

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2020

May

No. 5

Our New Life Together

Back in February, the March newsletter article was written prior to the shelter in place recommendations. The COVID-19 cases were increasing at the time and the notion of a pandemic was becoming discussed more frequently, but the drastic measures that we are now living with had not yet become our new normal. I wrote about how extraordinary the ordinary is, but that too often we don't realize this until it is gone.

Now that ordinary is gone, how wonderful it is to think ahead to when we will be able again to enjoy a meal with friends at a crowded restaurant. How much less stressful it will be to go grocery shopping without a mask. Or how about sitting again in church next to people we care about or to strangers.

Right now, though, we live in a different reality. My hope is that this strangeness may change the world for the better. I'm hoping that we have learned to appreciate the gift of each other. I'm hoping in this ongoing Easter Season that we emerge from the darkness, whenever that may be, renewed and ready to begin our new life together.

The direct effects of this pandemic may be in place until 2022, but this worldwide convulsion may end up changing the world for generations. This is a portion of a *New York Times* article printed on April 16, 2020: "When big convulsive economic events happen, the implications tend to take years to play out, and spiral in unpredictable directions. Who would have thought that a crisis that began with mortgage defaults in American suburbs in 2007 would lead to a fiscal crisis in Greece in 2010? Or that a stock market crash in New York in 1929 would contribute to the rise of fascists in Europe in the 1930s?"

We're in the strange and we're heading into the unknown. This pandemic could turn people and nations against each other. We could deteriorate to our most basic survival of the fittest mentality and strategy. It could pit us against each other individually and array nation against nation. It could foster alienation, violence, terrorism and even war. It could unleash our lowest instincts.

Or, hopefully, it will usher in our new life together. It will make appealing our higher calling as created in the image and likeness of God. I don't ever think

that the pure, essential Christian morality of Jesus' "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34) is naively idealistic. I think it is brazenly practical.

War is an extremely impractical use of resources, human and material. And we are at a technological point where war can annihilate everything. Stephen Hawking, the late astrophysicist, believed that we have not had contact with other advanced, extraterrestrial civilizations because they all would destroy themselves when they reached the level of technological competency that would allow for space travel. If this is the end-game of survival of the fittest, it seems to me to be the least logical and most absurdly impractical option available.

I will admit to the rush of endorphins when good news stories are shared, and they are being shared with intentionality in these dark days. If you visit our page, you the links to Krasinski's [Some



FaceBook will see all of John SGN Good

News] Network posts. It's about ordinary and extraordinary acts of kindness done by selfless people and generous corporations. From the local news to the world-wide-web, we see people choosing to be kind and thankful. Around the corner, my neighbour's young daughters drew chalk pictures and messages of hope by our shared mailboxes. How beautiful is that? And if I may, how practical is that?

Our new life together springs from these seeds. Is it too much to hope for? Is kindness and thankfulness so hard to imagine? Think to yourself about the feelings that emerge when you hear of people fighting over toilet paper. Then, think how you feel when you hear the stories of nurses who have placed themselves in dangerous situations on our behalf and who then dance when a COVID patient is released from the hospital. Our better selves are not naive. They are human and humane.

Paul says this to all the baptized: "Christ was raised from the dead ... so [that] we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) As resurrection-people, let us begin our new life together.

MAY EVENTS

Sun. 3 rd	Virtual Hampshire Association Youth Group meeting at 5:30pm.
Mon. 4 th	Virtual Bible study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Sun. 10 th	Mother's Day.
Wed. 13 th	Virtual monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Thur. 14 th	Association Clergy Committee of Practice gathering at noon. (?) Association Committee on Ministry virtual meeting at 5:30pm.
Sat. 16 th	Youth Group flower sale outside the church.
Sun. 17 th	Virtual meeting of the Benevolence Committee at 11:20am.
Mon. 18 th	Virtual Bible study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue. 19 th	Rev. Randy will participate in the virtual HEADS Up meeting at 7:00pm.
Tue. 26 th	Virtual monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Thurs. 28 th	Baccalaureate Service for Smith Academy Seniors postponed to a later date.
Sun. 31 st	Pentecost Sunday. Strengthen the Church Offering accepted. Incorporation Day – Hatfield's 350 th anniversary.

REGULAR GATHERINGS (All in person church gatherings are on hold until further notice.)

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.

"VIRTUAL"

You may have noticed all of the highlighted *virtuals* in this month's calendar. You will see them again below. Public health concerns during the pandemic demand that we continue to maintain social distancing and we have been asked to not meet in groups larger than ten people. Due to the restrictions in place during the pandemic, we have been worshiping and meeting virtually. We live-stream our Services, meetings, Bible study, Sunday School, and Youth Group. Log-in information is sent to everyone on our church's email mailing list. If you would like to be added to that list, please drop me an email at randyc1897@gmail.com. We are posting the recordings of our worship Service, but we do hope that people will join us live so that we may all gather as one just like on a regular Sunday, but in accordance with the constraints of these irregular times.

LIVE-STREAMED WORSHIP SERVICES

Due to the pandemic and the public health restrictions put in place because of it, we have not been able to gather in our church building. We are, however, continuing to gather. We have been conducting our Sunday worship Services in tandem with our sister congregation in Whately. Rev. Cynthia and I are working together on the Services and Anthony has been adding his gift of music. Every week we send out the log-in information for the Zoom meeting. If you are not on our church's email mailing list, please let me know.

It is important for us to keep holy the Sabbath. It is important for us to also keep together as a community. I have enjoyed the energetic greetings shared among our on-line congregation as friends see each other during these times of necessary isolation. Isolation can have its psychological costs. Church is healing because it breathes the new life of Christ into our souls, and church is healing because we share in the community of each other. Maybe now more than ever we can see church as the blessing that it always is.

PENTECOST SUNDAY / STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING

On the 50th day after Easter, we read in the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit was shared with the believers in Jerusalem. The once confused and power of the Holy Spirit. Inspired they Jesus and His gospel. When these first ministry and presence of Jesus, the group of people gathered in a beautiful inspired by the Spirit of God. Trust in and the church will be able to do so much more than we imagine or could accomplish on our own.



timid followers of Jesus receive the rush out into the streets to proclaim followers pick-up and carry forward the church is born. The church is never just a building. The church is the people of God this and give yourself over to Pentecost

It is wholly fitting that on Pentecost, the UCC accepts our offerings for Strengthen the Church. "This offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities. As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults." Thank you for your generosity and for helping us to be a Pentecost church.

CHURCH FINANCES

Even though we are not able to meet in the church building, we continue as church. As such, we continue to need your financial assistance. We have already canceled the Palm Sunday Breakfast and this month's Spring Roast Pork Dinner. These are important and much needed fundraisers for the church – and they will not be held this year. If you attend these events, please consider sending in a donation as if you were buying a ticket. Also, we are not passing the collection plate in person, but please send in your church pledges and contributions regularly. They may be sent directly to Marty or to the church at 41 Main Street. Thank you for your continuing financial support.

IN MEMORY OF SUE GILMAN

The much loved and respected member of this congregation, Sue (Polhemus) Gilman, passed away on March 24th after a long struggle with cancer. She is survived by her husband of 40 years Bill Gilman, her daughter Lori Parmet and her husband Chad, sisters Kathy Podmayer, Karen Polhemus, Deborah Tom and their families, and also grandchildren Jacob and Chloe Gilman and George Parmet. Her son Mark preceded his mother in death in 2017. Sue will always be remembered fondly by many cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles. And she is greatly missed by her friends at Hatfield Congregational Church.

Sue always had a smile on her face and was a question that needed to be answered turned to Sue. From her days in the Pilgrim treasurer and auditor, and her most recent and the Board of Trustees, Sue had unique missed.



treasury of history and information. If there about something to do with this church, we Youth Fellowship through her time as church involvement with the Real Folks organization insights and wisdom to offer. She is greatly

Due to the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been no public Memorial Service scheduled for Sue. The family will share that information with us as they are ready. They have asked that memorial contributions be made to the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC. We thank those who have already made donations in Sue's memory. If you would like to send a card to Bill, please contact the church for his address.

"Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master." (Matthew 25:21)

FOOD BANK VOLUNTEERS

Unfortunately, volunteering opportunities at the Food Bank have been put on hold until further notice due to the pandemic.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Massachusetts Bible Society's Executive Director Rev. Anne Robertson has authored a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. We are Testament. If you would like to the Bible, I encourage you to join us everyone talks about but few read transforming lives for thousands of years. It continues to do so today if we give it the chance, and these stay-at-home days are the perfect chance.



reading Volume II on the Old become more comfortable with for Bible study. This book that has been informing and

Because of the pandemic, we will be meeting via live-stream. If you would like to join us from the comfort of your own home, please send me an email (randyc1897@gmail.com) and I will send you the log-in information. We would love to have you join us.

YOUTH GROUP FLOWER SALE

The church's Youth Group is holding its Spring Flower Sale. We purchase the plants from Fairview Farms in Whately and we have heard nothing but compliments about them. Orders must be placed in advance. Orders

will then be picked-up outside of the church on Saturday, May 16th. We will have individual orders spread out around the church lawn – rain or shine. We will assign buyers a sign-up time to stop by to pick up their order and drop off their payment. This will avoid having any of us gather in groups.

An order form has been shared with all who are on the church's email mailing list. If you would like to receive an order form, please email Rev. Randy.

During this extended period of staying at home, what a joy it will be to get outside in the fresh Spring air and plant some flowers. Plus, your purchase helps our young people to be able to participate in more activities as our Youth Group. Thank you for your support.



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ASSOCIATION YOUTH GROUP

The Hampshire Association Youth Group will gather virtually this month. We will share the Zoom log-in information with our Youth Group members. Then we can all come together from our own homes. We're looking into playing an on-line game. We're also inviting people who can tell us about fighting the pandemic on the frontlines. Plus, we'll share in prayer and a meditation. Let's keep our Association Youth Group together in these strange times.

ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The Hampshire Association Annual Meeting that had been scheduled for April 19th has been moved to Sunday, June 14th at 3:00pm. This will be a virtual meeting. Each congregation is entitled to up to four delegates and the pastor. If you would like to represent our church at this meeting, please let Rev. Randy know. Thank you.

CONGREGATION'S 350TH ANNIVERSARY

Due to the fluid nature of the COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations, our congregation's plans for our 350th anniversary are not able to be finalized. One way or the other, however, we will acknowledge and celebrate three and half centuries of serving God and the people of Hatfield as this church community.

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:

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.



HATFIELD'S 350TH

Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 Steering Committee has made the difficult schedule as follows:



pandemic, the Hatfield 350th Anniversary decision to change their upcoming event

General Community Events

Rescheduled until date to be determined in 2021 – 350th Anniversary Parade
Strawberry Festival has been canceled for 2020 – Annual Strawberry Festival (Partnership w/ Hatfield PTA)

Rescheduled to July 18th – Historic Homes of Hatfield Walking Tour. This event is limited to 30 people. To register please email Cher Nicholas at CherNicholas@comcast.net.

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

May 31st - Incorporation Day and the Crossing of the CT River. Incorporation Day Celebration will go forward on as a modified event – more details to follow. Ceremonial Crossing of the river is postponed until a date TBD.

July 18, 2020 – Historic Homes of Hatfield Walking Tour

October 10, 2020 – Narrated Wagon Rides

Agricultural Events & Tours

Rescheduled to August 22nd as part of the Summer Celebration – Farm 5K Race

Rescheduled until July 23rd – Farm to Table Dinner

September 12, 2020 – Barn Mural Wagon Tour

Rescheduled to October 3rd - Cow Pie Bingo as part of the Tractor Parade and Harvest Festival

For the latest information, visit www.hatfield350.com or follow us on Facebook @Hatfield350th.

