

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2020

March

No. 3

Ordinary Blessings in a Season of Extraordinary Blessing

It was a beautiful Spring-like Sunday afternoon in February so Sharon and I took our dog for a walk around South Deerfield. A lot of other people had the same idea. We ran into people we hadn't had the chance to talk with for quite a while. The dog was not all that happy with the frequent stops, but we eventually finished our lap.

One of our first encounters was with a friend who owns a bookstore in town. He and his wife have an eclectic group of friends. It makes sense since they were always trying to build community in small, personal ways.

I remember once when they opened an art space in town. Out in front of the property they landscaped an area for people who were walking by to just sit down and talk with one another.

This is sort of how I ran into my old friend on this sunny February afternoon. He was sitting on a bench out in front of his home with a friend. This is when he pointed across the street to the Colonial era cemetery.

His wife had passed recently. She worked with the town Historical Society. In her memory, the group placed a granite bench in the cemetery. In a fitting tribute, they honoured her by giving people a place to sit down and spend time with one another.

My friend also introduced me to his friend, the one who was sitting with him on the bench in the sun. He's a retired archaeology professor. He's now volunteering with Deerfield's Historical Society.

He had learned that I am a pastor in Hatfield. Hatfield and Deerfield shared a common border in the days before Whately was incorporated. In the Colonial period, settlers moved north up the Connecticut River from Connecticut, and Deerfield for the longest time was the settlement located farthest to the north in our river valley.

From him I learned that an old Native American trail that was also used by the Colonists, that connected what is now Old Deerfield with Hatfield, passed along what is now Mill Village Road in Deerfield. As I sit typing this newsletter article, I am looking out at Mill Village Road.

The route I take between home and church has been traveled by Native Americans and Colonists for

hundreds of years. I like the thought of being so close to this trail and the history of this place and its peoples. It reminds me that the way I see things now is not the way they have always been or will be. My perspective is but a snapshot of a much larger picture. This helps to keep one openminded.

I mention these random and pleasant encounters because today, February 25th, the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that Americans should brace for the likelihood that the coronavirus will spread to communities in the United States. It is no longer a question of *if* this will happen, but of *when*.

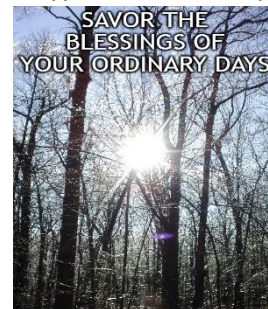
I assume the next important question is how bad will it be? As of today, it is reported that the coronavirus has infected nearly 80,000 people in 37 countries, causing at least 2,600 deaths. Who knows how this will play out in our backyard? Will we be obligated or choose to be more isolated from our neighbours? Will we look at each other differently and see encounters with others as dangerous?

These are not idle questions any longer. The pragmatic investors in the stock market are taking note of what could happen. Yesterday the Dow dropped 1,000 points and right now it is down another 800.

I do not want to be a pessimist or alarmist, hopefully this is only a hypothetical example, but however this will unfold, it is a reminder to appreciate ordinary like Sunday walks and happenings.

often we only count our ordinary once they are gone.

Maybe a constructive Lenten discipline would be to offer thanks to God for overlooked blessings. Maybe it could open our eyes to new perspectives like my now seeing ordinary Mill Village Road differently. And then maybe this would make us more open to the extraordinary blessing offered to all by a crucified Saviour. And this, God willing, we can do together as the blessing of our church community. May Lent give us the chance to see differently.



MARCH EVENTS

Sun. 1 st	Association Youth Group meets at the Southampton Congregational Church at 5:30pm.
Mon. 2 nd	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group meets from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 3 rd	MA Presidential Primary voting day.
Wed. 4 th	Lenten Discussion Series: Rev. Mick Comstock at the Conway Grammar School at 7:00pm.
Sat. 7 th	Don't forget to move your clocks AHEAD one hour before retiring for the night.
Sun. 8 th	Ecclesiastical Council for Carol Bull at the Haydenville Congregational Church at 3:00pm.
Mon. 9 th	Volunteer opportunity at the Western MA Food Bank from 1 – 4:00pm.
Tue. 10 th	Board of Deacons meets at 6:00pm.
Wed. 11 th	Board of Trustees meets at 7:00pm. Lenten Discussion Series: Rev. Candi Ashenden at the Montague Congregational Church at 7:00pm.
Thur. 12 th	Rev. Randy will attend the Clergy Committee of Practice lunch in Hadley. Rev. Randy will attend the Association Church and Ministry meeting in Amherst at 5:30pm.
Sat. 14 th	Southern New England Conference's Super Saturday at Minnechaug Regional High School in Wilbraham from 8:00am – 4:00pm.
Mon. 16 th	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group meets from 7 – 8:00pm.
Wed. 18 th	Lenten Discussion Series: Rev. Randy at the Whately Congregational Church at 7:00pm
Sun. 22 nd	<i>One Great Hour of Sharing</i> offering accepted.
Tue. 24 th	Real Folks "Mystery Dinner." Meet at the church at 6:00pm for further instruction.
Wed. 25 th	Lenten Discussion Series: Rev. Sherril Willis at our church at 7:00pm.
Mon. 30 th	<i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group meets from 7 – 8:00pm.

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.

THE SEASON OF LENT

Lent is the 40-day period of spiritual preparation culminating in the mysteries of the Last Supper, Jesus' crucifixion and His death, and anticipating the wondrous mystery of His resurrection. Its 40-day duration is based on Jesus' 40 days in the desert. Jesus is grapple with the implications of His God. He struggles with the meaning and revelation. During Lent, we are asked to deeper into our spiritual calling as opportunities to meditate upon the Him. It is hoped that these 40 days will we will not take our faith for granted, that we will be challenged by the perfect love and sacrifice of our crucified Saviour.



driven into the desert's solitude to baptism revelation that He is the Son of purpose of His life in the light of God's do the same. We are encouraged to dig Christians. We are offered additional person of Jesus and our relationship with lead to reexamination and renewal, that

LENTEN DISCUSSION SERIES

With this in mind, our congregation joins neighbouring churches for the annual Lenten Discussion Series. The theme of this year's gatherings is *Wondering What God May Think*. We will meet on Lenten Wednesdays at a different church each week with a different presenter and topic. The flier is included below. I hope you will choose to make these gatherings a part of your Lenten practice.

Our church is hosting this gathering on the 25th. We need to provide refreshments for those attending. A light collation follows each gathering. If you could help by bringing some plate to share or a beverage, it will be appreciated. Thank you.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

Bible study is another useful tool of spiritual discernment. The biblical words convey the eternal Word of God. When we devote time to the reading and study of the Bible, the Word of God has a better chance to speak to us. Bible reading, and also Bible study are excellent tools of Lenten spiritual practice.



The Massachusetts Bible Society's Executive Director Rev. Anne Robertson has authored a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. If you have ever wanted to know more about the Bible in general, this study group may be what you are looking for. Why not pop in and see what it's about? If you like it, you can buy the books at that time or borrow the set we have in the church's library. We'd love to see you.

SUPER SATURDAY GATHERING

And yet another opportunity for Lenten growth is the *Super Saturday* gathering. From worship to learning to building community, these events can help us broaden and strengthen our faith and our church. I hope others from the congregation will join me in Wilbraham.

Twice a year the Conference pulls together an amazing group of presenters who offer a myriad of topics from which to choose. The day begins with worship and a special guest speaker. This year Rabbi Elan Babchuck will start off our day. Rabbi Babchuck is the founding directory of the GLEAN Network, a network for faith leaders who seek to reimagine the role of religion in an ever-changing world. He serves also as the Director of Innovation at CLAL, which is a think-tank focused on the future of faith in America.

There are so many presentations to choose from that *Super Saturday* will take place at the Minnechaug Regional High School in Wilbraham. I have already registered for my morning and afternoon sessions. If you would like more information about the gathering, please follow this link: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/12792138?month=3&year=2020&day=1&display=m>. If you would then like to register and attend, please click on this link: www.sneucc.org/supersatreg.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the development ministries of offering, we are planting are investing in communities education to girls and boys, through vocational training, and seeing people through to families with skills to support neighbors, and participating offer dignity to all. These are offering touches God's children, in addition to disaster relief and refugee initiatives. Through our generosity, the world is a better place. But more is needed. We have an opportunity to plant seeds into the lives of others. Be a co-worker with God. Building, planting, watering...and trusting that God gives growth to all good gifts shared in faith. Donations will be accepted through March 22nd. Please make checks payable to "FCC Benevolence Fund" and write OGHS on the memo line. Thank you for your partnership and generosity.



REAL FOLKS MYSTERY DINNER

Every year the women of Real Folks go on a *Mystery Dinner*. They gather at the church and then they drive off to an unknown restaurant for a great meal and even greater company. The ladies will meet at 6PM and then off they go following the lead car. If you would like to attend this year's *Mystery Dinner*, please speak to Mary at church.

ASSOCIATION YOUTH GROUP

The Hampshire Association Youth Group will gather at the Southampton Congregational Church on Sunday, March 1st at 5:30pm. The gathering concludes at 7:30pm.

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 help our neighbours who struggle to feed their families. Please speak with Linda about this.

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ELECTION

Rev. Don Morgan shared this story at a recent gathering: When a Methodist is claiming authority, she says, "The bishop said ..." When a Roman Catholic is claiming authority, she says, "The Pope said ..." When a member of the UCC is claiming authority, she says, "In my opinion ..."

It is never the business of church to tell anyone how to vote, but we can encourage you to vote as a privilege and responsibility of our national democracy. The Massachusetts primary is on Tuesday, March 3rd.

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.

SANCTUARY CLOCK

In the 1890's, the Real Folks group donated an E. Howard Gallery Clock to the church. It has been repaired and restored by *The British Clock Maker* in Newfane, Vermont. This clock is an heirloom that the congregation is proud to own. Accordingly, we are budgeting the funds to now maintain this restored clock. If you would like to help with a donation, your generosity will be appreciated.

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

Facebook: www.facebook.com/First-Congregational-Church-of-Hatfield-UCC

Pastor: Rev. Randy Calvo 413-824-1630 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 350TH

The town's 350th Committee is looking for farms, even dogs and horses. They will be. The Committee is hoping to print an anniversary book. Please contact Cher Nicholas at CherNicholas@comcast.net.



old photos of town buildings, people, copied and returned to you. The book. Please contact Cher Nicholas at CherNicholas@comcast.net.

The Committee is taking reservations for a walking tour of historic homes of Hatfield. It will take place on April 25, 2020 and is limited to 35 participants. They are sure this will be filled. I've already signed-up. If you would like to participate, please contact Cher Nicholas at the email above.

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

April 25, 2020 – Historic Homes of Hatfield Walking Tour
May 31, 2020 – Incorporation Day and The Crossing of the CT River
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 or follow us on Facebook @Hatfield350th.

2020 - 23rd Annual Lenten Discussion Series - 2020

Wondering What God May Think

February 26th – Ash Wednesday.

All are invited to join at the Montague Congregational Church for a church service at 7PM.

March 4th

First session offered by Rev. Mick Comstock
at the Conway Grammar School at 7PM
Session Title: Asking what God Thinks

March 11th

Second session offered by Rev. Dr. Candice Ashenden
at the Montague Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: Micah Makes It Simple

March 18th

Third session offered by Rev. Randy Calvo
at the Whately Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: History as Prophet Is a Son of a Gun

March 25th

Fourth session offered by Rev. Sherril Willis
at the Hatfield Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: Is Loyalty Underrated?

April 1st

Fifth session offered by Rev. Dr. Cynthia Crosson-Harrington
At the Sunderland Congregational Church at 7PM
Session Title: Mary of Magdala: Prostitute, Priestess or Prophet

Refreshments will be served after each gathering by the host parish.

In case of inclement weather, please check our FaceBook page or call about a possible cancellation.