

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2023

June

No. 6

Who We Are (Part 1)

On June 25, 1957, the United Church of Christ (UCC) was born. As such, our congregation is part of both one of the oldest denominations in our country and the youngest. As a part of the Congregational Church we reach back over 400 years to the Pilgrims and Puritans, and as a United Church of Christ congregation we have reached only our 66th anniversary. We have tradition and innovation encoded in our spiritual DNA, intertwined and mutually supportive.

The basic history behind the formation of the UCC is that two Colonial era churches with a great deal of respect for congregational autonomy merged in 1931. They were the Congregational Churches and the Christian Churches. Their respect for autonomy is reflected in the name they adopted upon merger – the Congregational Christian Churches, with a noted emphasis upon *Churches* in the plural. This reflected their basic ecclesiology, the study of the church, that everything they needed to do church was inherent within each gathered community. There was no need for outside authorities or structures. They were coming together to form a united church, but not at the cost of sacrificing their autonomy as individual churches.

Three years later two other denominations engaged in a similar process. The Reformed Church in the United States emerged in 1793 as local Germanic and Swiss congregations centered around Colonial Pennsylvania united through the creation of a mutually recognized Synod. In the next century, a second wave of German immigrants settled in the Midwest and formed the Evangelical Synod of North America. These two churches respected the shared authority of the whole and they united to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1934.

About a decade later, these two newly organized denominations sought to continue the process of uniting Christian churches. In 1943, they authored the *Basis of Union* document, which was a blueprint for their own denominational demise and their re-creation as the UCC. The

agreed upon document went so far as to state officially that each separate denomination would “and, if need be, die” in order to confront “the divisions and hostilities of our world.” This is how seriously they understood the scandal of Christian division.

What we see here is that in spite of their differences – congregational autonomy and connectedness – there was a stronger desire for union. World War II and legal challenges delayed this formal union until the vote of the uniting General Synod of 1957. Now consider this. The four churches that united to form two churches that united to form the one UCC agreed to their union before they worked out their differences. This is the wonderfully powerful and inspirational example of setting the ideal of unity above the reality of difference. Christian unity was the primary goal to which differences must accede. Thus, the uniting General Synod formed a commission to compose the *Statement of Faith*, which eventually would come to be accepted at the Second General Synod in 1959.

The union came first and then followed everything else, including our Church Constitution. The General Synod declared the original Constitution of the UCC in force June, 1961, upon ratification of 2/3 of the Synods of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and by 2/3 of the Congregational Christian churches voting.

First came union, then our beliefs and only then the legalese. The Constitution promulgates the connectedness and autonomy so important to both of the constituent forebears of the UCC. Please read Article V, 18, which enshrines the autonomy of the local churches, but note as well that this Article is bookended by two connective statements that speak of “fellowship,” “mutual Christian concern,” and that the shared decisions and actions of the united church “should be held in the highest regard” by the local churches. <https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/constitution-and-bylaws/> Our polity is based upon covenant, and we will talk more about this next month.

JUNE EVENTS

Sun. 4 th	Children's Sunday.
Mon. 5 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEART (Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together) at 5:30pm. Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 6 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly Association Committee on Ministry meeting at 5:45pm.
Sun. 11 th	Confirmation Sunday. Northwest Regional Gathering at First Congregational Church of Chicopee from 2 – 5:00pm.
Mon. 12 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm in person.
Sat. 17 th	Southern New England Conference Annual Meeting in Worcester.
Sun. 18 th	Father's Day.
Mon. 19 th	Juneteenth. Online Bible study group will meet from 7 – 8:00pm.
Sun. 25 th	Open and Affirming Sunday. 66 th anniversary of the United Church of Christ.
Tue. 27 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Fri. 30 th	34 th General Synod of the UCC until July 4 th in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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.

JOYFUL RINGERS BELL CHOIR

The church owns a beautiful set of handbells and rehearsals are taking place to bring them back as a part of our worship. Lucinda W. has agreed to continue as the director of the Bell Choir and Sue M. is the coordinator. We thank them both for this. We're up to nine Joyful Ringers so far! Anyone else who is interested is welcome to become a part of the Bell Choir. Younger or older, church member or bell enthusiast, experienced or novice, we would love it if you would come forward and add the gift of more music to our sanctuary. The group rehearses on Monday evenings. If you may be interested, please reach out to Rev. Randy at randyc1897@gmail.com or Sue M., the Music Committee Chair.



CHILDREN'S SUNDAY

We will celebrate the children of our church on Sunday, June 4th, during the church service. Join us after the Service for an ice cream social to celebrate!

CONFIRMATION SUNDAY

During our worship Service on Sunday, June 11th, two of our young adults will be invited to come forward to affirm their baptisms. They are Iris Gochinski and Mattie O'Day. The entire congregation serves as their sponsors. Most baptisms in our tradition take place during infancy. Confirmation allows the young adult to "confirm" what was said on their behalf at baptism. To prepare for this assent, Iris and Mattie have attended Confirmation classes since September. With Confirmation, we ask the Holy Spirit to descend and to share God's inspiration as they are recognized as adults in the church and accept the responsibilities associated with being a part of the Body of Christ. The congregation is an essential part of this sacred rite. All are invited to attend and to participate.



and Mattie O'Day. The entire congregation tradition take place during infancy. Baptismal baptized. Confirmation allows the young adult to "confirm" what was said on their behalf at baptism. To prepare for this assent, classes since September. With Confirmation, God's inspiration as they are recognized as adults in the church and accept the responsibilities associated with being a part of the Body of Christ. The congregation is an essential part of this sacred rite. All are invited to attend and to participate.

REGIONAL GATHERING

"Dear Northwest Region local churches, authorized ministers and association leaders, Ours is an embodied faith and we have longed to be together in-person. We hope you will come and G.R.O.W. with us at the Northwest Regional Gathering on Sunday, June 11th 2:00pm - 5:00pm at First Congregational Church, UCC, 306 Chicopee

Street, Chicopee, MA. The confluence of the pandemic and the start-up of the Southern New England Conference has left us all yearning for stronger connections. Some of us still need to be introduced to each other; others need to reestablish relationship. Still others want to share the strong connections they have. Wherever you find yourself on that continuum, we hope you will join us! These gatherings are happening in every region of the Southern New England Conference this spring. We'll share resources and they will be led by Executive Conference Minister Rev. Darrell Goodwin and Executive Minister for Area Conference Ministry Rev. Liz Garrigan-Byerly. Please register here: <https://sneucc-reg.brtapp.com/GROWregional> .

JUNETEENTH

Juneteenth is a federal holiday in the United States since 2021. It commemorates the emancipation of the last enslaved African Americans. Deriving its name from combining "June" and "nineteenth," it is celebrated on the anniversary of the order, issued by Major General Gordon Granger on June 19, 1865, proclaiming freedom for slaves in Texas. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863, but was not enforced, obviously, until the Confederacy was defeated and Emancipation forced upon them. Texas, being the most remote of the Confederate states, was the last place that Emancipation was forced upon slave holders and their protectors. Juneteenth is often called America's Second Independence Day because we took more seriously the Declaration's "all men are created equal" statement. Special prayers will be offered at worship on Sunday the 18th to honour this national holiday.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING SUNDAY

Our congregation is a formally recognized Open and Affirming (ONA) Congregation of the UCC, which means that we are open to all believers and seekers however God has made them and that we affirm who they are as a child of God. The fourth Sunday of June is recognized annually as Open and Affirming Sunday. The date coincides with the Stonewall uprising, which were a series of spontaneous protests by members of the gay community in response to a police raid that began in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village. These are widely considered the watershed event that transformed the gay liberation movement and the twentieth-century fight for LGBT rights in the United States. While many voices in our nation are now threatening these rights, as an ONA congregation we defend them.



UCC ANNIVERSARY

"On Tuesday, June 25, 1957, at Cleveland, Ohio, the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 23 years old, passionate in its impulse to unity, committed to 'liberty of conscience inherent in the Gospel,' and the Congregational Christian Churches, 26 years old, a fellowship of biblical people under a mutual covenant for responsible freedom in Christ, joined together as the United Church of Christ. The new church embodied the essence of both parents, a complement of freedom with order, of the English and European Reformations with the American Awakenings, of separatism with 20th-century ecumenism, of presbyterian with congregational polities, of neoorthodox with liberal theologies. Two million members joined hands." This quote is taken from <https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/about/history/> and you are invited to read more of our history by clicking on the link. Prayers for our church will be offered on the actual 66th anniversary on Sunday the 25th.



a just
world
for all
ucc.org

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Our online Bible study group is reading from the Acts of the Apostles and then the Gospel of John. If you would like to join us as we read of the early days of the church and then of John's unique take on Jesus' life and ministry, we would love to have you join us. Let's read, study and discuss the book that literally has changed the world. Send an email to randyc1897@gmail.com for the login. We meet on alternate weeks for one hour.

FATHER'S DAY

Father's Day is the 18th. Special prayers will be offered that day for the fathers of our church and community, both those with us and those called to their eternal reward. I hope you'll be able to share in those prayers with the worshipping community.

GENERAL SYNOD

The General Synod's theme is, "Making All Things New." Along with the other important business before the Synod, the Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, who serves currently as the ninth General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, will be bringing his two terms in that office to an end at General Synod. Accordingly,

the United Church of Christ Board voted to nominate and recommend to the General Synod the election of Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson for a term as General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. Please keep the synod delegates in your thoughts and prayers as they meet from June 30th to July 4th.



*"Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 43:18-19*

GIFT CARDS

Big Y and Stop and Shop gift 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 Facebook: www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC

Pastor: Rev. Randy Calvo 413-824-1630 randyc1897@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, Martha Z.</i>
<i>Church Moderator, Jonathan B.</i>	<i>Trustees, Ed M.</i>
<i>Deacons, Jeff F.</i>	

