

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield

2018

October

No. 9

What Makes Our Christian Stewardship Worth It?

October is the month of our Christian Stewardship Campaign. In advance, the various organizations and boards of our church have submitted their budgets to the Trustees. The Trustees' Board then set a goal budget. This budget proposal was discussed at the Church Council meeting on September 16th and a goal budget of \$89,874 was accepted at an all church meeting on September 30th.

On Sunday, October 7th, the Stewardship Committee will address the gathered congregation asking for your financial support, which is obviously the key ingredient to this whole process. The church appreciates all of the donations of time and talent that people give so generously, but we must ask for your financial stewardship of the church as well.

Your stewardship pledges for 2019 are freewill donations. There is no financial requirement to be met to be a member of Hatfield Congregational Church. Membership is a spiritual covenant, but one manifestation of our spiritual covenant is our financial commitment to the church. We ask and we trust in your judgment of what you are able to pledge so that the church may continue to worship and serve.

As we read in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's Epistles, this apostle of the earliest church traveled far and wide throughout the Roman Empire planting the seeds of churches. Everywhere he established a church community he asked them to make a donation to help support the church in Jerusalem whose members were impoverished. A sign of their spiritual commitment was their financial commitment.

In the materials you will be receiving from the Stewardship Committee, there are suggested amounts for your pledges based on your income levels. We do not expect a person only receiving Social Security payments to pledge the same amount as a family who may be quite gainfully employed. Again, this is where we trust your Christian commitment.

The theme of this year's drive is:



The church brings much to us and during our Christian Stewardship Campaign we ask, "What shall we bring?" so that these blessings may continue.

Maybe this is the time when I could ask you to pause and ask just what is it that church brings to you that is worth investing in. Each of us will focus on something distinct. Let me share what is an especially important gift for me.

I am thoroughly Christian. The Incarnation may be the most important religious theme in my spiritual life. In Jesus of Nazareth, God has shared our humanity. God is not so transcendent and unchanging that creation is only to be watched from an antiseptic distance.

In Jesus, God has become one of us, even in the messy and sometimes mean circumstances of life; Jesus is one of us. This is bedrock for my faith.

Jesus' authentic human nature does not demean God; it sanctifies us. Jesus reveals perfectly the nature of God and inspires and empowers us to be ever more God-like. Jesus' Incarnation entrusts us with some of the responsibility of building a better world with Him, through Him and in Him because we are like Him. I appreciate this confidence in our religious maturity.

Because I am thoroughly Christian, I accept Jesus' broad embrace, even of those who are not thoroughly Christian. Some churches define the holy by only what is within the circle of its jurisdiction. Then, in the name of Jesus, they consider the possibility that all others must face an uncertain eternity or even one filled with unending torment. It has been said that in the name of Jesus' perfect love Christians have consigned more people to hell than any other religion. This is a wearisome burden.

Jesus, I would argue, veers in another direction, a direction embraced by the UCC:

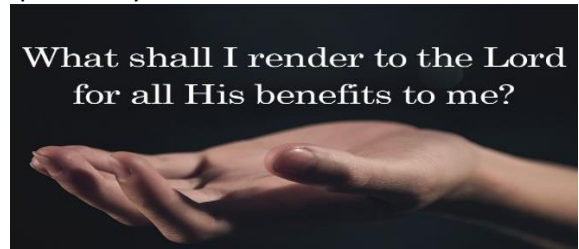
We are a people of
EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME

Even though Jonathan Edwards is famous in our story, and "sinners in the hands of an angry God" is famous in his story, because "God is still speaking" we have moved forward as a church that teaches, preaches and trusts in extravagant welcome.

This isn't pop culture theology. This is early Christian proclamation. If you would, grab your Bible. See if there is a footnote next to Luke 23:34. In my NRSV Bible, it informs me that this passage is lacking in other ancient authorities. It's quite possible that some early Christian scribes were so offended by this example of excessive forgiveness that they excised it from the text. This averseness speaks to me of the radical nature of Jesus and His gospel.

This scandalous forgiveness was hard for some to accept even as the Bible was being formed, but it's still Jesus. And this is the Jesus the UCC acknowledges as the sole head of the church.

When I consider my stewardship pledge as "What shall we bring," it is a reflection of my respect for what this church offers to me when it shares an extravagantly compassionate Christ. Likewise, I ask you to give in accordance with what you receive in a special way from Christ and His church.



OCTOBER EVENTS

- Tue. 2nd Rev. Calvo attending Heads Up meeting at 6:00pm.
- Sun. 7th Neighbors in Need Special Collection accepted.
Stewardship Campaign begins.
Jazz Bones Concert at 3:00pm.
- Tue. 9th Bible study in the church parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.
- Wed. 10th Town of Hatfield 350th Committee meeting at 6:00pm.
Trustees' meeting at 7:00pm.
- Thur. 11th Hampshire Association Clergy Committee of Practice meeting in Hadley at 12:00pm.
- Sat. 13th Rev. Cory Sanderson on Mission and Outreach from 10am – 12pm.
- Sun. 14th Benevolence Committee meets after worship.
- Mon. 15th Volunteer opportunity to help at the Food Bank from 1 – 4:00pm. (Please note special week.)
- Sun. 21st Guest minister invited for today's Service.
- Mon. 22nd Deacons' meeting at 5:00pm.
- Tue. 23rd Bible study in the church parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.

REGULAR GATHERINGS

- Sundays: Worship Service begins at 10:00am. Sunday School at 10:15 am. Chat and Coffee at 11:00am.
- 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 rehearsal every Thursday at 6:30pm.
- Saturdays: AA meets at the church every Saturday at noon.

NEIGHBORS IN NEED SPECIAL COLLECTION



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. Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. NIN 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. This collection will be accepted on Sunday, October 7th. Thank you.

JAZZ BONES IN CONCERT

On Sunday the 7th from 3 – 4:30pm our church will host a concert performance of “The Jazz Bones.” It is free and open to the public so invite any and all. This program is supported in part by the Hatfield Cultural Council,, which in turn is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP – October’s Theme → “By what authority?”

As our Bible study group continues reading, Jesus continues His fateful journey to Jerusalem. In remarkable symbolism, Mark conveys the reversal of expectations that are at the heart of understanding the “kingdom of God.” An expected disciple walks away, while an unexpected disciple follows Jesus joyfully. Expect surprises. Jesus is not shy about His presence in Jerusalem. The long-anticipated confrontation is about to reach its climax. Jesus is going to challenge the status quo and not quietly. Sometimes it is necessary to be deliberate and directly confront that which is wrong. Choices have to be made, and they don’t have to be easy ones. We need to choose whose “authority” we will follow. We need to be prepared for push-back. Institution does not necessarily guarantee the work and will of God. Whose authority will we accept and how do we choose?

I invite you to come and join us as we read these powerful chapters of Jesus’ uncompromising commitment to His revelation of the kingdom of God.

MISSION & OUTREACH PRESENTATION

On Saturday, October 13th, from 10AM until Noon, Rev. Corey Sanderson, the pastor of the Second Congregational Church of Greenfield and the United Church of Christ's Board of about mission and outreach. Corey mature spirituality, is passionate believes the church should be a place and then seek justice out in the world. Interfaith Council of Franklin County, Project, and as a member of The Communities that Care Coalition’s coordinating council.



Chair of the Massachusetts Conference of the Directors, will come to our church to speak is committed to helping people develop a about building and fostering community, and where people learn to practice compassion Corey has served as the president of The on the Board of Directors for The Literacy

Mark Gelotte and Rev. Randy attended his session at the Spring Super Saturday gathering. Rev. Corey shared his experience of planting a brand-new church in the Mid-West. He spoke to us about looking at church from a visitor's perspective, from a person who knows nothing or little about church in general and about our congregation in particular.

I have been in the situation of entering a house of worship and not knowing what to do and not to do. It is intimidating and can be off-putting. Rev. Corey is going to help us offer the blessings of Hatfield Congregational to people who may find themselves in a similar situation. This presentation is open to everyone at the church. We hope you will carve out a couple of hours on this particular Saturday morning to listen and learn about how we can help grow the church. Cider, doughnuts, coffee and tea will be served.

RE-DESIGNED WEBSITE IS UP AND RUNNING

Our website has been redesigned to be more user-friendly. It also allows the church to update the information and presentation as needed. You can check in a few times a week and there will be new content. The church has chosen to invest in this platform for the benefit of our members and for those who are interested in Hatfield Congregational Church. Please share the site with others: www.hatfieldchurch.org. Our thanks to Rocket Strategies and to Mark Gelotte, Anita Wilson and Rev. Randy for all of their work.

CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP AT HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL

If you may like to be a formal member of this church, it begins with a group meeting with Rev. Calvo and members of the Board of Deacons. We talk about the church, its organization, how things work, and our core

values and covenants. Talk with Reverend Calvo or Amy Novak, HeadDeacon, if you are interested. If you have questions before getting to this stage, please do not hesitate to contact Rev. Calvo.

CONFIRMATION CLASS

Our Confirmation class has started. We are using *My Confirmation* by Rev. Thomas Dipko as our text and as the outline for our class. We are meeting at the church on Saturday mornings and we will be choosing from three different weekend Confirmation retreats to attend in March, 2019. If you have any questions about Confirmation, please contact Rev. Randy at randyc1897@gmail.com.

SHARE AN INVITATION

If someone you know is not attending church anywhere, please share an invitation with them to come and join us at Hatfield Congregational Church because "Whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

VIEW CHURCH SERVICES ON-LINE AND ON TV

We air our Services a couple of times a month on public access television. They take place on alternate Sundays. This allows people to see what happens inside our church building and it also reaches into the homes of people who are unable to be with us in church. The recorded Services air on Hatfield Community Television on Saturdays and Sundays at 8 am and 4 pm. All of our taped Services may also be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjVqoCIEfNo&list=PL97Cp8D5oEflNg2Vj4DQk9p-ISAtaEkf>.

We could use the help of a few more volunteers to operate the camera on a rotating basis during the Services. If you could help in this way, please speak to Rev. Randy.

FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers from our church gather with Linda Milewski at the Western Mass Food Bank on the second Monday of the month to help this worthwhile organization. If you can share three hours of your time or even an hour or two, it will benefit those of our neighbours who do not have the ability to put enough food on their tables. Please speak with Linda if you can help.

UPCOMING EVENTS

*Pork Dinner on Saturday, November 3rd.

*Election Day food sale at Town Hall on November 6th.



We are looking for contributions for our jewelry table (lightly used, clean jewelry), our Collectibles table, and our Christmas décor table. And of course, any handcrafted items folks can make. To make our centerpieces/arrangements, we need donations of smaller vases, in Christmas colors or motif. Please see Linda Milewski 247-5604 or Marcia Sheehan 247-9285 with questions or how to contribute.

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:

*Christian Education, Anita Wilson 413 247-5229
Music, Anthony Tracia 781 738-6284
Real Folks Society, Martha Zigmont 413 247-5453
Benevolence, Carolyn Forsyth*

*Deacons, Amy Novak 413 210-3965
Trustees, Jonathan Bardwell 413-530-6262
Church Moderator, Glenda Flynn 413 247-5891*

