

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

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Getting Ready

“Social interaction, and, in particular, face-to-face interactions do a lot to help both our mental and physical health and well-being,” said Natalie Pennington, a professor of communication studies at the University of Nevada who recently authored a study on the topic. “There is some pre-pandemic work suggesting some types of technology could help, but I think what the pandemic showed us is technology can supplement, but not replace, face-to-face interactions.” (*Boston Globe*, 7/11/21, p. A15)

It has been a long, sometimes arduous, sometimes breakthrough, path since the church had to shut down in-person worship after March 8, 2020. Those long months of a closed church building both helped us to realize that being church does not depend on a building, and simultaneously it reawakened us to the blessing of being together in person.

We have been conducting hybrid worship Services since October 18th. Early on, most people chose to participate via Zoom, but slowly more and more people began to join us in person. We will continue to offer the Zoom option for those people who are at a distance from the church building and for those who are unable to join us for any other reason, as well. By offering the live-stream option, people who could not be with us in person before the pandemic can be a part of our worshipping community now. This is something we are invested in maintaining.

In person Sunday School, with Anita Wilson, and in person music returned to our Sanctuary on June 13th. When our Music Minister, Anthony Tracia, opened-up the pipes of the organ for the second verse of *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, I have to admit that it startled me. I had forgotten the power of the instrument. I look forward to the choir returning to the church and being seated up in the Chancel, as well. Before long, the choir will be *getting ready* to add their gift of music to our worship.

As we think ahead to the transition from a summer schedule to fall, the church will return to a more normal pace of activity. This begins with *Homecoming Sunday*. This gathering has a long tradition, but it was disrupted last year because of the pandemic. Now we can look forward to *getting ready* for

Homecoming Sunday, which is back on the calendar. On Sunday, September 12th we will begin with worship, but then, weather permitting, we will head outside for a continental breakfast. How great will that be to enjoy a bite to eat and sit with old and new friends alike? We could not even dare to imagine such a thing one year ago! Thank you Jesus, and thank you vaccines.

I know it is only August, but we are *getting ready* for church suppers to return. Remember our Chicken Barbecues? How about the Roast Pork Suppers? We want those back on the calendar for the Fall, but for that



to happen we need our members and supporters to step forward. Will you be able to help plan and work these church suppers? We can always count on some of our members, but we need others to volunteer to help too. These suppers help the congregation financially, but they also give us and the town a chance to gather and enjoy an evening together. I hope you will give this some thought. It's work; it can be fun; and it is also rewarding.

And young people, we're *getting ready* to meet again. We held a successful Spaghetti Supper just before the pandemic hit, and then ran two Spring Flower Sales. The money we raised is for the youth of the church. What would you like to do? You young people mean a lot to the church. You add excitement to our worship. No matter how long I work on a sermon or the choir works on an anthem, it is



most often the *Time with Children* that people most enjoy. As you get into your young adult years, your perspectives and expectations matter, and they matter to all of us. You are as much a part of the church as anyone else; and if you don't feel this, then we need to work harder at it to make sure you do.

It's still summer vacation season, but we're *getting ready*, and we hope that you are too so that we can enjoy those “face-to-face interactions” that are for our mental, physical and spiritual health.

AUGUST EVENTS

Mon. 2 nd	Online meeting of the Church Council at 7:00pm.
Tue 3 rd	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Mon. 9 th	Online meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Tue. 10 th	CROP Hunger Walk Rally at the New Salem Congregational Church at 6:00pm.
Sun. 15 th	Rev. Randy will be on vacation. The Board of Deacons will conduct the worship Service. Windjammers Band concert on the church lawn at 1:00pm.
Mon. 23 rd	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 24 th	Online meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.

REGULAR GATHERINGS – Yoga and Choir are on hold for in-person gatherings until further notice.

Sundays: Worship Service begins at 9:30am online and in person.

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

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

Thursdays: Choir rehearses in the sanctuary at 6:30pm.

HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE THE SUMMER OFF FOOD DRIVE

School summer vacation is in full swing. There are many young people who are helped greatly by the subsidized meal programs offered through the schools. This is why summer can be a time of food insecurity for many families. And this is why our congregation conducts the *Hunger Doesn't Take the Summer Off* food drive every year. Our collection is continuing through mid-August.

If you are able to help, the Northampton Area Survival Center is accepting non-perishable food items and toiletries, especially the kinds that are swimming pool each Sunday with your children friendly. We will load up our kiddy donations.

If you would prefer to help with a monetary donation, we will accept donations on behalf of the Western Mass Food Bank. Checks may be made payable to *FCC Hatfield Benevolence Fund*, with "food drive" written on the memo line, but these must be in **by August 1st.**

Andrew Morehouse, the Food Bank's Executive Director, will be with us to speak to the church on Sunday, August 15th about the good work they do serving just over 101,000 people monthly. At that time, we will present him with our monetary collection for the Food Bank. Thank you in advance for your generosity.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE ON-LINE STUDY GROUP

The Massachusetts Bible Society's past Executive Director, Rev. Anne Robertson, has authored a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. We are reading Volume III on the New Testament. If you would like to become more comfortable with the Bible, I encourage you to join us for Bible study. If you would like to see what Bible study is like, please send me an email (randyc1897@gmail.com) and I will send you the login information for our Zoom meetings. We are now reading from the New Testament. No prior Bible knowledge is needed, only a desire to become more familiar with the written Word of God.



CROP HUNGER WALK

Two years ago, our congregation participated in the CROP Hunger Walk, and then last year the Walk was cancelled because of the pandemic. Now it's back. The Walk will be in New Salem on October 3rd. The kick-off Rally is at the New Salem Congregational Church on August 10th at 6PM. At the Rally, teams receive their collection envelopes and advertising materials. The CROP Walks are the granddaddies of all charitable walks. They help fund Church World Services work here in our communities and around the world. Would you possibly be interested in walking on our team? It's a pleasant walk with pleasant people and it is going to be on a pleasant Fall afternoon. Also, would anyone like to attend the Rally meeting with me on the 10th?

VISITATIONS

As we make our way out of the pandemic, if you would like me to stop by for a visit, please let me know. I have received both of my vaccination shots, and I have no problem wearing a mask on top of that. I have been trying to stay in touch, but a phone call is not the same as seeing each other in person. Also, if you or a loved one ends up in the hospital, please let me know so that I can come by for a pastoral visit and a prayer.

SUMMERTIME

Summer offers many of us (except farmers) a time to slow down and relax. Many will take vacations during the summer. I, as a matter of fact, will be on vacation and not at our church on Sunday, August 15th. The Deacons will lead the Service that day and I know they will do a great job. I would like to mention that while I am on vacation, I will still attend Sunday worship. Church should not be looked upon as an obligation to be endured. I enjoy participating in worship and am uplifted by it. I hope it is the same for you. And I hope your summer schedule is relaxing and fun, and that worship will be a part of it too.



YUP, WE'RE ALREADY THINKING ABOUT THE FALL

It's August, but we're hoping you'll put these dates on your calendar for the fall.

Homecoming Sunday is September 12th. Following the worship Service, we plan to enjoy a continental breakfast outdoors. The food will be supplied by the Suppers' Committee. We do ask for free will donations to help cover the costs. There will be a few chairs brought from inside the church, but we are asking people to bring a lawn chair or a blanket to sit on.

At long last, we are returning to our church dinners. The **Chicken Barbecue** will be held on Saturday, September 18th. This will be take-out only from 5-7:00pm. Please don't be bashful – volunteer to help. It will be much appreciated.

Our **Roast Pork Supper** is back too with a tentative date of early November. If all goes well, we're hoping that this will be our first dine-in supper since the Youth Group's Spaghetti Supper back in February 2020. Again, we love it when volunteers surprise us with offers to help.

Lastly, the **Craft Fair** returns on December 4th. This year's event had to be modified because much of the prep-work could not be done during the pandemic. We are planning to have a bake sale/prepared food sale, raffle baskets, and outdoor items such as cemetery boxes, door swags, etc. We are hoping that individuals, families or groups will donate themed baskets. Be creative. Have some fun. I think you know what comes next, but we'll ask anyway – we will need volunteers to help with the Craft Fair and you would be such a blessing.

Thanks for putting these dates on your calendars, and thanks for supporting your local church.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The Conference has begun a prayer shawl ministry. They have asked local congregations to make the shawls, pray over them and then send them to the Conference to be shared with communities and others. One of our members who has offered to help with this making the shawls. If you are interested, please contact Rev. Randy.



GIFT CARDS

Big Y and *Stop and Shop* gift card sales are a continuing fundraiser of our congregation. Due to the fact that fewer of us are attending church in person during the pandemic, our sales of these gift cards have declined. Linda makes it as easy as possible to pick-up the cards at her home. Give her a call to arrange a day and time; Linda places them in her mailbox; you leave your payment there; and it's all done. Please contact Linda M. if you can help with this church fundraiser. The church earns 5% on all sales. Thank you.

CONTACT INFO: HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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Committee Chairpersons:

Benevolence, Amy N.

Christian Education, Anita W.

Church Moderator, Amy N.

Deacons, Jeff F.

Music Minister, Anthony T.

Real Folks Society, Martha Z.

Trustees, Jonathan B.

