

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield

2019

January

No. 1

Change Happens

New Year's Eve, even amidst the celebrations, is basically a sentimental occasion of remembrance. The most famous refrain of the night is "Auld Lang Syne," which translates literally as "old long since," which may be better understood as "days gone by," and in the context of New Year's Eve partying it is the sentimental statement of "Let's drink to days gone by." New Year's Eve looks to the past.

On the other hand, New Year's Day looks to the future. The coming of each New Year's Day gives us the chance to celebrate beginnings. It speaks to us of opportunities and of resolutions. It may be an artificial marker, but New Year's Day helps us to chart a new and better course, and gives us a new starting line each and every year.

With our own personal New Year's resolutions, we can go back to the starting line over and over again. We can resolve each year, year after year, to exercise more, or even better, to go to church more, but New Year's Day testifies to the fact that time continues to move forward regardless of our own use or misuse of it.

This dovetails into Jesus' frequent parable lessons about our moral and spiritual responsibility to use the gift of time well. However, New Year's Day speaks to us also of change. And this is what I would like to focus on for just a bit as we enter into the new year of 2019.

A movie has been released recently about the early life and career of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who serves currently on the Supreme Court. As the movie draws to its close, the young, activist lawyer is arguing before the judges of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. She is seeking a landmark decision that will negate the legality of gender discrimination.

As such, she addresses the bench stating, "We're not asking you to change the country. We're asking you to protect the right of the country to change." What a great line!

Sometimes we may be tempted to stop glorifying the principles of the past and start to simply glorify the past. Then change becomes suspect. Then we need social, political and religious defibrillators to shock us back into the normal heartbeat of change.

Change is not going to be halted by hanging on to the past. I read a recent article in the *New York Times* (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/26/science/chess-artificial-intelligence.html?emc=edit_th_181227&nl=todaysheadlines&nid=545965921227). It is both worrisome and promising. Computers have been programmed with machine-learning algorithms. Previously, huge amounts of human learning would be uploaded to a computer program and the computer would work through unbelievably massive amounts of this information in small fractions of a second.

Now, however, computers are beginning to learn for themselves. If computational advances continue apace, the smartest will sooner be able to follow the insight of the machines. Computers will reveal answers, but we may not be able to understand the "why" and the "how" of the answers.



There are tremendous dangers and possibilities associated with this transition. There will be significant questions also posed for religion by this consciousness transition, unavoidable questions. For religion and spirituality, for church and faith, to remain relevant and meaningful, for them to be able to offer guidance and insight long into the unknown future, change must be considered not pilloried.

This is already becoming evident. Among white, American millennials, only 28% identify as believers. This is not to be exclusive, but in the community of Hatfield, this demographic is our emerging church.

God's words and Word are eternal. Therefore, if they are ignored or judged superstitious by nearly three-quarters of young people in our community, then change has already taken place, and just maybe we church-people need to appropriate the cinematic line and realize that we are not changing our faith, we're only protecting the right of God's people to change.

New Years is a wonderful opportunity to at least consider change, as translation of the Word not as rejection, so that in fact "God is still speaking."

JANUARY EVENTS

Sun. 6 th	Epiphany Sunday. Benevolence Committee meets at 11:20am. Real Folks annual meeting in the church parlor at 6:00pm.
Tue. 8 th	Bible study group meets in the parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.
Wed. 9 th	Board of Trustees meets at 7:00pm.
Thur. 10 th	Hampshire Association Clergy Committee of Practice meeting in Hadley at 12:00pm.
Sun. 13 th	Volunteer opportunity with Habitat for Humanity from 12 – 4:00pm.
Mon. 14 th	Volunteer opportunity at Western Mass Food Bank from 1 -4:00pm.
Sun. 20 th	Annual Congregational Meeting after worship.
Mon. 21 st	Bible study group meets in the parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 22 nd	Rev. Calvo participates in the Heads Up meeting from 6 – 8:00pm.
Mon. 28 th	Deacons' meeting in the church parlor at 5:00pm.

REGULAR GATHERINGS

Sundays: Worship Service begins at 10:00am. Sunday School at 10:15 am. Chat and Coffee at 11:00am.

Tuesdays: Yoga classes are offered every Tuesday in the church parlor at 5:30pm.

Wednesdays: Hatha Yoga classes take place every Wednesday at 6:00pm.

Thursdays: Choir rehearsal every Thursday at 6:30pm.

Saturdays: AA meets at the church every Saturday at noon.

EPIPHANY SUNDAY AND THE CONTINUATION OF OUR CELEBRATION

January 6th is the twelfth day after Christmas. This is the traditional day on which we celebrate the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem. On Christmas Eve we share in Luke's story of the shepherds and the angel chorus. On Epiphany we tell Matthew's story of the Magi traveling from the East to newborn king. Their gifts are symbolic. Gold tells of Jesus' royalty as the Son of David. Frankincense reveals Jesus' divinity as the Son of God. And myrrh, the burial spice, foreshadows Jesus' death as the Son of Man. I know that the world is already looking at Christmas in its rearview mirror, but the Incarnation is far too important a mystery to put aside quickly. I hope you will join with us at church as we continue to rejoice in the gift of Jesus' birth.



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REAL FOLKS ANNUAL MEETING

This meeting will be held in the church parlor on Sunday, January 6th, beginning at 6:00pm. All of the women of the congregation are invited to attend. At this meeting the program for 2019 will be discussed, an election of officers will take place, and the dispersal of 2018 income will be decided. Refreshments will be served and if you need a ride to the meeting please call Marty at 413-247-5453.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP – January's Theme → Surprises in a familiar story

As we continue to read through Mark's Gospel, we first encounter the possibly unexpected message of the "widow's mite." Was Jesus praising her generosity or was He condemning an institution that would think it appropriate to take a poor, desperate woman's last cent? Is this Mark's introduction to Jesus' leaving the Temple, and in turn is this reminiscent of Ezekiel's account of the glory of God leaving the Temple almost 600 years earlier? Is this where history and revelation meet again? And as we move toward Lent, we are beginning to hear of Jesus' Passion – the anointing, the Last Supper, the betrayal, the desertion and Gethsemane. I invite any and all to come as we read and discuss, and hopefully discover, the text together.

KINDNESS FOR KIDS PROGRAM

Kindness for Kids (K4K) is a charitable program sponsored by our church's Benevolence Committee. Its sole purpose is to help the students at the Hatfield Elementary School. Sometimes a family may face a financial difficulty in one way or another that would hinder or prevent their child(ren) from participating in a school or after-school activity. Our K4K donations are entrusted to the school administration for disbursement. When

the school recognizes such a need in a student, the administration may decide to use K4K funds to assist the family.

A Valentines themed Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser is planned for Saturday, February 9th from 8:30 – 10:00am in the church dining room. A suggested per ticket course additional donations will be accepted with a smile. Please make checks payable to "FCC Hatfield purchased online



room. A card-making table will be set-up so make a card to share with someone they care about. A suggested per ticket course additional donations will be accepted with a smile. Please make checks payable to "FCC Hatfield purchased online

at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/valentines-day-breakfast-fundraiser-tickets-54183905520> This breakfast is open to the community at large.

We are working in conjunction with the Hatfield Elementary School and with Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church. If you would like to help work this breakfast, please contact Rev. Randy or Melody Edwards: (413)320-2089/mephany@hotmail.com.

We also wish to thank the Hatfield Fire Fighters' Association. After their very successful summer bonfire, they donated a majority of the proceeds to benefit the Town of Hatfield and to some charitable organizations outside of town. As part of this giving campaign, the Fire Fighters chose to donate \$1,000 to the K4K program! Again, we thank them for their generosity.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Hatfield Congregational Church holds an Annual Meeting of the Congregation each year in January. This year the date will be Sunday, January 20th, after church. There will be a luncheon served by the Suppers Committee before the meeting at 11 in the dining room. After lunch, the meeting will be held in the parlor and all are welcome to attend. Typically, the church Moderator the agenda includes the review of published reports of all the finances of the church for the past year. Comments and discussion are accepted the Family Record as submitted or amended. A vote is also taken to accept those nominated for positions on committees of the church and for Officers of the church and a vote is taken to accept the budget for the upcoming church calendar year. Other business may also be taken up at the meeting such as bylaw revisions or discussion of any important issues that may be warranted.



FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers from our church gather with Linda Milewski at the Western Mass Food Bank on the second Monday of the month to help this worthwhile organization. If you can share three hours of your time or even an hour or two, it will benefit those of our neighbours who do not have the ability to put enough food on their tables. Please speak with Linda if you can help.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PROJECT

"The workday we are signed-up for is Sunday, Jan 13th, from 12-4. The Location is 1 Garfield Ave. in Florence at the "tiny house" construction site. No experience is necessary, but Volunteer Orientations are Mandatory for those who have not volunteered previously. These are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30pm, and third Saturday of the month at 9am at the Habitat Admin. Office, 140 Pine St., Florence. The three upcoming orientation dates are Wed. Dec 5th 6:30pm, Sat. Dec 15th 9am, and Wed. Jan 2nd 6:30pm. Please sign-up online for an orientation at: <https://www.pvhabitat.org/ways-to-volunteer/> and click the VolunteerUp tab. Come join in for this worthwhile cause! It's fun and you can learn a lot too. Please let Carolyn know if you'd like to participate in the Jan 13th workday (space is limited), and/or feel free to contact her for more information, or call the Habitat office at 413-586-5430. Thank you, The Benevolence Committee."

CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP AT HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL

If you may like to be a formal member of this church, it begins with an informal meeting with Rev. Calvo and members of the Board of Deacons. We talk about the church, its organization, how things work, and our core

values and covenants. Please contact Rev. Calvo if you are interested. We will then welcome formally new members into our congregation on Sunday, January 27th.

VIEW CHURCH SERVICES ON-LINE AND ON TV

We air our Services a couple of times a month on public access television. They take place on alternate Sundays. This allows people to see what happens inside our church building and it also reaches into the homes of people who are unable to be with us in church. The recorded Services air on Hatfield Community Television on Saturdays and Sundays at 8 am and 4 pm. All of our taped Services may also be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjVqoCIEfNo&list=PL97Cp8D5oEflNg2Vj4DQk9p-ISAtaEkf>.

We could use the help of a few more volunteers to operate the camera on a rotating basis during the Services. If you could help in this way, please speak to Rev. Randy.

CONTACT INFO: HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Website: www.hatfieldchurch.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC

Pastor: Rev. Randy Calvo 413-824-1630 randyc1897@gmail.com

Committee Chairpersons:

Christian Education, Anita Wilson 413 247-5229

Music, Anthony Tracia 781 738-6284

Real Folks Society, Martha Zigmont 413 247-5453

Benevolence, Carolyn Forsyth

Deacons, Amy Novak 413 210-3965

Trustees, Jonathan Bardwell 413-530-6262

Church Moderator, Glenda Flynn 413 247-5891

