

The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2023

April

No. 4

Thank You Frank

April is the month of Holy Week and of Easter. Both are discussed separately in this newsletter. The eight days between Palm Sunday and Easter inclusively are absolutely essential to our faith. When Paul writes his letters to the various churches in his orbit, his Jesus stories are almost all about the death and resurrection. It may have something to do with the fact that Paul's only encounters with Jesus were with the resurrected Jesus of heaven, not the carpenter of Nazareth.

When Jesus appeared to Paul on the Road to Damascus, Paul was transformed. His life changed 180° because of that heavenly vision. He was heading toward Damascus to persecute the Christians there. Instead, after his Jesus encounter, Paul worked tirelessly and more successfully than any other apostle to share Jesus with others. The resurrected Jesus changed his life, and in the process changed the world.

The horrid reality of Jesus' Passion, crucifixion and death, followed by the gloriously unexpected triumph of Jesus' resurrection, changed the disciples, as well. They had betrayed and abandoned Jesus when He needed them most, but the resurrection changes them. They come back. They lead lives dedicated to Christ. The Bible holds only one account of an apostle's martyrdom, but tradition holds that each of them dies for the sake of the faith except for John. Their lives are changed because of Easter.

Easter is most surely a promise of eternal life. Jesus is called the first-fruits of the resurrection, which implies that we will follow. In a mean and unfair world, the promise of resurrection after death is a blessing unsurpassed. However, Easter is not meant to be kept in the drawer until it is taken out with all the other funeral arrangement papers. Easter is meant to change us now.

Frank Marchand is my plumber and I would like to think my friend. He was interviewed recently for a segment on New England Public Radio. (<https://www.nepm.org/regional-news/2023-03-16/life-death-and-plumbing-western-massachusetts-man-keeps-working-throughout-cancer-treatment>) I thought it was so uplifting that I

told him it would be picked-up by the national NPR. He doubted it, but I hope he's wrong. If you haven't heard it, I hope you'll listen by clicking on the link.

Frank has been living with Stage 4 colon cancer for seven years and counting. When I spoke with him recently, he said that he had just had his 100th chemotherapy treatment. And he still goes to work every day.

He told me over the phone that he wakes up every workday at 3:25am! Walks in the dark to the bathroom, looks at himself in the mirror, and his reflection says in amazement something along the lines of, "You're still here!" This is perfect Frank Marchand dark humour.

But he continued. He told me that he didn't really live until he was faced with death. Now every day is precious, every moment counts. Every day because of the reality of his terminal cancer diagnosis is an opportunity to do something to bring a blessing into someone else's life, maybe a bit of joy or insight, or to maybe correct something in his own. (I won't share his story about the guy who ticked him off 30 years ago.) The reality of death has made Frank so aware of life that it is transformative. It has changed him, and changed others around him. It so impressed Karen Brown the NEPR journalist that she took out a tape recorder as he fixed her toilet.

Similarly, Easter's promise of eternal life is meant to make us aware of life, to never take it for granted. In the play *Our Town*, there is this dialogue: "EMILY: 'Does anyone ever realize life while they live it... every, every minute?'" STAGE MANAGER: 'No. Saints and poets maybe...they do some.'" Maybe some of us are poets, but all of us Easter-folk are saints. Saints aren't marked as different by halos, but by cherishing life, by making it count, by sharing it with others. This renewal is what Easter's resurrection calls us toward, and I thank my friend Frank Marchand for reminding me of this blessing that is an appreciation of life. May Holy Week and Easter draw out the best in all of us.

APRIL EVENTS

Sun. 2 nd	Palm Sunday. Blessing and distribution of the palms, worship Service beginning at 9:30am. Filling Easter Eggs after the Service for the Easter Egg Hunt.
Mon. 3 rd	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.
Thur. 6 th	Maundy Thursday. Combined Service with the Sunderland Church at 7:00pm in Hatfield.
Fri. 7 th	Good Friday. The church will be open from noon until 3PM for private prayer and meditation.
Sat. 8 th	Children's Easter Egg Hunt beginning at 10:00am. Volunteers needed at 9:00am.
Sun. 9 th	Easter Sunday. Sunrise Service at Matt and Melody's, Prospect Street, beginning at 6:15am. Worship Service at church at 9:30am.
Mon. 10 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Tue. 11 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly Association Committee on Ministry meeting at 5:45pm.
Thur. 13 th	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of HEADS Up at 7:00pm.
Sun. 16 th	Deacon-led worship Service at 9:30am. Rev. Randy will be away on vacation.
Mon. 17 th	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7-8:00pm.
Sat. 22 nd	Observance of Earth Day.
Tue. 25 th	Monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons at 6:00pm.
Sat. 29 th	Spring Roast Pork Supper – take out only – 4:30 to 6:30pm.

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 beginning with Communion Sunday on April 2nd. For those preferring to continue to receive Communion by the individually packaged Communion, this will remain an option.

HOLY WEEK

Lent's final week is called Holy Week. It begins with Palm Sunday. On this Sunday, we commemorate the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. John's Gospel tells us that the people in their excitement cut down palm branches to lay across the road as Jesus they expected to be their Messiah. We distributing palms among the faithful



Holy Week

Holy Week's Thursday is called that Jesus gathered with His disciples offered the words of institution over the

to do this in remembrance of Him. We have done just that ever since as we share in the sacrament of Communion, and Communion will be offered on this night. The word *Maundy* refers to the Latin word for *commandment*, and it refers to the new commandment Jesus offers that night to love one another. This is a most holy commemoration in the life of the church and we do hope that the faithful will gather around Christ's table.

Good Friday is the day on which Jesus is crucified. This horrid event should be remembered with acts of prayer, piety and solemnness. We are told in the Gospel text that it grew dark at noon on this day and that Jesus died at

3PM. Accordingly, the church will be open for private moments of prayer and meditation during these hours on Good Friday.

Lent comes to its close on the Saturday of Holy Week. Jesus lies dead in the tomb. And we wait.

I hope we will have taken the opportunity of our Lenten journey seriously so that Holy Week may be as meaningful as possible. It is humbling and at the same time inspiring to ponder the teaching that God loves us so much that God gave His only begotten Son so that we may enjoy eternal life with God in heaven. And it is never too late to enter into this journey.

On our website, I also post a Daily Lenten Blog that will be based on the given biblical readings for each particular day. (www.hatfieldchurch.org/pews-news/category/revd-up) These daily posts will continue through Holy Saturday.

CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY EASTER EGG HUNT

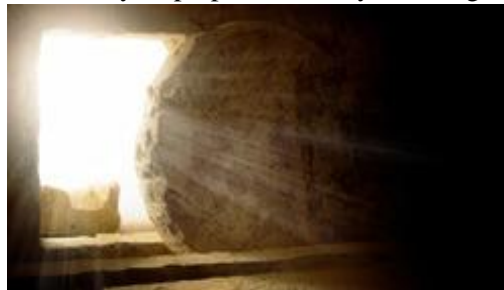


The Children's Community Easter Egg Hunt returns once again this year. It will be held on Saturday, April 8th beginning at 10:00am. Volunteers are needed at 9:00am to help hide the eggs. Please share the news with the young families you know. Donations of individually wrapped candies are appreciated. Volunteers will stuff the plastic Easter

eggs after the worship Service on Palm Sunday.

EASTER SUNDAY

His followers had denied and deserted Him. The women followers watched from a distance most likely kept away by Roman guards. The death of Jesus was all too real. His burial was hasty and unceremonious. Jesus was dead. There was no expectation that this would change. On Sunday morning at dawn, the women venture out to the tomb to grieve and to somehow find a way to prepare the body for the grave, which they could not do as the Sabbath rest approached. When shocked by what they thought was But it was not desecrated. This Jesus had risen! New life returned



they get to the tomb, they were its desecration. It was open. was no longer a place of death. to Him and to us.

This joyous mystery is Easter. and Melody's lawn on Prospect our church's steeple, and remind us of that glorious sunrise Sunday. After this we will gather

We will gather outside on Matt Street, looking to the east over hopefully seeing the sunrise, to on that awesome first Easter again in church at the usual hour

for our worship on the holiest day of the year. Please make every effort to join with us as the people of God in the house of God, and even dare to invite with you friends, family and neighbours who would not otherwise be in church on Easter. We count on Jesus being with us at worship because we trust that Jesus was not in that tomb, the tomb was empty, and for 2,000 years we have proclaimed Alleluia!

ROAST PORK SUPPER

This supper is scheduled for Saturday, April 29th, with new hours of 4:30 – 6:30pm, which is when we have discovered most people come by for their meals. It is take-out only and the cost is \$17/ticket. Please call Linda at 413-247-5604 or Jeannie at 413-247-5905 to reserve your tickets. This meal tends to sell out so the earlier the better for your reservations.

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 for the login. We meet on alternate weeks for one hour.

CHURCH MUSIC – BELL CHOIR

The church owns a beautiful set of handbells. We would love to have them back adding their joyous sounds to our worship. Lucinda Williams has agreed to continue as the director of the Bell Choir, and we thank her for that kindness. We have the instruments and the director, and we've started to get the bell ringers too. We're up to eight 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 help us get the bells out of the closet and into the sanctuary. If you may be interested, please reach out to Rev. Randy at randyc1897@gmail.com or Sue M., the Music Committee Chair.



ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The Hampshire Association place in person and online at Northampton on Sunday, May because we should have lay meeting rather than only the pastor. (We could even enjoy a dinner in Northampton if you'd like after the meeting.)



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

Annual Meeting will take Edwards Church in 21st. I bring this up now representation at this

Also, the Association is now 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.

EARTH DAY

Earth Day is April 22nd. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science. They released a report last Scientists are warning us together to hold global below an increase of 2.7° of catastrophic heat waves, malnutrition, flooding, mass human migration and species extinction become significantly harder for humanity to handle.



related to climate change. month that is alarming. that nations must work temperature averages Fahrenheit or the impacts water scarcity, drought, crop failures,

With current practices and plans unchanged, the world will surpass this critical threshold by the early 2030's. According to the UN report, we have one last chance to protect ourselves from this future. It is expensive and intrusive, but it will be only more expensive and intrusive if we ignore it. Scientists are urging the industrialized nations to join together immediately to slash greenhouse gases roughly in half by 2030 and then stop adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere altogether by the early 2050's. If those two steps were taken, the world would have about a 50% chance of limiting warming to 2.7° Fahrenheit.

We have an obligation to the generations that follow us, our children and grandchildren included. We have an obligation to the flora and fauna of this planet. We are the world's stewards not its masters. As Earth Day approaches, let us offer prayers and plans for what we can do to ensure that future generations do not look back upon us with contempt.

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.

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 Pastor: Rev. Randy Calvo 413-824-1630 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>	



A blessed and joyous Easter to you and yours.

