

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2019

February

No. 2

Balance

I know that I am getting older when I keep trying to make a point with my Confirmation class students by bringing up television programs and movies that I assume are well known. These young people, I discovered, have never heard of television shows like *Cheers* or the movie *Oh God*.

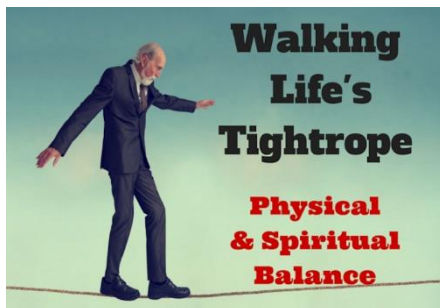
Another program that I used to enjoy as a young person was *Kung Fu*, which I watched when I was the same age as the students now in Confirmation class. A recurring device they used in the program was the flashback. They were often used to recall specific lessons from Caine's childhood training in the monastery.

I remember one such flashback. Caine had to balance himself and carefully cross over what he believed to be a mortal bath of some sort below him. The possibility of slipping and dying distracted Caine to the point that he lost his concentration and then his balance, and he fell into the bath.

Seconds later he emerged unscathed. This was when his teacher impressed upon the bewildered but still living student that the mere possibility of danger distracted him from the reality of the task at hand – his balance.

Religion and spiritual practices, I hope, help us to mediate life's distractions so that we are better prepared to concentrate on moving forward by keeping our balance. Our goal in life as people of faith is to find the balance between our lives here and now and our eternal lives.

The threat to this balancing act is if we focus too much of our attention on one over the other. I bet some of you were expecting me to warn against too much attention on this life, but I really think it's about the imbalance of one over the other.



A healthy spiritual balance (And from my biased perspective as a person of faith, a healthy

psychological balance too because I believe truly that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and this means our personal contentment, fulfillment and purpose are linked inextricably with a spiritual consciousness.) is one that embraces the ethereal and the real. A person who concentrates inordinately on heaven is no more balanced than a person who focuses only on the temporal. Neither the fanatic nor the apathetic is spiritually well-suited to move forward.

In the church, we remain in the Season of Epiphany throughout February, and Epiphany reminds us that creation has been sanctified by the creative hand of God and the Incarnation of Jesus. This world is holy. God is here. The fanatic misses this reality as much as the unbeliever. Their balance is compromised. Their distractions become pronounced.

This is when the community of the church becomes so important. It offers balance. Take a quick look at the calendar on the next page. In February, as in any given month, this congregation will be involved in helping our neighbours – the Relay for Life, the Souper Bowl of Caring, the K4K breakfast, the Food Bank volunteering – and in tending to our spirituality – our Sunday worship, Sunday School, Bible study group.

The community of the church balances our faith practices and beliefs, and our works for this world and for eternity. Standing in isolation, a person can create a tailor-made god, but in the community of the church, history, conversation, community and covenant work together to challenge each of us to see the God beyond our own gods.

I know that in a hectic world where there are more things to do than time to do them that balance means "making time for me." I would ask that we consider that in a hectic world that balance may also mean making time for all of me, the me of the here and now and the eternal me that is just as real. I believe that we are physical and spiritual in an overlapping, divine creation, and that we need to balance the needs of both to reach who we are supposed to be and to do what we are supposed to do. Let's try and lead a balanced life together.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

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| Sun. 3 rd | Souper Bowl of Caring food drive for the Western Mass Food Bank. |
| Tue. 5 th | Bible study group meets in the parlor from 7 – 8:00pm. |
| Sat. 9 th | K4K Valentine's Breakfast fundraiser from 8:30 – 10:00am. |
| Sun. 10 th | Youth gathering at Hadley Congregational Church from 5:30 – 7:30pm. |
| Mon. 11 th | Volunteer opportunity at Western Mass Food Bank from 1 -4:00pm. |
| Wed. 13 th | Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm. |
| Thur. 14 th | Hampshire Association Clergy Committee of Practice meeting in Hadley at 12:00pm. |
| Sun. 17 th | Church Council meets at 11:20am in the church parlor. |
| Sat. 23 rd | Rev. Corey Sanderson on Mission and Outreach from 11AM – 1PM. |
| Mon. 25 th | Bible study group meets in the church parlor from 7 – 8:00pm. |
| Tue. 26 th | Rev. Calvo participates in the Heads-Up meeting from 6 – 8:00pm. |

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.

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING FOOD DRIVE

Almost 30 years ago, the Souper Bowl of Caring began with a simple prayer from a single youth group: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat." Since that day, more than \$143 million has been raised for local charities across the country through Souper Bowl of Caring. It has become a powerful movement that is transforming the time around the Big Game into one of the nation's largest celebrations of giving and serving. Through this mission, young people learn what it's like to make a positive difference in the world – as they collect food, raise the money and volunteer to work in charities that provide shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry and compassion to those in need. Be part of this movement that is sharing God's love with those in need. Please give generously on Super Bowl Sunday.



The young people of our Christian Education program are participating in the annual Souper Bowl of Caring national food drive. The food drive culminates on Super Bowl Sunday, February 3rd. Thank you for your Christian generosity.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP – February's Theme → Preparing for the end and for a beginning

In January, we read of Jesus' leaving the Jerusalem Temple to never return. In February, we will pick-up with what this implies. Temple worship will be replaced by another singular sacrifice – Jesus on the cross. Prior to this final act of Jesus' life, we will delve into Marcan account of the Last Supper, and of Jesus' betrayal and desertion. Jesus will face His final trial utterly alone. I invite you to come and join us for Bible study, to maybe discover a new way to read the old texts and to look at the Passion in a different way, and to reverse Jesus' isolation. Bible study can introduce people to God's Word and it can deepen people's relationship with God's Word. Wherever you are at when it comes to the Bible, I invite you to join our group as we read the inspired 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 card-making table will be set-up so that our younger attendees may 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



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<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.

LOCAL UCC YOUTH GATHERING

The Youth Groups of the Hadley and Southamptton Congregational Churches share in a light meal, join in a fun activity and February, this gathering will be postponed one week due to the Super Bowl Game. We will meet at the Hadley Congregational Church from 5:30 – 7:30pm on Sunday, February 10th. This gathering is open to any of our youth or their friends from 7th – 12th grade. If you would like to attend, please contact Rev. Randy.



Southamptton Congregational Churches share in a light meal, join in a fun activity and February, this gathering will be postponed one week due to the Super Bowl Game. We will meet at the Hadley Congregational Church from 5:30 – 7:30pm on Sunday, February 10th. This gathering is open to any of our youth or their friends from 7th – 12th grade. If you would like to attend, please contact Rev. Randy.

INVITATION TO A TALK BY REV. COREY SANDERSON

Rev. Corey Sanderson, pastor of the Second Congregational Church of Greenfield and also the Chair of the Massachusetts Conference of the UCC's Board of Directors, visited Hatfield Congregational back on October 13th to speak to us about mission and evangelism. That was Part I. He is coming back on February 23rd from 11AM - 1PM to offer Part II. His first presentation was dynamic and informative. Ask any of us who were there. We hope that you will come out to hear what he has to say on February 23rd as we work at reaching those in our community who may need a church like ours. Hot soup will be served, as well.

RERUN SHOES SHOE DRIVE

Started in 2009, *Rerun Shoes* was created to help people here in the US and in other parts of the world recycle old shoes. In addition to providing shoes (in good condition) to children and families in the neediest nations, these donated shoes provide opportunities to micro-businesses throughout the African continent. *Rerun Shoes* is a nationwide charitable organization, but its home-base is right here in Florence, MA. To learn more about this organization, please visit their website: www.rerunshoes.com.

Not all shoes can become *Rerun Shoes*. Shoes that have too much wear, or don't have a need in African countries (i.e., winter boots), won't make the cut. Here are the shoes that they look for and welcome: athletic shoes, men's shoes, women's shoes (no high heels please), children's shoes and sports sandals (please no flipflops or Crocs).

A collection container has been placed inside the front entrance of the church. So if you have old shoes that are only taking up space in your house, please bring them by the church for this collection. And thank you.

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.

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.



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/user/FCATMedia/videos> or at <https://www.youtube.com/user/HatfieldCommunityTV>.

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

These contacts may change after our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 27th. Between then and our next newsletter, please reach out to Rev. Calvo for the revised contacts.