

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2020

November

No. 11

Alternative Rhythms

On the first weekend of this year's online Super Saturday gathering as offered by the Southern New England Conference, I participated in the session offered by Rev. Holly Miller Shank on *Faith Worlds*. Her session was, in turn, based on the book *Theological Worlds: Understanding the Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief* by W. Paul Jones.

It was an interesting session that touched upon the different, but equally valid ways in which believers approach their faith. For some, faith is most fervently understood and embraced as Jesus' forgiveness of sins, for others it is Christ as role model and teacher who empowers believers to reach beyond the ordinary and trust in what is possible, while others see in Jesus the revolutionary power of the liberator who challenges and also regenerates His followers to fight injustice, and still others hold on to the Jesus who draws people away from separation and to the unity in God and among others.

What I found to be most helpful in this session was the suggestion that churches keep in mind that most often these "alternative rhythms of Christian belief" coexist beside each other. Some people attending the same worship Service may be seeking Christ as Saviour from sin, while others aren't worried about forgiveness but about the inspiration and grace to improve society. Others may be a part of a congregation for its sense of community and belonging, and yet the person next to them may be more attuned to the unseen mystical presence of God through Word and sacrament. The goal of the congregation and its leadership should be to respect each of these alternatives and to nourish them so that the church in any particular community may be entered into and engaged by any and all of those who hold "alternative rhythms of Christian belief."

The unity of the congregation does not, and actually must not, be based on uniformity. There are biblical justifications for this.

Two different definitions of church are found in the New Testament. One is based on Paul's imagery of church as the body of Christ. All of the body's different parts work for the good of the whole, and if any one part suffers the whole suffers.

The other definition is found in the First Epistle of Peter where he speaks of church as the People of God. Scholars hold that the Petrine writings were directed to Christians at the fringe of the Roman Empire where their isolation would have been amplified by their calling to an unfamiliar Christian faith. In response to their alienation, the church invited everyone, whoever they may be, to become a part of the one People of God.

This month we will gather with our neighbours from Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church, and I hope with residents from town who may not actually belong to either of our two churches. We will do so to pray to the one God in thanksgiving for all the blessings that have been bestowed upon us in and as our nation.

174 years before "In God we trust," the official motto of the United States was *E Pluribus Unum*, Latin for "from many, one." We professed the rare and unexpected news that we are the "united" states regardless of all our differences. Our national identity was not what we looked like, where we hailed from, what we practiced in our faith or politics, how little or how much money we had. We celebrated both our diversity and the unity that was made stronger by its acceptance.

This month our nation will once again put our democracy in practice by voting. Here in Massachusetts we will vote on everything from ballot initiatives all the way up to the President. The national climate is now more divided and acrimonious than it has been in modern history, and the election is not exempt from any of this. Somehow though, we need to reach back to our national foundation of *E Pluribus Unum* for the alternative is unthinkable.

This is where the church can hopefully be helpful. This is where we can intentionally set our example of "alternative rhythms of Christian belief" before our fellow citizens. In this way, the church can actually be "as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us," as the Puritans proclaimed when first they came to these shores. Let us embrace a diversity of "alternative rhythms" among us as church and pray that the same respect for diversity may carry over to our nation at this watershed moment.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Sun. 1 st	<i>Standard Time</i> begins.
Mon. 2 nd	On-line <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 3 rd	Election Day. Remember to vote.
Sun. 8 th	Stewardship Sunday.
Mon. 9 th	At 5:30pm Rev. Randy will participate in the monthly meeting of HEART – Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together.
Wed. 11 th	Veteran’s Day. Marge Kowalski’s 102nd birthday, our congregation’s oldest member. If you would like to send her a card, contact Rev. Randy for the address. On-line meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Thurs. 12 th	Rev. Randy will attend the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry on-line meeting at 5:30pm.
Mon 16 th	On-line <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 17 th	Rev. Randy will attend the HEADS Up on-line meeting at 6:30pm.
Wed. 18 th	On-line Church Council meeting at 7:00pm.
Sun. 22 nd	Last Sunday after Pentecost. On-line Ordination of Rev. Carole Bull, Cooley Dickinson Hospital chaplain, at 3:00pm. On-line Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service at 5:00pm with Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church.
Tue 24 th	On-line Board of Deacons meeting at 6:00pm.
Thur. 26 th	Thanksgiving Day
Sun. 29 th	First Sunday of Advent
Mon. 30 th	On-line <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.

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

Sundays: Worship Service begins at 10:00am. Sunday School at 9:30am.

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 rehearses in the sanctuary at 6:30pm.

ON-LINE PRESENCE AND PLANS TO MOVE FORWARD

We are adhering to the protocols issued by Gov. Baker (<https://www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-places-of-worship>) and the Conference (<https://www.sneucc.org/phasingforward>) as we re-enter the church building for worship.

An internet connection has been established at the church. There are many advantages to having access to the web available at church, one of which is that we are now able to live-stream our worship Services so that those who choose may worship in person and those who choose to worship from home may also be a part of our gathered congregation. Even when the pandemic passes, whenever that may be, we will continue to live-stream broadcast our Services for those who are unable to join us in person.

Due to the pandemic, however, the church Service will be conducted differently. There will be no congregational singing and no physical sharing of the gift of peace. We will enter the church and keep our social distancing of six feet. Families may sit together, but separate households will need to remain at a distance from one another in the pews. There will be no Sunday School unless it is an outdoor activity and there will be no Chat and Coffee. As things improve gradually, we will return to these much-loved traditions.

The monthly cost for the internet and Zoom services is \$100/month. Several people have already offered to cover half of a monthly cost. If you would like to donate \$50 for this purpose, please send your donation to Marty and note on the check that it is for internet charges. And thank you.

It is hard to imagine the benefits emerging from this pandemic, but its push to move the idea of church beyond a building and further out to the larger community may be one such benefit. The pandemic has ushered us into a new configuration of the church and community. It is no longer limited to the ones who can or wish to join us

physically. Our community is now as open as the world-wide-web. People can join us in real time as part of our worshipping church no matter where they are. This is a blessing.

I imagine that there may be bumps along the road as we move forward, but we will still move forward. It is kind of exciting to think about what the future holds. I am looking forward to just what church as the called People of God will come to look like.

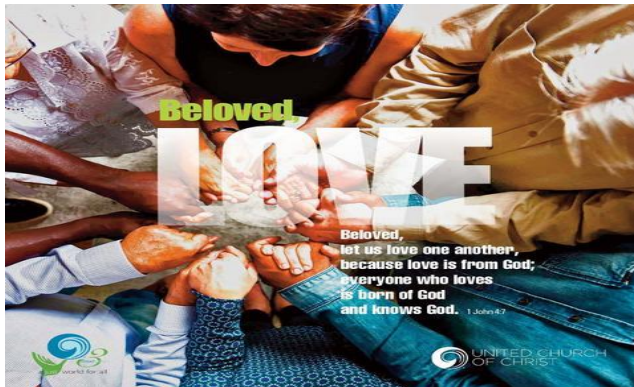
EXPLORING THE BIBLE ON-LINE STUDY GROUP

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 II on the Old 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 join us, please send me an email (randyc1897@gmail.com) and I will send you the log-in information for our Zoom meeting.



STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

The theme of this year's stewardship campaign is based on 1 John 4:7 and its command to love one another. Church is a covenant of love. We covenant with God, with each other and through our mission with all our whomever they may be and wherever they may be. We are not stand-alone Christians. We are given and Spirit-empowered mission is possible through our efforts and also our support. Stewardship is in truth a form of worship. As such, we ask you to prayerfully consider your pledged amount in this unique time of pandemic.



The Stewardship Committee sent out our pledge forms last month. We ask that you please return them to the church by Stewardship Sunday, November 8th, so that we may make adjustments to the 2021 budget at the Board of Trustees meeting on the 11th and then put it to a vote at our annual Congregational Meeting in January. Thank you for your financial support of our congregation and its ministries.

THANKSGIVING

The second annual Thanksgiving Ecumenical Prayer Service will be hosted on-line by our church as we gather with our neighbours from Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church and any who wish to join from the community. The Service will begin at 5:00pm. Last year I was invited to preach at Our Lady of Grace. This year Deacon Mark Kolasinski will preach. To make this as safe as possible we will conduct this Prayer Service on Zoom. A log-in link will be shared with both communities closer to the date of the Service.

CHURCH APPAREL FUNDRAISER

The congregation has lost most all of this year's fundraisers due to the pandemic. We hope you will consider supporting our church through our upcoming apparel fundraiser. We will be selling clothing and masks that will carry our "Good Intentions" logo. This will be up and running in the near future, and definitely in time for Christmas gift-giving.



SEASON OF ADVENT

The church's calendar imitates the cycle of Jesus' life, beginning with the time of anticipation before His birth and ending with Him enthroned in heaven. On the 22nd, the church's liturgical year comes to a close with the Last Sunday after Pentecost and on the 29th the cycle begins again with the First Sunday of Advent.

Advent's four Sundays represent the putative 4,000 years that the world awaited the coming of the Saviour. Advent is a season of anticipation and preparation for the coming of Jesus into the world, and it is also a time of increasing joy and celebration as we approach closer to the mystery of God's Incarnation in the holy child of

Bethlehem. We are not yet sure how many of our Advent traditions we will be able to maintain during this time of pandemic, but we will strive to make this season meaningful and memorable through whatever form Advent assumes this year.

REAL FOLKS

"After calls to committee chairs and some other members (not all), we have decided to postpone our November Election Day Food Sale and our Christmas Craft Fair. Covid-19 made this decision for us. We will meet in 2021. Please do not accept donations of items for sales until we know what 2021 will bring. We cannot store items at the church. Think of fundraising ideas for moving ahead in the new year. NOTE: Any snack food left in the kitchen needs to be in a tin container or in the refrigerator. Also, if you use dishes, please wash, dry and put them away. Do not leave them in the dishrack on the counter. Thank you. Martha Zigmont."

GIFT CARDS

Big Y and *Stop and Shop* gift card sales are a continuing fundraiser of our congregation. Please contact Linda M. about purchasing the cards. The church earns 5% on all sales. Thank you.

FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS

Unfortunately, volunteering opportunities at the Food Bank have been put on hold until further notice due to the pandemic.

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:

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.

HATFIELD'S 350TH General Community Events

December 19th – Luminarium/Fireworks (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)
Rescheduled until Sunday, **May 30, 2021** – 350th Anniversary Parade beginning at 1PM.

Historical Events & Tours

May 30, 2021 – Incorporation Day and the Crossing of the CT River. Incorporation Day Celebration will go forward as a modified event.

For the latest information, visit www.hatfield350.com or follow us on Facebook @Hatfield350th.

