

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

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## “And they said nothing to anyone”

At last month’s Super Saturday gathering at Min-achaug High School, Rev. Shannon Wall recited the entirety of Mark’s Gospel from memory – a two hour effort! Rev. Wall is a Yale trained actor. Her recitation was compelling and emotion-filled. Sitting in that high school classroom, I could see that the others, like myself, were drawn into the story.

I especially remember her portrayal of Jesus’ words as He found the disciples sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane. I realize she’s a professionally trained actor, but she’s also an ordained minister who has felt a calling to serve Christ as her life’s vocation.

I could not tell if “Jesus” was on the verge of tears or if she was on the verge of tears as she recited the Gospel words: “Could you not keep awake one hour?” Jesus’ isolation in this terrible hour was palpable. His desperation was not only heard; it was felt.

The horror of Jesus’ capture, torture and death, thankfully, gave way to the mystery of Easter morning. Rev. Shannon narrated the story with a note of apprehension, telling us that the women left for the tomb at dawn to anoint Jesus’ dead body. Along the way they worried about how to get into the tomb.

Then her voice became excited as the women discovered that the tomb was unsealed. I think us Christians sitting in the high school classroom associated that tone with the approaching revelation of the resurrection.

However, being faithful to the text which says that the women “were alarmed,” the excitement sprang more from fear than from emerging hope. “A young man, dressed in a white robe” informed the women that Jesus had been raised from the dead, “He is not here.”

So again, as Christians sitting in a high school classroom, but maybe not all that familiar with biblical idiosyncrasies, we’re getting ready for Easter joy. Rev. Shannon continues to recite the text for us: “So [the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Then she quickly walked out of the classroom. At this point people in the classroom were wondering

for a moment or two if she was coming back. Was this the end of a scene or was this the end of the Gospel? I watched as two very intent women in the front row took out their Bibles to see what had just happened.

We have grown so familiar with the aggregate of the resurrection story told by all of the Evangelists that we can miss the drama of Mark’s final words, and his were the first and only Gospel words for maybe a decade.

Mark shares no resurrection appearances with us. The women do not share their experience of the empty tomb with anyone else. They are so afraid that they said nothing.” To later ears this ending became so strange that two other endings were added on to it at different times.



But let’s leave the tradition bound additions aside and consider instead Mark’s poignant ending at 16:8. The oral presentation of the Gospel shared with us the experience of hearing it for the first time. Our shock at its abrupt conclusion would have been like the shock of the first generation. That may be intentional. Mark may be trying to convey to his readers the bewildering encounter that confronted the first witnesses to the resurrection. They were unable to process what had happened. Amazement and fear are honest reactions.

The readers of Mark’s Gospel, however, know that the news did get out. They are evidence of that fact. Mark’s surprise ending, though, may share the message that the resurrection must be experienced firsthand. It must be a personal awakening. It must be what the philosopher William James called eureka moments: “Unclasp, in a word, your intellectual and practical machinery, and let it run free” Easter is not learned; Easter is experienced. It is transformative. Others, like Mark, can lead us to the empty tomb, but the resurrection is personal. I invite you to join other resurrection people at our Easter worship to help us all experience the wonder that the empty tomb confronts us with still today.



from all the churches bringing in food to share, and we will put out the coffee, tea and drinks. I hope you will be able to attend and make these discussions a part of your Lenten practice.

### YOUTH GROUP

The Youth Groups of the Hadley, Hatfield and Southampton Congregational Churches gather on the first Sunday of the month – and hopefully some share in a light meal, join in a fun activity and meet at the Hadley Congregational Church gathering is open to any of our youth or their attend, please contact Rev. Randy.



other congregations as we move forward. We then have a bit of worship or discussion. We will from 5:30 – 7:30pm on Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. This friends from 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. If you would like to

### HOLY WEEK

**Palm Sunday** is April 14<sup>th</sup> this year. On this first day of Holy Week, palms will be shared with those at church to commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to shouts of "Hosanna," which is a Hebrew exclamation begging God to save. It was shouted joyously at Jesus with the expectation that He would be a triumphant Messiah king who would free the Jews from their Roman oppressors. When Jesus rejects the people's demands for a militant Saviour, they turn against Him quickly, thus leading to the events later in Holy Week.

**Maundy Thursday** falls on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The name *Maundy* Thursday is derived from the Latin word *mandatum* (command) and refers to the biblical passage: "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also the example of humble service at the disciples. We are likewise to practice a Christ. This is our "new commandment."



love one another." (John 13:34) Jesus had set Last Supper by washing the feet of His humble life of loving service in imitation of

Maundy Thursday is also the day when Supper when He sat at table with His and "This is my blood," and then me." We will recreate that setting in our Service as we then invite everyone in attendance to share in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. On this solemn night we will also remember loved ones who have passed on to their eternal reward.

Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Lord's closest followers and said, "This is my body" commanded "Do this in remembrance of

The church will be open much of the day on **Good Friday**. This is the church's most solemn of days. This is when we remember the tortured death of Jesus on the cross. Mark's Gospel tells us that Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9AM, at noon darkness covered the land, and finally at 3PM Jesus died. Reflecting this passage, the church will be open for quiet times of private prayer and meditation from 9AM – 3:30pm. If you are unable to come to church on Good Friday, please make every effort to keep this day solemn wherever you may be. This is a day of humble gratitude and reflection, not a time for dinner out or anything frivolous. Jesus dies for all of us on this sacred day. We should respect this no matter where we are or what we are doing.

### EASTER SUNDAY

The Gospels tell us that by the time the women arrived at Jesus' burial tomb on **Easter Sunday** that it was already empty. Jesus had resurrected from the dead and with that everything in God's good creation changes. God's revelation in Jesus of Nazareth is vindicated. Death is conquered. We become a people no longer defined by our physical mortality. And God's ineffable graciousness in the life and even death of Christ Jesus ends in triumph and charge as we are the ones who are called upon to share this glorious news with all the world.

We will first gather at the home of Matt and Melody at sunrise, 6AM (yes, 6AM, I know). We will proclaim the Good News of the empty tomb with a yard looking toward the East and our together once again at 10AM for the message, the music, and the congregation days. Please make every effort to be an invitation with others to come and join us.



the simple and short Service out in their church's steeple. We will come beautiful Easter Sunday Service. The tion bring to life the joy of this holiest with us, and if you choose, even share

### PALM SUNDAY BREAKFAST

The men of the congregation come together on Palm Sunday morning to make breakfast for us before our morning Service. The proceeds from this event, appropriately so, benefit the Benevolence Committee, which is our congregation's charitable arm. We hope that everyone will help support this event. If you are able to help

work at the breakfast, please reach out to Jonathan Bardwell. Tickets are available on Sunday mornings and some will be available at the door.

### **EASTER EGG HUNT**

The church hosts an Easter Egg Hunt for our children and those of our local community. It will take place on the grounds around the church, library and elementary school – so please say a prayer for good weather. It begins at 10AM at the church with a short prayer.

In preparation for the Easter Egg Hunt, we are asking for the donation of bags of candy. These may be brought to the church on any Sunday. We then ask volunteers to meet in the church parlor on Monday evening, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm to fill the eggs.

### **EASTER FLOWER COLLECTION**

If you would like to help adorn our church with Jesus' favourite flower, the lily, please see Amy Novak to make your in memory or in honour donation. And thank you.

### **HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING**

Our congregation is a member of the Hampshire Association. The Association gathers once a year for a business meeting. This year we have accepted the responsibility of serving as the host church. Others from throughout the Association will be coming to our spiritual home on Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> at 2PM. A light reception will be provided for our guests. We will pray together and then enter the work of the day. More information will be made available in church and on our website as it is made available.

### **RERUN SHOES SHOE DRIVE – THANK YOU**

Started in 2009, *Rerun Shoes* was created to help people recycle old shoes with people in need in Africa. To learn more about this organization, please visit their website: [www.rerunshoes.com](http://www.rerunshoes.com). We wish to thank everyone who brought in shoes for this collection. The provided box is overflowing and will soon be picked up by Rerun Shoes. We will run another collection in the Fall so if you accumulate more gently worn shoes over the summer hold on to them so that we can share them with people in need. Thanks again.

### **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.

### **REQUEST**

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, and we appreciate your attentiveness to the needs of others.

### **CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP AT HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL**

If you may like to be a formal member of this church, it begins with an informal 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. Please contact Rev. Calvo if you are interested.

### **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.

### **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:**

*Christian Education, Anita Wilson 413 247-5229*

*Music, 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*

