

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ

2024

November

No. 11

Not End-time, Thanksgiving time

On October 14th, NASA sent the Europa Clipper on a five-and-a-half-year journey to one of Jupiter's moons, Europa. Scientists believe that beneath an ice shell that may be ten miles thick lies a saltwater ocean, an ocean that contains more water than all of earth's oceans combined.

There is the possibility that life may exist in that far distant ocean. IF it exists at all, it is most likely extremely primitive life, but life nonetheless. To date, life or signs of life have been detected nowhere beyond earth. And likewise, places where life may be possible, what scientists call the Goldilocks Zone, a habitable zone for earth-like life around other stars, all seem at present to allow only for primitive life not advanced.

At present, evidence for life is found only here, and if the civilization-altering discovery of life is found beyond Mother Earth, then it will most likely be primitive. All of the ingredients of eons of stability, the perfect amounts of energy and materials, make life rare, and advanced life possibly uniquely earth-bound.

In the vastness of space and time, we humans may be the only life capable of intellectually appreciating the vastness of space and time, and our place in it. Furthermore, in all creation, we may be the only ones spiritually capable of considering the Creator beyond the magnificence of creation. If life is a one in a gazillion random occurrence, it is staggeringly remarkable, and must be honoured as such. If life is the intentional act of the Creator, it is God's rarest blessing, and should evoke not only wonder but thanksgiving.

Toward the end of this month, we first encounter the Last Sunday of Pentecost and then Thanksgiving Day. The Last Sunday of Pentecost is the last Sunday of the church year. As the church approaches the end of its worship cycle, it draws out and emphasizes biblical readings that dwell on the End-time.

I'm not a fan of these apocalyptic writings. The learned German theologian Hans Kung offered that the End-time stories should be read like the creation stories, as myths rather than predictions. Apocalyptic writings emerge from hopelessness. The situation is judged so dire that there is no imaginable remedy beside the hope that God will intervene to destroy earthly

order and power, and replace them with an imposed divine order.

Thus, on the Last Sunday of Pentecost, we read of Jesus' resignation to His fate. Before the world-power of the Roman Empire, Jesus says, "My kingdom is not from here." (John 18:36) That same Sunday we read from the opening of the Bible's last Book. The promise is shared of Jesus' return at the End-time to reverse the power-dynamics He encountered at the Praetorium. In supernatural glory and power, Jesus returns to establish His reign on earth: "Look! He is coming with the clouds ... and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail." (Revelation 1:7)

The Roman Empire seemed invincible in 30AD. Now it lives only in history books. Through the Christian millennia, Rome has stood-in for each generation's newest evil empire. So many times things have looked so hopeless that predictions are recalculated so that every *now* is the End-time when Jesus will return triumphantly to impose a new order on the world. Yet none has materialized – ever.

Rather than being a prophecy unfulfilled, these repeated prediction failures should point us in another direction. And this points us to the national holiday that falls four days after the Last Sunday of Pentecost, the holiday of Thanksgiving Day.

The first Pilgrims were saved by the Native Americans. They were taught by the first Americans how to adapt to life in 17th century New England. In what could have been imagined as an apocalyptic setting of almost certain extinction, the Pilgrims instead offered thanksgiving to God, not only for survival but for the prospect of what now became possible.

If intelligent life is more than the randomness of a one in a gazillion accident, then it is God's foundational miracle. It should not be treated casually and disposed of through misguided hopes for an End-time cataclysm. We should rather be ever thankful to God for the very possibility of life, even when life is hard. We should express that thanks not in hopes of End-times, but in a renewed respect for life's profound rarity, and in our work to preserve and better this unbelievably precious, and maybe unique, gift of life.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Sat. 2 nd	Roast Pork Supper 4:30 – 6:30pm. Remember to set your clocks BACK one hour before retiring for the night.
Mon. 4 th	Online Bible study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 5 th	Rev. Randy will attend the online meeting of the Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm.
Mon 11 th	Veteran’s Day.
Tue. 12 th	Rev. Randy will attend the Association clergy lunch in Hadley at noon.
Wed. 13 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Sun. 17 th	Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa, our Area Conference Minister, will join us for worship and will preach, and remain for Chat and Coffee. Ecclesiastical Council for Dawn Orluske at the Haydenville Congregational Church at 5:00pm.
Mon. 18 th	Online Bible study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Sun. 24 th	Last Sunday of Pentecost.
Tue. 26 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Thur. 28 th	Thanksgiving Day.

REGULAR GATHERINGS

Sundays: Worship Service begins at 9:30am online and in person. Sunday School begins after the children’s sermon during the worship Service.

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

Thursdays: Choir rehearses in the parlor at 7:00pm, except July and August.

ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP DRIVE

The annual Stewardship Drive concludes on November 3rd. We have turned to our members and friends and asked for your commitment of financial support for the upcoming year of 2025. We are, however, projecting a deficit, very much needed. The theme of this year’s Stewardship Drive is “Imagine Together.” Your pledges and contributions help us to help ourselves and others, and to grow the reign of God. They allow us to have in our lives and in our local communities. Please keep this in mind as you consider your financial support of our church. Everyone should have received an envelope from the Stewardship Committee. If you have not, please contact one of the Stewardship Committee members. They are Susan McGlew, Christina McGlew, JoAnn Petcen and Wunderly Stauder.



support for the upcoming year of 2025. Your generosity is appreciated and also help us to help ourselves and others, and to *Imagine Together* the impact our church communities. Please keep this in mind as church. Everyone should have received an envelope from the Stewardship Committee. If you have not, please contact one of the Stewardship Committee members. They are Susan McGlew, Christina McGlew, JoAnn Petcen and Wunderly Stauder.

HORN OF PLENTY FOOD DRIVE

Each November the congregation conducts the Horn of Plenty Food Drive to help support the good work of the Survival Center. In this month when we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, when many of our tables are filled with delicious foods of all sorts, we are asked to remember those whose tables will be much more sparse. There is food insecurity among our neighbours. Our food drive helps those who have little put something more on their tables than they could possibly afford on their own. The drive will be held from November 3rd through the 24th. Non-perishable food items may be brought to the church. Monetary donations are accepted as well. If offering by check, please make them payable to the church with a “food drive” notation on the memo line. And thank you.

ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Our group meets on alternate weeks online for one hour. Currently, we are working our way through the first books of the Bible. They are referred to as the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses. Critical scholars argue that these books were not actually written by Moses, but they are told from the perspective of the emerging nation of Israel. Where we are now confined to study is that the people of Israel are in the time of the Exodus. They are the wilderness for 40 years. They are not allowed to yet enter the Promised Land. During this time, the social and religious code of the People of God is revealed. If you would like to learn more about this crucial period of biblical history, you are invited to join us for Bible study.



of Moses. but they are in our Bible confined to Land.

Wherever you may be in your Bible literacy, the practice of sharing in these sacred writings opens up new possibilities. If you may be interested in joining our group, please send an email to randyc1897@gmail.com for the Zoom login.

VETERAN'S DAY



On the eleventh hour, eleventh day of the eleventh month, World War I ended, the war to end all wars because it was judged so destructive and inhuman. This observance of Armistice Day eventually morphed into Veteran's Day. How many wars have we fought since 1918? How many men and women have served in harm's way for the good of all the rest of us? I think we do remember and honour those who have served in our military forces, but especially on Veteran's Day we should acknowledge the commitment and sacrifice of those who volunteer to protect our nation and our nation's democratic ideals. Please make a point of doing so this Veteran's Day.

ACM's VISIT TO THE CHURCH

Rev. Terry Yasuko Ogawa is the Area Conference Minister of the Northwest Region of our Southern New England Conference, which includes our she is engaged with churches throughout Connecticut. Rev. Terry strives to be as engaged and their members. One way she does this is by joined us via Zoom one Sunday during the Covid church will be on Sunday, November 17th. She sermon. I do hope you will make a special effort and worship with Rev. Terry. After the Service, this gives you the perfect chance to ask Rev. Terry any question you may have about the wider church and our place in it.



Her first in-person visit to our will join us for worship and will preach the to join us a church on this Sunday to meet she will remain for Chat and Coffee and

THANKSGIVING DAY

Many people of a strong and not so strong faith turn to God and ask for special blessings in times of stress, danger, need and want, but less than those many offer thanksgiving to God for extraordinary interventions and for ordinary blessings. Luke tells the story of ten people healed of leprosy, but only one returned to offer thanks to Jesus. (17:11-19) In case it is only 10% who offer thanksgiving, we do have the national holiday dedicated specifically to this purpose. National days of thanksgiving reach far back into biblical history. For more recent history, the Smithsonian Institution offers their expertise: <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/thanksgiving/history>. On this holiday of food and football and so much more, we should also make the conscious decision to offer God thanksgiving for all that blesses our lives and our nation.



UPCOMING EVENTS

We have been invited back to Town Hall for an **Election Day Bake Sale**. This will be a large turnout election so the more we bake the more we can donate is very much appreciated. clear plastic wrap, and mark and price Sharon Bannister if you have any run the Bake Sale from 8:30 – 1:00pm are looking for volunteers to work two please talk to Amy or Linda of Real Folks.



sell. Whatever you can Please wrap your items in them clearly. Reach out to questions. We are planning to or earlier if we sell out. We hour shifts. If you can help,

We know it is still a month away, but the **Christmas Craft Fair** will be here before you know it. Now is the time when we ask for jewelry. This gives us the time to get the donations marked and priced. If you have jewelry to donate, please bring it to church on any Sunday. If you can share your kitchen specialties with us, please do so. Homemade foods sell quickly. If you make crafts, please set aside time now so that you can share your talents with us at the Christmas Craft Fair on December 7th.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't forget to check in at our website and FaceBook page. The links are directly below. They are updated several times each week and often share information from the larger church that we may not know of otherwise. Please like our pages and posts and share them as you choose.

The Conference has created and constantly updates a new social media presence called *Find Hope Now*. It can be found at www.findhopenow.org. The site is a concerted effort to offer messages of hope when so much

involving religion is defined by judgment and aspersion. As the site grows, it will allow individual congregations such as ours to maintain a presence and to reach out to people in the southern New England region who are looking for churches of hope. Take a look if you have a chance.

GROCERY CARDS

Big Y grocery 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

Website: www.hatfieldchurch.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC

Pastor: Rev. Randy Calvo 413-824-1630 randyc1897@gmail.com

Music Minister: Anthony Tracia anthonytracia@gmail.com

Committee Chairpersons:

<i>Benevolence, Amy N.</i>	<i>Music Committee, Sue M.</i>
<i>Christian Education, Anita W.</i>	<i>Real Folks Society, Amy N.</i>
<i>Church Moderator, Jonathan B.</i>	<i>Trustees, Ed M.</i>
<i>Deacons, Jeff F.</i>	

Annual
Roast Pork Supper
Hatfield Congregational Church
 41 Main Street, Hatfield

Saturday, November 2nd



Take Out Only

4:30 - 6:30 pm



Tickets: \$18
 In Advance or at the door until sold out.
 Call Linda 413 247-5604 or Bill 413 247-5905

- *Pork Tenderloin*
- *Mashed potato*
- *Squash, Gravy*



- *Apple Sauce*
- *Rolls & Butter*
- *Dessert*