

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2020

October

No. 10

The Reformation's Continuing Challenge

October 31, 1517 is accepted as the beginning of the Reformation. On this day, Martin Luther is supposed to have nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of All Saints Church in Wittenberg, in modern day Germany. With this act, the reformation of the church and society took off with the pent-up energy of opposition to centuries of ignorance and abuse.

The Renaissance was in full swing a century earlier finally bringing the western world out of the darkness of the Middle Ages. The printing press was invented and the Gutenberg Bible came out at mid-century. Learning was becoming more wide-spread. Blind authority was being challenged. People were beginning to think for themselves and there was an explosion of reforms, one of which was in the church.

This past month Hatfield's 350th Committee conducted a very interesting walking tour of the historic



buildings of Main Street. The last building visited was our church. Rev. Randy was invited to speak to the group about the history of our congregation. Before entering the building, he asked the participants to take note of the Ionic Greek columns that grace the

front of our 1849 church building.

Once inside, Rev. Randy noted that intentionally these columns draw on the example of ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy and philosophy. This makes perfect sense considering the fact that the Congregational church model fosters a vibrant sense of democracy and freedom of thought.

All members of the United Church of Christ are ministers of this church. All members have voice and the responsibility of leadership in this church. This harkens back to the tradition of the earliest Christian communities that were enthusiastically open and democratic. It was accepted that the Spirit would act through any and all baptized Christians.

As a matter of fact, if you turn to 1 Corinthians 12-14, you will see this Spirit-inspired democracy in action. So many believers shared in the Spirit's gifts that Paul insisted on bringing some order into Christian gatherings. There was not hierarchy over the church; there was *enthusiasm* in the church, a word which literally means being *in God*.

The ancient Greeks are also credited with fostering the discipline of philosophy. Philosophy encourages the freedom to explore thought. Freedom of thought is necessary in philosophy because without it thoughts become merely repetitive or even just superstitious.

The Ionic columns at the entrance of our church building draw the attention of all who pass by or enter to this tradition of democracy and freedom of thought, a tradition that was revived with the Reformation. The Reformation not only allows for, but encourages, creative religious thought. The Reformation nurtures the spiritual imagination of believers. It promotes the advancement of religious thought and practice so that they may remain vibrant, meaningful and relevant.

The Reformation challenges the faithful to challenge the status quo. People may look at the Ionic columns and think "establishment," but they are there to proclaim a continuous challenge to the establishment. They stand for the continuous reformation of not only the church, but the world in which the church stands as the presence of Jesus who forever declares, "I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

It is easy to slip into a comfortable faith. It is hard to engage with a challenging faith. The Reformation challenged the church and its members to go back to the biblical text. In this month when we celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation, I would ask you to do just that, to go back to the biblical text. There are four weeks in October and there are four Gospels in the New Testament. Why not try to read a Gospel a week? As you are reading, and as you consider the state of our world, compare the two. If the world, or even if the church, do not match what is written in the Gospels, then the challenge of the Reformation must continue through us.

OCTOBER EVENTS

Sun. 4 th	<i>Neighbours in Need Offering</i> accepted.
Mon. 5 th	Rev. Randy will participate in the monthly meeting of HEART – Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together at 5:30pm. On-line <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Thus. 8 th	Rev. Randy will attend the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry on-line meeting at 5:30pm.
Sun. 11 th	Association Youth Group activity – trail walk.
Wed. 14 th	On-line meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Mon. 19 th	On-line <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Sat. 24 th	On-line Conference Super Saturday event starting at 10:00am (Part I)
Tue 27 th	On-line Board of Deacons meeting at 6:00pm.
Sat. 31 st	On-line Conference Super Saturday event starting at 10:00am (Part II) Remember to turn your clocks BACK one hour before retiring for the night.

REGULAR GATHERINGS

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

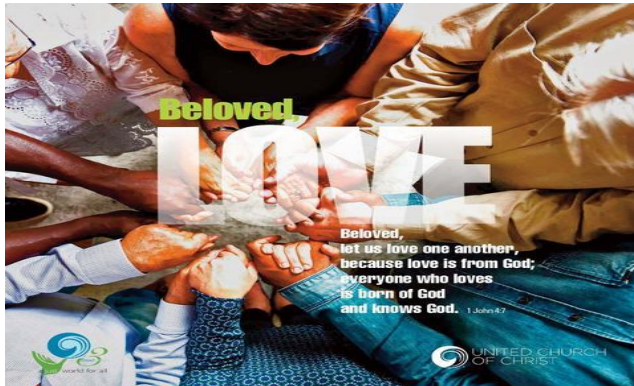
Tuesdays: Yoga classes are offered every Tuesday in the church parlor at 5:30pm.

Wednesdays: Hatha Yoga classes take place every Wednesday at 6:00pm.

Thursdays: Choir rehearses in the sanctuary at 6:30pm.

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 neighbours who may be wherever they may be and wherever they may be. We are not stand-alone Christians. We are God's people. We are the People of God and we in turn with God. This covenant is both spiritual and practical, and they are inseparable. They support each other. Our Christ-made mission is given and Spirit-empowered mission is possible through our efforts and also our financial 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.



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The Stewardship Committee will be sending our pledge forms this month. We ask that you please return them to the church by the end of October so that we may make our final adjustments to the 2021 budget. Thank you for your financial support of our congregation.

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 make our plans to re-enter the church building for worship.

The Church Council has voted to install an internet connection inside the church. There are many advantages to having access to the web available at church, one of which is that we will be able to live-stream our worship Services. We are working toward an October roll-out of this.

Rev. Randy will broadcast from the church and eventually people will be invited to either attend our Services in person or online. Even when the pandemic passes, whenever that may be, we will continue to live-stream broadcast for those who are unable to join us in person.

Due to the pandemic, the church Service will be conducted differently. There will be no hymnals or Bibles in the pews. 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 volunteered 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 idea of community may be one such benefit. The pandemic has ushered us into a new configuration of 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 most definitely looking forward to getting back into the church building, and I'm looking forward to just what church as the called People of God will come to look like. More information will be emailed directly to our members as decisions are made.

NEIGHBOURS IN NEED OFFERING



Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. *Neighbors in Need* grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities. To make your donation, please send it directly to Marty or to church at 41 Main Street.

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.



Often times I think people assume they already know what the Bible has to say so they do not bother to actually read it. I remember a New Testament professor telling me that he began his survey course with the Epistles rather than the Gospels because his students were more open to processing the challenges to their biblical assumptions of Paul rather than of Jesus. The Bible can surprise and startle if we read what it says rather than what we think it says. I invite you to come to one of our Bible study sessions and see for yourselves.

ON-LINE CONFERENCE SUPER SATURDAY GATHERINGS

Due to the ongoing pandemic, this year's Fall Super Saturday will be conducted online on two consecutive Saturdays at the end of the month. The keynote speaker will be Rev. Sarah Heath who is a pastor, author, podcast host and speaker. There are multiple topic offerings in the morning and afternoon, and worship. If you

would like to learn more about the event or register, please follow this link: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/super-saturday-12871453>

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

October 10th – Annual Bonfire (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)

December 19th – Luminarium/Fireworks (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)

Rescheduled until Sunday, **May 30, 2021** – 350th Anniversary Parade beginning at 1PM.

Historical Events & Tours

October 10th – Narrated Wagon Rides

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

Agricultural Events & Tours

Rescheduled to **October 3rd** - Cow Pie Bingo as part of the Tractor Parade and Harvest Festival

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

