

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2021

March

No. 3

## So Many Opportunities

As I write this newsletter article, I think back to this morning and shoveling the driveway after yesterday's new snowfall. I think back to earlier this afternoon and my walk with the dog over snow laden paths through the woods. I love winter snow. If it's going to be winter, let there be snow.



But winter ends this month and spring arrives on the 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:37am. Spring is a special time of renewal and growth. And March offers us many chances of the same when it comes to our church and our faith.

I won't spend much time on this since it is discussed and outlined below, but several local congregations have joined together to present our 24<sup>th</sup> annual **Lenten Discussion Series**. These often delve into unexpected Lenten associations. It is worthwhile to up-end the staid expectations of our Lenten journey. Why not walk with others on these Wednesday evenings and see what we may have left unexplored?

The Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ offers semi-annual **Super Saturday** gatherings. They, like most everything else, have moved from in-person to online, but they remain broadly inspiring. The scope of offerings amazes me, and the quality of their keynote speakers is impressive.

Due to the fact that online gatherings can become tedious only because of the method not the content, this usual one-day event is spread out over two consecutive Saturdays. I have already registered for the sessions that interest me. If you would like to refresh your spiritual palate, check out the offerings for this spring's **Super Saturday** at the link provided below.

When the Conference pools its resources, gatherings such as **Super Saturday** can be offered. When the United Church of Christ pools all of its resources, we can accomplish wondrous things through our shared generosity as we support the annual Lenten appeal of the **One Great Hour of Sharing**.

**One Great Hour of Sharing** is part of Our Church's Wider Mission. It is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. **One Great Hour of Sharing** also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

If you would like to help the church practice what we preach and help show the authenticity of our proclamation, then I invite you to consider a donation to this worthy effort. Please mark your offerings with "OGHS" so that it is directed to the right place – and thank you.

March also brings Lent to its final, climactic week, a week we call holy. On **Palm Sunday**, palms will be distributed prior and during our worship. They remind us of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but they also foreshadow that these very same people will be the ones screaming, "Crucify, crucify Him." Faith is not about the optics. It's about the conviction of belief in Jesus and what He stands for, not what we wish He would stand for.

This is my chance to plug **Bible Study**. We meet on alternate weeks for one hour online. The Bible is the recorded history of our faith. It's not the entirety of our faith nor is it inerrant, but it is the record of the spiritual efforts of generations of believers, and we hold its message to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is not a book to be left on a shelf if we truly wish to know Jesus better and what He expects of us, His followers.

During March alone, there are many ways in which to reclaim, live and enliven our faith, but it is up to each of us to choose to do so. In the spirit of approaching Spring, in the spirit of Lent's renewal of faith, I ask that you consider sharing in these gifts of the church. Sunday worship will always be at the center of our church-lives, but there is so much more in orbit around it. Maybe try and explore these other opportunities to be church.

## MARCH EVENTS

Mon. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Church Council online meeting at 7:00pm.
Wed. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Online Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. Rev. Sherril -presenter.
Mon. 8 <sup>th</sup>	At 5:30pm Rev. Randy will participate in the online monthly meeting of HEART – Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together. Monthly online meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Wed. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Online Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. Rev. Randy – presenter.
Thur. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will participate in the monthly meeting of the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry online meeting at 5:30pm.
Sat. 13 <sup>th</sup>	Online SNEC UCC <i>Super Saturday</i> event beginning with worship at 9:00am. Please remember to turn your clocks AHEAD one hour before retiring for the night. <i>One Great Hour of Sharing Offering</i> will be accepted.
Sun. 14 <sup>th</sup>	
Mon. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Online Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. Rev. Cynthia – presenter.
Thur. 18 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will participate in the monthly online meeting of HEADS Up – Hatfield Embraces Acceptance and Dismantles Stigma – at 6:30pm.
Sat. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Second weekend of the online SNEC UCC <i>Super Saturday</i> event.
Tue. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Monthly online meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Wed. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Online Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. Rev. Rob – presenter.
Sun. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Palm Sunday. Distribution of the palms outside of church prior to the Service.
Mon 29 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.

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

Sundays: Worship Service begins at 10:00am. Sunday School at 9:30am.

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.

## SHARED PASTORATE

The shared pastorate agreement between the Hatfield and Sunderland Congregational Churches, UCC commences on March 1<sup>st</sup>. The congregations accepted their respective Sunday worship Service times of 9:30am in Hatfield and 11:00am in Sunderland. For a while, a combined live-streamed Service will take place at 10:00am. Once Sunderland is ready to start their own Services the revised times will go into effect. Again, thank you for your flexibility in allowing for this to come to fruition. If you have any concerns or comments about the shared pastorate, please feel free to contact Rev. Randy directly, or contact our congregation's Pastoral Relations Committee members, Eli Bell and Maureen Burris.

## SEASON OF LENT

The season of Lent's 40 days are a penitential season. This means they are a time of introspection and spiritual evaluation. We are challenged to look at our lives by focusing on the final days of Jesus' life. His complete devotion to us inspires us to contemplate our devotion to Jesus. He was willing to suffer and die for us. How have we responded to such a loving devotion in our faith and in how we lead our lives?

Lent is a sacred opportunity to not dwell on our faults, but to move past them and to become better Christians. Lent is a time of growth. How appropriate that its 40 days are the ones that coincide with the transition from winter to spring. I hope and pray that we will all take advantage of Lent to grow closer to Christ and His church, and to explore more deeply our spiritual selves.

One way in which the church is here to help with this growth is through our **Lenten Discussion Series**. The flier with all the dates, topics and presenters is found below. The general theme of the series is "Even the cherry blossom falls ..." Each presenter will take this theme in some unique direction.

Due to the on-going pandemic, all these gatherings will be held online. I will miss meeting in person, but thank God for what Zoom makes possible. A new log-in will be required each week and it will be emailed to all who

receive this newsletter. You are invited to share this log-in with others in the hopes that they too will discover the power of Lent's transformation.

The last Sunday of the month is **Palm Sunday** and the beginning of Holy Week. For those who choose to worship online, palms will be distributed prior to the Service (time yet to be determined). For those worshipping in person at the church, the palms will be distributed during the Service.

### **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*. We are reading 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. If you would like to join us, please send me an email ([randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com)) and I will send you the log-in information for our Zoom meeting. As mentioned above, Lent is the perfect time to deepen our relationship with Christ. Reading, studying and discussing His Word can only help.



### **350<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY PARADE ... **AND FLOAT!****

The pandemic-delayed Town of Hatfield's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade will take place on Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup>. The parade will be held in conjunction with the annual Memorial Day parade on the final day the town is 350! In order to avoid people congregating in the center of town, the parade will venture throughout town so that people may watch from their homes. The church has been invited to be a part of the parade by entering a float. We thank Board of Trustee member Jonathan Stanisiewski of Tri-State Truck and Trailer for donating the use of a flatbed trailer. We will need to decorate the trailer with poster work and bunting, and create a representation of our church. If you would like to help with this fun project, please let Rev. Randy know so that we can get started on our plans and preparations. Thank you.

### **SUPER SATURDAY**

Registration is now open for the March 13 & 20 Super Saturday. This online event features workshops, networking opportunities and a keynote from noted rabbi and entrepreneur Rabbi Elan Babchuck. Rabbi Babchuck is the Founding Director of GLEAN for faith leaders who seek to re-imagine changing world yearning for meaning, Babchuck will speak at both Saturday leadership development and networking sponsored by the Southern New England Conference. Participants can choose from over 50 workshops covering a variety of topics related to church life, sign up for networking lunches, register for one-on-one professional coaching sessions, browse the virtual marketplace, and celebrate in worship. More information is available at: <https://www.sneucc.org/newsdetail/super-saturday-registration-open-14978675>.



### **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING**

*One Great Hour of Sharing* is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the development of Church Ministries. taken from Isaiah hunger or thirst, wind nor sun shall he who has pity on and by springs of them." Donations to the fund at [www.ucc.org/giving/donate-now/general-donation](http://www.ucc.org/giving/donate-now/general-donation) or by sending them through our congregation with a clearly marked reference to OGHS. Thank you.



disaster, refugee, and ministries of the Christ within Wider This year's theme is 49:10: "They shall not neither scorching strike them down, for them will lead them, water will guide may be made directly

### **BROADCAST VOLUNTEERS ABSOLUTELY NEEDED**

Mark Gelotte has run the broadcast from the church building every Sunday since we returned to in-person worship in October. We cannot expect one person to perform this task every week. We must have other

volunteers. Mark is ready to train others to help so that we will be able to continue to live-stream-broadcast the church Service during the pandemic and even afterwards. So far Morgan Whidden and Hugh Massey have come forward to help. Please contact Rev. Randy if you can help with this church ministry. Your help is needed!

### 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.

### 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:

*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.*

## 2021 - 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Lenten Discussion Series - 2021



# Even the Cherry Blossom Falls ...

### March 3<sup>rd</sup>

Second session offered by Rev. Sherril Willis at 7PM. Member of the Sunderland Congregational Church, UCC. Session Title: Thank God, the Blossoms Fall!

### March 10<sup>th</sup>

Third session offered by Rev. Randy Calvo at 7PM. Pastor of the Hatfield Congregational Church, UCC. Session Title: Be brave Pandora and open the jar again.

### March 17<sup>th</sup>

Fourth session offered by Rev. Dr. Cynthia Crosson-Harrington at 7PM. Pastor of the Whately Congregational Church, UCC. Session Title: Beauty in the Broken Places

### March 24<sup>th</sup>

Fifth session offered by Rev. Dr. Robert Gormbley at 7PM. Interim Pastor of the Shelburne Congregational Church, UCC. Session Title: Failure Isn't Fatal

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Due to the continuing pandemic, all sessions will be offered live-streamed. Please send an email to your pastor or church office for **EACH** week's unique Zoom log-in link.