



# Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of October 13, 2024

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## Sunday Worship

Each year in October, the United Church of Christ observes Laity Sunday, affirming that all members of the body are called to minister to others. Every one of us has direct access to God's heart and, therefore, we're encouraged to share the sacred responsibility of preaching and teaching.

This year, our lay preacher is Janice Olson, staff member since April 29th and new member since September 29th. A little about Janice: She retired from corporate life in 2018; and began leading spiritual retreats and workshops for women in recovery. In 2022, she became a certified spiritual director. In addition to her part-time position as Office Manager, she's currently teaching chair yoga and will lead a women's pre-holiday weekend retreat next month. Janice lives in Wethersfield with her hubby (Pete), her black lab (Asher), and three hens (Mrs. T., Chicken Little, and Boss Lady).



When I asked her to summarize her subject, she said: "Every day, in so many ways, we are tempted by offers to buy, eat, drink, or order from Amazon, things that are supposed to make us feel satisfied -- a temporary solution to scratch the itch of desire or quiet our existential angst. And there is plenty of that to go around these days. My reflection, entitled *The Hungry Ghost*, will offer some thoughts about the underlying cause of our comfort-seeking behavior and the spiritual solutions Jesus offers us for free."

She'll say more Sunday! Be blessed and be a blessing!

Rev. Fredd

## Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Yvonne and Lou Tafuto in loving memory of their son, Jason Paul Hannigan.

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## Upcoming Events and Announcements

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### Coffee and Conversation - Wednesdays at 10 a.m. - NEW LOCATION!

Join Rev. Fredd and friends at Nero Kitchen on 13 South Main Street in West Hartford Center for coffee and conversation!



## FAITH FORMATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### Join our Sunday School Team!

We are looking for Sunday School volunteers for the Infant to 5-year-old classroom. The children will listen to a story, listen to music, color, and play. There is no lesson planning involved for this age group. If you're interested in joining us or would like to learn more, please contact Amanda Bethune, [faith.formation@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:faith.formation@whfirstchurch.org). We would love to hear from you!

### Sunday School Registration

Sunday School is underway at First Church and all children are welcome to attend! Parents of children (infants through 8<sup>th</sup> grade) can register online for childcare or Sunday School by clicking [HERE](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to Amanda Bethune at [faith.formation@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:faith.formation@whfirstchurch.org).



### **Potluck Dinner - Friday, October 18 at 6 p.m. in the Auditorium**

The Inreach team invites you to join your First Church friends for a potluck dinner! Make your favorite dish and join us for an evening of good food and fellowship. There will be games for the kids and for the young at heart. We look forward to seeing you! Click [HERE](#) to sign up.

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### **Unity Green Bench Dedication**

Please join us on November 3 at 11:15 a.m. on the Church's Front Lawn following the worship service.

In 2020, the First Church congregation voted to change the name of the town green – which is owned by the church – to *Unity Green*. This was the first accomplishment of a new collaboration between the church and the Concerned Parents of Color of West Hartford (CPCWH), the West Hartford African American Social and Cultural Organization (WAASCO), and Witness Stones/West Hartford, among others. Our goal was to spark conversation and insight by telling the stories of the land, acknowledging the past, and embracing the Town's diverse and rich culture. We continue this story of understanding and justice on November 3 when we dedicate the first Unity Green bench.

### **Hat and Mitten Collection for Covenant to Care**

Now through December 31st we will be collecting new or gently worn mittens, hats, scarves, and other winter clothing for Covenant to Care! Please bring items to church and look for designated boxes for collection. Thank you!

### **October Reach Out: Mental Health Connecticut**

Mental Health Connecticut partners with individuals, families, and communities to create environments that support long term health and wellness. Their vision is to create a future where well-being is rooted in respect for the condition of being human. Services provided include outpatient and residential mental health support, deaf and hard of hearing services, addressing homelessness, etc. regardless of ability to pay.

To donate click [HERE](#). Or to donate online through the church, click [HERE](#).

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### **Celtic Worship Begins this Month!**

Sunday, October 27 at 5 p.m. in the First Church Chapel

The Spirit Team and the JPW Library are delighted to share that Celtic Worship services will begin on Sunday, October 27. Services will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month thereafter, except for our December service, which will be Saturday, December 21 at 4 p.m. Celtic worship is a candlelit service in which we share Holy Communion, hear lovely Celtic melodies, and reawaken our awareness of the sacred in all things. The October service will be led by Rev. Tom Carr. Please see Liz Oman-Wilfred or Jennifer deSimas with questions.

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### **Visit the Church Library – We're Open Sundays**

First Church's worship services are live-streamed every Sunday in our bright, welcoming John P. Webster Library. Come watch while your toddler plays in our children's area or if you need a separate place to worship for health reasons. The JPW Library is open to the public -- church membership is not required. Come in, meet the staff, browse the shelves, and find your next read!

## Interfaith Art Exhibition: "Holy City – A Spiritual Pilgrimage" by Brian Whelan

October 15 through November 22

Opening Reception Tuesday, October 15 from 7–8:30 p.m. Please register [HERE](#).

Immerse yourself in the diversity of Brian Whelan's inspiring art as we reflect on the spiritual essence of our shared humanity. Don't miss this opportunity to experience the power of art to transcend boundaries and foster understanding! Free registration, along with a schedule of related events [HERE](#). To join a carpool to HIU for the Opening Reception, please speak to Jennifer.

## In Conversation with Stephen Drew

Author of *Into the Thin: A Pilgrimage Walk Across Northern Spain*

Tuesday, October 29 from 7-8:30 p.m. in the First Church Auditorium. [Please register here](#).

Experience an evening on the [Camino de Santiago](#) through stories and photographs as Stephen Drew, author of [Into the Thin, A Pilgrimage Walk Across Northern Spain](#), explores the outer - and inner - act of pilgrimage. Drew's story centers on the weeks he spent on the Camino, and the year of loss and tragedy that preceded being called to the walk, as well as some thoughts on the high art of pilgrimage. Presented in partnership with the Hartford International University of Religion and Peace in coordination with the exhibit "Holy City" by Brian Whelan, October 15 - November 22 at HIU.

## FREE Fitness Classes -- Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Spirit - CORRECTED DATES!

The JPWL invites you to attend a free *Faithful Fitness* class. Each class provides an opportunity for meditation as well as movement. Perfect attendance is not required! – it's ok to miss a couple classes. More information is available on each class's registration page:

- **FitMix** with Kathi Boratko -- Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m. through November 5. [Register here](#).
- **ChiGong** with Cynthia Hoag -- Thursdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m. through November 7. [Register here](#).
- **Chair Yoga** with Janice Olson -- Thursdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m. through November 7. [Register here](#).

## Women's Pre-Holiday Retreat

Ladies, you are invited to join Janice Olson for a rejuvenating pre-holiday weekend retreat on the serene Connecticut shoreline, a weekend designed to nourish your spirit and help you create a personalized self-care plan for the coming holiday season and beyond. Through a blend of group gatherings, creative activities, solitude for reflection, and one-on-one spiritual guidance, you'll find the space to recharge and refocus. The retreat will equip you with strategies for making self-care a priority, tools for implementing these practices with accountability, and a personalized self-care kit to take home—plus tidings of comfort and joy to carry into the holidays and new year! For more information and to register, visit [Conscious Contact](#). Scholarship funds are available through the JPW Library; see Jennifer with questions.

## Book Group News:

The John P. Webster Library coordinates and sponsors two book groups that meet regularly in the library. Copies of the books are provided for participants. New members are always welcome to either group! For more information, please contact Jennifer or Molly at 860-232-3893 or at [jpwlibrary@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwlibrary@whfirstchurch.org).

- **Awakening the Spirit**, Meets every Monday from 12-1:30 p.m.

We're currently discussing [Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer

- **Food for Thought**, Meets on first Tuesdays of the month from 5-6:30 p.m.

Nov. 5 – [LuLa Dean's Little Library of Banned Books](#) by Kirsten Miller

Lula Dean has embarked on a mission to rid the public libraries of all "inappropriate" books. To replace the books she's challenged at the public library, she starts her own lending library in front of her home: a cute wooden hutch with neat rows of "worthy" literature. But one of Lula's neighbors sneaks in by night and secretly fills Lula's little library with banned books wrapped in "wholesome" dust jackets. An engrossing satire about a small town; an homage to the power of books, and the importance of speaking up.

## 6th-8th Graders — This One's for You!

The JPW Library has created a new book group for students in Grades 6-8. We will meet on the third Sunday of each month in the Library. With snacks! Our first meeting is October 20 for an encore discussion of [Mexikid](#), by Pedro Martin. Some of you read this one over the summer but couldn't make the discussion; others weren't able to pick up the book in time. So, let's get started! We have extra copies of the book -- pick up yours today! Questions? See Molly or Jennifer.

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## Ongoing Announcements

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### West Hartford Food Pantry

The West Hartford Food Pantry is very low on stock. Please drop off donations in the marked blue bins outside the auditorium and around the building. Specific needs include: baked beans, canned fruit/applesauce, pasta and sauce, cold cereal, canned chicken and tuna, 1 lb. packages of rice, 16-18 oz sized peanut butter, soup, macaroni and cheese. Food donations can also be dropped off at the town hall lobby, Monday - Friday, from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

### Altar Flowers

If you would like to donate altar flowers, we have weeks available for 2024-2025.

Submit Prayer Requests at [http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\_request](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request).

### Light The Steeple in Honor of a Loved One

For a \$25 donation, you are invited to "Light the Steeple" for one week in honor of a loved one. We ask that you pick a date at least one week in advance of the desired week, and all donors will be acknowledged in our weekly *Happenings*. Please note more than one donor can fall on any given week. Donations will be added to the Save the Steeple fund. Click "Light The Steeple for a loved one" found on the "Save the First Church Steeple" web page or [click HERE](#).

### Four Ways to Give (besides Sunday Morning Offertory)

1. **Give by Text:** Text "GIVE" to (860) 222-7870. Choose the fund you would like to donate to and follow the text prompts to enter your credit or debit card and follow all instructions. It's amazingly fast and simple!
2. **Give Online:** To make an online donation with your credit or debit card, click DONATE in menu, type amount and choose the designation from drop-down. To set up recurring payments, or to use ACH, login to "My First Church Login" and select GIVE and follow prompts.
3. **Give by Mail:** Checks can be mailed to First Church West Hartford: 12 South Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06107. Please indicate the fund, of your choice, in the memo line of your check.
4. **Give Gifts of Securities:** Contact local Financial Advisor Sue Banville at Edward Jones in West Hartford at 860-521-2119.

### Family News!

We now have a family news page on our website: [click here](#). Family news will be shared when it is submitted to [Amy Melvin](#) or [Joy Taylor](#). Send your photo(s) with caption(s) any time! We may edit content to fit. Check it out under the Inreach Menu! Please keep in mind that this is a public page.

### Spreading Your News

The Communications Team is made up of members of our Outreach Ministry, and the church Office Administrators.

- **Sunday Notes/Happenings submissions** are *due by noon* on Tuesdays to Sarah: [sarah.kopp@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:sarah.kopp@whfirstchurch.org)
- **Website, printed pieces, and Social Media additions or changes** can be sent to Amy and Joy anytime.  
Amy Melvin: [Communications@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Communications@whfirstchurch.org), Joy Taylor: [Communications2@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Communications2@whfirstchurch.org)

**Office Hours:** Monday through Thursday 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. - Noon.

**Contact:** [Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org) or 860-233-9605.