

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2020

April

No. 4

## A World Changing Event ... No, Not the Pandemic

During this month of April, we remember Jesus' crucifixion. This was supposed to be the end of His story. He should have been forgotten by history. The New Testament refers to the presence of other would-be Messiahs, but they fade from memory (Acts 5:33+). Messianic hopes were high in Israel at the time. The Maccabees were not long past. The Temple was being rebuilt. There were pagans occupying the Temple Mount in Fortress Antonia.

The charge against Jesus was nailed to His cross. From that very moment it became an unexpected double entendre. For the Romans "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews" was a political indictment. Jesus' crucifixion was meant to show all who passed in and out of Jerusalem during the Passover festival that this is what happens to anyone who dares to challenge the authority of the Empire.

For believers, however, this Messianic title came to mean so much more. Rather than silencing Jesus, the cross set an example for people of faith to speak truth to power in His name. The once timid and terrified apostles are soon proclaiming in the halls of power: "We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree." (Acts. 5:29-30) The charge nailed to the cross that was supposed to silence Jesus instead gave Him and His gospel new life.

In Matthew's Gospel, the phrase "king of the Jews" bookends the story of Jesus' life. The Magi employ it in their search the newborn king. Then it disappears from the text only to reappear at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. Everything written about Him between these bookends, which is His life story, defines His kingship. The cross was never limited to Jesus' death. The cross is Jesus' final living testimony to everything He preached and lived.

The cross was the world's rejection of God's revelation in Jesus. The world would not tolerate His gospel so it killed Him. But the cross, and our inspiration from the cross, are the not the end of Jesus' story. The women disciples went to the place of death after the Sabbath had passed. It was early Sunday morning and that's when they discovered that the tomb was open and empty.

Acts records some of the earliest Christian testimony about how the first believers processed this mystery: "But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power" (2:24) The world passed its judgment against Jesus and nailed Him to the cross and threw His battered, dead body in a nearby tomb, but God overturned this judgment and vindicated everything Jesus lived and preached by raising Him up from the grave to be seated in heavenly glory.

Just as the cross is not limited to Jesus' death so the empty tomb is not limited to Jesus' resurrection. Easter is the glorious and message back to testifies sacred



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everything Jesus did and said. We short-change Easter by only thinking of it as assurance of life-after-death. Easter grants meaning and purpose, joy and hope to this life.

There has not been a pandemic like this for a century. We live in a world-changing time. Uncertainty is everywhere. Expectations will change. Look at the people who lived through the Depression in the 1930's. They saved and scrimped for the rest of their lives. Now that toilet paper has to be searched for on often empty shelves, we will look at the world differently from this point forward too. This pandemic will change us long after a vaccine has been discovered.

Things we once counted certain, whether it be our 401K's, our careers, our health are all a bit wobbly at present. But there was another life-altering, world changing event that we all continue to experience. It's our faith that the tomb was empty, that Jesus lives, that as He says at the end of Matthew, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This month as we remember the climactic events of Jesus' last days and of His forever days, let us find strength and renewal in them. Let our faith become the foundation in our lives when so many others have cracked. Let us live lives transformed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

## APRIL EVENTS

Sun. 5 <sup>th</sup>	Palms will be blessed in church and then distributed at the side entrance on Billings Way from 8:30-9:30am. Palm Sunday <b>virtual</b> worship at 10:00am.
Wed. 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Virtual</b> monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees.
Thurs. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Maundy Thursday <b>Virtual</b> Service at 7:00pm.
Fri. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Good Friday. The church will be open from 12:00 – 3:30pm for private prayer. <i>Drive-by Food Drive</i> from 12:00 – 3:30pm.
Sun. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Sunrise Service at 6:10am across the street from the American Legion. Easter <b>Virtual</b> Church Service at 10:00am.
Mon. 13 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> <b>virtual</b> study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Association Clergy Committee of Practice gathering in Hadley at noon. (?) Association Committee on Ministry <b>virtual</b> meeting at 5:30pm.
Sun. 19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Virtual</b> Meeting of Church Council at 11:20am.
Wed. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day.
Sat. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Historic Home Tour, Hatfield's 350 <sup>th</sup> , postponed to July 18 <sup>th</sup> .
Mon. 27 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> <b>virtual</b> study group meets from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Board of Deacons <b>virtual</b> meeting at 6:00pm.

## 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.

## “VIRTUAL”

You may have noticed all of the highlighted *virtuals* in this month's calendar. You will see them again below. Public health demands that we maintain social distancing and we have been asked to not meet in groups larger than ten people. Due to the restrictions in place during the pandemic, we have been worshiping and meeting virtually. We live-stream our Services, meetings and Bible study. Log-in information is sent to everyone on our church's email mailing list. If you would like to be added to that list, please drop me an email at [randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com). We may start posting the recordings of our worship Service, but we do hope that people join us live so that we may all gather as one just like on a regular Sunday, but in accordance with the constraints of these irregular times.

## CHURCH FINANCES

Even though we are not able to meet in the church building, we continue as church. As such, we continue to need your financial assistance. We may not be passing the plate in person, but please send in your church pledges and contributions regularly. They may be sent directly to Marty or to the church at 41 Main Street. Thank you for your continuing financial support.

## HOLY WEEK

Even in the throes of a pandemic, Holy Week is Holy Week. This is the period on the church's liturgical calendar when we remember the final events of to the pandemic, I will bless palms in church them at the side entrance off Billings Way enough time, and you as well, to return home for our 10AM Virtual Worship Service.



Jesus' life. It begins with **Palm Sunday**. Due and then I and the deacons will distribute between 8:30 and 9:30am. This will give me

Palm Sunday is the day the church commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people hail Him with shouts of "Hosanna," which means "Save, I pray." They are looking to Jesus as their Saviour. They are hoping that Jesus will be who they want Him to be, a military leader, someone who will free them from Roman occupation by the power of God's sword. Here is an important lesson for us as people of faith. Jesus is our Saviour, but it is on God's terms, not our own.

A virtual Service will be conducted on **Maundy Thursday**. On this day, the church commemorates Jesus' Last Supper and His institution of Holy Communion. We will not be able to gather in our church for this moving Service. We will not be able to share in Communion together. Due to the extenuating circumstances of our times, I will say the words of our Communion Service in my home, and I invite you to gather at the table via our virtual Service and to have prepared a bit of juice or wine and some bread. In this way, we will be able to share Communion together, not physically, but spiritually.

The name Maundy Thursday is derived from the Latin word for *commandment (mandatum)*. During the Last Supper, as Jesus washes the feet of His a servant, He says, "A new love one another, as I have loved you, 13:34) "Love one another" is the lasting leave with us, His followers. Then, Jesus retreats to the solitude of the Garden of Gethsemane. Soon, however, He is arrested and His Passion begins, which is the costly and perfect testament of "Love one another."



**Good Friday** is the most solemn and somber of all days. It is the day on which we remember the dying and death of our Saviour. Even outside of definite sense of purpose. Try to avoid prayer. The church will be open from noon the sky grew dark at noon as Jesus hung on would like to come into the church for quiet also keep in mind the restrictions of social distancing.



As mentioned above, Jesus' last words to us are "Love one another." The Board of Deacons will give us a chance to put this commandment into practice on Good Friday. During the time that the church is open, a large container will be placed by the sidewalk off of Billings Way. We are conducting a "**Drive by Food Drive.**" Donations may be dropped off with a quick stop. The Food Bank has issued an urgent appeal for help. Many of our neighbours have lost jobs. The economy is in a recession. More people than ever need food assistance. If you can help in kind, thank you. If you can help with a monetary donation which goes even further, please come inside the church and a collection basket will be at the entrance to the sanctuary. For every \$1 we donate the Food Bank is able to provide 4 meals. For every \$1 we donate they can purchase \$7 worth of food. On Good Friday, let us remember Jesus' sacrifice both spiritually and charitably.

### **EASTER SUNDAY**

The Bible tells us that the women followers of Jesus venture out to His tomb before dawn on Easter Sunday. They find the tomb opened and empty. Everything changes. New life begins. at dawn, we will gather on the lawn of from the American Legion Post at say some prayers and sing a hymn or two, should be able to watch the sun rise to the Service will be outdoors, and we must practice social distancing, but I think if we are careful we will be able to come together on this holiest of days.



Jesus has resurrected from the dead. Keeping to the tradition of venturing out Matt Hunter and Melody Edwards across 6:10am. Sunrise is 6:13am. We hope to and if all goes according to plan, we east and over our church building. The

Our virtual Easter Sunday worship Service will begin at 10AM. The message of hope that is Easter is so necessary right now. Who knows how long the strangeness of these times will last, but they will not last forever. Life will return. I hope our circumstances help us to better appreciate the gift of hope that the empty tomb shares with all of us who believe that Jesus died, Jesus arose, and Jesus lives among us still.

### **FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS**

Unfortunately, volunteering opportunities at the Food Bank have been put on hold until further notice due to the pandemic.

### **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*. We have just begun to read Volume II on the Old Testament. If you would like to become more comfortable with the Bible, I encourage you to join us for Bible study. This book that everyone

talks about but few read has been informing and transforming lives for thousands of years. It continues to do so today if we give it the chance, and these stay-at-home days are the perfect chance.

Because of the pandemic, we will be meeting via live-stream. If you would like to join us from the comfort of your own home, please send me an email ([randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com)) I will send you the log-in information. We would love to have you join us.

### **EARTH DAY**

April 22<sup>nd</sup> is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. Since 1970, aware of the destructive and dangerous degradation of the earth's environment by human behaviour, we have observed Earth Day. In these five decades, we have done much to healthier for generations of people around the globe. Much remains to be done, however. Climate change needs to be dealt with seriously. We need to do what we must to be good stewards of this our only planet. God didn't create humankind to pillage the earth, but to steward it. Let us do what we can to nurture Mother Earth during this year of Earth Day's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



It has been pointed out that the only one to benefit from this pandemic has been the earth. The threat of sickness has helped the earth itself grow healthier. Here is a picture of the smog in China. It is a photo of the exact same location, the one to the right is before the pandemic, the one on the left is during the shelter in place. Look what we do to our world every day, and look at the difference we can help bring about.



### **ASSOCIATION YOUTH GROUP**

The Hampshire Association Youth Group will not be able to gather until further notice.

### **ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING**

The Hampshire Association Annual Meeting has been postponed until further notice.

### **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.

### **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.
- Please remember to close and latch the kitchen door when leaving the building. The wind has blown the door open already this winter and we do not need the extra heating cost. Thanks.

### **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 Minister, Anthony Tracia 781 738-6284*  
*Real Folks Society, Martha Zigmont 413 247-5453*  
*Benevolence, Amy Novak 413 210-3965*

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

## HATFIELD'S 350<sup>TH</sup>

The town's 350<sup>th</sup> Committee is taking homes of Hatfield. It will take place on April. They are sure this will be filled. I've already please contact the 350<sup>th</sup>. Also, due to the the dates and events below are subject to cancellation or rescheduling. Please check their website for current information.



reservations for a walking tour of historic 25, 2020 and is limited to 35 participants. signed-up. If you would like to participate, restrictions associated with the pandemic, all of

### General Community Events

- June 13, 2020 – 350th Parade
- June 20, 2020 – Annual Strawberry Festival (Partnership w/ Hatfield PTA)
- August 22, 2020 – Summer Celebration
- October 10, 2020 – Annual Bonfire (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)
- December 19, 2020 – Luminarium/Fireworks (Partnership w/ Firefighters Association)

### Historical Events & Tours

- May 31, 2020 – Incorporation Day and The Crossing of the CT River
- July 18, 2020 – Historic Homes of Hatfield Walking Tour
- October 10, 2020 – Narrated Wagon Rides

### Agricultural Events & Tours

- May 16, 2020 – Farm 5K Race
- June 4, 2020 – Farm to Table Dinner
- September 12, 2020 – Barn Mural Wagon Tour
- October 2, 2020 – Tractor Parade

Additional events are currently being planned and will be announced as details become available. For the latest information, visit [www.hatfield350.com](http://www.hatfield350.com) or follow us on Facebook @Hatfield350th.



AND PLEASE, PLEASE,

