

# The Bell Tower

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

2024

October

No. 10

## Don't Be Afraid - Tradition Changes

As everyone knows, Halloween is the last day of this month. Children seem to enjoy it, but I get the impression adults enjoy it even more. The spooky celebration familiar to us today really took off after World War II's end of sugar rationing, but the roots of Halloween reach much further back than the late 1940's.

Even before the time of Jesus, the Celtic people were observing Samhain, or "summer's end." Samhain was their New Year's Day and it fell on November 1<sup>st</sup> on our modern calendars. On the eve of Samhain, the Celts believed that the barrier between the living and the dead could be breached. For this one night, our October 31<sup>st</sup>, supernatural beings could roam the earth out among human beings.

In this superstitious age, people would leave out offerings of food to placate these other-worldly beings. Also, as another layer of protection, they would also disguise themselves to look like the imagined supernatural predators, hoping to blend in with them, but probably only adding to the "sightings" of such barrier-breakers.

Then around 700AD, this Celtic observance was Christianized in an attempt to bring pagans into the faith by keeping their customs while translating them into an acceptable format. The church called Samhain "All Saints Day," or as it came to be known in Middle English, "All Hallows Day." The night before this November 1<sup>st</sup> feast day was, accordingly, called "All Hallows Eve," which adapted into our modern word "Halloween."

The Christianization of this pagan tradition did not erase the past. It reinterpreted it. This Celtic tradition bled into 16<sup>th</sup> century traditions in Ireland and Scotland where people would still dress in ghoulish costumes. Children would circle their neighbourhoods dressed in these costumes. They would receive treats in return for their prayerful petitions on behalf of those households because the prayers of children are held to be especially cherished by God.

It is not hard to see how this Samhain / All Hallows Eve tradition crossed the Atlantic and made its way here. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a large migration of immigrants from Ireland and Scotland to the United

States. They brought with them their customs, one of which was All Hallows Eve. When sugar rationing ended after World War II and candy companies realized that profits were to be made off of this 2,000 year old tradition, well, Halloween as we know it was born.

I share this interesting and fun story, a story which I must credit to the current edition of the *Smithsonian Magazine* (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/celtic-origins-trick-treating-halloween-180984916/>), because it is a current example of living tradition. I love this quote of Jaroslav Pelikan on living tradition, "Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. Tradition lives in conversation with the past, while remembering where we are and when we are and that it is we who have to decide. Traditionalism supposes that nothing should ever be done for the first time, so all that is needed to solve any problem is to arrive at the supposedly unanimous testimony of this homogenized tradition." (Jaroslav Pelikan, interview with *U.S. News & World Report*, July 26, 1989)

Church and tradition seem to be concepts that fit hand in glove. However, this does not equate with church being locked into the past because tradition is not limited to the past. Church would be a much less interesting experience if we were to believe that God stopped speaking, stopped God's self-revelation, some 2,000 years ago. Then we would not live "in Christ" as Paul says so frequently in his writings. We would live through the experiences of believers two and even three millennia ago. This would deny the curiosity of faith, the search for a more meaningful relationship with God.

This is something we encounter constantly in our online Bible Study Group. At our most recent gathering, we discussed Jacob's wrestling with God. This is shared as an actual physical competition, and it may well have been understood that way some 3,000 years ago. We expanded on this and asked and dialogued about whether this could be a metaphor for our struggle to know God, to know ourselves better, and even for God to know us better. This is the language of living tradition and this is what keeps faith vibrant, and a part of our lives rather than limited to those in the past.

**OCTOBER EVENTS**

Tue. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the online meeting of the Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm.
Sun. 6 <sup>th</sup>	World Communion Sunday. <i>Neighbours in Need</i> offering accepted. Special Congregational Meeting after Service to discuss and vote on the Goal Budget. CROP Hunger Walk in Shelburne beginning at 2:00pm.
Tue. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the Association clergy lunch in Hadley at noon. Online Bible study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Wed. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend a Northwest Region COM meeting at 10:00am.
Sat. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Church Tag Sale 8:00am – 1:00pm.
TBA	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Mon. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Online Bible study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Sun. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will be away on vacation. Guest Minister will be Rev. Bill Ault.
Wed. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the Conference’s Racial Justice Training from 9:00am – 4:00pm.

**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 parlor at 7:00pm, except July and August.

**WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY**

World Communion Sunday offers congregations a distinctive opportunity to experience Holy Communion in the context of the global community of faith. The first Sunday of October is when Christians in every culture break bread and pour the cup to remember and affirm Christ as the Head of the Church. On that day, we recognize that we are part of the whole body of believers. Whether shared in a grand cathedral, a mud hut, outside on a hilltop, in a meetinghouse, or a storefront, Christians celebrate the communion liturgy in as many ways as there are congregations.



**ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP DRIVE**

The annual Stewardship Drive begins on Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. At this time we turn to our members and friends and ask for their commitment of financial support for the upcoming year of 2025. Each church committee was asked to submit a goal budget to the Board of Trustees, who then passed along their proposal to the Church Council. That goal budget now comes before the entire congregation for a vote on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup> following our worship Service. It outlines the financial support we need as this church for the upcoming year. We are, however, projecting a deficit. Your generosity is appreciated and also 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 *Imagine Together* the impact our church can have in our lives and in our local communities. Please keep this in mind as you consider your financial support of our church.



support for the upcoming year of 2025. Each church committee was asked to submit a goal budget to the Board of Trustees, who then passed along their proposal to the Church Council. That goal budget now comes before the entire congregation for a vote on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup> following our worship Service. It outlines the financial support we need as this church for the upcoming year. We are, however, projecting a deficit. Your generosity is appreciated and also 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 *Imagine Together* the impact our church can have in our lives and in our local communities. Please keep this in mind as you consider your financial support of our church.

**CROP HUNGER WALK**

The annual Walk will be hosted by the Shelburne Congregational Church on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm.

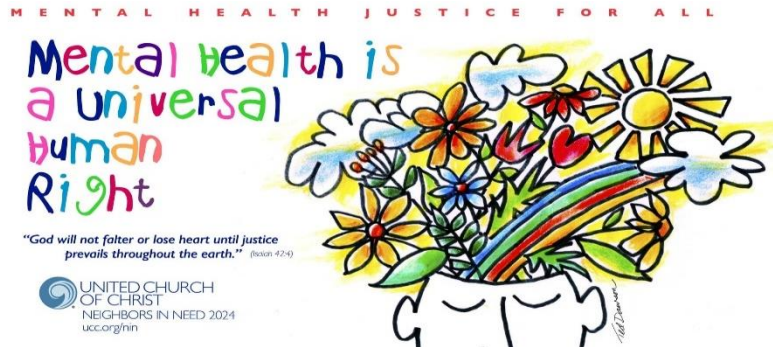


This is a fundraiser for Church World Services and the good work they do around the globe and in our neighbourhoods. Their efforts concentrate on sustainable endeavours that help people in need to raise themselves up. If you would like to be a part of our team, please make sure to ask for a fundraising envelope. If you would like to join our team or make an online donation, please click on this link: <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/cropwalks/team/hatfield->

[congregational-church-united-church-of-christ](http://congregational-church-united-church-of-christ) I hope you will think about walking with us and people from throughout the area as we bring attention to the Christian obligation to love and care for one another.

### **NEIGHBOURS IN NEED OFFERING**

In 2024, the *Neighbours in Need* theme is “Mental Health Justice for All!” This year’s focus is on Mental Health Justice. In 2015, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ passed a resolution to become WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) for mental health.



A just world for all is a world where the human rights and well-being of people with mental health challenges are respected, no matter who you are or where you are in life’s mental health journey.

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.

Donation envelopes are available at the church. If offering by check, please make it payable to the church with NIN on the memo line. This offering will be accepted on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GROUP**

Growing deeper into the faith does not end with Sunday School. As with so many of life’s worthwhile endeavours, we strive to learn more and appreciate better the gift that is our faith. journey to understanding God and our relationship with God more clearly. As change, as we change, our faith changes. It is a living relationship. The Bible foundation upon which we build faith. It is a collection of inspired writings millennia. Inspired means that God is speaking to us through the words of the those words are not locked into their original time or situation. They are the vehicle for the still-speaking Word of God. This is why we read and study the Bible together in our Bible Study Group.



Faith is the our lives is the that cover Bible, but

The group meets on alternate weeks for one hour, and meets online. 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](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com) for the Zoom login.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

A **tag sale** will take place at the church on Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 8:00am – 1:00pm. If you have items to donate to the tag sale, please price them at home. If you are not sure about setting the price, Linda says, “Just wing it.” We could also use volunteers to help with set-up and break-down of tables. Donations may be dropped-off in the pie room of the church back porch of the church during thank you!



on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup> or on the the week of October 6<sup>th</sup>. And

We have been invited back to **Bake Sale**. This will be a large bake the more we can sell. Whatever you can donate is very much appreciated. Please wrap your items in clear plastic wrap, and mark and price them clearly. Reach out to Sharon Bannister if you have any questions. We are planning to run the Bake Sale from 8:30 – 1:00pm or earlier if we sell out. We are looking for volunteers to work two-hour shifts. If you can help, please talk to Amy or Linda of Real Folks.

Town Hall for an **Election Day** turnout election so the more we

We know it is still a couple of months 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 make crafts, please set aside time now so that you can share your talents with us at the Christmas Craft Fair on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

**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](http://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](http://www.hatfieldchurch.org) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC](http://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, Amy N.</i>
<i>Church Moderator, Jonathan B.</i>	<i>Trustees, Ed M.</i>
<i>Deacons, Jeff F.</i>	

