

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2019

November

No. 11

Judgment again? Not really

The church's liturgical year is coming to end quickly. Its last day is actually the last day of this month. The next day, December 1st, is the start of the Advent Season. As we begin to prepare for Jesus' birth, the cycle of our worship calendar begins all over again.

I prefer not to think of this cycle as repetitive, but as revolutionary. I enjoy words. The word *revolutionary* is derived from two Latin words. The base word is *volvere*, which means to roll. *Re*, however, can have two rather different meanings. One is *back* and the other is *again*.

To "roll back," to be repetitive, does not fit the expectations we associate with *revolutionary*, but to "roll again" sure does. I've been bugging some friends to go bowling with me. The bowling ball rolls again and again as it moves forward down the alley. Its revolution, its cycle, is progressive. It carries the ball forward toward its destination.

The liturgical cycle does not repetitively spin in place. It is revolutionary. It carries us forward to where God intends. It's about discovery and even invention. And as the liturgical cycle wends its way forward and takes us to the end of another year, we again encounter the closing theme of judgment.

Just as *revolutionary* conjures up images in our minds so does the word *judgment*. Its connotations are negative. God's judgment can be fearsome to the point of being grotesque. But should it?

Hans Kung is a world-famous theologian. He treats the imagery of the end-time judgment the same way as he treats the creation myths in Genesis. They are not historical descriptions. They are moral plays set on the grandest stage for each successive generation. He argues this point based on the gospel. There is a fundamental incongruity between the lived proclamation of Jesus and the ugliness of judgment if the descriptions are read as factual. Therefore, Kung doesn't read them as such.

Hermeneutics is the fancy name for the study of biblical interpretation. It's meant to discover the divine truths that lie behind the writer's imagery.

For example, in our *Exploring the Bible* study group, we are asked to compare 1 Samuel 17, 2 Samuel 21:19 and 1 Chronicles 20:5. What we find

there are separate and different accounts of God's warrior slaying a formidable opponent. Since the three different accounts can't all be historically accurate, we are asked to consider the meaning of *truth*. Are the particular names and details as crucial as the enduring truth that with God on our side anything is possible? This biblical interpretation, or hermeneutics, searches for these lasting meanings.

In our church denomination, we interpret the graphic stories of judgment in a radically different manner than do fire and brimstone churches. Here's another fancy word to throw around at cocktail parties, we speak of *Postmillennialism*, which is the polar opposite of a scary judgment. It posits that we have the moral capacity to create a thousand-year reign of peace and prosperity on earth.

This need not be an historical prediction. Nonetheless, it revels in the divine trust that humanity will improve. Our destiny is not complete failure. This judgment message of hope melds with Jesus' lived and preached gospel, which, in turn, gives it authenticity. This is seen, for example, in Jesus' judgment message in Matthew 25. He links judgment with how we treat each other right now.

The Greek word used in this passage for *punishment* (κολασις) is used only one other time in the New Testament. The literal translation of that passage is "fear contains *punishment* in itself." (1 John 4:18). The person who lives in fear of God is already punished by this fear. Instead, "perfect love cast out fear." (1 John 4:18) Punishment, therefore, is what we pile on ourselves. Christian love is the way to dig out, and Matthew 25 equates this with how we treat each other, and this plants the seeds for our Postmillennialism hope.

The end of our liturgical year does repeat the judgment theme, but a judgment that reminds us we have the potential as God's People to build a better world. This is revolutionary because obviously there is much that needs to be done. It is liberating, however, to see ourselves as Christ sees us, as our better selves. Judgment too frequently hangs on the notion that humans are by nature and will unredeemable. This is horribly debilitating and contrary to Jesus' gospel. We are better than we tend to imagine.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

- Fri. 1st Rev. Randy will attend the Southern New England Conference, UCC, Annual Meeting at the DCU Center in Worcester, through Saturday.
- Sat. 2nd Roast Pork Supper from 5 – 7:00pm.
7:30pm Concert in the sanctuary.
Daylight Savings Time ends, turn your clocks BACK one hour before retiring for the night.
- Sun. 3rd Hampshire Association Youth Group meets in Hadley from 5:30 – 7:30pm.
- Mon. 4th *Exploring the Bible* study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
- Mon. 11th Veteran’s Day. Remember those who have served.
- Tue. 12th Volunteer opportunity at the Western Mass Food Bank from 1 – 4:00pm. (Please note special day due to the holiday.)
- Wed. 13th Board of Trustees meeting at 7:00pm.
- Thur. 14th Rev. Randy attends Hampshire Association Clergy Committee of Practice meeting in Hadley at noon.
Rev. Randy participates in the Hampshire Association Church and Ministry Committee meeting at 5:30pm in Haydenville.
- Sun. 17th Church Council meets at 11:20am.
- Mon. 18th *Exploring the Bible* study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
- Sun. 24th Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service at our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church at 3:00pm.

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 rehearses in the sanctuary at 6:30pm.

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

CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Southern New England Conference will be held in Worcester on November 1st and 2nd. Well, almost. This will be the third and final joint Annual Meeting of the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island Conferences before they join formally on January 1, 2020. Friday evening’s worship will include Vlarie Kaur as the keynote speaker. She is the founder of the Revolutionary Love Project (<https://revolutionarylove.net>). The theme of the Annual Meeting is *Unbound* and it is based on the biblical account of the raising of Lazarus from the grave. There will be the necessary legalize of structuring the new conference from the old ones, but the message is “unbound.” It is a new life story. It is a powerful feeling to gather with hundreds of others who are committed to the mission of this church. Hopefully that enthusiasm will be carried home to all of our local congregations as we continue to do the work of Christ in the world.



ASSOCIATION YOUTH GROUP

The Hampshire Association Youth Group has grown in size. We now gather regularly with others from Hadley, South Amherst, Southampton, Westhampton, Granby and Easthampton. We meet on the first Sunday of the month from 5:30 – 7:30pm. In November we are heading over to Hadley and in December everyone is coming to Hatfield. The group is open to Middle and High School students. Let’s keep it growing.

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*. It begins with an introduction to the Bible that offers an overview of the text itself, a discussion of the different perspectives on the authority of the Bible, and even the archaeological witness. Volume Two takes us through the books of the Old Testament, and Volume Three introduces us to the New Testament.



If you have ever wanted to know more about the Bible in general, this study group may be what you are looking for. This month we are meeting on the 4th and 18th. Why not pop in and see what it's about? If you like it, you can maybe buy the books at that time. We'd love to see 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.

THANKSGIVING ECUMENICAL SERVICE

This year we are resurrecting an old tradition here in Hatfield. Members of our church and members of Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church November 24th at 3PM for a Our Lady of Grace will host this year year. It is a significant statement in that our churches are coming together to share in a combined prayer of blessings upon us and our nation. I hope many of us will put this on our calendars and keep the day open so that we can gather with our neighbours and friends in celebration of Thanksgiving.



will come together on Sunday, Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service. and we plan to return the favour next these times of unnecessary division beyond their denominational walls thanksgiving to God for all His many

CONGRATULATIONS!

November 11th is the 101st birthday of Marge Kowalski, Hatfield's oldest resident and our church's most senior member. Let's keep her in our thoughts and prayers on this special day, and if you can send her a card to wish her a happy birthday!

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. Their work is in such high demand that it may take up to 9 months for them to be able to start their work on our timepiece. 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.
- Also, the church purchased a pop-up tent to use at outdoor functions. It cannot be found. If you may know where it is, please let us know. Thanks.
- The annual Craft Fair will take place on December 7th. If you have collectibles, handmade crafts, jewelry or books that you would like to donate, please start to set them aside for us. Please visit our website and FaceBook page for more information.

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/FCAT-Media/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 old photos of town buildings, people, farms, even dogs and horses. They will be copied and returned to you. The Committee is hoping to print an anniversary 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>

ROAST PORK SUPPER

First Congregational Church of Hatfield
41 Main Street, Hatfield, MA

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2019

Take outs: 5:00-6:30pm

Dine in: 5:30-7:00pm

Adults: \$14.00

Children under age 10: \$6.00

MENU:

Roast pork, gravy, mashed potato, green beans, homemade applesauce, coleslaw, roll with butter, and apple crisp for dessert...



Call Linda Milewski to reserve tickets – 247-5604
or Jeannie Belden – 247-5905

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

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