

TOWER NOTES

Centre Congregational Church (United Church of Christ)

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We Welcome Everyone: An "Open and Affirming" Church

March 2022

Laughter as Medicine

"What a shame, for I dearly love to laugh."

~Elizabeth Bennett, *Pride and Prejudice*

"The more I laugh, the more I fill with glee."

~Uncle Albert, *Mary Poppins*

I was recently reading a post on the 3 Minute Ministry Mentor blog written by Erin Robinson Hall in which she focused on giving ourselves permission to laugh. During the pandemic, the 3MMM team has developed a set of cards called the "Pandemic Permission Project." Permission to laugh is included among other things such as nap, go outside, or dream. I think they have named for us a pervasive pandemic problem: we've forgotten to do the things that feed our souls. Perhaps when lockdown began the slower pace of life allowed you to embrace a variety of activities that nourished you, mind, body, and soul. But as the pandemic and divisive sociopolitical stresses have raged on and on, many of you have shared with me your weariness, anxiety, frustration, and fear. There is so much to be serious about, yes, but spending all of our time in a state of stress actually destroys our ability to navigate our present challenges and remain healthy. Hall says that even amid serious issues, "there is a serenity and openness that happens when you give yourself permission to laugh." I know I have found this to be true in my life, and that I crave that serenity and openness. Shared laughter creates delightful connection, even among strangers and a moment of levity can temper anxiety and frustration. So, I pray you can give yourself permission to laugh on a regular

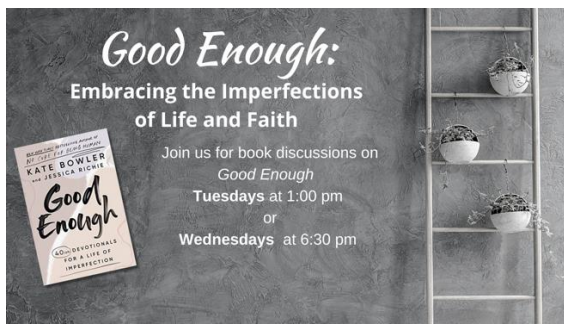
basis. And I hope you can find a greater lightness of being when you do.

When someone needed a boat built, what did the people in town say? "We Noah guy!" 😄

Good Enough

We live in a culture bent on definitions of a good life as continuous upward mobility – climbing ladders of prosperity and judging each other's and our own success based on the life experiences we have curated in our various social media accounts. We may comb the shelves of the self-help section in search of just the right formula of success. We comb through the writing of "expert" after "expert" forgetting that 1) they are all just flawed humans just like us, 2) and no one else lives in our exact circumstances. Maybe we even gravitate towards spiritual leaders who promise great rewards if we only do "the right thing." But life happens, right? Most of the time we are not moving upward no matter what we think is at the top of the ladder of success. Most of the time we are just trying to repair the rung of the ladder we've just slipped from. So, what if we stopped climbing and started fertilizing, watering, and blooming right where we find ourselves? This Lent we will affirm a faith in which we are blessed, regardless, and where we can lean into embracing our "good enough" lives.

Join us!



Lenten Devotional Book Group

Our worship series this Lent is based on the new Lenten Devotional *Good Enough: Embracing the Imperfections of Life and Faith* by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. Rev. Nancy is offering two weekly opportunities to gather for in-person discussions of the devotions. Each week, we will be focusing on a concept from the book in worship and our discussion guide will include a **road-map of devotions in the book to read each week** that align most closely with that week's theme. Rev. Nancy has copies of the book available for \$15.00 each. Please email nancy@centre-church.org to let you know you'd like a copy. The discussion guide will be available for all participants at the first discussion. If you are unable to attend but would like to follow our reading and discussion guide on your own as your Lenten spiritual practice, email Rev. Nancy or speak to her after worship on Sunday, March 6.

Weekly discussions will be held: Tuesdays (3/8, 3/15, 3/22, 3/29, 4/5, 4/12) at **1:00 pm** or **Wednesdays** (3/9, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30, 4/6, 4/13) at **6:30 pm**.



THE GREAT PIE CHALLENGE HAS RETURNED!!!

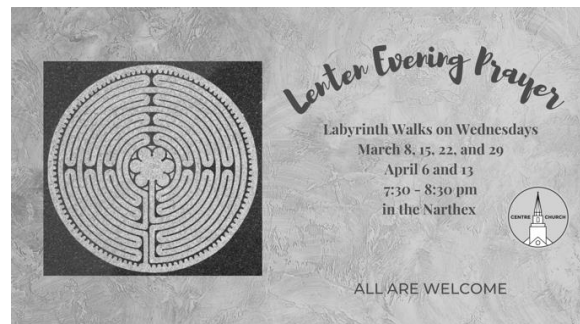
Pull out your pie recipes, the Great Pie Challenge has returned! This year we will be holding the Great Pie Challenge outside on Sunday, May 1st after the Service. Pies can be dropped off that morning. Signup sheets will be in the Narthex starting March 27th or you may contact Annmarie Pendola (617-549-9164).

Ash Wednesday Service



On **Wednesday, March 2 at 7:00 pm** we will gather in the **sanctuary** or via the **livestream** to begin our

Lenten journey. Jesus used the word “hypocrite” to describe those who put on airs in public to make people believe they were holy, that their religious practice was...well...perfect. But their hearts were not in the practice but rather in the rewards that public approval could bring them – which is here today, often gone tomorrow. Sometimes it is life itself that robs us of the shiny, perfect life that we had planned for ourselves. A diagnosis. A broken heart. A lost opportunity. This Lent, rather than change for “the best,” we’ll seek to gain momentum one day at a time, “to reach for a faith that is never perfect, but good enough” (Bowler/Richie). We’ll begin by reminding ourselves what is always true. We come from dust. And to dust we will return.



Lenten Evening Prayer

This Lenten season you are invited to deepen your spiritual experience and seek greater connection to the Divine by praying with your feet on our labyrinth. Each Wednesday evening through the Lenten Season (March 8, 15, 22, and 29, April 6 and 13) the labyrinth will be available in the Narthex from 7:30 – 8:30 pm. You are invited to drop in anytime during that hour to spend time in prayer. Rev. Nancy will be there for guidance for any who are new to the practice. Our Lenten Book Group will meet from 6:30 – 7:30 so you are also invited to join in the discussion and then stay to walk the labyrinth. Questions? Curiosity? Why not drop in and see for yourself what it is all about.



Llama Love

On Saturday, February 12, our Mission and Outreach Mission Team hosted a “Llama Love” event to raise money to gift llamas/alpacas via Heifer International’s Living Gift program. A lot of fun was had, and, in the process, we raised \$600, enough to purchase 4 alpacas. Bravo to our M&O team for creating such a fun and successful event. Thank you to Mother Nature for the perfect, spring-like weather. Thank you to everyone who contributed to make these living gifts possible. Blessings to each of the families somewhere in the world who will receive an alpaca and the opportunity to thrive.



Centre Church Seeks Nursery Assistant!

After many years of faithful service, Alicia Dwyer is stepping down from her position as Nursery Assistant. If you are interested in the position (or know someone who might be) please speak with Larainne.

The job description and application instructions can be found here: <https://www.indeed.com/jobs?q=Nursery%20Assistant&l=Lynnfield%2C%20MA&vjk=f32f5b82dd9ed6b8>

Faith Formation Lent Dates

March 6, 2022
Mystery of Easter

March 13, 2022
Faces of Easter 1

March 20, 2022
Faces of Easter II
Youth Group Meeting 12-1:30

March 27, 2022
Faces Of Easter III

Godly Play:

Ms. Katie Swayne-Gerrish and Ms. Allison Barbieri will continue to lead our children through the parables in March. As Lent begins next week, we will start to talk about the Mystery of Easter!

