

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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The Rev. Nancy Rottman, Pastor

Laraine Wilson, Director of Faith Formation

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Alison O'Connor, Church Administrator

We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

December 2021



Advent and Christmas at Centre Church

The pandemic has laid bare, and widened, economic disparity locally and globally. As we enter the Advent season, how can our church become a house where the Holy will be born anew – offering respite, sustenance and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter from the onslaught of life? No one church can do it all, but each can do something. As we study the biblical prophets that call us to care for our neighbors and “make room in the inn,” the lonely and frightened spaces within us are filled with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love

Sun., 11/28: First Advent Worship
10:00 am, "Making Room (Hope)"
Sanctuary and Livestream

Wed., 12/1: Candlelight Labyrinth Walk
7 - 8:30 pm, Narthex

Sun., 12/5: Second Advent Worship
10:00 am, "A Place at the Table
(Peace)"
Sanctuary and Livestream
with Holy Communion
Tree Decorating, Narthex

Wed., 12/8: Blue Christmas Worship Service
7:00 pm, Sanctuary and Livestream
Candlelight Labyrinth Walk
7 - 8:30 pm, Narthex

Sun., 12/12: Third Advent Worship
10:00 am, "How Much is Enough?
(Joy)" Sanctuary and Livestream

Wed., 12/15, Candlelight Labyrinth Walk
7 - 8:30 pm, Narthex

Sun., 12/19, Fourth Advent Worship
10:00 am, "A Room with a View
(Love)" Sanctuary and Livestream

6:00 pm, Christmas Concert Sanctuary

Wed., 12/22, Candlelight Labyrinth Walk
7 - 8:30 pm, Narthex

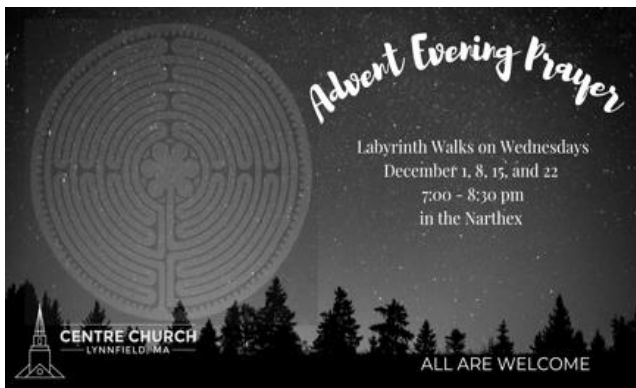
Fri., 12/24, Christmas Eve Services
5:00 pm, **Worship for all ages**
Candles, Lessons and Carols
Sanctuary and Livestream

**11:00 pm, Worship w/ Holy
Communion ~ Candles, Lessons and
Carols - Chapel**

Sun., 12/26, First Sunday of Christmas
10:00 am, Telling the Story Together
Sanctuary and Livestream

Blue Christmas Service

Christmas is rarely as cheery and bright as the television commercials would like us to believe. In this year filled with so much that is hard, the season can feel like a spotlight on our sorrow or grief or illness or insecurity or loneliness or pain. We can feel isolated and out of step with all the preparations being made, carols being sung, gifts being purchased. Blue Christmas offers us sacred space filled with peaceful music, sacred story, heartfelt prayer, and communion, in order that we might come to trust again that God comes to shine a light into our darkness. Rev. Nancy, Laraine Wilson, and Noel Smith welcome anyone and everyone to this sacred space on **Wednesday, December 8, at 7:00 pm**. If you feel inspired to do so, please invite a friend or family member to join you. The labyrinth will also be available in the Narthex for individual prayer and reflection. (See below)



Advent Evening Prayer

All are welcome to experience evening, candlelit walks on the labyrinth to cultivate hope, peace, joy, and love this Advent. No matter who you are or what faith you live by, or don't, you are welcome to experience this ancient spiritual practice to center yourself amid the busy holiday season and the ongoing stress of pandemic. **Wednesday evenings, 12/1, 12/8, 12/15, 12/22 from 7:00 – 8:30 pm**. If you have never walked a labyrinth before don't let uncertainty hinder you. Rev. Nancy will be available to offer guidance and support.



Ma Duke's Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

Thank you to all who donated shopping cards to Ma Duke's. This year Mission & Outreach matched your donations of \$500 to this good cause.

FAITH FORMATION MINISTRY TEAM

What is the Faith Formation Ministry Team?

We are so glad you asked! The Faith Formation Ministry Team of Centre Church meets monthly (typically on the Second Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom) to discuss Faith, Friendship and Fellowship opportunities for Youth and Families. We collaborate with Centre Church Staff on issues relating to Church School, Worship and Sacraments, Adult Faith Formation, and Intergenerational Opportunities. Members are: Jill DiGiorgio, Sarah Gorham-Crosbie, Betsy Ragalevsky, Katie Swayne-Gerrish, Rev. Nancy Rottman and Laraine Wilson. Our chair position is currently vacant. Our next meeting is on Dec 14th at 7:30 via Zoom.

Nursery News:

Alicia Dwyer has decided to retire from her position in our Church Nursery. We are grateful for her service to the church and will be deciding upon a date where we can honor her during Sunday Morning Worship. More to come soon!

Children as Liturgists:

We would like to thank Ann Decker for her work with Faith Formation and helping our children participate in the worship service in meaningful ways. We encourage you to look for some familiar faces as the weeks go on!

Youth Group Event:

On Sunday, December 5th, youth children and their families are invited to stay after worship for a time of cookies, cocoa and decorating the Angel Tree with the Mission and Outreach Team. Sarah Crosbie and Katie Swayne Gerrish are the contacts for this event.

Church School:

We have been meeting weekly since Welcome Back Sunday in September. We spent the rest of the month of September getting reacquainted with one another and creating a covenant, reminding ourselves of God's promises to us and

our promises to one another. Since then, we have begun our Godly Play Stories, starting with Creation and The Circle of The Church Year. We have THREE ways children can respond to the story: 1) Art Materials 2) Legos! 3) Materials from Godly Play (Sandbox anyone?!?!)

COVID-19 Precautions: We wear masks, distance as much as possible and sanitize before and after using materials. We also have individual trays for each child's materials that are sanitized before and after use.

Mission and Outreach

Turkey and Fixin's Food Drive: Eighteen frozen turkeys and lots of associated Thanksgiving food donations were dropped off at Haven From Hunger on 11/15 and 11/22. These meal supplies were immediately distributed allowing food-insecure families to prepare and share traditional Thanksgiving dinners together. Thank you for filling our Green Wagon!!

We are collecting Christmas gifts and gift cards for the following organizations:

City Mission: Angel gifts and all popular store and grocery cards

Haven From Hunger: donations at www.citizensinn.org/holiday-giving/

La Colaborativa: Diapers (sizes 4+) and donations at www.la-colaborativa.org/

Bread and Roses: grocery shopping cards and www.breadandroseslawrence.org/

Matching donations: Mission and Outreach will be matching monetary and shopping cards donations to the above charitable partners. Please forward a copy of your Christmas donation receipt to the church office.

Shopping cards for the above donations or for your own use and gifting, can be bought through the church. See the [order form](#) on www.centre-church.org An order will be placed on 12/3/21 for delivery before Christmas.



The **Angel Tree** has taken its place in the narthex, decorated with Angels bearing suggested gifts for **City Mission Boston**. A [Wish List](#) of most-needed gifts can be found on www.centre-church.org. Please place UNWRAPPED gifts under the tree by December 12th, when these gifts will be blessed in worship. For convenience, a drive-through

drop off will also be happening in the church parking lot on Saturday 12/11 10-11am.

Heifer Living Gift Market: Give "Living Gifts" in honor of your loved ones this Christmas. See www.centre-church.org for a list of animals/bees/programs that Heifer International provides to families in need around the world. Your gift of these items keeps on giving as families benefit from food/milk/clean water and pass on the gift of livestock offspring to other families in their community. You can send a check made out to Centre Church with memo "Heifer" and we will supply tribute cards for you.

Outreach will be hosting fellowship on the third Sunday of each month. At these coffee hours, we'll have **Equal Exchange** Fair Trade foods and **Earth Breeze** plastic-free laundry detergent products for sale at wholesale prices. On December 19th, we'll have tribute cards available for **Heifer Living Gift Market** purchases.

The December **Equal Exchange** order will be placed on 12/3/21 to arrive before Christmas. Check the form on www.centre-church.org for what's in stock and contact green@centre-church.org to order. We can add anything you see in their wholesale catalog at <https://shop.equalexchange.coop/> so please suggest favorite items for us to stock up on. Currently a variety of coffees, teas and chocolates are available.



Dear Centre Church,
Thank you so much for donating many bibles, books, daily devotions, and Christian literature to Love Packages. This Organization was founded in 1975 in Butler, Illinois by Pastor Steve Schmidt. Reverend Schmidt had an abundance of old religious magazines and he thought that they could be used elsewhere. Today, Love Packages sends tons of gospel materials to countries all over the world who want and need them. Once again, THANK YOU for your kindness and generosity towards this wonderful cause.

Fondly,
Susan Gustavsen



Help Us Decorate The Angel Tree!

Join us in decorating our Angel Tree! On Sunday, December 5th, during coffee hour, we will be decorating the Angel Tree. If you like, bring a family ornament or Christmas card to place on the tree. Ornaments and decorations will also be available that day. Your family ornament should be labeled so it can be returned to you after the Christmas season. As in past years, Mission and Outreach Ministries will be teaming up with Tower Day School to collect gifts for City Mission's Christmas Shop.

The tree will already bear Angel tags asking for clothes of a certain size or games for a certain age. The idea is to take a tag and return the UNWRAPPED gift by December 12th. If you're already starting your holiday shopping, the most needed items are: Winter coats, sweaters, sweatshirts in large adult sizes as well as hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, socks and underwear, as well as gift cards to Target, Walmart, Kohl's, CVS, Marshalls, and Walgreens (see Shopping Card buying information). Any of these items placed under the tree will be much appreciated. Thank you!

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POINSETTIA ORDER

I would like to order: ____ red poinsettia(s) \$10.00 each

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ made payable to Centre Congregational Church.

These flowers have been given by _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

___ I will take my plant(s) home after one of the services on Christmas Eve. (5 pm or 11 pm)

___ I wish to donate my plant(s) to the hospitalized, bereaved or shut-in.

Plants will be displayed in the sanctuary on Sunday, December 19th.

A list of donors will be printed in the bulletin on that day.

Thursday, December 9th is the deadline for placing orders.