

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2021

November

No. 11

Lawful vs. Right

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, “It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law so much as for the right.” It is much more complicated to be a moral citizen than a lawful citizen. The Israelites faced the anger of the Pharaoh because they dared to disobey. David was an outlaw during the reign of King Saul. Elijah was hunted down by King Ahab. Jeremiah was judged treasonous by Judah’s last monarchs. Daniel was thrown into a fiery furnace for upsetting Nebuchadnezzar’s pride.

Jesus was arrested and executed as a revolutionary opposed to the Roman Empire. His apostles were soon detained as they continued Jesus’ ministry. The authorities rebuked them saying, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name [of Jesus]’ ... But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than any human authority.’” (Acts 5:28, 29)

The Pilgrims came to this continent in 1620. They nearly did not make it through their first winter. This was a hard land. They came nonetheless since they were persecuted in England because their faith marked them as insufficiently loyal to the king.

The Puritans would follow along quickly. Many who eventually settled Western Massachusetts left the relative security of the Atlantic coast because their values chafed against the establishment of those who had come only a short time earlier.

Nor should we ignore the fact that slavery was once lawful. Human beings seeking their freedom were arrested and returned to “good law-abiding citizens.” Not to mention the embarrassing history of Jim Crow Laws, legal segregation and the contemporary need for an equity movement in our country.

These are but some of the pieces of evidence that what is lawful need not always equate with what is morally right. Since this dichotomy is so consistently repeated, we would do well to realize that it is just as likely to live among us now as it has throughout history.

Defining what is right is extremely complicated, far more so than relying on what is lawful. This is why moral discourse is essential. It may take place in many forms and places, but one such place is obviously within religious communities. We can see in the opposite column that religion is not *ipso facto* a definer of what is right, but it shares, or should share, with us tools and a setting to explore what is right. Even then, it may take a prophetic voice to challenge the inauthenticity of uninspired religious decree.

Right is far messier than lawful. Laws are necessary for people to live together, and they need to be enforced. The law-makers and the law-enforcers, however, need to be restrained by the unavoidable fact that law does not have to equate with right. Dissent must be encouraged.

And this leads me to two national holidays that fall in November. The first is Veterans Day. On this day, we honour those who have served in the Armed Forces of our nation. To the degree the military protects its citizens and allows for the right for prophetic voices to challenge what is lawful with what is right it should be honoured.

If, however, the military were to ever become more aligned with power than protection, as it is in so many other countries where it terrorizes its citizens and maintains the powerful no matter what, then it sacrifices its honour. Then its uniforms, ribbons and titles only become embarrassing plumage rather than badges of courage.

Which leads me to Thanksgiving Day. On this day, we pause to give God thanks for the blessings shared upon our nation where we are privileged to welcome the dissenting, prophetic outcasts of the world, and where they can be added to the *mélange* already here who appreciate, or at least tolerate, and protect Thoreau’s thesis that “It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law so much as for the right.”

Because Thoreau is so thoroughly American it is meaningful that Veterans and Thanksgiving Days are but a fortnight apart. Let us pray that this connection may always be the case.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Mon. 1 st	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEART (Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together) at 5:30pm.
Tue. 2 nd	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Mon. 8 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Tue. 9 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry from 5:45pm until 7:00pm. Church Council meeting at 7:00pm.
Thur. 11 th	Veteran's Day. Remember those who have served in our Armed Forces.
Sat. 13 th	Roast Pork Dinner from 5 – 7:00pm (Take-out only).
Wed. 17 th	Rev. Randy will attend the HEADS Up annual meeting at 6:30pm.
Mon. 22 nd	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 23 rd	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Thur. 25 th	Thanksgiving Day.
Sun. 28 th	First Sunday of Advent.

REGULAR GATHERINGS

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 – **Now in person at the church.**

EXPLORING THE BIBLE ON-LINE STUDY GROUP

The Massachusetts Bible Society has published a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. We are reading Volume III on the New Testament. If you would like to see what Bible study is like, (randyc1897@gmail.com) and I will send Zoom meetings. No prior Bible to become more familiar with the written Word of God. This month we will be reading from what are called the Deutero-Pauline Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus) as we work toward our study of the four Gospels.



would like to become more you to join us for Bible study. If you please send me an email you the login information for our knowledge is needed, only a desire

ROAST PORK SUPPER

A Roast Pork Supper will be served on Saturday, November 13th from 5 – 7:00pm. This will be a take-out only meal. The menu will be roast pork, gravy, apple sauce, roll with butter, and apple crisp for this is a take-out only meal, there will be no our and we sadly had to turn some people away reservation sooner rather than later. They may 5905 or by emailing the church at hatfieldconchurch@gmail.com.



mashed potatoes, vegetable, homemade dessert. The cost per ticket is \$15. Since children's dinners. Our Chicken BBQ sold at the door. Please make your be made by calling Jeannie at 413-247-

Tickets may also be purchased at church on Sunday mornings. If you can help with this important fundraiser of our congregation, your assistance will be very much appreciated.

THANKSGIVING DAY

If we were to make assumptions based on department store decorations, then we could assume Halloween would be followed immediately by Christmas. Thanksgiving gets trampled upon as stores entice us to buy more of anything, insisting that we never have enough. The whole and holy message of thanks-giving to God for what we already have and how we have been blessed as individuals and as a nation is almost ignored.

Every time I see scenes like the fall of Afghanistan to the religious zealots of the Taliban, that lead to scenes of people braving any and all odds to escape such depravity, to hope beyond hope to come to the United States so that they may be free and have the opportunity to work hard and better their lives, my sense of thanksgiving is recharged. We are blessed in this land and in ways we too often may take for granted. This is why the national pause of Thanksgiving Day is so important. I hope we will all take time on this day to remember how we are blessed and to actually take the time to give thanks to God for all that is good in our lives and in our nation.

END AND BEGINNING OF LITURGICAL YEAR

November 21st is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. The next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent, which marks the beginning of a new liturgical year. The church's calendar imitates the life of Jesus. As the liturgical year closes, the church focuses on the glorified Jesus in heaven. The theme of judgment is more pronounced at this time. We should remember, however, that it is the one-in-the-same Jesus who sits in heavenly glory who also entered the world in the humble ordinariness of His human birth. Advent is our opportunity to prepare for that holy mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus brought God into the world in His person and revealed God perfectly. The life of Jesus is how we must contemplate the nature of God. As the church year closes with the theme of glory and judgment, we are soon reminded that our heavenly judge loves us enough to be born as one of us. These two Sundays remind us that the Jesus of heaven is the same Jesus of the Gospels.

VISITATIONS

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. 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.

MARGE'S BIRTHDAY

Marge Kowalski, our oldest member, turns 103 on November 11th. If you would like to send her a card, it may be mailed to her at: 14652 Canterbury Ave., Tustin, CA 92780-6704.

CHURCH MASK POLICY

The Church Council has based its mask policy on the number of cases in Hampshire County. If the cases rose above 10 per day per 100,000 people, we would require masks in the church building. The numbers have surged past this mark. Therefore, masks must be worn to attend worship Services in person. When they fall again, masks will again be optional. Thank you for your cooperation.

PLANNING AHEAD

"The **Craft Fair** returns on December 4th. We have jobs for all – set-up, clean-up, donating and volunteering. Can you make swags, decorate cemetery boxes, make bows, pick holly, gather greens? Amy Novak will again chair outside and can use your help. We can accept artificial wreaths, trees and outdoor lights. No small items please.



Food table: Cakes, pies, bread, candy, jellies, prepared meals (i.e., soup, mac & cheese) and more. Moki Reopel can use all your donations to help make a great sale.

Carolyn and Joe will again be at the raffle tree. We need gift cards in any amount. Thank you.

Mary McCarthy will handle the gift baskets. If you need help, she will wrap for you. Please keep your basket value at \$25. If you have any questions, please call Marty at 247-5453. Thank you."

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The Conference is conducting a prayer shawl ministry. They have asked local congregations to make the shawls, pray over them and then send people who do good for the church, members 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. Please contact Linda M. if you would like to purchase any. The church earns 5% on all sales. Thank you.

CONTACT INFO: HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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Benevolence, Amy N.

Christian Education, Anita W.

Church Moderator, Amy N.

Deacons, Jeff F.

Music Minister, Anthony T.

Real Folks Society, Martha Z.

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