

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield

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Church Connecting

When I read an article about business or education, I often see that there is a push to increase cross pollination among different fields. Colleges, corporations and city planners are creating spaces intentionally in which people with different expertise and expectation must encounter each other. These articles are not rare, but I chose this one about a Boston architectural firm because it happened to be around as I was preparing this month's newsletter.

From what I read, *Elkus Manfredi* is one of the most prominent architectural firms in Boston. Of its two co-founders, David Manfredi remains active in the business. He commented in an interview with the *Boston Globe* that he and his partner never wanted their firm to be typecast in any one way.

Rather, they were open to all kinds of projects. Manfredi offered that in every different project they undertook they learned something new, and then they took that new experience and included it in the next, different endeavour. This practice bred creativity, and creativity spurred business opportunities.

Even their headquarters includes the idea of cross pollination. It was designed as an open space. The sole remaining founding partner had daily contact with the other employees simply by walking across the room for a cup of coffee. These "casual collisions" of people and ideas led to creative and unexpected "big ideas."

But for as much as they intentionally planned, and for as productive as those casual collisions were, inevitably, the people who used these spaces made it their own in unexpected and unplanned ways. David Manfredi closed out the interview saying: "That's what authenticity is. The user finishes the process." (*Boston Globe*, 8/12/18)

Let's transition now to more of a church theme. Actually, let's talk about church. The word *church* is used to translate the Greek word *ecclesia*, which is similar to the Jewish concept of synagogue, a Greek translation of the Hebrew word for *God's assembly*. Either way we're talking about community, but what community?

Even before Jesus, the Bible was expressing a widening understanding of this called together community. After the nations of Israel and Judah were

defeated and the people sent into exile, they were confronted with the reality of others, of Gentiles, of non-Jews. Some writers such as Ezra, Obadiah and the author of Esther called for separation from outsiders. Others, however, such as Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 40-55), Trito-Isaiah (Isa 56-66), Ruth and Jonah believed that God's providence was not limited to the people of Abraham: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." (Isa 56:7)

Then comes Jesus. He prefers the title of "Son of Man," which means He's us. Jesus comes in the universality of His human nature. In Bible study, we discussed the Mark 9 account of the other exorcist, the one who "was not following us." (9:38) Jesus rebukes His narrow-minded disciples (the *us* of 9:38) saying, "Whoever is not against us is for us." (9:40) There's also the amazing account of Jesus' aha-moment with the Syrophenician Woman. Look her up in Bible Bytes on our new website. The expansiveness of God's community surprises so often that we shouldn't be surprised.

What this leads to is the benefit of connections, to all sorts of productive and innovative "casual collisions." God's called community doesn't even have to be "us," as the Jews discovered in Exile, as the disciples discovered in the presence of Jesus, and as church should be open and attentive to still today. The church has always been about community, but it is a fenceless community.

I don't find a lot of inspiration in the Noah story, except for the detail that it is God who closes the door (Gen. 7:16). If the ark is a metaphor for the church, then the door is still wide open, the community, in other words, is not limited to the ones already inside. God is in charge of the door!

These fenceless connections create new ideas and new ways to serve. The church should foster this with intentionality for the good of the gospel and for the church itself, but still not be surprised when, as Manfredi said, "The user finishes the process." Church will become what is needed because of its people. When church builds itself as fenceless, amazing is possible, but the users are going to make it their own nonetheless, and that makes it authentic. Church is not our walls; it is our connections.

“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

Nelson Mandela

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Tue. 4 th	Rev. Calvo attending Heads Up meeting at 6:00pm.
Sun. 9 th	Home Coming Sunday. Sunday Service at 10:00am. Luncheon to follow. All are invited. Free will donation appreciated to cover the cost of the meal.
Mon. 10 th	Volunteer opportunity to help at the Food Bank from 1 – 4:00pm.
Mon. 10 th	Bible study in church parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.
Wed. 12 th	Trustees’ meeting at 7:00pm.
Sun. 16 th	Church Council meeting at 11:20am.
Mon. 17 th	Deacons’ meeting at 5:00pm.
Tue. 25 th	Bible study in the church parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.
Sat. 29 th	Annual Wood Fired Chicken BBQ, Take Out from 5 – 7:00pm. \$12 adults/ \$6 children

REGULAR GATHERINGS

Sundays: **Worship Service returns to 10am from September - June.** 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.

RE-DESIGNED WEBSITE WILL BE UP AND RUNNING THIS MONTH

The church hired a professional consultant to build and launch an improved website for us with integrated links to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. It will be easier to navigate and to send our message out to our members and anyone else. We thank Anita Wilson and Mark Gelotte for working with Rocket Strategies on this project. They have produced some great content and helped to make the website user friendly. I hope you will visit and explore. The content will not be static. It may change daily. Keep checking in and maybe share it with others. Remember, church is all about our connections and the world wide web allows for a world full of possible connections.

HOME COMING SUNDAY

The church invites any and all to come back to church after the summer vacation season moves into our rear-view mirror. The full choir returns to add their gift of musical voice to our Services on September 2nd and on September 9th a flautist will also be with us to add to the beauty of the Service.

A Baked Chicken Luncheon will be held after Service on Home Coming Sunday. This will give us additional time to connect with old friends and new acquaintances. There is no set price, but we do ask for a freewill offering to offset the cost of the meal.

But the most important detail is one that the church can’t plan for us. We need you. We hope that you will make every effort to be with us on this special Sunday, and we would like to ask you to invite someone else to church with you. Thanks.



CHICKEN BBQ

The annual Wood Fired Chicken Barbeque will be held on Saturday, September 29th, on the church grounds. Take Out only from 5-7pm. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$6. for children 10 and under. Tickets will be available at door or may be reserved in advance. Please contact Mark Gelotte for tickets and of course to volunteer to help. He may be reached at 413-247-9624 or msgelotte@gmail.com. The meal includes: half chicken, baked potato, squash, coleslaw, roll/butter and dessert. Thanks for your support of this church fundraiser, and don't forget to take a few tickets to sell for this delicious meal.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP – September’s Theme → The Provocative Kingdom of God

During September as the church activity level increases, I invite you to come and sample Bible study. It’s hard to know exactly where we will be in the text of Mark’s Gospel, the earliest Gospel, but Chapter 10 seems like a good guess.

Mark 10 delves into the revolutionary values of the kingdom of God as preached by Jesus. Even Jesus’ disciples seem unprepared for Jesus’ vision. Right there is a topic we should discuss in more depth. Somehow religion seems staid, static, but Jesus constantly surprises – even His disciples. What does that imply in our lives today?

Chapter 10 draws out this theme of faith’s challenge by challenging the social norms that were just accepted as God-given. Then comes Jesus. He will not tolerate the accepted subservience of women; He embraces children; He turns upside down the idea that wealth rather than service are true blessings. And all this culminates with Jesus’ third and final prediction that He must die rather than shy away from any of this.

Then Chapter 10 closes with the amazing story of Bartimaeus. Even on His path to crucifixion, Jesus has time and sympathy for the less fortunate.

What does all of this mean for church, for us as individual Christians? I don’t know, but maybe we can come toward a better understanding together. I invite you to come and join us in September as we read Mark and discuss the provocative kingdom of God.

BENEVOLENCE NEWS

The Benevolence Committee has a fund called *Kindness to Kids*. It will be administered through the Hatfield Elementary School’s nurse. Thanks to the Spring pancake breakfast and a few donations we have already sent the school \$300 so that they may purchase back-to-school supplies for children in need. Other donations in kind have been supplied as well.

Benevolence is planning tentatively a Pancake Breakfast for this coming February to benefit the *Kindness to Kids* fund. This fundraiser will be open to the community for the benefit of the community. If you would like to get more involved with the good work of this group, or if you would like to make a

donation, please contact Carolyn Forsyth. Thank you.



CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP AT HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL

If you may like to be a formal member of this church, it begins with a group 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. Talk with Reverend Calvo or Amy Novak of the Board of Deacons if you are interested. If you have questions before getting to this stage, please do not hesitate to contact Rev. Calvo.

CONFIRMATION CLASS?

Confirmation classes will begin this fall for teens interested in becoming members of the church. The spiritual journey towards becoming a church member starts this fall and will conclude in the spring. Let Rev. Randy know if you are interested and what days/times would work best for you at randyc1897@gmail.com or see him after church.

SHARE AN INVITATION

If someone you know is not attending church anywhere, please share an invitation with them to come and join us at Hatfield Congregational Church because “Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

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. It may also be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjVqoCIEfNo&list=PLq7Cp8D5oEflNgzVj4DQk9p-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.

CAN WE INTEREST YOU?

On the table by the church hall entrance to the Sanctuary are sign-up sheets for Sunday flower offerings and coffee and chat hostings. The flowers will be placed on the Communion Table and the donation will be printed in the bulletin and announced from the pulpit. Our Sunday morning coffee and chats are a wonderful opportunity to gather together after worship as friends and neighbors. To host does not entail feeding us all until we are full. It is rather an opportunity to linger over a cup of coffee or tea and chat. Thanks for helping.

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

On Saturday, October 13th, Rev. Corey Sanderson, the pastor of the Second Congregational Church of Greenfield and President, Board Chair of the Conference Board of Directors will come to our church to speak about mission and outreach.

*Pork Dinner on Saturday, November 3rd.

*Election Day food sale at Town Hall on November 6th.

*Christmas Craft Fair on December 1st.



We are looking for contributions for our jewelry table (lightly used, clean jewelry), our Collectibles table, and our Christmas décor table. And of course, any handcrafted items folks can make. To make our centerpieces/arrangements, we need donations of smaller vases, in Christmas colors or motif. Please see Linda Milewski 247-5604 or Marcia Sheehan 247-9285 with questions or how to contribute.

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

Stewardship appeal will begin in October. To prepare, Church Committees are reminded to submit their budgets to the Board of Trustees this month.