

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2022

April

No. 4

“They said nothing to anyone”

The date of Easter is based on the lunar calendar and this is why the date changes annually. The lunar calendar is about a month long, but not exactly, and incrementally this discrepancy will accumulate with the passage of time. The Muslims, for example, follow a lunar calendar explicitly, which leads to their major feast days marching around the calendar. We allow for adaptations to the lunar calendar. Accordingly, Easter’s date is defined as the first Sunday following the first full moon after the Spring equinox. Spring began on March 20th, two days after a full moon, and this is why Easter is so late this year. The first full moon of Spring falls almost a calendar month later on Saturday, April 16th. This makes April 17th Easter Sunday this year.

Easter’s date is temporal and precise. You can punch-in a year on Google and the calculations are there for the date of when Easter was or will be. The event of Easter, however, is the most profound mystery in all of Christianity. An old New Testament professor of mine insisted that Easter should never be referred to only as a miracle. A miracle is a temporary interruption of the normal. Easter is a mystery that transforms all of creation and time. It is not an interruption of the normal; it alters the normal by creating a new reality.

Each of the four Gospels strives to share this mystery in its own way. I, personally, am drawn to the Gospel of Mark. If you would, I’d ask you to grab your Bible and turn to the end of Mark’s Gospel. If you have not done this before, it may surprise you. I’ll wait until you return.

Thanks for coming back. The Gospel actually ends at 16:8. Early editors were so bothered by Mark’s ending that they took it upon themselves to add to the Gospel. This you may see as the Shorter and the Longer Ending of Mark.

Why were they so troubled by Mark’s ending? It has to do with the silence of the resurrection witnesses. Three women, none of them Jesus’ mother, go to the tomb to complete the burial ritual that the approaching Passover had prevented

on Good Friday. When they reached the tomb, they were shocked to see it defiled, that is opened, the stone had been rolled from the entrance. They enter and are startled to be confronted by “a young man dressed in a white robe.” (16:5)

The “young man” tells them that “Jesus of Nazareth” has been “raised,” (16:6) and the three women are instructed to share this news with the disciples. (16:7) Maybe at this point we jump to conclusions and assume this is what they do, but it’s the opposite: “[The women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” (16:8) The End. This is why there are two alternate endings.

Some scholars posit that based on examples in Mark, including this passage, that he is writing from within an early community that had faced failure, and this failure is reflected in the text. I see it differently. I see in Mark’s resurrection account the humble acceptance that this mystery cannot be conveyed through another’s experience. The resurrection cannot be shared by someone else’s story.

The resurrection happened in time, but is a mystery that breaks through the confines of time. It belongs to God’s forever, but it is so powerful that it even bursts into the world’s here and now. It is as real on April 17, 2022 as it was on the first Easter. I see Mark



marveling at the fact that he belongs to a community who are sharing against all odds in believing in the timelessness of Jesus’ resurrection presence. And Mark is humble enough to realize that he can share the story with others, but not the experience. It is up to each person to take the leap of faith to believe in the reality of Jesus’ forever presence. Therefore, the women must be silent so that Jesus can tell us of Easter, so that we can be touched by the resurrected Saviour.

MARCH EVENTS

- Mon. 4th Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEART (Hatfield Equity Alliance fighting against Racism Together) at 5:30pm.
The Church Council will meet online at 7:00pm.
- Tue. 5th Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Hampshire Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm.
- Wed. 6th Lenten Discussion Series at 7:00pm. Hosted by the Ashfield Congregational Church. Offered by Rev. James Koyama pastor of the Montague Congregational Church, UCC
Session Title: Paul in Prison
- Sun. 10th **Palm Sunday** worship Service at 9:30am with distribution of palms.
- Mon. 11th Monthly online meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
- Tue. 12th Online *Exploring the Bible* study group from 7-8:00pm.
- Thur. 14th **Maundy Thursday.** Combined worship Service at the Sunderland Church at 7:00pm.
- Fri. 15th **Good Friday.** The church will be open for prayer and meditation from 12 – 3:00pm.
- Sat. 16th Easter Egg Hunt starting at 10AM around the church grounds.
- Sun. 17th **Easter Sunday Sunrise Service** at the home of Matt and Melody, across Prospect Street from the American Legion, beginning at 6:00am (Sunrise is at 6:06am).
Easter Sunday worship Service at 9:30am.
- Fri. 22nd **Earth Day.**
- Sun. 24th Youth Group Spring Flower Sale order deadline. (Pick-up on May 7th)
- Mon. 25th Online *Exploring the Bible* study group from 7-8:00pm.
- Tue. 26th Monthly Clergy Brown Bag Lunch at noon.
Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.

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 – **Now in person at the church.**

Wednesdays: Hatha Yoga classes take place every Wednesday at 6:00pm.

Thursdays: Choir rehearses in the sanctuary at 7:00pm – **Now in person at the church.**

CHURCH COVID POLICIES

The CDC expects the number of COVID cases to continue to decrease especially as the weather grows warmer and people spend more time outdoors.

policy on the number of cases in 10 per day per 100,000 people, we will worship. Please remember, as well,



If you are not feeling well on any given Sunday, please join us online. Thank you for your cooperation in keeping us all as safe as possible.

The Church Council has based its mask Hampshire County. If the cases fall below rescind the mask requirement for in person that all of our worship Services are live-streamed via Zoom.

SEASON OF LENT

The 25th annual **Lenten Discussion Series** will theme is "Anchors in the Storm: Getting through person and online at the Ashfield Congregational Montague, will offer a talk entitled "Paul in



come to a close on the 6th at 7:00pm. Its general Difficult Times." This last session will be offered in Church. Rev. James Koyama, the pastor in Prison." I hope you will choose to join us.

Lent comes to its conclusion with Holy Week. Sunday, April 10th, is **Palm Sunday**. Palms will be distributed during the Service to commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

We are collecting for the **Easter Flower Offering** so that we may adorn the church sanctuary with the flowers that represent Jesus' resurrection and share the beauty and hope of this most holy of all Christian celebrations. Flowers may be ordered by contacting June L. or at church on Sundays with either Cynthia P. or Marty Z.

On **Maundy Thursday**, a combined worship Service will be hosted by the Sunderland Congregational Church at 7:00pm. Last year Sunderland joined us. On this night we will remember Jesus' Last Supper, the institution of the Sacrament of Communion, and Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane. This night's worship is beautiful and meaningful. I hope you will join us in person or online.

Good Friday calls on us to remember as solemnly as we can that this is the day of Jesus' crucifixion and death. Whether inside the church building or not, we should treat this day with as much solemnity as we can and give ourselves the time and place to meditate upon the mystery of Jesus' tortured death, willingly and lovingly accepted for us. The church building will be open from noon until 3PM for moments of private prayer and meditation.

We had to take a couple of years off because of the COVID pandemic, but we are returning to our **Easter Egg Hunt** once again this year. It is open to children and youth from our church and from our community, up to the age of 12. It will take place on the grounds around the church on the Saturday before Easter, starting at 10AM. Candy donations are appreciated that would fit inside the plastic eggs. These may be brought to church and given to Amy L. or to Anita W. We are planning to fill the eggs after church on Palm Sunday. Volunteers welcome.

EASTER SUNDAY

On the third day after the crucifixion, the finish the burial rites for Jesus. Instead, had resurrected from the dead! This is the Christian calendar. We will gather for a Matt and Melody on Prospect Street to the resurrection, of Jesus' triumph. All, of join us for this religious celebration.



We will meet again on Easter Sunday in Service at **9:30am**. I hope all our members community on this most holy of days. And invitation to join us with anyone you know experience the wonder and mystery of the

women went to the tomb at sunrise to they found the tomb to be empty. Jesus most holy and glorious moment on the **Sunrise Service** at 6AM at the home of share in the glorious news of Easter, of course, are invited and encouraged to

the church building for our worship will choose to be a part of the worshipping if it is possible for you, please share an who is unchurched so that they too may resurrection.

On this holiest of all days, we are **asking our members to share an invitation** with a family member, a friend, a neighbor, anyone you may choose, to come to church with you. The resurrected Jesus' first words to the women at the tomb were to go and tell the others. We carry this tradition forward by telling others of Jesus, by inviting them to come with us to meet with the resurrected Jesus on Easter Sunday.

YOUTH GROUP FLOWER SALE

The annual Youth Group Flower Sale will take place once again this year. Orders will be accepted throughout April with an order deadline of April 24th. Plants will be ordered from Fairview Farms in Whately. Ask anyone who has ordered from us before about the quality of the plants. They are beautiful. Orders may then be picked-up at the church on Saturday, May 7th between 9:30 and 10:30am. An order form will be emailed to everyone on the congregation's email list, and printed copies will be available at the church on Sundays. Thank you for supporting the fundraising efforts of our young people.



CHURH DIRECTORY REQUETS

The Board of Deacons has decided to compile an electronic church directory for our use. Maybe you have seen printed church directories in the past. A directory helps members, long-time members and brand new, to put faces and names together. A directory is also a useful tool to reach out to others in the congregation. The problem with printed directories is that first of all they are expensive, and second, they become outdated rather quickly.

The Board of Deacons would like to ask all of our members and friends to submit an electronic photo of themselves – individual, couple or family, and to include names and contact information, which would be address, phone and email. The Deacons will then share the directories only with those who have submitted such information, and will stress that the directories are not to be shared freely. We want to keep contact information for our use only. The directory will not be posted online anywhere.

We ask that you send your photo and contact information to our Head Deacon, Jeff F., at jeffrun82@yahoo.com. Since the directory is electronic, it will be updated periodically. We think this will be good for our church and a welcome tool for our members so we hope that you will all choose to participate. Thank you.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE ON-LINE STUDY GROUP

The Massachusetts Bible Society has published a three-volume text called *Exploring the Bible*. We are reading Volume III on the New Testament. If you would like to become more comfortable with the Bible, I encourage you to join us for Bible study. If you would like to add Scripture study to your preparations for Holy Week and Easter, I invite you to join our group. If you would simply like to see what Bible study is like, I'd ask you give us a try. If, for whatever reason, you are interested in exploring the Bible, please send me an email (randyc1897@gmail.com) and I will send you the login information for our Zoom meetings.

REAL FOLKS NEWS

"We will be having a Tag Sale on April 30th. It will run from 8:00am – 2:30pm. Church folk who would like to donate items for our sale should have them to the church no later than Friday the 29th. Items should be clean and priced (I have price stickers just ask.) We will need help on Thursday the 28th setting up tables, unpacking items, and loading them on the tables. The times on Thursday and Friday are 9:00am – 6:00pm to drop off items and help out. We are not accepting TV's, electronics, big electrical items or furniture, encyclopedias or computers. Also, Maki will be running a Bake Sale during the Tag Sale. Please see Maki if you can bake cookies, small breads, pies, fudge or whatever you can make to support the Bake Sale, but nothing that will require refrigeration since this may take place outdoors. These may be brought in on the 29th. Thank you. Linda M."

FOOD DRIVE

We have no food drives in the near future, but please remember that we are ALWAYS collecting for the Survival Center/Food Kitchen in Northampton. This serves the Northampton area and welcomes all kinds of non-perishable foods. If you are spring cleaning and find you have extra in your cabinets or are at the food store and there is a "2 for 1" think of those in need and leave it in the wagon as you walk into the church. Some of the most needed items are: canned fruit juice, canned vegetables, soups, spaghetti sauce, crackers, rice, cereal, pasta, canned tuna, baked beans, and peanut butter. They are always so grateful! Thanks to those who give what and when they can.

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:

Benevolence, Amy N.

Christian Education, Anita W.

Church Moderator, Jonathan B.

Deacons, Jeff F.

Music Minister, Anthony T.

Real Folks Society, Martha Z.

Trustees, Ed M.

