

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2023

May

No. 5

## Pentecost Deserves More Attention

Pentecost is derived from the Greek word for fifty. That right there is not at all exciting. Pentecost is named after the fact that it falls 50 days after Easter. This puts Pentecost at a disadvantage when compared with Christmas or Easter and it shouldn't because Pentecost is essential to the continuing life of the church.

At the end of 1 Corinthians, Paul lays out his travel plans. He tells the believers in Corinth that he would like to spend a significant amount of time with them. Then he goes on to explain that he will "stay in Ephesus until Pentecost." (16:8) Pentecost is an important marker for Paul. It is a date around which plans are made.

The significance of the day of Pentecost comes across more emphatically in Acts of the Apostles. Paul is finishing his third missionary journey and "he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." (20:16) Again, Paul is planning his travel based on the date of Pentecost. These passing comments may seem insignificant, but they speak to the importance of Pentecost among the earliest believers. Why?

Well, that is made abundantly clear in Acts 2. Just as Jewish pilgrims had gathered in Jerusalem, Jesus among them, for the Feast of Passover, so they were converging on the Holy City once again for the Feast of Pentecost or in Hebrew *Shavuot*. *Shavuot* is associated with the wheat harvest in the land of Israel. The period that began with the spring festival of Passover culminated in *Shavuot* fifty days later.

*Shavuot* was originally an agricultural festival. Eventually, however, it took on an historical meaning. In the Talmud, Israel's ancient Rabbis associated the time it took the people of Israel to travel from Egypt to Mount Sinai with the fifty days of the eponymously named Pentecost. Thus, *Shavuot* became the anniversary of the day on which Yahweh presented the Law to Moses on tablets of stone. It was for this Jewish festival of *Shavuot* that "there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem." (Acts 2:5)

It was on this same day that the confused and timid followers of Jesus, few in number since "they were all together in one place," (2:1) all received the Holy Spirit. Inspired by the powerful presence of the Spirit of God, they rushed out onto the streets of Jerusalem and there they preached for the first time of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus is twice referred to as a *man*. (2:22, 23) This unadorned language hints at a very early date of composition. Also, Jesus does not resurrect, which entails His active power. Rather, "God raised him up," which is passive and another indication of a very early composition. Then Peter, who recently had betrayed and deserted Jesus, declares publicly and loudly before all sorts of devout Jews, "All of us are witnesses." (2:32) In other words, the followers of Jesus, now inspired by the descent of Pentecost's Holy Spirit, are readied to continue the ministry and message of Jesus.

With this, the church is born. God the Father raises God the Son from death and also sends God the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' first followers so that they act not on their own, but as inspired by God. This bedrock of the Spirit's presence and power replaces the religious foundation of the Mosaic Law for Christians. Pentecost's Spirit becomes Christianity's Mount Sinai.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth: "Our competence is from God who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:5-6) This fundamental reordering of the meaning of Pentecost is why Paul struggled mightily to return to Jerusalem to be in the place where the Spirit was first shared so powerfully that it transformed people who believed (they had seen the Ascension!) into people who would be witnesses, and the church was born. May Pentecost be formative in the same way with us today, with us who are the same church today as the church that was born that first Pentecost Sunday. May the Pentecost Spirit continue to excite and empower us.

## MAY EVENTS

Mon. 1 <sup>st</sup>	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. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly Association Committee on Ministry meeting at 5:45pm.
Mon. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Sun. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Mother's Day. Special prayers offered during the worship Service.
Thur. 18 <sup>th</sup>	Ascension Day.
Sun. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Hampshire Association Annual Meeting at Edwards Church from 3 – 5:00pm.
Mon. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Tue. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm. Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEADS Up after the Board of Deacons.
Sun. 28 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Pentecost Sunday.</b> <i>Strengthen the Church Offering</i> will be accepted.
Mon. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Memorial Day. Let us remember and honour those who died in the Armed Services.

## 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. optional. The Council will continue to hopefully continue to decrease.



while the numbers remain higher than we COVID treatments have combined to Accordingly, face coverings are now monitor the COVID numbers as they

The Board of Deacons has voted to return to the traditional form of Communion distribution. For those preferring to continue to receive Communion by the individually packaged Communion, this will remain an option.

## JOYFUL RINGERS BELL CHOIR

The church owns a beautiful set of handbells and we are getting ready to bring them back as a part of our worship. Lucinda W. has agreed to continue as the director of the Bell Choir and Sue M. is the coordinator. We thank them both for this. We're up to nine Joyful Ringers so far! Anyone else 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 add the gift of more music to our sanctuary. The group is planning to rehearse on Monday evenings. If you may be interested, please reach out to Rev. Randy at



[randyc1897@gmail.com](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com) or Sue M., the Music Committee Chair.

## 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 John's unique take on 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](mailto:randyc1897@gmail.com) for the login. We meet on alternate weeks for one hour.

## MOTHER'S DAY

Mother's Day is on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Special prayers will be offered that day for the mothers of our church and community, both those with us and those called to their eternal reward. I hope you'll be able to share in those prayers with the worshipping community.

## ASCENSION DAY

According to the Acts of the Apostles, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day after Easter, Jesus ascended into the heavens in the presence of His apostles. This year Ascension Day falls on the 18<sup>th</sup>. As Jesus ascended into the heavens, He told

His followers to remain in Jerusalem. He promised them that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit and that they would become His witnesses throughout the world.

**PENTECOST SUNDAY**

Ten days after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit descended upon those first believers in Jesus. The once confused and frightened disciples, now inspired by the Holy Spirit, rush out into the streets of Jerusalem and begin passing of Jesus’ ministry to His Christian church. The church carries on their own authority. The church is of the Spirit of God. This is one of the calendar, but for some reason it never Easter or Christmas. It should. I invite worship on this holy occasion of Pentecost, the birthday of the church.



The once confused and frightened disciples, now inspired by the Holy Spirit, rush out into preaching about Jesus. This followers is the birthday of the forth what Jesus began, and not guided by the abiding presence holiest days on the church’s seems to rise to the level of you to join the church at

**STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING**

“The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC. Conferences and the national setting equally share the gifts given by members and friends through their local congregations. The funds raised support leadership development, new churches, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you build up the Body of Christ. 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. We will receive the STC offering on Pentecost Sunday.”

**ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING**

The Hampshire Association place in person and online at Northampton on Sunday, May representation at this meeting (We could even enjoy a dinner in Northampton if you’d like after the meeting.) If you are interested, please let Rev. Randy know.



**Southern New England Conference**  
 United Church of Christ  
*Living the Love & Justice of Jesus*

Annual Meeting will take Edwards Church in 21<sup>st</sup>. We should have lay rather than only the pastor.

Also, the Association is canvassing local congregations looking for people who are willing to serve the wider church through either the Executive Committee or the Committee on 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 the Southern New England Conference, 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.

**MEMORIAL DAY**

Armed Forces Day pays our respect to those who serve currently. Veterans Day honours all of those who have served. On Memorial Day, the nation pauses to remember solemnly those who while serving in the Armed Forces of our nation offered the supreme sacrifice of their lives. Memorial Day Weekend is not only an excuse for an extra day off. It is our responsibility to remember those who died so that we are able to live in a free land. We will offer special prayers in church on Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup> and will participate in the town’s program as it is planned.

**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](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:**

<i>Benevolence, Amy N.</i>	<i>Music Committee, Sue M.</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>	

