoping for us.

The second avenue leads into the heart of our community, our congregation. The worship staff (Laraine, Doug, and I) and lay leadership of Centre Church (Parish Council and the PPRC) have set out on this path. Working with Congregational Consultant Rev. Laura Stephens-Reed (<https://www.laurastephensreed.com/>), we have begun a series of facilitated conversations that are offering us the opportunity to look back in order to look ahead. We began with lament – this process of pouring out to God what has been and continues to be hard and sad and just plain awful. As nearly always happens, within our lament we were able to recognize the blessings amidst the hardships and name those for one another as well. Then in our second session we covenanted with one another about how we'll move forward with our conversations, naming trust, honesty, and transparency among our responsibilities to one another, to the church, and to God. This process is intended to bear fruit as we identify how we will all move forward together in our new, post-COVID normal. We anticipate identifying opportunities for everyone's participation in the future. What you discovered, uncovered, heard during your prayerful reflection will be an important addition to our mutual discernment. We will share more as the way unfolds before us.

As with all things, I pray we can trust in the slow work of God and in each other, trust in our faithful and prayerful discernment of the future God is calling us to. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are exactly who is needed for the Centre Church we are and we are becoming.

In the love of Christ,

Rev. Nancy



Lent Begins

Our Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17th. Our service will be virtual, of course,

and will be posted by 6 am on our YouTube channel for your viewing and participation any time that day. This year, we are not offering ashes due to COVID-19 precautions but are offering temporary tattoos in the shape of a cross for you to apply during the service. We will be distributing the tattoos on Saturday, February 13th. See notes from Faith Formation and Mission and Outreach about the opportunity to stop by our parking lot that day.



Faith Formation Ministry Team News

Church School February 2021: Email Larainne (larainne.wilson@gmail.com) for the link (or check your email for the link if you are already on Larainne's email list!)

Sunday 2/7 at 10 a.m.

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, which is Ash Wednesday.

Sunday 2/14 at 10 a.m.

Join Ms. Katie for the Godly Play Story “Parable of the Pearl”. Let’s wonder together about the seller, the merchant and the Great Pearl. I wonder what it could really be!

Sunday 2/21 at 10 a.m.

Join Ms. Allison for the “Parable of the Sower” for the Godly Play. Let’s wonder together about the sower, the person, the birds and the seed. I wonder what part of the story you will like best!

Sunday 2/28 at 10 a.m.

Join Ms. Allison for the Godly Play Story “Parable of the Leaven”: Let’s wonder together about the leaven and what it could really be. I wonder if the bread could ever be changed back to how it was before.

Other Important Dates in February:

2/4, 2/17, 2/24: Parent Support Group via Zoom. See Larainne or Jill for the link.

2/13: On Saturday, February 13th, Youth Group and Young Families Group will join Mission and Outreach in our parking lot to encourage our community to FILL THE GOAT TUBE for Heifer International ([Heifer International](http://HeiferInternational.com)). The children miss it and many of us do too! There will be something for children to take away with them as well. As it is Valentine's Day weekend, let us remember that what we do, we do for LOVE! **Speaking of which: Wearing a facemask and keeping distance are acts of love and we will be doing both of those things at this event!**



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. 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 by Monday, February 8.



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

Mission & Outreach



Heifer Goat Tube Coin Drive, Feb 13

The Ministry teams of Mission and Outreach and Faith Formation are working together on another drive-through collection event. This time we're filling the Heifer goat tube with quarters and also collecting any other coins you'd like to donate. The collected total will be matched by our Missions budget when we make our annual donation to Heifer International this Spring. Before then, we'll deposit these coins in the bank to get them back into circulation. Does anyone even use coins anymore? We'll be in the parking lot behind the church on February 13 at 1pm. Please collect your coins and come on down!

Equal Exchange Fair Trade

We welcomed Bethany McGinnis to our fellowship Zoom last week. She presented quite a bit of information about the chocolate and cocoa industry, including facts on child/slave labor associated with big-name high-volume companies and how the Fair Trade supply chain avoids such practices. Fairly traded goods involve paying fewer middlemen along the supply chain, allowing small farmers appropriate pay to sustain their farms and allow their children to attend school. As small farming is best for our environment as well, Fair Trade benefits human rights and our global climate! We'll be placing orders for a limited selection of goods bought through the Equal Exchange Fair Trade network, each month or so. An order is being placed this Friday, Feb. 5. Please get your [order form](#), found on the www.centre-church.org home page, in by noon.



Wakefield Food Pantry

Did you know that there is a very active food pantry in Wakefield? Located in the American Civic Center on Main Street, this pantry helps meet the food and household needs of almost 600 families (about 1,100 people) who visit the pantry each

year. Most of their food supply comes from the [Greater Boston Food Bank](#) (GBFB) where pantries can buy food at a 75% discount. Volunteers also shop at grocery stores when necessary to supplement GBFB items and donations, sort and shelve food and assist guests shopping at the pantry. Other services provided by WFP include meals for Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas as well as running a monthly Mobile Market at various local senior citizen residences. WFP also supports other organizations, by providing snacks for the Boys and Girls Club of Wakefield, meal ingredients for free community meals, and supplies for the monthly Veterans program.

The pantry is open two days/week: Tu & Th 9am-1pm and 6:30-7:30pm. Please consider donating to this organization online at <https://wakefieldfoodpantry.org/donate-funds/> or by mailing a check to Wakefield Food Pantry PO Box 1624, Wakefield, MA 01880. Send a copy of your receipt to the church office and our Missions Ministry will match it, as long as we have funds in our pledged budget to do so.

News from Around the Parish



Dear Church Friends,
Thank you so much for your expressions of sympathy after my mother passed away in December.

And thanks to all for the beautiful poinsettia which brightened our Christmas days. My mother was fortunate to live a long life (95 years) which for the most part was a very healthy life.

Dwight



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.

Centre Church Virtual Gathering Schedule

- **February 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/
- **Wednesday, February 17: Ash Wednesday** Online worship video on You Tube. The video will be posted by 6 am for viewing all day.
- **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 for the link **OR contact Larainne at: larainne.wilson@gmail.com**
- Zoom Fellowship hour: **Sundays at 10:30 am**
- Midweek Prayer and Support Gathering: **Wednesday afternoons at 4pm** with Rev. Nancy.
- Parent Support Group: **Thursdays at 7:30 pm** with Ms. Larainne and/or Jill DiGiorgio. Contact Larainne for the link

Centre Church Upcoming Events

- **Saturday, February 13**, 1pm Coin Drop off for Heifer. Also, temporary tattoos in the shape of a cross will be available for you to pick up for use in the Ash Wednesday Service.

.....

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

The Church office will be closed on Monday, February 15 for President's Day.

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

They will be closed the week of Feb.15 for school vacation.

