

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, United Church of Christ

2025

May

No. 5

Pentecost Then and Now

There are 50 days between Easter and Pentecost because there are 50 days between Passover and Shavuot. There are three Jewish Pilgrim Festivals listed in the Hebrew Bible. Jews were expected to make a pilgrimage and gather as one people on these three occasions. They originated as agricultural festivals, and then historical commemorations were added on top of them.

Shavuot means *weeks* in Hebrew. The name is derived from seven weeks of seven days, and then on the fiftieth day the new grain offering was made to Yahweh. The Greek translation for this feast is Pentecost, which refers to the 50th day. Rabbinic tradition overlays the teaching that the date of Shavuot also marks the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

Jesus' death and resurrection coincide with Passover and the descent of the Holy Spirit with Shavuot, or Pentecost. Since the sharing of the Holy Spirit is noted with different details in the Gospels, the explicit linkage with Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles must have a special significance.

I think that Luke's intention behind linking the sharing of the Holy Spirit with the Jewish festival of Shavuot is to connect both events as foundational stories. The giving of the Law to Moses is the formative and unifying event of Israel. I have attended several synagogue Services over the years and when the Torah, the Law, is taken from its tabernacle it is done so with great joy and piety. The Law is the cornerstone of the Jewish faith. In the synagogue I attended, it was literally located front and center.

As Luke shares the story of the earliest followers of Jesus and the beginning of church, he does so in the context of the already established tradition of Shavuot. As the Jewish people were celebrating the giving of the Law, Christians



would celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit defines and directs the church. As “[a]ll of them were filled with the Holy Spirit,” (Acts 2:4) they leave behind the safety of

their silence in locked rooms and rush out into Jerusalem's streets and they begin to share Jesus and the gospel fearlessly. With the Spirit's inspiration, the followers of Jesus have taken on the ministry of Jesus, and the church is born. Pentecost now becomes the Christian foundational feast.

Pentecost is a Christian holy day that we celebrate annually to remind ourselves that we are led and strengthened by God the Holy Spirit dwelling within and among us. As

church, we are more than what we see with our eyes. As church, we can do more because we are the hands, feet and voice of Jesus in the world. Pentecost calls upon us to live into what we believe. Pentecost makes us co-workers with God. In other words, our efforts are not ours alone.

Pentecost means that we must do more than hope for and wait for God's righteousness to take hold in the world. To only imagine the world that Jesus embodied is not enough to make it real. To despair that a better world is impossible and wait for Jesus to come again is to abdicate our Christian duty. Pentecost empowers us by a divine presence to do the hard work of changing the world. Pentecost gives us the confidence that our efforts will matter.

Nir Eyal writes about the problems inherent with “manifestation culture,” the belief that if you visualize and affirm an outcome strongly enough it will be made real. He points, instead, to people with “self-efficacy” as a model for success. This is built on effort and persistence. He offers, “Yes, what you believe shapes what you notice, how you feel, and what you do. Yes, expectations alter subjective experience in measurable ways. Yes, the person who believes their effort will matter is more likely to persist than the person who doesn't. But the leap from ‘beliefs matter’ to ‘just believe’ skips over everything that makes belief actually useful.” (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2026/04/05/opinion/manifest-believe-affirmation-fantasy-outcomes/>)

“Just believe” is far too passive for a Pentecost church. “Just believe” is akin to the disciples of Acts 1 who have shared witness to the resurrection, who believe in the risen Saviour, but they do nothing. “Beliefs matter” is the church of Acts 2 and the story of Pentecost, of the descent of the Holy Spirit as “the rush of a violent wind” (2:2) that drives the believers out into the world to begin the work of proclamation and ministry that has brought Christianity to us, and demands that we do the hard work of continuing to be that Pentecost church for us and for others.

Here's an example of the Spirit at work. Mid-April we had a Church Council meeting. A member had been approached by their mail carrier about participating in the “Stamp Out Hunger” food drive. It wasn't on the agenda, but it was brought up at Council, and the Council chose to join in this food drive by collecting your donations through May 3rd. 40% of Massachusetts residents are food insecure, and an unanticipated encounter led to an unexpected Council decision and to an unplanned effort to help our neighbours. This is but one practical example of a Pentecost church, of “beliefs matter” rather than “just believe.”

MAY EVENTS

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| Sat. 2 nd | Spring Chicken Barbecue from 4:30 – 6:30pm. See flier below. |
| Sun. 3 rd | “Stamp Out Hunger” food drive concludes (https://about.usps.com/what/corporate-social-responsibility/activities/nalc-food-drive.htm) <i>Mental Health Action Week</i> begins. |
| Tue. 5 th | Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm. |
| Sun. 10 th | Mother’s Day. |
| Mon. 11 th | Online Bible study group will meet from 7 – 8:00pm. |
| Tue. 12 th | Rev. Randy will attend the monthly Association clergy lunch at the Hadley Church. |
| Wed. 13 th | Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm in person. |
| Thurs. 14 th | Ascension Day. |
| Sun. 17 th | Installation Service of Rev. Susan Cartmell at the South Amherst Church at 3:00pm. Recital of Beau Flahive’s students in the sanctuary from 4 – 5:30pm. |
| Mon. 18 th | Online Bible study group will meet from 7 – 8:00pm. |
| Thur. 21 st | Rev. Randy will attend the HEADS Up meeting at 3:15pm. |
| Sun. 24 th | Pentecost Sunday. <i>Strengthen the Church</i> offering will be accepted. Music Sunday and last Sunday for Francis Shuman and Philip Varvek. Big Mind Meditation from 12 – 1:00pm. Installation Service of Larry Picard at the North Hadley Church at 3:00pm. |
| Mon. 25 th | Memorial Day. |
| Tue. 26 th | Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm in person. |
| Sun. 31 st | Trinity Sunday. |

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: Bell Choir rehearses at 5:30pm, Chancel Choir rehearses at 7:00pm, except July and August.

ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

We are steadily making our way through the books of the Bible and are now reading Jeremiah the prophet. Pentecost is the Christian feast of renewal, I invite you to read with us and join the discussion, and hopefully be drawn more deeply into the Bible. No prior Bible knowledge is required, only an excitement to learn and appreciate the most influential book in human history. If interested, send an email to randyc1897@gmail.com for the Zoom login.



ASCENSION DAY | PENTECOST SUNDAY | TRINITY SUNDAY

In the Acts of the Apostles, and only there, we are told that the resurrected Jesus appears to His disciples for a period of 40 days. On that 40th day, **Ascension Day**, Jesus returns to the heavens. The time of His Easter appearances has drawn to a close. Before Jesus ascends, He promises His disciples that they ““will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”” (1:8) As “witnesses,” they have seen the death and resurrection, and now the ascension of Jesus, but they do not have the courage to tell the Ascension, the Holy Spirit descends upon the once timid followers of Jesus rush out into and teach Jesus. This is the birthday of the followers of Jesus begin to carry forward the do this on their own, but with the Spirit everything becomes possible. We, the church of 2026, remain that Pentecost church. The Spirit continues to work through us. On the Sunday after Pentecost, the church ties all of this together – that God the Father raised God the Son and that God the Holy Spirit abides within and among us – as we celebrate **Trinity Sunday**. The Trinity is the teaching that the one God consists of three equal Persons who abide in a perfect unity of love, transcendent and immanent. Jesus dies alone on Good Friday and on Trinity Sunday the church celebrates the restoration and fullness of the Godhead.



STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING

Strengthen the Church is a special offering on Pentecost Sunday to support innovation in ministries of congregations in the Southern New England Conference. This year, we are especially excited to lift-up the expanding vision for Youth and Young Adult ministries across our Conference! With the recent arrival of our new Minister for Youth and Young Adults, Devin leadership and growing opportunities to formation, community-building, and Craig of the Search Committee for the has these thoughts on the selection of that Devin Shmueli has been called to Young Adults. Devin brings both deep for walking alongside young people and those who nurture them in faith. He understands the challenges youth and young adults face today and carries a Spirit-led vision for innovative, faithful ministry that will strengthen, encourage, and inspire our churches across the Conference. I am especially excited for the ways he will connect and equip youth leaders across our Conference and for the new and life-giving opportunities he will introduce for our young people.” Gifts to *Strengthen the Church* will directly support the growth and expansion of ministry offerings for youth and young adults, including: New and revitalized programs for youth and young adults across the Conference; Leadership development and accompaniment for congregational leaders working with emerging generations; Faith formation opportunities that encourage curiosity, courage, and connection; and Conference-wide initiatives that help young people find belonging and purpose in the church. 80% of your gift will be put to work in Southern New England. 20% of your gift will support national ministries of the United Church of Christ. This offering will be accepted on Sunday, May 24th.



Shmueli, we are energized by fresh engage young people in meaningful faith justice-focused ministry. Rev. Brian Minister for Youth and Young Adults Devin, “I am truly grateful and excited serve as our Minister for Youth and experience and a sincere, pastoral heart

HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION INSTALLATION SERVICES

Our congregation is a part of the wider church. We are part of the Hampshire Association. We support one another, and we celebrate with one another. As such, members of our church are invited to participate in the Installation Service of Rev. Susan Cartmell as the pastor of the South Amherst Church on the afternoon of May 17th and the installation of Larry Picard as the pastor of the North Hadley Church on the afternoon of May 24th.

2026 CHURCH DINNERS SCHEDULED

The church dinners for the year are as follows: Lobster Dinner returns on Saturday, July 18th; Chicken Barbecue on Saturday, September 26th; Fall Roast Pork Supper on Saturday, November 7th. Please mark your calendars.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Don’t forget to check in at our website and FaceBook page. The links are directly below. They are updated several times each week and often share information from the larger church that we may not know of otherwise. Please like our pages and posts and share them as you choose.

GROCERY CARDS

Big Y grocery 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:

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| <i>Benevolence, Amy N.</i> | <i>Music Committee, Christina M.</i> |
| <i>Christian Education, Anita W.</i> | <i>Real Folks Society, Amy N.</i> |
| <i>Church Moderator, Jonathan B.</i> | <i>Treasurer, Mark G.</i> |
| <i>Clerk, Carolyn F</i> | <i>Trustees, Ed M.</i> |
| <i>Deacons, Jeff F.</i> | |
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CHICKEN BARBECUE

SATURDAY, MAY 2ND

FROM 4:30 – 6:30PM

TAKE OUT ONLY

AT

HATFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST,

MAIN STREET, HATFIELD

\$18.00 / MEAL

HALF CHICKEN COLESLAW

BAKED POTATO ROLL & BUTTER

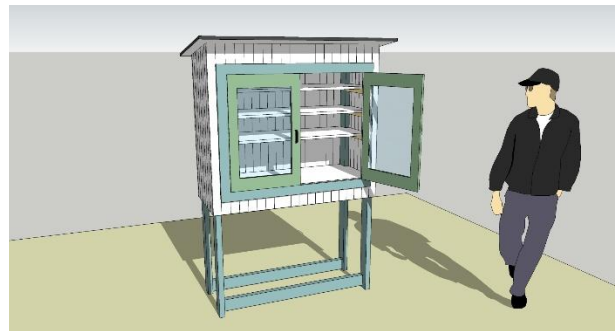
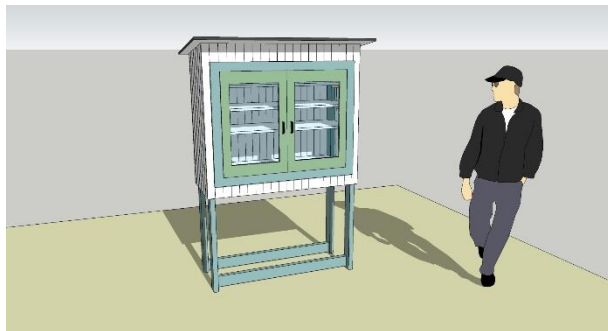
GREEN BEANS AND DESSERT

RESERVATIONS AN PRE PAY ENCOURAGED:

Call Linda at 413-247-5604



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT!



The Church Council is planning to offer a

Community Food Pantry

Non-perishable food donations will be accepted from church and community. We will work under the premise of donate as you are able, and please take as you need.