

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2021

June

No. 6

Human Equality as God Given

June 19th is known as Juneteenth. It was on this date in 1865 that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation finally made it to the most remote of the Confederate slave states. On September 22, 1862 Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect on January 1, 1863. Obviously, the Confederate states did not recognize his authority nor did they respect the Proclamation's intent.

It required more than an additional two years of combat to enforce the Proclamation. Civil War combat ended officially on April 9, 1865. This is when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Court House.

Enforcement of Emancipation relied on the advance of Union troops. Texas was the most remote outpost of the defeated Confederacy. It was, therefore, not until the June 19th announcement by Union General Gordon Granger proclaiming freedom from slavery in Texas, that the last American slaves were emancipated. Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom. It is a celebration of American ideals. The Declaration of Independence declared with revolutionary impact: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."



As these enlightened words were embraced in 1776, the blight of slave-owners ignored them. The tension between American ideals and slavery's reality coexisted until the Civil War. It then erupted into the deadliest military conflict in American history, leaving between 620,000 and 750,000 soldiers on the field and an undetermined number of civilians dead as well. All of these lives were sacrificed to protect and advance the founding truth of freedom, that all people are equal.

Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, a slave owner himself who fathered children with Sally Hemmings whom he owned, justified the radical notion of human equality by basing it on the Creator. His ideal of human equality was

unknown in the world of his day. It could not be justified by history or by the contemporary world he lived in. Jefferson needed to reach back to the liberating revelation of Holy Scripture.

Human equality, as one of our national principles, is based on the idea that every person is created in the image and likeness of God. This takes some living up to.

Thomas Jefferson believed in what he wrote, but he owned people. Sally Hemmings was his slave; it was not love that bound them together. Jefferson was unable to reconcile his ideals with the practicality of his life. I believe his ideals motivated him, but reality limited how he practiced them.

The Civil War was fought over slavery. Some revisionists would try and teach that it was over state's rights, but Alexander Stephens, the Confederate Vice-President, explained the Civil War as: "Our new government[']s foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth." [Cornerstone Speech, March 21, 1861] This "moral truth" was neither, and it took four years of brutal warfare to expose this lie.

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Juneteenth was a celebration in 1865 as the last owned Americans were freed, and we should continue to celebrate this move closer to our founding ideals. However, this celebration should also motivate us to continue moving toward a fuller, more honest embrace of the ideal of human equality and its implementation. Where inequality exists, our national ideal, based on our biblical revelation, is to struggle to make real that we are all created equal. As Rev. King knew all too well, this will take a long time, but all that we do for equality will put us on the right side of history and of our Creator. Juneteenth is a celebration not only for African Americans, but for all Americans. Slavery ended, but the fight for equality continues.

JUNE EVENTS

Thur. 3 rd	Rev. Randy will participate in the monthly online meeting of HEADS Up – Hatfield Embraces Acceptance and Dismantles Stigma – at 6:30pm.
Fri. 4 th	Smith Academy graduation.
Mon 7 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly online 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.
Thur. 10 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry at 5:30pm.
Sun. 13 th	Church Service moves from 10:00am to its new start time of 9:30am. Fanfare Brass Band concert at the church at 1:00pm.
Mon. 14 th	Monthly online meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm
Sat. 19 th	Juneteenth celebration of the end of slavery in the United States.
Sun. 20 th	Father's Day.
Mon. 21 st	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Fri. 25 th	64 th anniversary of the United Church of Christ.

REGULAR GATHERINGS – Yoga and Choir are on hold for in-person gatherings until further notice.

Sundays: Worship Service begins at 10:00am online and in person. Sunday School at 9:30am online.

Tuesdays: Yoga classes are offered every Tuesday in the church parlor at 5:30pm – **Now in person at the church.**

Wednesdays: Hatha Yoga classes take place every Wednesday at 6:00pm.

Thursdays: Choir rehearses in the sanctuary at 6:30pm.

SHARED PASTORATE

Rev. Randy has entered a shared pastorate with the Hatfield and Sunderland churches. If you have any concerns or comments about the shared pastorate at any point going forward, please feel free to contact Rev. Randy directly, or contact our congregation's Pastoral Relations Committee members, Eli Bell and Maureen Burris.

This arrangement means that we have agreed to a change of time for our Sunday worship. **Beginning on Sunday, June 13th, we will begin our Service at 9:30am in Hatfield.** I will then leave after the Service to be in Sunderland to hold their Service starting at 11:00am. Please make a note of this change. Thank you.

FYI

Boundary Awareness Training is required of all UCC pastors. I have enrolled in the online training course that is offered in June on the 3rd, 10th and 17th.

UCC'S 64TH ANNIVERSARY

The United Church of Christ (UCC) denomination was born on June 25, 1957. The church origin story explains its way: "[The UCC] binds in presently covenant with nearly 6,500 congregations approximately 1,800,000 members. One of the youngest American denominations, its background also makes it one of the oldest in Protestantism.



The United Church of Christ, a united and uniting church, was born on June 25, 1957 out of a combination of four groups. Two of these were the Congregational Churches of the English Reformation

with Puritan New England roots in America, and the Christian Church with American frontier beginnings. These two denominations were concerned for freedom of religious expression and local autonomy and united on June 17, 1931 to become the Congregational Christian Churches.

The other two denominations were the Evangelical Synod of North America, a 19th-century German-American church of the frontier Mississippi Valley, and the Reformed Church in the United States, initially composed of early 18th-century churches in Pennsylvania and neighboring colonies, unified in a Coetus in 1793 to become a Synod. The parent churches were of German and Swiss heritage, conscientious carriers of the Reformed and Lutheran traditions of the Reformation, and united to

form the Evangelical and Reformed Church on June 26, 1934.”

Four separate denominations merged to form two denominations that further merged to form the one United Church of Christ, thus the moniker of “a united and uniting church.”

BRASS BAND CONCERT

Fanfare Brass Band is going to set up in front of the church’s Main Street entrance. People will need to bring their own blankets and lawn chairs to set up on the grass/parking lot outside. Anthony Tracia is going to also live-stream it from the church’s iPad in case anyone wants to watch from home. The concert will take place on Sunday, June 13th at 1:00pm. The rain date will be Saturday, June 19th at 1:00pm. This is a free concert.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE ON-LINE STUDY GROUP

The Massachusetts Bible Society’s past Executive Director, Rev. Anne Robertson, has authored a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. New Testament. If you would like the Bible, I encourage you to join us, please send me an email



send you the login information for our Zoom meetings. We have just begun to read the New Testament so this is a great time to start Bible study, and since it’s online anyone can join from anywhere.

We are reading Volume III on the to become more comfortable with for Bible study. If you would like to (randyc1897@gmail.com) and I will

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The Conference has begun a prayer shawl ministry. They have asked local congregations to make the shawls, pray over them and then send people who do good for the church, members has offered to help with this making the shawls. If you are interested, please contact Rev. Randy.



them to the Conference to be shared with communities and others. One of our ministry and to get novices going on

GIFT CARDS

Big Y and *Stop and Shop* gift card sales are a continuing fundraiser of our congregation. Due to the fact that fewer of us are attending church in person during the pandemic, our sales of these gift cards have declined. Linda makes it as easy as possible to pick-up the cards at her home. Give her a call to arrange a day and time; Linda places them in her mailbox; you leave your payment there; and it’s all done. Please contact Linda M. if you can help with this church fundraiser. The church earns 5% on all sales. Thank you.

REAL FOLKS

“A few reminders: We will not be having a food sale during town elections in May. We are still in a pause due to COVID 19. Do not leave items on the back porch, church kitchen, or in the church balcony. At this time we have no plans for a sale. Let’s stay connected. Call someone to say hello. 2020 Real Folks’ Program has phone numbers of members. See you in church. Marty Z.”

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Committee Chairpersons:

Benevolence, Amy N.

Christian Education, Anita W.

Church Moderator, Amy N.

Deacons, Jeff F.

Music Minister, Anthony T.

Real Folks Society, Martha Z.

Trustees, Jonathan B.

