

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

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## God Is There; We're Getting There

On occasion you may hear reference to “the Old Testament God” and “the New Testament God” as if they were separate. The God of Israel was characterized as violent and judgmental, while the Christian God was depicted as compassionate and merciful. This is misleading at best and prejudiced at worst. Yahweh of the Hebrew Bible is the same God Jesus called “Father” in the New Testament.

What changed over time was not the nature of God, but our perception of God. We cannot expect believers of 3,000 years ago to express God as we do today or as others will 3,000 years from now. There’s an interesting Greek word that applies to this dynamic. It’s *kairos*. It means God’s *the time*. It’s distinct from chronological time, but also intervenes in it.

When God determined, for instance, that it was *the time* for Jesus to enter the world, it was because God judged, in God’s inscrutable ways, that chronological time was ready to interact with God’s *the time* in this most profound way.

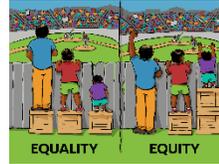
Matthew’s Gospel is very concerned with presenting Jesus as the fulfilment of Old Testament expectations, that change does not erase continuity. A sort of repetition is used in the text to reinforce this point. Matthew writes, “At that time Jesus said,” “At that time Jesus went,” “At that time Herod” (11:25; 12:1; 14:1) None of these are chronological references even though they seem like they should be. They indicate the intrusion of God’s extraordinary *the time* into the ordinary time of Jesus’ life.

During and ever since the life of Jesus, people of a Christian faith have tried to better understand and relate more profoundly to Jesus. Jaroslav Pelikan, the late Yale professor, wrote the book *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*. It’s captivating to read how each successive Christian epoch reimagines Jesus so that He is more meaningful in their particular time. We constantly and naturally reimagine God so that God is more approachable. Change is a constant and it does not impair the continuity of *the time*. Actually, it enhances it.

Let’s take the recent example of our vote to use the gender-neutral Doxology. The traditional referred to God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This gender identification of God reaches back to the Bible’s first paragraph when “he” is used as God’s pronoun. (Genesis 1:5) Language and culture change, however. *He* was once used to honour God; now many

see gender as limiting God. Thus, we voted to adapt. God didn’t change; we did for the sake of continuity.

Another language adaptation that I find interesting is the apparent increased use of the word *equity*. The word *equity* is used fourteen times in the Old Testament, and never in the New! There is a profound difference between *equity* and *equality*. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. This is the dif-



ference: (Interaction Institute for Social Change, Artist: Angus Maguire.)

Social justice is working more toward equity than equality at present. The traditional Columbus Day, for example, is now just as often referred to as Indigenous Peoples’ Day. There is a conscious effort to reflect the neglected but equally noble history of the Native Americans rather than to concentrate almost solely on the European settlers. This is an example of equity, of compensating now for past inequalities.

There’s a great deal of pushback to such things as unfair, but this seems to be a liminal moment and change engenders strong reactions. Equity, in a sense, is unfair and it can be resented. Equity treats people according to a desire to achieve equality by striving in the present to redress past inequalities.

We should remember God acts with equity. The New Testament does not use the word equity, but Jesus says, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” (Lk 12:48) Jesus’ take on equity is not from the one receiving, but from that of the one sharing an advantage.

If we have been blessed with advantages in life, Jesus asks us to act like God acts – with equity. In this way our time may match *the time* of God. As such, we will become more godly, more attuned to the aspirations Jesus sets before us in His life and gospel, and history teaches this takes time – a lot of time, but we can get there.

**OCTOBER EVENTS**

Sun. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>Neighbors in Need Offering</i> accepted. <i>World Communion Sunday</i> observed.
Mon. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	CROP Hunger Walk begins at 2PM, hosted by the Greenfield Methodist Church. Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEART (Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together) at 5:30pm.
Tue. 4 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly Association Committee on Ministry meeting at 5:45pm.
Sun. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Congregational Meeting after Service to vote on the proposed Goal Budget for 2023.
Mon. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Tue 11 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the online meeting of HEADS Up at 6:30pm.
Sat. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the Committee on Ministry Instructional meeting from 10:00am – 3:00pm.
Wed. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the NW Committee on Ministry chairs’ meeting at 1:00pm.
Sun. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Rev. Randy will offer the Charge to the Pastor at Rev. Will Sencabaugh’s Installation in Attleboro, MA at 3PM.
Mon. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly online meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.

**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 sanctuary at 7:00pm.

**CHURCH COVID POLICIES**

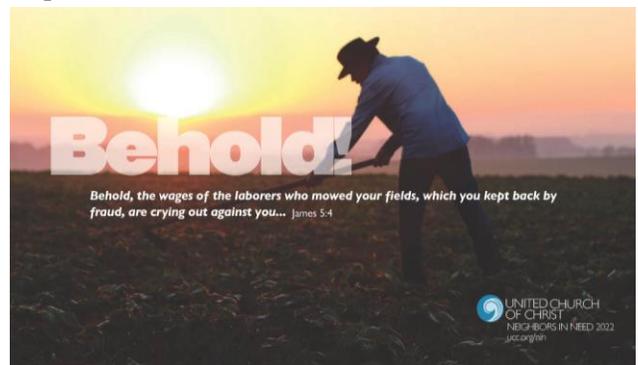
The Church Council has decided that while the numbers remain higher than we would like, the COVID vaccines and COVID treatments have combined Accordingly, the Council encourages for the benefit of those who may be are now optional. The Council will



to lower the risks of this pandemic virus. those attending in person to wear a facemask immunocompromised, but face coverings continue to monitor the COVID numbers. If the numbers spike upwards, then we may return to the mask requirement if needed.

**NEIGHBORS IN NEED OFFERING**

This annual offering of the United Church of Christ will be accepted on World Communion Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our contributions help in this way: “In 2022, the Neighbors in Need “BEHOLD!” offering focuses on an economic justice. With inflation impacting all our households, we wanted to provide a way to discuss this through a faith lens. Join us by promoting this year’s NIN “Behold!” campaign at your church. As you may recall, one-third of the offering supports Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds are used by Justice and Witness Ministries to provide grants to UCC churches and organizations as well as supporting a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.” Please make checks payable to: FCC Benevolence Fund, with NIN written on the memo line. And thank you!



**BIBLE STUDY GROUP**

Our online Bible study group is reading from Acts of the Apostles and John at present. If you would like to join us as we read these distinct accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry, and then of the early days of the church, 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. If you have any questions about how Bible study works, send them along to the same email as above.

## STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN BEGINS FOR 2023

On Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, a congregational meeting will be held after our worship Service to vote on the proposed goal budget for 2023. Following this meeting, our Stewardship Campaign for the new year will begin. We do hope that those who had made pledges for 2022 are up to date in their contributions. Pledged offerings are one of the pillars we use to plan for the future and develop an annual budget.

## CHURCH CHOIR

A pastor posted this on FaceBook: “How much to hire a church singing group?” “You mean a choir?” “Fine, how much to acquire a church singing group?” We are truly fortunate to have our very talented Music Minister, Anthony, with us. Music adds so much to our worship. What adds on top of what Anthony has to offer is our volunteer choir. They can do amazing things. The pandemic shut down the choir, and then they came back to us through videos and occasional in person pieces. There’s the possibility that we may be able to return this Fall to the choir again seated in the Chancel and leading us with their voices. If you would like to join the choir and share in the gift they give to us, please contact Anthony. I know we all welcome the thought of the choir’s return.

## CROP HUNGER WALK

This year’s Church World take place on Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>. this year’s host congregation. The 25% of the collected funds remain The other 75% is shared around the need communities support with a hand up.

We have donation envelopes for our congregation’s team. Please see may also join our team online or make an online contribution by visiting <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2022/team/hatfield-congregational-church-united-church-of-christ>



Service’s CROP Hunger Walk will The Methodist Church in Greenfield is wonderful thing about CROP is that in our area to support people in need. world through projects that help in-themselves. Not with a handout, but

anyone who would like to be a part of either Amy N. or Rev. Randy. You

## REAL FOLKS – Tag Sale, Chancel Flowers, Chat and Coffee, Christmas Craft Fair

**Tag Sale** will be held on Friday 9/30 and Saturday 10/1 from 8:30 to 1 Rain or Shine. Decor for ALL seasons, furniture, household items and more! We do not need any contributions from parishioners as we are trying to clean out much of what we have been storing and what has been donated . Help with set up and pricing as well as breaking down would be appreciated. Please save for a sale in the Spring. If you can help, Linda M. and Marcia S. are the co-chairs. Please let them know. There will not be a food sale.

**Altar flowers** can be donated by anyone. Fresh cut, wild, plants, whatever. Bring arranged and take home after church Service. Sign up on the calendar at the front of the church. Questions – Jeannie B. is the chair.

Please sign-up for a Sunday **Coffee Hour**. Make a snack, coffee is provided. If we all take a turn, we can continue to offer Chat and Coffee fellowship after church. Mary M. is chair if you have questions.

We are planning a return to our **Christmas Craft Fair** this year. If you have costume jewelry to share, please contact Jeannie Belden. And if you have a crafting ability, please consider sharing your talents with us by beginning to work on your donations.

## 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

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)

### Committee Chairpersons:

*Benevolence, Amy N.*

*Christian Education, Anita W.*

*Church Moderator, Jonathan B.*

*Deacons, Jeff F.*

*Music Minister, Anthony T.*

*Real Folks Society, Martha Z.*

*Trustees, Ed M.*

