

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2019

May

No. 5

How do we see ourselves as church?

Easter Sunday has come and gone, but the church remains within the Easter Season. We continue to celebrate and contemplate the implications of Jesus' resurrection and the promise of our own. Easter is our greatest joy, and also a part of the wonderful mystery that is Jesus Christ. So of course we still return to the message of the empty tomb, and we will for 50 days.

If the tomb is empty, if the dead body of Jesus is not there to be found, and don't be persuaded by speculations that it was misplaced or even devoured on the cross as carrion because then the non-believing witnesses would have been able to raise these objections, then that means that the resurrected Jesus abides with us and among us.

We need to keep Jesus' presence in all of our calculations as Christians and as church. In such cases, it is not only what you or I as a believer can accomplish nor is it only what we as a church community may accomplish. It is what Jesus is able to do through us and with us. Numbers matter, but so does Easter, and Easter is even more important than the numbers.

Last month I listened in on a webinar produced by the UCC for small churches. One of the definitions of a small church is a part time pastor and a weekly attendance under 80 people. According to this classification, we are a small church.

The sub-categories of the small church were of more interest to me. There were three: not yet big; stable small; and smaller church. Let's start with the smaller church. This was defined as a church becoming "smaller." In other words, a church in decline. The smaller-small church talks about what was and what it did. Its focus is on the past. When it plans for the future, it "calendars." It simply tries to repeat what has always been done.

The stable small church speaks about what is and what it is doing. It looks at the present. Its ministry is the planning needed to maintain its spiritual vitality and its contribution to the communities it nurtures whether they be local or global.

The not-yet-big small church dreams. It looks to the future. It ponders what it might do. It engages in strategic planning, which is planning not only to

meet the current needs, but how to be in a position to move forward. It is defined by more than looking at what is. It is motivated by vision, by what can be.



I thought these were helpful designations for us as a small church. They can help us take a better look at ourselves now and discuss who we want to become. In the webinar, they encouraged church members to work together to see if there is a consensus to build upon. The work of church is not a solitary effort. It calls upon all of the members of the community to participate. I'd ask you to read Paul's example of the church as the body of Christ to explain this further – 1 Corinthians 12: 4-27.

It was suggested that congregations look at attendance trajectory, how often visitors join in worship, the impact of the church on the larger community, does the church membership reflect the demographics of the neighbourhoods outside the church, how many members are active in church leadership or organizations, and how engaging is the spiritual life of the congregation.

These are all important questions to be considered by us as members of the church, but we can never forget that it is not only what **we** see, measure, contribute and feel that matters. This is Jesus' church too. The tomb was empty. Jesus is among us. A recurring theme of the resurrection appearances is that Jesus goes unrecognized. He has to say basically, "Here I am." The resurrected Jesus in the church is also often unrecognized.

Sometimes the church is what hides Him. Scandals abound and convince people that Jesus is elsewhere than the institutional church; and sometimes its message is unappealing, outdated and unresponsive; and sometimes people just don't care no matter how hard church tries. Nonetheless, it is up to us, Jesus' co-workers, to say to those outside, to show those outside, that Jesus is here and that Jesus matters, and that begins when we look at ourselves as church and believe and celebrate that the resurrected Jesus abides among us.

MAY EVENTS

Sat. 4 th	Roast Pork Dinner, takes outs 5:00pm, sittings 5:30 to 7:00pm.
Sun. 5 th	Music Sunday at 10:00am.
Tue. 7 th	Rev. Calvo will participate in the Installation Service of Rev. Will Sencabaugh at 3:00pm. Rev. Calvo will participate in the Hatfield Elementary School Council meeting at 3:00pm. The Church Council will meet at 7:00pm.
Wed. 8 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Thur. 9 th	Rev. Calvo will participate in the Hampshire Association Clergy Committee of Practice meeting in Hadley at 12:00pm. Rev. Calvo will participate in the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry meeting at 5:30pm.
Sun. 12 th	Mother's Day. The congregation will honour mothers on their special day.
Mon. 13 th	Volunteer opportunity at the Food Bank from 1 – 4:00pm. Board of Deacons will meet at 5:00pm.
Tue. 14 th	Bible study group will meet in the church parlor from 7 – 8:00pm.
Sat. 18 th	Youth Group flower sale at the church from 9 – 11:00am.
Sun. 19 th	New Members Sunday at 10:00am. Real Folks 150 th anniversary celebration at 1:00pm.
Mon. 20 th	Bible study group will meet from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 21 st	Election Day food sale at Town Hall at 8:30am. Rev. Calvo will participate in the Heads Up meeting at the Elementary School at 6:00pm.
Sun. 26 th	Hatfield's Memorial Day observance
Thur. 30 th	Baccalaureate Service at Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church.

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 rehearsal every Thursday at 6:30pm.

Saturdays: AA meets at the church every Saturday at noon.

ROAST PORK DINNER

The Spring Roast Pork Supper will take place on Saturday, May 4th. Take outs are from 5:-6:30pm and dine in from 5:30-7:00pm. The cost is \$12/ticket, and \$6 for those 10 and younger. Please help promote this great and delicious dinner. You can help by selling tickets, helping out with preparations and serving, or enjoy a great meal and bring a friend! See you there!!

BIBLE STUDY GROUP – May's Theme → The ending, or the short ending, or the long ending?

One way or another, we are going to draw our reading of Mark's Gospel to a conclusion this month. We are going to walk with Jesus to the cross and then we will walk with the women to the empty tomb. There is a lot more going on in these familiar accounts than you may imagine. I would encourage you to visit us for our last two meetings to see what Bible study is all about before we move on to something new.

YOUTH GROUP

Our Youth Group has been meeting with the youth of some of our local congregations in the Hampshire Association. We meet on the first Sunday of the month. This month I have another commitment, but some of the others are heading to the First Congregational Church of Bloomfield, CT for a Youth Revival concert. If any of our young people would like to drive down and attend, I can share the information with you. We will, however, be hosting our next meeting on the first Sunday of June, which involves a light meal, an activity and a bit of a religious lesson. The group usually doesn't meet again until September, but we were thinking of going to

Circus Smirkus, which is Vermont's award winning traveling youth circus. They will be at the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton on July 9th and 10th. More information will follow.

YOUTH GROUP FLOWER SALE

The Youth Group of our congregation is running a flower sale. Order forms are available through any of our members or you may email me at randyc1897@gmail.com and I will send an order form right to you. Orders will be accepted through May 12th and they may be picked-up at the church on Saturday the 18th between 9:30 and 11:00am. Thank you for supporting the efforts of our young people.

TIME WITH CHILDREN VOLUNTEERS?

Every Sunday during our worship Service we have a few moments with our children and youth before they head off for Sunday School. If you have a brief activity or lesson you would like to share with them at that time, I would love to have you come forward. If you have some thoughts, please don't hesitate to reach out to Rev. Randy.

REAL FOLKS HIGH TEA CELEBRATION

Real Folks is celebrating their 150th anniversary with a High Tea on Sunday, May 19th. A luncheon will be served at 1:00pm, and the speaker, Kathleen Gow, will begin her address at 2:00pm. This event must be invitation only to limit the number of participants to 48. The deadline to RSVP is May 10th. Please call Maki at 247-9246 or Marty at 247-5453.

SANCTUARY CLOCK

Speaking of the Real Folks Society, back in the 1860's this group donated an E. Howard Gallery Clock to the church. It is currently in the queue at *The British Clock Maker* in Newfane, Vermont waiting to be repaired and refurbished. Ray and Richard Bates are a father and son team who have been in the high-end clock repair business for over half a century. Their work is in such high demand that it may take up to 9 months for them to be able to start their work on our timepiece. This clock is an heirloom that the congregation should be proud of. Accordingly, we are budgeting the funds to restore this clock to its original condition as part of our congregation's 350th anniversary. The estimated cost is \$2,500 - \$2,800. Real Folks has made a generous pledge toward this cost. We are also asking our members to consider a donation. If you would like to help in this way, your generosity also will be much appreciated.

ELECTION DAY FOOD SALE

We run a food sale fundraiser at Town Hall on Election Day, May 21st. Please bring your donations to Town Hall by 8:30am. Pies, breads, cookies, etc. are all great sellers as people come in to vote. Please wrap and price your donations. This is coordinated by Linda Milewski and JoAnn Petcen. Thanks for your help.

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 benefit those of our neighbours who do not have the ability to put enough food on their tables. Please speak with Linda if you can help.

REQUEST

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, and we appreciate your attentiveness to the needs of others.

CONSIDER MEMBERSHIP AT HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL

If you may like to be a formal member of this church, it begins with an informal meeting with Rev. Calvo and members of the Board of Deacons. We talk about the church, its organization, how things work, and our core values and covenants. Please contact Rev. Calvo if you are interested.

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, Anthony Tracia 781 738-6284

Real Folks Society, Martha Zigmont 413 247-5453

Benevolence, Amy Novak 413 210-3965

Deacons, Mark Gelotte 413-247-9624

Trustees, Jonathan Bardwell 413-530-6262

Church Moderator, Glenda Flynn 413 247-5891

MUSIC SUNDAY

At Hatfield Congregational Church

Sunday, May 5th at 10AM

An all-music Sunday Worship Service

Anthony Tracia, Music Minister

Chancel Choir

and a guest string quartet

All are welcome to come and share in our continuing celebration of Christ's resurrection.

