

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2023

February

No. 2

The Embrace Sculpture

On January 13th, Boston unveiled a monumental bronze sculpture called *The Embrace*. It represents the hug that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife Coretta Scott King shared in



1964 after Rev. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The Nobel Committee honoured Rev. King for his work in trying to heal America's often violent racial divide peacefully.

I thought this to be an appropriate subject because February is Black History Month and the month of Valentine's Day. The sculpture signifies all that is profound in King's peaceful struggle against prejudice, discrimination and institutional racism, but it also celebrates the love that sustained and fortified both husband and wife.

The City of Boston has placed benches around the sculpture so that people may sit and contemplate the work of this tireless, fearless couple, and also the tenderness of their embrace. Jenee Osterheldt writes in the *Boston Globe*, "The art is not just of an embrace, but made to embrace people, to invite them to stay and be held ... *The Embrace* has come to represent the tenderness we need." (1/15/23, A8)

The sculpture is located within Boston Common, which is America's first public park. In this publicly shared gathering space, people have been congregating for 400 years to share and debate ideas. There, on April 23, 1965, Rev. King called upon the people of Massachusetts to live into those highest ideals that fomented the American Revolution and that fueled the abolitionist movement. (If you like, read this love story about the daring escape from slavery of

Ellen and William Craft, who came to Boston as a city of refuge for Black Americans: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/01/05/magazine/1848-an-enslaved-couple-fled-boston-one-historys-most-daring-escapes/>)

The artist behind the sculpture is Hank Willis Thomas. Explaining his artwork, he has noted that American history is mostly a story of violence. Martin Luther King Jr. received the Nobel Peace Prize because he stood up to and against this incessant reliance upon violence. With short, memorable phrases akin to Jesus' parables, this renowned preacher tried to get us to understand the wisdom and necessity of the peacefulness that Jesus insisted upon. King once preached, "The old law of 'an eye for an eye' leaves everyone blind." Thomas drew this out in his sculpture saying, "I am excited about building markers that can direct us toward non-violent coexistence and allow us to tell new stories about our history, our present, our future."

Again, in this month that is Black History Month and the month of Valentine's Day, we acknowledge the struggles and resilience that Black Americans have demonstrated for 404 years on these shores, but in their stories is also found the power of love to sustain and to make life worthwhile. *The Embrace* conveys this. It shares with all who will pass by and all who will sit on its surrounding benches, the power of love. In that sense, it is not only the love of Rev. and Mrs. King, but also the message that through a love like theirs we are all able to hold each other up and share one another's joys and triumphs.

Maybe a 38,000 pound sculpture is not absolutely necessary to share the message of the good Reverend and his wife's message of peace and of supporting love, but it does give us the opportunity to talk about such things even if difficult or awkward to do so, to dialogue about subjects that should never be taken for granted. May we take this month's twin celebrations of Black History and of Valentine's Day love and delve a bit more deeply into the purpose of both.

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Mon. 6 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. 7 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly Association Committee on Ministry meeting at 5:45pm.
Sun. 12 th	<i>Souper Bowl of Caring</i> Food Drive collection. Valentine's wedding renewal ceremony during our Sunday Worship Service.
Mon. 13 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Thur. 16 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEADS Up at 6:30pm.
Mon. 20 th	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 22 nd	Ash Wednesday. (Please see flier below.)
Tue. 28 th	Monthly online meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.

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.

CHURCH COVID POLICIES

The Church Council has decided that while the numbers remain higher than we would like, the COVID vaccines and COVID treatments have combined to lower the risks of this pandemic virus. However, there are increased risks of RSV infections and the flu. Accordingly, the Council encourages those attending in person to wear a facemask for the benefit of those who may be immunocompromised, but face coverings are now optional. The Council will continue to monitor the COVID numbers. If the numbers spike upwards, then we may return to the mask requirement if needed.



CHURCH MUSIC – BELL CHOIR

The church owns a beautiful set of handbells, but sadly they sit mostly unused, seldom taken out to make the joyous music for which they are intended. The handbell choir used to mark special occasions for us, and the town looked forward to their being played at the Luminarium Concert. We would like to try and revitalize the Bell Choir. Lucinda Williams has agreed to continue as the director of the Bell Choir, and we thank her for that kindness. We have the instruments and the director, but what we need are people who are excited to learn, to practice and to play. Anyone 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 help us get the bells out of the closet and into the sanctuary. If you may be interested, please reach out to Rev. Randy at randyc1897@gmail.com.



And let's not forget our Chancel Choir. These are the volunteers who sing during our worship Services under the direction of our Music Minister, Anthony Tracia. I had Covid recently and it is no fun. There is a much more highly contagious variant floating around. At some point, however, we will want to return to the pre-Covid practice of having the choir play a more prominent role in our Services. In the meanwhile, the choir still rehearses on Thursday evenings and sings on Sunday mornings. Again, member or not, if you love to sing and wish to share your talent, please contact Anthony (anthonytracia@gmail.com) to find out more about the choir.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Our online Bible study group is reading from the Gospels of Luke and John and the Acts of the Apostles at present. If you would like to join us as we read of Jesus' life and ministry, and then of the early days of the church, 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.

ASH WEDNESDAY / SEASON OF LENT

Ash Wednesday falls on the last Wednesday of February this year, and Ash Wednesday is the first day of the season of Lent. Lent is the period of 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday, excluding Sundays,

which are always days that celebrate the resurrection. It is a sacred time to dive deeper into the meaning of a crucified Saviour. It is a season of repentance leading to renewal. Repentance is the discipline of looking at one's life and seeing where and how we could grow spiritually. This obviously implies recognizing our moral faults, but that is not the endgame of Lent. It is the renewal that follows upon this recognition. It is to more deeply appreciate the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and what this reveals about the love of God for all of us, and how we might better respond to this love.

To help us with our Lenten journey, there are, of course, our Lenten Sundays of worship. These allow us through prayer, music, meditation and Communion to share in the mystery of Christ among us. There is Bible study as noted above and there is also the private reading of Holy Scripture at home. On our website, I will also post a Daily Lenten Blog that will be based on the given biblical readings for each particular day. (www.hatfieldchurch.org/pews-news/category/revd-up) Our congregation is also one that participates with other local churches as we come together for our weekly Lenten Discussions. These are offered each Lenten Wednesday at 7:00pm. They are hosted by a different church each week and a different minister leads the discussion each week, as well. People can join in person for remotely via Zoom. The full schedule is below.



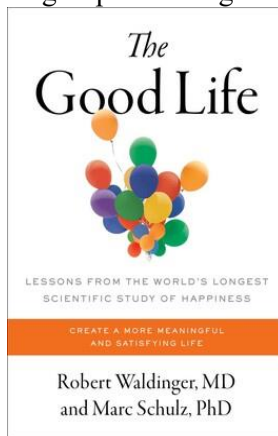
I do hope that you will take the opportunity provided by Lent to grow closer to Christ and to embrace your faith more deeply and to hold Christ more lovingly.

HOW TO BE HAPPIER

Harvard University has been and still is conducting the longest-running experiment on human happiness ever. It started in 1938 and it has been tracking some of its participants for generations. Dr. Robert Waldinger oversees this study. He reports that the single most important thing anyone can do to increase happiness in their lives is to build relationships. Extroverts may have a ton and introverts a few, but it's not the number of relationships that matter for happiness, it's that we have relationships, we have people in our lives with whom we enjoy spending time. Here is the link to a conversation about this on NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/10/1148210611/whats-the-1-thing-to-change-to-be-happier-a-top-happiness-researcher-weighs-in>

The origin of "church" is assembly. It is the group called together by Christ. The church is the People of God. It is a sacred community. Church, in other relationships, not only with God, but with together weekly for worship. A bond is believe in this quite strongly.

However, these relationships can be the United Church of Bernardston and ways in which to build-up community, to Talks where they actually go to different discussions. There is a Breakfast Club restaurant and just spend time together. I have to do what they're doing, but I think in this still very young year of 2023 we always been based on relationships, and are the single most important factor in human happiness. Would you like to give it a try?



words, has always incorporated each other. It is meaningful to come formed through this shared experience. I

fostered in other ways too. I have friends at they come up with original and interesting create relationships. They sponsor Pub local pubs and hold Bible study or religious where people get together at a local think these are both great ideas. We don't their attempts are worth imitating. Maybe could try something like this. Church has now science is telling us that relationships

VALENTINE'S WEDDING RENEWAL CEREMONY

The congregation had a tradition of a wedding Valentine's Day. It was brought up at our Annual renewing your vows together with other likeminded February 12th.



renewal ceremony on the Sunday prior to Congregational Meeting. If you are interested in couples, I invite you to come and do so on Sunday,

REAL FOLKS NEWS

"On Saturday, February 11th from 9:30 – 12:00 cleaning and organizing the church kitchen. Supplies will be provided. Jobs for all. Give us an hour or more. Visit a little and help us "shine." Snow date of February 18th. Questions – Linda or Marty. We would like members to make a donation to the February "Souper Bowl of Caring" food collection. This is in place of our annual dues. Food will be delivered to the Northampton Survival Center. At our annual meeting we voted to give \$4,000 to the General Fund of the church. Anita and Marty will be sharing Treasury duties and Amy will be sharing Co-President duties with Marty. Coffee hour will be the first Sunday of each month. Please sign up. Mary will help if needed. Coffee and cream are provided. Help out by

providing flowers or a plant for the chancel table. Sign up sheet on the table near the dining room. Jean will answer questions. Program booklets will be ready in March.”

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

The *Supper Bowl of Caring* food drive will take place on Super Bowl Sunday, February 12th. This is being run by our Christian Ed program and Anita W. to help children in need as families face increased food insecurity during school vacation weeks. Two boxes will be placed in the church. One for each team that makes it into the Super Bowl. Place your donation in the box of the team you would like to see win it all that evening. Let’s see if our food collection competition matches that night’s big game.

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 Minister, Anthony T.</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>	

2023 - 26th Annual Lenten Discussion Series - 2023
On the Outside Looking In

February 22nd – Ash Wednesday

All are invited to join the Montague Congregational Church for a worship service at 7PM. Rev. Dr. Cynthia Crosson-Harrington, pastor of the Whately Congregational Church, UCC, will preach on the message of: Living Circles

March 1st

First session at the Sunderland Congregational Church at 7PM.
 Offered by Rev. Gordon Pullan, pastor of the North Hadley Congregational Church, UCC
 Session Title: Out of Body

March 8th

Second session hosted by the Hatfield Congregational Church at 7PM.
 Offered by Rev. Sherril Willis, Pulpit Supply and Bridge Minister.
 Session Title: The Journey – Religious Music Hidden in the Secular World

March 15th

Third session at the Whately Congregational Church at 7PM.
 Offered by Rev. Marianne MacCullagh, pastor of the Conway and Shelburne Congregational Churches, UCC
 Session Title: Stigma

March 22nd

Fourth session at the Shelburne Congregational Church at 7PM.
 Offered by Rev. Randy Calvo, pastor of the Hatfield and Sunderland Congregational Churches, UCC
 Session Title: “[Jesus] looked around at them with anger. He was grieved at their hardness of heart ...” (Mark 3:5)

March 29th

Fifth session at the N. Hadley Congregational Church at 7PM.
 Offered by Rev. James Koyama, pastor of the Montague Congregational Church, UCC
 Session Title: Passports Please

 Due to the continuing cases of Covid and the flu, all sessions will be offered live-streamed and in person. An email will be sent out for **EACH** week’s unique Zoom login link. If you do not receive it, email randyc1897@gmail.com.