

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2023

March

No. 3

Lent Is a Chance to Recommit

This year the month of March holds most all of the Season of Lent. I would like to explore Jesus' three Passion predictions as a way for us to engage with this season that confronts us with a crucified Saviour.

Mark is the oldest Gospel, and Matthew and Luke use Mark as the scaffolding as they write their later Gospels. In Mark's Gospel, and copied subsequently in Matthew and Luke, Jesus foretells His death and resurrection on three separate occasions.

The first is at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus has asked His disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29) Peter blurts out, "You are the Messiah." (8:29) Then Jesus tells His closest companions that in Jerusalem He will be rejected, suffer, die and resurrect. This is not at all what "Messiah" implied in a traditional sense. The Messiah is to be David's successor, a warrior strengthened by the power of God. Peter is so disturbed by Jesus' words that he actually rebukes Jesus! (8:32) This leads to one of those especially memorable lines in the Bible when Jesus turns to Peter and says, "Get behind me Satan!" (8:33)

Things obviously did not go well the first time. Jesus tries a second time, and it actually gets worse. The disciples argue among themselves about who is the greatest. (Mark 9:33+) Peter had been recognized as a first among equals. He was the most prominent disciple. After Caesarea Philippi, his status is jeopardized. The eleven others take advantage of this and argue among themselves about privilege and priority, about who is now the greatest among them.

The first prediction was met by Peter's abysmal reaction, which was bad. The second prediction, however, is worse because now all of the disciples are giving evidence that none of them understand what Jesus is revealing to them. How could the third be even worse?

Well, it is. For a third and final time Jesus tells the disciples about what will happen in Jerusalem. This is followed by the request of two

brothers who are disciples, James and John. They ask Jesus secretly for places of honour in His coming kingdom. The old image of Messiah will not recede, but what is more devastating is that the unity of the disciples has been broken. First it was Peter alone. Second it was all the disciples. Now the disciples have turned against each other. (Mark 10:41)

Jesus is seven verses away from entering Jerusalem. Jesus knows what this will entail. He continues forward even though the ones closest to Him have failed miserably. No one understands what He is about to do. No one will let go of old images of Messianic power to make room for Jesus' radically new revelation.

As Jesus is about to be handed over to His enemies, even the unity of the Twelve is threatened. Who will remain to continue His gospel proclamation? How will Jesus have made any sort of lasting impression if even His closest followers cannot comprehend Him and who will turn against each other pursuing false honours?

And yet Jesus continues forward. Jesus Himself is committed to His ministry regardless of others. Jesus is steadfast because Jesus believes in His ministry and its message. As we enter into the reflective season of Lent, may we ponder Jesus' example of faithful commitment. Jesus did not waver even as He faced the apparent futility of His life's work. The thought that His message and ministry may have ended with Him must have tormented Jesus as a very real part of His Passion, but Jesus never faltered. Jesus' commitment never weakened.

Lent is a time of reflection and hopefully renewal. We have the example of Jesus' constancy before us. Can it inspire us to deepen our commitment to Christ, to practice what we believe with a determined regularity? Jesus persevered when others failed. Can we learn from the mistakes of the disciples and be there for Jesus, and be there to support each other? Can we use Lent's 40 days to appreciate Jesus' commitment and may that in turn help grow our commitment.

MARCH EVENTS

Wed. 1 st	Lenten Discussion Series hosted by our church at 7:00pm in person and online.
Thur. 2 nd	Rev. Randy will attend a Committee on Ministry conference from 3:30 – 5:00pm.
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.
Wed. 8 th	Lenten Discussion Series at the Sunderland church at 7:00pm in person and online.
Sat. 11 th	Remember to turn your clocks forward before retiring for the night for <i>Daylight Savings Time</i> .
Mon. 13 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Wed. 15 th	Lenten Discussion Series at the Whately church at 7:00pm in person and online.
Sun. 19 th	<i>One Great Hour of Sharing</i> Offering accepted.
Mon. 20 th	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Wed. 22 nd	Lenten Discussion Series at the Shelburne church at 7:00pm in person and online, Rev. Randy presenting.
Thur. 23 rd	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEADS Up at 6:30pm.
Mon. 27 th	Church Council meeting at 7:00pm.
Tue. 28 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
We. 29 th	Lenten Discussion Series at the North Hadley church at 7:00pm in person and online.

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 would like, the COVID vaccines and lower the risks of this pandemic virus, and the flu. Accordingly, face coverings continue to monitor the COVID numbers as they hopefully continue to decrease as Spring approaches.



while the numbers remain higher than we COVID treatments have combined to However, risks remain for RSV infections are now optional. The Council will

SEASON OF LENT

Lent encompasses all of March this year. It is a sacred time to dive deeper into the meaning of a crucified Saviour. It is a season of Repentance is the discipline of where and how we could better live Jesus. This obviously implies but that is not the endgame of Lent. upon this recognition. It is to more of Christ on the cross and what this for all of us, and how we might



repentance leading to renewal. looking at one’s life and seeing into our calling as followers of recognizing our moral faults, It is the renewal that follows deeply appreciate the sacrifice reveals about the love of God 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, Word, meditation and Communion to share in the mystery of Christ among us. There is Bible study as noted below and there is also the private reading of Holy Scripture at home. On our website, I also post a Daily Lenten Blog that will be based on the given biblical readings for each particular day. (www.hatfield-church.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. Our church hosts on March 1st in the sanctuary to enable us to meet in person and online, and I have the chance to present in Shelburne on the 22nd. [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.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING



“It’s time to share. One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women’s empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.”

Click here to watch a short video about this Offering: https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/oghs_2023_video-1080p.mp4

Offerings will be accepted on Sunday, March 19th. Envelopes will be available at church in March. If paying by check, please make them payable to “FCC Benevolence Fund.” And thank you.

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

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

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.



ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The Hampshire Association Annual Meeting will take place in person and online at Edwards Church in Northampton on Sunday, May 21st. I bring this up at this meeting rather than only the pastor. (We you’d like after the meeting.)



Also, the Association is now canvassing local to serve the wider church through either the Ministry (COM). I have found my time on the COM to be deeply meaningful. It has also offered me the opportunity to meet members of other congregations and to interact with those different churches. We are in covenant with other congregations of the United Church of Christ and serving the Association is one way to put that into practice. If you may be interested in this wider service, please let Rev. Randy know.

now because we should have lay representation could even enjoy a dinner in Northampton if

congregations looking for people who are willing Executive Committee or the Committee on

SUPPORT FOR EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

Tens of thousands of people died in Syria and Turkey, and tens of thousands more are homeless and hungry. Monetary donations may be made through the UCC at <https://support.ucc.org/global-h-o-p-e/turkey-syria-emergency-appeal/donate>

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

March 1st

First session at the Hatfield 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 Sunderland 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.

