

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2020

September

No. 9

## This Strange September

What a strange September this is. This is usually the start of my favourite time of the year. I love autumn. Summer's heat and humidity are exhausting. I can handle June. I can survive July. But by August, I'm begging for September's promise of Fall.

Also, September is when church-life revs-up again. That's a shot of adrenalin for me. Most Septembers we would be getting ready for *Home Coming Sunday* and the return to more formal Sunday School classes. This is when our Youth Group would reconvene in person and we would start traveling to local congregations for our monthly gatherings.

September is when in normal times the choir would return in full-force to add the beauty of their voices to our worship Services. This is when I would return to my Clergy Community of Practice gatherings to meet with our ministers in the area. We even had Sen. Jo Comerford coming to talk with us **IF** this were a normal September.

I also get the impression that you may not judge Conference Annual Meetings as favorably as I, but their worship and sermons are truly uplifting, and I also count their actual church democracy as an authentic blessing. And being together in person with other enthusiastic church people, fortifies the spirit.

But this is a strange September. This is a September still buffeted by the pandemic. One of the greatest joys of church is community. Church actually means assembly, the people called out by Christ to be the new People of God.

I enjoy hearing the enthusiastic greetings shared as we get ready to begin our live-streamed Sunday Service; and I look forward to that time when not only will we return to the church building, but we will not be hesitant to greet one another, share the gift of peace and laugh at Chat and Coffee.

But this is a strange September. We can hope for better months to come, but this different September is our current reality. There are actually valid fears that the pandemic may grow worse in the Fall as college students reconvene and cooler weather pushes people indoors. The Director of the Centers for Disease Control, Robert Redfield, has warned that if Americans don't follow public health guidance, the country could be facing "the worst fall,

from a public health perspective, we've ever had." So for as much as we may need the adrenaline of a normal September, we have to make the best of the strange September that is at our doorstep.

With this said, our live-streamed worship Services are not the traditional church we have long experienced and which, I hope now that we have been deprived of its blessing, we appreciate even more. However, it remains church. It remains our most effective and safest way to gather as Christ's called community.

At our August Church Council meeting we voted to move forward with plans to return to the church building. This may mean only broadcasting the Zoom Service from the church building at first, but it is a first step. The second step is to invite those who are comfortable back into the building while we still live-stream the Service for others. We would love to have you be a participant in our worship whether that be in person or live-streamed because either way we are the church community.

In a normal September, we would welcome people back after summer and even encourage you to invite new people to church on *Home Coming Sunday*. We can do the same in this strange September. As such, we invite all of our congregants, especially those whom we have not seen for a while, to return to worship and also to share the blessings of the gathered church community with others.

The church is the assembly of Christ's called people, and the church is also the Body of Christ still active in the world. Even more than during a normal September, the church's mission among our local community and worldwide has increased in importance during this strange September. Accordingly, during this month we will begin to draw attention to the annual collection for *Neighbours in Need*, which is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

The church has had to transition to new forms of worship and mission, but throughout it has remained church in its worship and mission. We welcome you back and we encourage you to share an invitation with others to join us as church.

## SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Wed. 9 <sup>th</sup>	On-line monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm. Budget proposals for 2021 received from chairs of committees.
Sun. 13 <sup>th</sup>	Home Coming Sunday. On-line Service begins at 10:00am. On-line Association Youth Group gathering at 5:30pm.
Mon. 14 <sup>th</sup>	On-line Exploring the Bible study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 16 <sup>th</sup>	On-line Church Council meeting at 7:00pm. Discussion of church 2021 budget.
Sat. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Hatfield 350 <sup>th</sup> Walking Tour from 12 – 2:30pm, including our church building.
Sun. 20 <sup>th</sup>	On-line congregational meeting on goal church budget at 11:20am.
Tue. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	On-line Board of Deacons meeting at 6:00pm.
Sat. 26 <sup>th</sup>	On-line Southern New England Conference Annual Meeting 8:30am – 12:30pm.
Mon. 28 <sup>th</sup>	On-line Exploring the Bible study group from 7-8:00pm.

## REGULAR GATHERINGS (All in-person church gatherings are on hold until further notice.)

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.

## ON-LINE PRESENCE AND PLANS

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 for the future.

So as to stay connected with people who may not feel comfortable enough and safe enough to gather in the church building, with those who are at a distance, and even with our wonderful friends in local congregations, the Board of Trustees has signed with Comcast to get an internet connection in the church building that will allow us to continue to live-stream our worship Services. We are hoping to have this installed by early October.

As decisions are made, they will be emailed and posted so make sure and to check your emails and our website. In the meanwhile, we will continue worshiping and meeting on-line. We live-stream our Services, meetings, Bible study, Sunday School, and Youth Group. Log-in information is sent to everyone on our church's email mailing list. If you would like to be added to that list, please drop me an email at [randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com).

We are posting the recordings of our worship Service on our website, but we hope you will join us live so that we may all gather just like on a regular Sunday, but in accordance with the constraints of these irregular times.

## BUDGET PROCESS CONTINUES

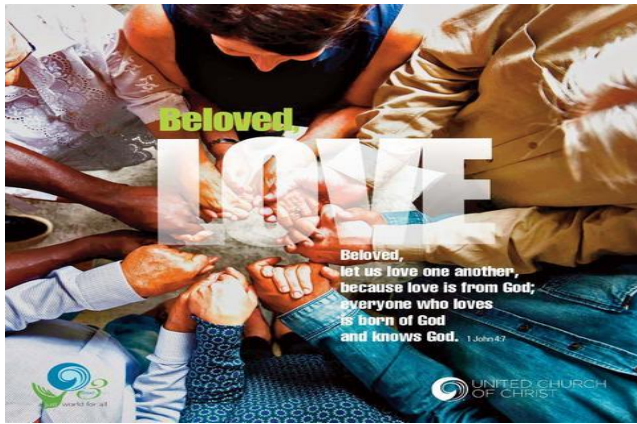
As uncertainty continues due to the pandemic, the congregation's task of creating a financial budget for 2021 becomes more complicated. It does not, however, disappear. Rather, it becomes even more crucial. Our fiscal responsibility takes on increased importance during these uncertain times. It is our hope that we will emerge from the pandemic's social distancing at some point in 2021. How and when that will manifest itself, we do not know. Much of next year could be as normal as 2019 or as extraordinary as 2020. Without being able to tell the future, we have to plan as best we can.

The process begins with committee chairs submitting their budget proposals to the Board of Trustees. The Trustees will receive these proposals at their September meeting and will then form a proposed budget for 2021 based on projected income and expenses, and, lest we forget, our mission as a church.

From the Trustees, the proposed budget then moves along to the Church Council where the representatives of all church organizations share their voice and vote. This goal budget is then submitted to the entire congregation for consideration at a congregational meeting where it will hopefully be ratified.

The Stewardship Committee then takes over and asks our members and supporters to pledge their financial support to the congregation for 2021. In these strange and uncertain times, we will not be able to plan definitively for church fundraisers. They may happen or be postponed or even cancelled due to the pandemic. What is certain is that the financial support, the stewardship of the church by its members, is essential. Your pledged contributions are the basic financial resource of our congregation. Please be as generous as you are able during these times of uncertainty and limitations.

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 may be wherever they may be and wherever they may be. We are not stand-alone Christians. We are God's people. God has made a covenant commitment with us as the People of God and we in turn with God. This covenant is both spiritual and practical, and inseparable. They support each other. Our Christ-made mission is given and Spirit-empowered mission is possible through our efforts and also our financial worship. Stewardship is in truth a form of As such, we ask you to prayerfully consider



your pledged amount in this unique time of pandemic.

### **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. This book that everyone talks about but few read has been informing and transforming lives for thousands of years. It continues to do so today if we give it the chance, and these stay-at-home days are the perfect chance. If you would like to join us, please send me an email ([randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com)) and I will send you the log-in information.



### **CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING**

The Southern New England Conference will hold the Conference Annual Meeting online on Saturday, Sept. 26. Clergy, delegates, and all those interested are asked to save 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM on that date. Conference leaders postponed the planned June Annual Meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, meeting planners see it as unlikely to be safe – or even allowable - to hold a large gathering in the fall, so the Board of Directors has agreed that the September meeting should be held online.

The Conference will act on the Nomination of Directors and Officers, the Nomination of the Executive Conference Minister, and will release the recommendation of the Executive Conference Minister Search Committee. The worship theme will be based on Jeremiah 31:31-34, "The Days are Surely Coming..."

The theme invites us to focus on facing our past with honesty as we center in our present with heart and move into our future with hope. In this year that commemorates 400 years of slavery and colonization, as well as the impact of congregationalism in shaping culture, we have a powerful moment....and a crucial moment for our new Conference as it moves into its vision, identity and purpose.

Registration for the Annual Meeting is available on line: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/14027304/item/14028290> The deadline for those who wish to participate in the Networking Breakout Groups is September 18th. If you would like to attend and represent our congregation, please let us know. Rev. Randy will be attending.

### **VISITATIONS**

The Deacons have been making periodic calls to all of our members to stay in touch during this time of extended separation. Also, I have been staying in regular contact with members who are homebound or who have difficulty in leaving their homes. Since we have not had the opportunity to see each other in person since mid-March, if anyone would like to speak with me, please feel free to give a call or drop an email. If we can practice social distancing, maybe we could meet outside of your homes with masks on. And hopefully, sooner rather than later, we will be able to gather in person again. In the meanwhile, let's keep being smart about our interactions and let's keep praying for the people working on a vaccine.

### **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."

### **HISTORIC HOMES OF HATFIELD WALKING TOUR**

This September 19<sup>th</sup> event sponsored by Hatfield's 350<sup>th</sup> Committee will include a tour of our church building. Rev. Randy has been asked to talk about our congregation's history, pointing out the significance of the three windows dedicated to past long-serving pastors. There are only a limited number of openings for this tour. If you may be interested, please reach out to Cher Nicholas at [CherNicholas@comcast.net](mailto:CherNicholas@comcast.net).

### **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](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, Amy N.*

*Deacons, Jeff F.*

*Music Minister, Anthony T.*

*Real Folks Society, Martha Z.*

*Trustees, Jonathan B.*

### **HATFIELD'S 350<sup>TH</sup> General Community Events**

Rescheduled to **September 19<sup>th</sup>**, 12- 2:30pm – Historic Homes of Hatfield Walking Tour. This event is limited to 30 people. To register please email Cher Nicholas at [CherNicholas@comcast.net](mailto:CherNicholas@comcast.net).

**October 10<sup>th</sup>** – Annual Bonfire (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)

**December 19<sup>th</sup>** – Luminarium/Fireworks (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)

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

### **Historical Events & Tours**

**Rescheduled to September 19<sup>th</sup>** – Historic Homes of Hatfield Walking Tour

**October 10<sup>th</sup>** – 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**

**September 12<sup>th</sup>** – Barn Mural Wagon Tour

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

For the latest information, visit [www.hatfield350.com](http://www.hatfield350.com) or follow us on Facebook @Hatfield350th.

