

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2023

November

No. 11

## Thanks for Thanksgiving

Maybe you have seen Tim Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas*. When I worked at *Yankee Candle* for three years, the *Department 56* figures from this movie were an all-year display. People love them.

Or maybe this month you'll see in one form or another the cartoon of the Thanksgiving turkey yelling at the cartoon Santa to wait his turn, to stop encroaching on Thanksgiving's turf.

Long before the church even enters Advent, which is the season for Christmas preparation, the world is already off to a running start. Christmas really does intrude on Halloween and it overruns poor Thanksgiving.

Halloween is one thing, but Thanksgiving is too important to sacrifice to the reindeer, snowmen and elves who show up when we're still passing out Halloween candy. Instead, let us give thanks for the day of Thanksgiving.

Luke is the only Evangelist who shares the story that Jesus once healed ten people inflicted with leprosy, but only one returned to give thanks. (17:11-19) Thanks-giving faced long odds then and now.

I wonder if thanks-giving is treated lightly because the reality of the present is too often unfairly compared with the massaged memories of the past and the excited imaginations for the future. The present abides in the messiness of reality: its good and bad; its successes and failures. Everything surrounding the present can be remembered or expected as we would prefer, but the inescapable messiness of the present's reality can get in the way of thanks-giving.

The story from Luke 17 is a miracle story. A debilitating disease disappears in an unanticipated moment. The thrill that the ten experience is understandable. They are overcome with emotions and expectations. Life is brand-new and they cannot wait to rush into it. In such an agitated state, forgetting to give thanks is not excusable, but it is somewhat understandable. This makes the intentional return of one of the ten who were healed remarkable. He breaks away

from the others and their rush into new lives, and he comes back to Jesus to give thanks.

Thanks-giving is exceptional, it seems, even in the case of miracles. To hear this Gospel story 2,000 years later makes us gasp in shock that nine took a miracle for granted. We may tell ourselves that it would be different with us. We would give thanks for a miracle. And it's quite possible we would.

However, thanks-giving cannot be limited to the miraculous. This has been a tenet of our faith ever since there was a Christian faith. The oldest book in the New Testament is 1 Thessalonians, and as this pastoral letter comes to a close, Paul admonishes those very first believers to "give thanks in all circumstances." (5:18)

What precipitated the writing of 1 Thessalonians was the reality of death. The community was confused and disconsolate because some among them had died. Paul writes to them of hope, and closes with the exhortation to be ceaselessly thankful, not for the miraculous gifts that didn't occur and prevent death, but for the ordinary gifts that are too often ignored.

During World War II, Norman Rockwell painted a series of four prints based on President Roosevelt's hopes for post-war society. One was *Freedom from Want*. It depicts a family gathered around an inviting but relatively sparse Thanksgiving table. There was thanks-giving without abundance on the table. The present reality of wartime limitations did not hamper thanks-giving. Ordinary gifts were appreciated.

I hope that the Christmas intrusion we already see beginning right now does not overrun the opportunity for the nation to pause, catch a breath, and offer thanks-giving for ordinary blessings, and maybe even those occasional extraordinary ones. The final book within the Book of Psalms begins with this verse: "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever." (107:1) May this break into our thoughts however we will be observing Thanksgiving Day for truly God is good.

## NOVEMBER EVENTS

Sat. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Roast Pork Supper from 4:30 – 6:30pm. Clocks BACK one hour before retiring for the night so you're on time for Sunday Service.
Sun. 5 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Horn of Plenty</i> Food Drive begins and continues until Thanksgiving.
Mon. 6 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 7 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm.
Wed. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Sat. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Veteran's Day.
Tue. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the Hampshire Clergy Gathering from 12 – 1:00pm in Hadley.
Mon 20 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Thurs. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Thanksgiving Day.
Tue. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons in person at the church at 6:30pm.

## 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.

Mondays: The Joyful Ringers Bell Choir rehearses from 6 - 8:00pm.

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.

## ROAST PORK SUPPER

The Roast Pork Supper will take place on Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 – 6:30pm. This will be a take-out only meal. The cost is \$18 per person, which of pork has increased in Massachusetts. The and squash, roll and butter, apple sauce and a on Sunday mornings at the church or by 413-530-3278. If you could volunteer some volunteer clipboard will be floating around essential to the financial health of our congregation so thank you for your support.



is a great price considering how much the cost menu is roast pork and gravy, mashed potatoes brownie for dessert. Tickets may be purchased calling Linda at 413-247-5604 or Jeannie at of your time, that would be a huge help. The on Sunday mornings. These fundraisers are

## HORN OF PLENTY FOOD DRIVE

The annual *Horn of Plenty* Food Drive begins on the first Sunday of November and continues through Thanksgiving. Most all of us have been blessed in myriad ways. The Thanksgiving holiday is our chance to demonstrate our thankfulness. One way in which we can do this is by sharing with those of our neighbours who are less fortunate than we. The large cornucopia will be in our sanctuary for most of the month. Please bring in a non-perishable food item or you can make a monetary donation. Please make checks payable to "FCC Benevolence Fund." We have so much to be thankful for. Let us never take such blessings for granted.

## ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Our online Bible study group is reading from the Gospel of John. If you would like to join us as we read of John's unique take on Jesus' life and ministry, we would love to have you join us. Let's read, study and discuss the book that literally has changed the world. Send an email to [randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com) for the login. We meet on alternate weeks for one hour.

## 2024 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Our Stewardship Campaign is scheduled to conclude on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The theme of this year's campaign has been "Because of you, our church changes lives." Stewardship is a biblical theme from the first pages. Adam is placed within Eden "to till it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15) Even Paradise is not without responsibility. Somehow we tend to ignore this aspect of the biblical imagery. We like to think of Paradise as a forever vacation, but the text provides for purpose. We share in the work of God. This is what stewardship means.

The church's stewardship campaign focuses our attention on how we plan to support the blessings and works of our congregation. It is stewardship that provides us with a beautiful sanctuary so that we can tend to our spiritual needs, and that gives



us a place to gather as the community of the church. It is stewardship that allows us to help our neighbours whether they are literally next door or on the other side of the globe. It is stewardship that keeps alive the desperately needed gospel of Jesus in a world that is dreadfully in need of recalibration. We need to hear the truth of self-giving and mutual respect and understanding. It is stewardship that sustains the message of hope when we need it most.

Stewardship supports the church that changes our lives as members, and stewardship is able to change the lives of so many others through what we do as church. If you have not yet made your pledge, please consider doing so in order that we may plan responsibly for the year ahead. Thank you for your support of this church.

**JOYFUL RINGERS BELL CHOIR**



The Joyful Ringers rehearse on Mondays from 6 – 8:00pm. Anyone who is interested is welcome to become a part of the Bell Choir. Younger or older, church member or bell enthusiast, experienced or novice, we would love it if you would come forward and add the gift of more music to our sanctuary. If you may be interested, please reach out to Rev. Randy at [randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com) or Sue M., the Music Committee Chair.

Also, we do have a set of *chimes that the children may play at worship*. If your daughter or son may be interested in learning how to play the chimes, we would love to hear from you. It may even be fun for them.

**THANKSGIVING DAY**

I think we all look forward to Thanksgiving Day. It is usually a sumptuous meal, vacation time, family and friend time, the beginning of the long holiday season. However, let’s not forget the real reason behind Thanksgiving’s importance. It is the opportunity for us as a nation to pause and in those moments freed of other responsibilities to give thanks to God for the blessings, extraordinary and ordinary, which we enjoy in our lives. We are a blessed people. Let us never take this for granted. Please find the opportunity on Thanksgiving Day to actually give thanks.

**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.

**GIFT CARDS**

Big Y 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**

Website: [www.hatfieldchurch.org](http://www.hatfieldchurch.org) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC](https://www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC)

Pastor: Rev. Randy Calvo 413-824-1630 [randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com)

Music Minister: Anthony Tracia [anthonytracia@gmail.com](mailto: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, Martha Z.</i>
<i>Church Moderator, Jonathan B.</i>	<i>Trustees, Ed M.</i>
<i>Deacons, Jeff F.</i>	



# **CHRISTMAS BAZAAR AND CRAFT FAIR**

**Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**8:30am – 2:00pm**

**Everyone's HELP is appreciated!**



- **Greens are needed in advance to make patio pots, swags and cemetery boxes.**
- **Jewelry items are needed. They will be priced unless they are priced in advance by the donors.**
- **Food table is looking for bakers to share their homemade specialties of pies, cookies, breads, whatever, and we are looking for prepared foods for grab-and-go-purchases because these always sell well.**
- **Gift baskets and gift cards are a huge draw.**
- **Craft items are much appreciated too.**

**This is Real Folks only fundraiser of the year and this organization is extremely generous to our church. Please HELP as you are able. Thank you!**