

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2019

December

No. 12

Virgil vs. Luke

“In the same breath, blazing with wrath [Aeneas] plants his iron sword hilt-deep in his enemy’s heart. Turnus’ limbs went limp in the chill of death. His life breath fled with a groan of outrage down to the shades below.”

These are the final lines of Virgil’s epic poem *The Aeneid*, the legend of the founding of Rome. Turnus is the leader of the Latin army and Aeneas of the Trojan. They are bitter, but honourable, opponents.

In their decisive battle, Aeneas fells his enemy. Standing over him, Turnus asks for mercy. Aeneas has won everything and Turnus pleads, “Go no further down the road of hatred.” Aeneas is moved with compassion, but then he sees that Turnus wears as a battle trophy the sword-belt of Pallas, a beloved friend of Aeneas. This incites Aeneas to rage and in the name of his slain friend he murders Turnus and abruptly the poem ends.

Virgil wrote this only about 20 years before Jesus was born. It came to define the founding myth of the city of Rome and the eventual empire of Rome. *The Aeneid* glorified traditional Roman virtues. Virtues such as the honour found in revenge, a “blazing with wrath”-revenge that overcame the temptation of compassion.

This was the world into which Jesus was born as God’s living contradiction. The comparison is made explicit by Luke who struggles with historical accuracy, but connects Jesus’ birth nonetheless with Caesar Augustus and Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria. (Luke 2:1-2)

Jesus is revealed by heavenly messenger to be the long-awaited Messiah who will assume “the throne of his ancestor David ... and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32, 33) The two kingdoms are interlocked by the Evangelist.

Augustus claimed the titles of “saviour” and “son of god” because he had brought peace to world through the Roman legions, and he was the putative off-goddess Venus. The 1st century CE statue called *Prima Porta Augustus* of depicts the eternally vibrant and victorious



Augustus with the child god Cupid, another son of Venus, at his leg.

Jesus’ birth is foretold by the angel Gabriel who reveals to Mary that her child “will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High.” (Luke 1:32) A heavenly chorus sings to the shepherds, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace ...” (Luke 2:14) The Christ Child usurps the honours of Caesar Augustus.

All of this is not to establish bragging rights; it is to establish contradiction. The Roman virtue of a “blazing with wrath”-revenge is contrasted with the compassion of a helpless child born homeless and nationless.

A Roman saviour brings *Pax Romana*, a Roman peace, by war and brutality. This is contrasted with the peace born with a child who despises all violence and hatred.

This is why I hate the fact that Christmas has been stripped of its profound contrast. It has become commercialized and sanitized. It is used to sell stuff in the name of God’s Son who was born in poverty. It is used to make us feel good with images of peace and community and all the while we give so much of our resources to war and separation. Luke’s intentional contrast has been made easy.

As the church prepares for Christmas during the Season of Advent, we need to re-emphasize its contradiction. We can’t allow ourselves to let God’s personal entry into the world be conveyed only by *Jingle Bells* and *The Night Before Christmas*. Advent is a sacred opportunity of joyous anticipation. The Christmas contradiction is filled with hope. How many failed warriors and warrior nations will define history before we realize the more compelling alternative that lies in the baby born in a Bethlehem manger?

I share with you this website: www.playingforchange.com. It revels in compassion and community. If we can feel its joy and potential, then we can appreciate the Christmas contradiction. This is a blessed time of the year, a time for peace, hope and charity, but it is made real when we see compassion as a virtue not a temptation.

DECEMBER EVENTS

Sun. 1 st	First Sunday of Advent Hampshire Association Youth Group meets in Hatfield from 5:30 – 7:30pm..
Mon. 2 nd	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group meets from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 3 rd	“Giving Tuesday” www.givingtuesday.org
Sat. 7 th	Holiday Craft Fair at the church from 8:30am – 2:00pm.
Sun. 8 th	Ecclesiastical Council for Gordon Pullan at North Hadley Congregational Church at 3:00pm.
Mon. 9 th	Volunteer opportunity at the Food Bank from 1 – 4:00pm.
Wed. 11 th	Board of Trustees meeting at 7:00pm.
Thur. 12 th	Rev. Randy attends Hampshire Association Clergy Committee of Practice meeting at noon at our church. Rev. Randy participates in the Hampshire Association Church and Ministry Committee meeting at 5:30pm in Easthampton.
Sun. 15 th	Old Fashioned Christmas at 11:00am.
Mon. 16 th	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Thur. 19 th	Rev. Randy attends the HEADS Up meeting at the Elementary School.
Sat. 21 st	Hatfield’s Luminarium at 6:00pm. Luminarium concert at 7:00pm.
Sun. 22 nd	Bring a Friend Sunday. Children’s Christmas Pageant during the 10AM Service.
Tue. 24 th	Christmas Eve Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at 7:00pm.
Mon. 30 th	Board of Deacons will meet at 5:00pm.
Tue. 31 st	New Year’s Eve. Have fun, but be careful out there we want to see you in 2020.

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 rehearses in the sanctuary at 6:30pm.

Saturdays: AA meets at the church every Saturday at noon.

“Live in each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth.” - Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*

SEASON OF ADVENT

Advent is the church’s season that helps us to prepare spiritually for the coming birth of Jesus on Christmas. Its four Sundays represent the putative 4,000 years that the world awaited the birth of its Saviour from the time of Adam to that of Jesus. The Advent Wreath is a part of our worship. Each Sunday we light an additional candle, symbolizing the increasing light in the world as we get ever closer to the Incarnation. This is a time of joyous anticipation. Advent helps us also to focus on the real joy of Christmas. It prevents Christmas from degenerating into a commercial frenzy. I hope you will join with the church as we prepare for the real Christmas.

ASSOCIATION YOUTH GROUP

The Hampshire Association Youth Group has grown in size. We now gather regularly with others from Hadley, South Amherst, Southamptton, Westhampton, Granby and Easthampton. We meet on the first Sunday of the month from 5:30 – 7:30pm. In December, these churches are coming to Hatfield. The group is open to Middle and High School students. We look forward to our chance of hosting.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Massachusetts Bible Society’s Executive Director Rev. Anne Robertson has authored a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. If you have ever wanted to know more about the Bible in general, this study group may be what you are looking for. Why not pop



in and see what it's about? If you like it, you can buy the books at that time or borrow the set we have in the church's library. We'd love to see you.

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

The Christmas Craft Fair will be held on Saturday, December 7th from 8:30am – 2:00pm. Please contact Maki Reopel if you can bake us something, Carol Lampron if you are gifted to make hand donate collectibles, Carolyn Forsyth to help McCarthy if you choose to put a gift basket at the church on Friday, December 6th between 2 and 6PM. Please share an invitation with your friends and neighbours to come by and join in the fun of our Christmas Craft Fair.



Benson if you have jewelry to share, June crafted items, Cynthia Pica if you could out with gift card tree, and/or Mary together. Donations may be dropped off

OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

After church on the 15th, we will enjoy a potluck meal together (please bring along something to share if you can) and then we will begin to decorate the church sanctuary for Christmas. This is a fun gathering with food, song and friends. We would love to have you come and join in the festivities of getting Jesus' house ready for the celebration of His birth.

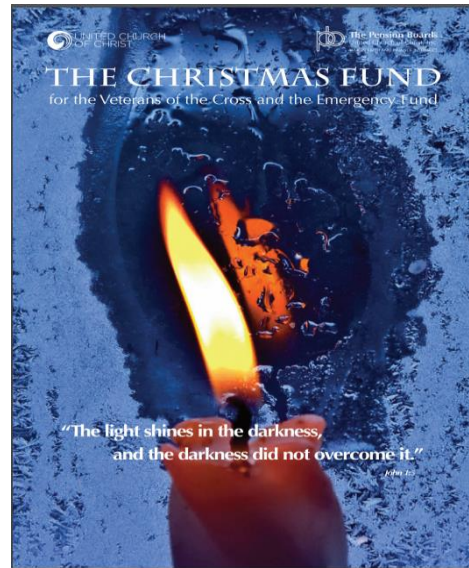
GIVING TREE & STUFF OUR STOCKINGS

The Giving Tree Collection: "For many years our generous church family has filled a 'wish list' of children through the services of the Greenfield Department of Children and Families. Our list this year has 45 gifts for 15 children. The gifts need to be returned unwrapped, gift card attached, to the church by December 8th, or to Carol or Pari by December 12th. I will deliver the gifts to the Greenfield Office on December 13th. Thank you all so very much for your warm hearts. Carol and Pari."

The Stuff Our Stockings collection will take place from December 8th through the 29th. The new men's and women's socks are then donated to the Hampshire County Interfaith Cot Shelter. The homeless are in constant need over the winter months for socks. To be outdoors in the cold and wet has to be brutal. Let's help the Cot Shelter as best we can.

CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

For over 100 years, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a way to ensure that a light of love and hope will always shine for faithful servants of our church who find themselves facing unforeseen financial need. We are grateful for the generosity of churches and individuals who contributed a total of \$2,539,471 to the 2018 Offering, enabling us to provide Pension Supplementation, Health Premium Supplementation, special grants for emergencies, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to over 1,000 individuals and families in need. We hope that the members of the UCC will be just as generous this year. Checks may be made out to our congregation and will then be forwarded to the national office. And thank you.



CHRISTMAS FLOWER DONATIONS

If you would like to donate a poinsettia to help please see June Lampron at church or reach out to our church as beautiful as possible for the joyous



adorn our church sanctuary for Christmas, her at home. Your donations help us to make celebration of Jesus' birth.

LUMINARIUM

The 39th annual Luminarium will take place on SATURDAY (Please note the change of days), December 21st. Town residents will light their luminaria at dusk. A program will take place in front of Town Hall beginning at 6PM, and will conclude with a visit by St. Nick.

At 7PM the Luminarium Concert will take place at our church. This is a wonderful Christmas gift to our community. Come and celebrate with your neighbours as we get more and more into the Christmas spirit.

BRING A FRIEND SUNDAY / CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The Board of Deacons invites all of our members to "Bring a Friend" to church on Sunday, December 22nd. The Christmas season is an amazing opportunity to share the Good News. People are talking about Christmas, celebrating it, and even singing songs about it – and that's outside of the church. With all of this happening, we have the perfect opportunity to interject an invitation, such as, "How would you like to come with me to church on Sunday morning to see how we're getting ready for Christmas?" Or anything else far more ingenious than this. A printed invitation card will be available, as well, to share with those you would like to invite. Chat & Coffee will be sponsored by the Board of Deacons and we will be serving hot and cold cider and doughnuts.

On this day, our young people will give their Christmas gift to the congregation in the form of their annual Christmas Pageant. It's a joy to watch and it's a chance to encourage these young people in all that they do for their church.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

On Christmas Eve at 7PM we will gather in our beautifully decorated church to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. This year we will conduct *A Service of Nine Lessons and Carols*. The Lessons are biblical readings that take us from the prophetic anticipations of the coming Messiah to the glorious accounts of Jesus' birth. This is an inspiring Service of Word, music, community and candlelight. We look forward to sharing a bit of Christmas Eve together.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee has begun its work of weeding through all of the enthusiastic volunteers who want to serve our congregation in various ways through our various committees. The Annual Meeting will take place on January 19th. If you would like to become more active in our church, please reach out to those on Nominating and if you are approached about serving take it as a compliment that we see great potential in you.

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. However, that day is a holiday in November so we will gather one day later on Tuesday. If you can share three hours of your time or even an hour or two, it will help our neighbours who struggle to feed their families. Please speak with Linda about this.

BULLETIN COVERS

A sign-up sheet is available in church. Special bulletin covers are used several times a year. If you would like to donate a set for any given occasion, it will be acknowledged in church. The cost is \$10.

SANCTUARY CLOCK

In the 1860's, the Real Folks group donated an E. Howard Gallery Clock to the church. It is currently in the queue at *The British Clock Maker* in Newfane, Vermont waiting to be repaired and refurbished. Ray and Richard Bates are a father and son team who have been in the high-end clock repair business for over half a century. We are expecting our clock to be returned in January. This clock is an heirloom that the congregation should be proud of. Accordingly, we are budgeting the funds to restore this clock to its original condition as part of our congregation's 350th anniversary. The estimated cost is \$2,500 - \$2,800. Real Folks has made a generous pledge toward this cost. We are also asking our members to consider a donation. If you would like to help in this way, your generosity will be much appreciated.

REQUESTS

- Some of our members have breathing problems that are aggravated by perfumes and other scents. Please keep this in mind when getting ready for church. We appreciate your attentiveness to the needs of others.

VIEW CHURCH SERVICES ON-LINE AND ON TV

We air our Services twice 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/user/FCATMedia/videos> or at <https://www.youtube.com/user/HatfieldCommunityTV>. 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, please speak to Rev. Randy.

HATFIELD'S 350TH

The town's 350th Committee is looking for farms, even dogs and horses. They will be. The Committee is hoping to print an anniversary book. Please contact Cher Nicholas at CherNicholas@comcast.net.



old photos of town buildings, people, copied and returned to you. The book. Please contact Cher Nicholas at CherNicholas@comcast.net.

The Committee is taking reservations for a walking tour of historic homes of Hatfield. It will take place on April 25, 2020 and is limited to 35 participants. They are sure this will be filled. I've already signed-up. If you would like to participate, please contact Cher Nicholas at the email above.

Full Event Schedule	
✓	December 31, 2019 - <i>New Year's Eve Gala</i>
✓	April 25, 2020 - <i>Historic Homes Tour</i>
✓	May 16, 2020 - <i>Farm 5K Run/Walk</i>
✓	May 21, 2020 - <i>HHS Annual Meeting and presentation, "A History of the Connecticut River"</i>
✓	May 31, 2020 - <i>Incorporation Day</i>
✓	June 13, 2020 - <i>350th Parade</i>
✓	June 20, 2020 - <i>Strawberry Festival (partnership w/ Hatfield PTA)</i>
✓	August 22, 2020 - <i>Summer Celebration</i>
✓	September 12, 2020 - <i>Barn Mural Wagon Tour</i>
✓	October 3, 2020 - <i>Tractor Parade</i>
✓	October 10, 2020 - <i>Bonfire (partnership with Hatfield Firefighters Association)</i>
✓	October 11, 2020 - <i>Wagon Ride Historical Tours</i>
✓	October 17, 2020 - <i>Hatfield Cemetery Tours</i>
✓	November 19, 2020 - <i>350 Years of History Presentation</i>
✓	December 19, 2020 - <i>Luminarium/Fireworks</i>

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 Minister, Anthony Tracia 781 738-6284

Real Folks Society, Martha Zigmont 413 247-5453

Benevolence, Amy Novak 413 210-3965

Deacons, Mark Gelotte 413-247-9624

Trustees, Jonathan Bardwell 413-530-6262

Church Moderator, Glenda Flynn 413 247-5891

May our season of Advent-hope lead us all to a deeper joy this Christmas as we celebrate the birth of the Child Saviour.

