

# The Bell Tower

Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Hatfield, UCC

2024

April

No. 4

## A Solar Eclipse and Easter

On April 8, 1974, Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves hit his 715th career home run, breaking Babe Ruth's legendary record of 714 homers. He hit a pitch off the Los Angeles Dodgers' Al Downing. However, as Aaron was an African American who had received death threats and racist hate mail during his pursuit of one of baseball's most distinguished records, the achievement was bittersweet.

On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic event in baseball, a total solar eclipse enters the United States at 1:27pm C.D.T. at Maverick County, Texas, beginning a 15-state tour taking 68 minutes. During this timeframe, the shadow will sweep rapidly northeast across Texas and Oklahoma, portions of the Deep South and Central Great Plains, the Greater Ohio Valley, northwest Pennsylvania, Upstate New York and northern New England.

Do you think the eclipse has anything to do with the Hank Aaron anniversary? Maybe it is a celestial testimony to one of baseball's greatest players, or on the other hand an astronomical indictment of prejudice in the United States? I would imagine not, but let's not simply ignore the idea.

If I could predict such an occurrence a millennium ago (But don't hold me to the date because I'm not sure when people started to be able to predict eclipses), I could have used that information to convince people that supernatural powers supported whatever scheme I would have devised. "I will darken the sun on April 8<sup>th</sup> if ...," and then fill in whatever follows.

Imagine even today if the total solar eclipse had arrived just eight days earlier on Easter Sunday. There could have been all sorts of religious pronouncements based on this coincidence. God would be saying something to us, good or bad, based on the paths of the moon and the earth. I can easily imagine the fire and brimstone preachers issuing warnings of Endtime importance that the saints will be resurrected to glory and the sinners to damnation (cf. Matthew 24:29).

Maybe something similar has happened at some point in human history, I have no idea. However, it is true that the heavens have always been coopted to speak for Heaven. I'm not speaking about an awe of

the night sky like that of the Psalmist: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." (19:1-4)

I'm speaking about what is called "the God of the gaps:" if science cannot explain it, God did it. For example, Pierre-Simon, marquis de Laplace (1749 – 1827) was one of the great French mathematical physicists. In physics, he was the first to show that planetary orbits are stable and he developed a model to account for how the solar system formed. Laplace presented his definitive work on the properties of the solar system to Napoleon. Napoleon asked Laplace if it was true that there was no mention of the solar system's Creator in his work. Laplace replied, "I had no need of that hypothesis."

The weakness of "the God of the gaps" argument is that as science is increasingly able to explain the strangest events of the universe, God must grow ever smaller. When I was in college, the power of quasars could not be explained, but now they are defined. I would count on the God-given gift of intelligence to continue to discover, and I see this discovery as evidence that we are made in the image and likeness of God, which is the opposite of "the God of the gaps."

About 95% of the universe is the unknown Dark Energy and Dark Matter. The remaining 5% is what we study and what causes us to look in awe at the night sky. 5%! This awes me. It reveals to me that God is so much more than the small boxes we try to place God in. As we have just entered the Easter Season. Let us not shy away from the resurrection's promise. It is not merely a miracle that breaks the normalcy of creation. It is a mystery that transcends it. Easter is like the eclipse. Not in its strangeness and rarity that are now well understood, but in the awe and wonder we feel in its experience. The tomb was empty. Jesus wasn't there; He's here. This should still make us gasp in amazement, and I hope it does. A blessed, joyous and meaningful Easter Season to you.

## APRIL EVENTS

Tue. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the monthly meeting of the Association Committee on Ministry at 5:45pm.
Mon. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Online <i>Exploring the Bible</i> study group from 7 – 8:00pm.
Tue 9 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the Hampshire Clergy lunch from 12 – 1:00pm in Hadley.
Wed. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees at 7:00pm.
Thur. 11 <sup>th</sup>	Rev. Randy will attend the HEART/HEADS Up meeting at 6:30pm.
Sat. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Real Folks Tag Sale at the church
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.
Sat. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Roast Pork Supper from 4:30-6:30pm.

## 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, except July and August.

## EYE SAFETY FOR PARTIAL SOLAR ECLIPSES

Partial or annular solar eclipses are different from total solar eclipses – there is no period of totality when the Moon completely blocks the Sun’s bright face. Therefore, during partial or annular solar eclipses, it is never safe to look directly at the eclipse without proper eye protection. When watching a partial or annular solar eclipse directly with your eyes, you must look through safe solar viewing glasses (“eclipse glasses”) or a safe handheld solar viewer at all times. Eclipse glasses are NOT regular sunglasses; regular sunglasses, no matter how dark, are not safe for viewing the Sun. Safe solar viewers are thousands of times darker and ought to comply with the ISO 12312-2 international standard. Always inspect your eclipse glasses or handheld viewer before use; if torn, scratched, or otherwise damaged, discard the device. Always supervise children using solar viewers. Do NOT look at the Sun through a camera lens, telescope, binoculars, or any other optical device while wearing eclipse glasses or using a handheld solar viewer — the concentrated solar rays will burn through the filter and cause serious eye injury. (<https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/safety>)

## SERVING THE ASSOCIATION AND THE CONFERENCE?

The Annual Meeting of the Southern place at UMass basically on Saturday, that we had scheduled previously our accordingly, will not be attending the be able to represent our congregation at

The Hampshire Association Annual June 2<sup>nd</sup> from 1:30 – 2:30pm. Would represent our congregation at this the Executive Committee and the Association. If you are interested in please contact Rev. Randy.



New England Conference will take June 22<sup>nd</sup>. This happens to be the day outing to the Woo Sox. Rev. Calvo, Annual Meeting this year. Would you this important gathering?

Meeting will take place on Sunday, you like to join Rev. Calvo and meeting? Also, there are openings on Committee on Ministry of the possibly serving or have questions,

Both the Association and the Conference are ways for us to live into our covenant with the wider church.

## ONLINE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

I invite you to join our online Bible study group. We meet on alternate weeks for one hour. We are reading from the Gospel of John. 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.

## APRIL TAG SALE

Real Folks is planning for an April 20<sup>th</sup> tag sale. Please try to price your donations at home. We do not have sufficient storage at the church so please keep your donations at home until a couple of days before the tag sale. We are not accepting televisions, electronics, or encyclopedias. Please bring in only items that will sell. Thank you for your support.

**ROAST PORK SUPPER**



The Spring Roast Pork Supper will take place at the church on Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. It is take-out only. Meal pick-up is available from 4:30 – 6:30pm. Menu is roast pork, potato, gravy, vegetable, roll/butter and dessert. The cost is \$17.

This is an important fundraiser for the entire church. If you would be able to help work the meal, the clipboard volunteer sign-up sheet appears magically on Sundays at worship, and your help is very much appreciated.

**EARTH DAY 2024**

April 22<sup>nd</sup> is Earth Day. *Planet vs. Plastics* is the Global Theme for Earth Day 2024. “It unites students, parents, businesses, governments, churches, unions, individuals, and NGOs in an unwavering commitment to call for the end of plastics for the sake of human and planetary health, demanding a 60% reduction in the production of plastics by 2040 and an ultimate goal of building a plastic-free future for generations to come.

To achieve a 60% reduction by 2040, EARTHDAY.ORG’s goals are: (1) promoting widespread public awareness of the damage done by plastic to human, animal, and all biodiversity’s health and demanding more research be conducted on its health implications, including the release of any and all information regarding its effects to the public; (2) rapidly phasing out all single use plastics by 2030 and achieving this phase out commitment in the United Nations Treaty on Plastic Pollution in 2024; (3) demanding policies ending the scourge of fast fashion and the vast amount of plastic it produces and uses; and (4) investing in innovative technologies and materials to build a plastic-free world.”



The Bible opens by naming us as stewards of creation. God has blessed us with the earth. At present, we have nowhere else to go. Its health is our health. Let us do what we can to be good stewards of the blessing that is this small blue dot.

**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.

**JOYFUL RINGERS BELL CHOIR**

Anyone who is interested in joining The Joyful Ringers is welcome to become a part of the Bell Choir. They will be playing on Palm Sunday and Easter. They rehearse on Sunday afternoons at 1:00pm. 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. If you may be interested, please reach out to Sue M., the Music Committee Chair.

**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)

Music Minister: Anthony Tracia [anthonytracia@gmail.com](mailto:anthonytracia@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>	



## SUMMER CAMP at Silver Lake

[www.SilverLakeCT.org](http://www.SilverLakeCT.org) **2024**

Standard Program • Tiered Pricing: \$745 / \$670 / \$595  
\*Some programs may have slightly different pricing, or an additional program fee.

<b>PRE-CAMP</b>	<b>FAMILY CAMP WEEKEND</b> All Ages • Saturday-Monday, May 25-27
	<b>PIONEER WORK WEEK</b> Adults, 18+ • Friday-Wednesday, June 21-26
<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>ALL AGES WEEK</b> Family Camp 1   Counselors-In-Training (CIT) • Sunday- Wednesday Family Camp 2 • Wednesday- Saturday
<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>PERFORMING ARTS WEEK</b> God Song   Sing Praise   Rock of Ages grades 4-6 grades 7-9 grades 10-12
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>FASTER, STRONGER, FURTHER = TOGETHER WEEK</b> Silver Lake Sampler   Fun in the Sun   Linked by Love grades 4-6 grades 7-9 grades 10-12
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>FUN IN THE SHADE WEEK</b> Bring on the Monsters   All Aboard!   Reel to Reel grades 4-6 grades 7-9 grades 10-12
<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>REGIONAL YOUTH EVENT</b> Grades 7-12, with their adult leaders • Sunday- Wednesday
	<b>ALUMNI &amp; FRIENDS</b> Adults, 18+ • Thursday- Saturday

**SILVER LAKE** Southern New England Conference  
 Camp & Retreat Center United Church of Christ  
 Living the Love & Justice of Jesus **LEARN MORE**

## SILVER LAKE

Camp & Retreat Center

### SUMMER CAMP VOLUNTEERS

**RECRUITING NOW!** **LEARN MORE**

[www.SilverLakeCT.org/volunteers](http://www.SilverLakeCT.org/volunteers)

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

## 2024 Spring Programs at Silver Lake

**LEARN MORE**

<b>Women's Yoga Weekend</b> May 3-5 Women 18+	<b>Spring Action Weekend</b> April 26-28 Grades 6-12, adults
<b>Spring Camp Weekend</b> May 3-5 Grades 3-7	<b>Open House</b> Sunday, May 19 1-5 p.m.
<b>Family Camp Weekend</b> May 25-27 All ages	

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

**SILVER LAKE**  
 Camp & Retreat Center



**HEADS Up & HEART Are Sponsoring a Contest for Hatfield Participants. Show Us What Social Justice Means To You Through Your Artwork!**

**HEADS Up & HEART Are Sponsoring a Contest for Hatfield Students. Show Us What Social Justice Means To You Through Your Artwork!**

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
 All artwork must be in by May 3rd and we encourage you to display the artwork at your organization.

**PRIZES**  
 Winners will receive a \$50 gift certificate from a local restaurant for the most creative submission

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 All artwork must be in by May 3rd and displayed on May 9th during the art show

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**WINNERS ANNOUNCED**  
 All winners will be announced the week of May 13th to May 17th. We will post the name of the winners on our FaceBook pages.

**WHAT WE DO?**  
**HEADS Up** - Hatfield Embraces Acceptance and Dismantles Stigma  
**HEART** - Hatfield Equity Alliance is committed to an inclusive, equitable community

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