

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2022

March

No. 3

## Repent as Recommitment

I am sitting in my office in February writing this March newsletter article. Writing about March events lead me to thoughts of Spring. And Spring brings to mind the Season of Lent. The word *Lent* is derived from the Old English word for *long*. Maybe you can see *Lent* in *length*. It ties in with Spring's lengthening days.

The ancient Jewish religious feast days also began in association with the nature rhythms of an agrarian people who saw God most powerfully in the cycles of the seasons. The Book of Exodus commands the nation to gather three times annually at the barley harvest, the first fruits harvest, and at the "ingathering at the end of the year." (23:16) Eventually, these agrarian themes took on theological colorings.

Likewise, while the word *Lent* derives from its calendar association with the season of Spring, its theological impact is what drives our 40 days of introspection, devotion and hopefully recommitment. But back to thoughts of Spring ... As I sit in my office, the sun is streaming through the windows and it looks like a beautiful sweat-shirt day outside. Then I look down at the task bar on the bottom of my computer screen and I see it's only 15° out there. There is a definite disconnect between my expectations and what is on the other side of the window.

And the same disconnect may happen when it comes to how we think about Lent. We may be imagining one thing, but Lent may surprise and lead us in another direction. In the first Gospel, the first words Jesus proclaims are: "Repent and believe in the good news." (Mark 1:15) We may hear those words with a preconceived notion of what *repent* means, but I sometimes wonder if that notion places the cart before the horse.

Let me try to explain. Keeping with this analogy, the horse is the original meaning of repent. The Greek word for *repent* means literally "know after." Repent signifies the changing of one's mind, intentions or plans. To change one's mind means a person has reflected on her or his first knowledge, has reconsidered a first

opinion. Repent introduces a new form of thought and feeling. It is to "know after."

Thus, repent means to introduce a new form of thought. The cart, according to our analogy, is what evolves as a consequence of this new thought. Upon reflection and reconsideration, a person looks back at the original thought or feeling and the memory is accompanied by regret, sorrow or shame because of that former opinion or attitude. (I share this with you from the *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, Ceslas Spicq, 1994, Vol. 2, p. 471+)

A common perspective on repent is this idea of regret, sorrow or shame. It's the notion that we have sinned and offended God, and to repent means to acknowledge the offensiveness of our lives and to seek forgiveness. But this is the cart.

To keep the horse in front of the cart we need to first repent by seeking change, by looking at our misplaced priorities, and "know after" by changing them so that we may recommit to our faith-lives. Repent as regret is not the primary focus. Repent as seeking moral change in our lives, a refreshed start, a recommitment to Jesus – that's the priority!

Repent moves faith to a place of emphasis and influence in our lives. We may regret we weren't there before, but the main point is we are now. Repent is a creative force more than a feeling of guilt. If we reverse this by placing the cart in front of the horse, we turn Lent into a backward-looking season rather than a creative one, a season dwelling on regret for past sins rather than changing us and making a difference now.

Jesus' first words in the first Gospel are repent and believe in the good news. That is, repent so as to allow the power of the gospel to change us, which is the good news of being cherished by God who loves us so much that even the cross makes sense (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). Lent's repent gives us the holy opportunity to appreciate this transformative mystery more deeply.

*Lent* IS A TIME TO  
**GROW**  
CLOSER TO JESUS

## MARCH EVENTS

Tue. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm.
Wed. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ash Wednesday – the beginning of Lent. Rev. Randy will attend the worship Service at the Whately Congregational Church at 7:00pm. All are welcome.
Mon. 7 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEART (Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together) at 5:30pm.
Tue. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. (Information flier below)
Sat. 12 <sup>th</sup>	Standard Time ends. Remember to move your clocks forward one hour before retiring for the night – you don't want to miss church in the morning 😊
Sun. 13 <sup>th</sup>	New Member Sunday. Annual meeting (rescheduled) of Real Folks at 10:45am.
Mon. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly online meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Wed. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. (Information flier below)
Sat. 19 <sup>th</sup>	Conference's <i>Super Saturday</i> event from 9:00am – 3:30pm.
Tue. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Monthly Clergy Brown Bag Lunch at noon. Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Wed. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. (Information flier below)
Sun. 27 <sup>th</sup>	<i>One Great Hour of Sharing Offering</i> accepted
Mon. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 30 <sup>th</sup>	Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. (Information flier below)

## 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 – **Now in person at the church.**

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

Thursdays: Choir rehearses in the sanctuary at 7:00pm – **Now in person at the church.**

## CHURCH COVID POLICIES

The CDC expects the number of COVID cases to continue to decrease in March. This will, hopefully, allow us to maintain our hybrid worship format of offering both in person and online access to our worship Services.

The Church Council has based its mask policy on the number of cases in Hampshire County. If the cases rose above 10 per day per 100,000 people, we would require masks in the church building. The numbers are higher than to attend worship Services in person. When they fall again, masks will again be optional. Additionally, the Trustees have opened a portion of the balcony for additional seating, which will help us maintain social distancing in the building. The Omicron variant is highly contagious. We, therefore, ask those attending in person to double-mask or to wear a KN95 mask.



Please remember, as well, that all of our worship Services are live-streamed via Zoom. If you are not vaccinated or if you are not feeling well on any given Sunday, please join us online.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping us all as safe as possible.

## LENTEN PREPARATIONS

Lent comes rather late this year. It begins with Ash Wednesday on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Rev. Randy will be participating in the worship Service at the Whately Congregational Church that evening. If you would like to attend, you are more than welcome to join in worship.

The 25<sup>th</sup> annual Lenten Discussion Series will also be held this year. Its general theme is "Anchors in the Storm: Getting through Difficult Times." at 7:00pm at various local churches. These will be social gatherings after the sessions as in years past due to pandemic protocols. More information is shared in the flier below.



Discussions will take place on Lenten Wednesdays offered in person and online. There will be no past due to pandemic protocols. More information is shared in the flier below.

### **EXPLORING THE BIBLE ON-LINE STUDY GROUP**

The Massachusetts Bible Society has published a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. We are reading Volume III on the New 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 add Scripture study to your Lenten regimen, I invite you to join our group. If you would simply like to see what Bible study is like, I'd ask you give us a try. If, for whatever reason, you are interested in exploring the Bible, please send me an email ([randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com)) and I will send you the login information for our Zoom meetings.

### **SUPER SATURDAY INFORMATION**

The Southern New England Conference's *Super Saturday* gathering will take place on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Once again, this needs to be an online-only event. The general theme of the day is "A Future with Hope: Relevant, Prophetic and Transformative." The guest speaker is Sarah B. Drummond who serves as Founding Dean of Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School. There are many, many morning and afternoon workshops to choose from. For more information on the workshop offerings and on registration, please visit:



<https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/super-saturday-15280214>.

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

*One Great Hour of Sharing*, part of Our Church's Wider Mission, 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. For more information, please visit:



[https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/our-churchs-wider-mission/one-great-hour-of-sharing/oghs\\_resources\\_frequently-asked-questions/](https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/our-churchs-wider-mission/one-great-hour-of-sharing/oghs_resources_frequently-asked-questions/). The collection will be accepted on Sunday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your Christian generosity.

### **VISITATIONS**

If you would like me to stop by for a visit, please let me know. I have received both of my vaccination shots and a booster, and I have no problem wearing a mask on top of that. Also, if you or a loved one ends up in the hospital, please let me know so that I can come by for a pastoral visit and a prayer.

### **PIANO AVAILABLE**

If any member of the congregation would like the piano that is located in the church parlor, it is available for the taking on a first come basis. This is the piano the choir used for rehearsals. With the donation of the Grand Piano to the church, which is in the Sanctuary, the electronic keyboard has been moved to the parlor for choir rehearsals. The other piano is no longer needed, but is still a good, working instrument. If you may be interested in it, please contact Ed M., the chair of the Board of Trustees.

### **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.

### **REAL FOLKS SOCIETY / PRAY SHAWL MINISTRY / CHURCH DONATION ENVELOPES**

The Real Folks Society will meet on Sunday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:45am following the church Service. Reports will be read, committee chairs appointed, money disbursements made, and programs for the remainder of the year discussed. Any questions or other new business, contact Marty at 413-247-5453. Prayer shawls should be

delivered to Rev. Randy so we can pass them along to the Conference for distribution. And anyone wishing to have donation envelopes for their church contributions are asked to contact Marty at the above phone number.

Our Church Fair was such an overwhelming success, we are looking for ideas of what could be included to make it even better! Please contact either Linda or Marcia if you have some thoughts. And men, we are including your ideas as well. We do have some talented craftsmen. As you are taking down your Christmas wreaths, swags and/ or outdoor decorations please keep the church in mind. Pine cones, decorations, small ornaments can be used in the cemetery boxes. All the boxes were sold, so we know this is a sought-after item. Also, other decorations such as artificial wreaths, roping, trees, lights etc., in good condition are appreciated.

**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, Jonathan B.*

*Deacons, Jeff F.*

*Music Minister, Anthony T.*

*Real Folks Society, Martha Z.*

*Trustees, Ed M.*

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**2022 - 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Lenten Discussion Series - 2022**

***Anchors in the Storm: Getting through Difficult Times***

**March 2<sup>nd</sup> – Ash Wednesday**

All are invited to join the Whately Congregational Church for a worship service at 7PM. Rev. Linda Rhinehart Neas message: "Ask and You Shall Receive, But What Will You Find?"

**March 9<sup>th</sup>**

First session **at the Hatfield Congregational Church** at 7PM.  
Offered by Rev. Sherril Willis Bridge Pastor of the Conway Congregational Church, UCC  
Session Title: Help, My Anchor Is Too Small!

**March 16<sup>th</sup>**

Second session hosted by the Conway Congregational Church at 7PM at the Conway Elementary School.  
Offered by Rev. David Jones pastor of the Ashfield Congregational Church, UCC  
Session Title: Climbing (Up and Down) the Sycamore Tree Today

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Third session at the Sunderland Congregational Church at 7PM.  
Offered by Rev. Dr. Cynthia Crosson-Harrington pastor of the Whately Congregational Church, UCC  
Session Title: One Soul --- In Need of Repair

**March 30<sup>th</sup>**

Fourth session at the Montague Congregational Church at 7PM.  
Offered by Rev. Randy Calvo pastor of the Hatfield & Sunderland Congregational Churches, UCC  
Session Title: “Repent and believe in the good news”

**April 6<sup>th</sup>**

Fifth session – online only – hosted by the Ashfield Congregational Church at 7PM.  
Offered by Rev. James Koyama pastor of the Montague Congregational Church, UCC  
Session Title: Paul in Prison

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