



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of October 20, 2024

Sunday Worship

I believe in the sun
even when it isn't shining.
I believe in love
even when feeling it not.
I believe in God
even when God is silent.
I believe in the silence.

That anonymous text is the creative heart of this Sunday's choir anthem. The words were found on a basement wall in Cologne, Germany -- presumably written by someone hiding from danger during the holocaust.

I wonder how you react when you feel forsaken and forgotten; when appearances indicate that your prayers have gone unanswered; or when God seems to be unresponsive. It's a terrible state to endure...a tight space to occupy! I think the unnamed writer offers a powerful survival strategy. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon (based on Psalm 22:1-5) is entitled: **When God is Silent...Believe in the Silence.**

Blessings,
Rev. Fredd

Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Judy and Terry Schmitt in loving memory of Jean Quick Piper.

“God’s silence is not
God’s absence, so
keep going.”

— GUGULETHU NDLOVU

Upcoming Events and Announcements



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. 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 8th 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.



SPIRIT TEAM

Celtic Worship Begins this Month!

Sunday, October 27 at 5 p.m. in the First Church Chapel
Services will be held on the 4th 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.



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!

Festival of Trees

Just in time to make the holidays festive, we are thrilled to announce the 9th Annual West Hartford Festival of Trees which will be held on Thursday, December 5 from 5 - 8 p.m. during the Holiday Stroll. You can be part of it! Just donate an artificial, decorated tree and/or a Gift Card.

Reserve your tree's space by Friday, November 15! Complete the online registration form: [Register Tree Here](#) (please use separate form for each tree). Printable Registration: Open and print form [HERE](#) and mail it in.

Tree drop-off and set up is 12–2:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 1. Contact us for special arrangements. You may also choose to donate a gift card to be added to one of our "Gift Card Presents" which are gift-wrapped boxes filled with a variety of gift cards as part of the fundraiser.

If questions, please contact Eleanor Wight at ejwight@comcast.net.

Unity Green Bench Dedication

November 3 at 11:15 a.m. on the Church's Front Lawn

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. Please join us on the front lawn at 11:15 following the worship service!

GHIAA Campaign Kick-off Coming Up

Thursday, November 21 from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Weaver High School (415 Granby St., Hartford)

GHIAA (the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance, of which First Church is a founding member) will soon launch its next round of collective efforts to make life better for everyone in our little corner of the world. You -- and your friends, and your neighbors -- are invited to attend the kick-off celebration, and help show by your presence the breadth and strength of support that is behind GHIAA's efforts. Information on how to register and who wants to car pool will be available soon. The campaigns being launched will focus on improving housing affordability, updating State fiscal policy, combating racial and religious hate, and reclaiming the former MIRA trash-to-energy site.

For questions, contact Linda Bronstein (lindadiane275@gmail.com) or Terry Schmitt (terrerschmittwh@gmail.com).

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](#).



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

Through November 22

The JPW Library is pleased to partner with Hartford International University, as well as other local faith organizations, to present "Holy City" by Irish artist Brian Whelan. "Holy City," Whelan's "vision of unity amongst the three Abrahamic faiths" joyfully transcends religious boundaries. Check out the schedule of related events that will be hosted by participating communities [HERE](#).

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

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.](#)

Tidings of Comfort & Joy Women's Retreat

Friday, November 15 at 7:00 p.m. -- Sunday, November 17 at 12:00 p.m. in Madison, CT

Ladies, 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.

6th-8th Graders — A Book Group Just for You!

This Sunday October 20!

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 on October 20 will be 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.

- Our next meeting will be November 17 to discuss:

We Are Big Time by Hena Khan (Author), Safiya Zerrougui (Illustrator)

SWISH! Cheer courtside for a Muslim teen as she joins an all-girls, hijab-wearing basketball team and learns that she's much more than a score. This energetic graphic novel is inspired by a true story! "A slam dunk!" —Minh Lê

Aliya is new to Wisconsin, and everything feels different than Florida. The Islamic school is bigger, the city is colder, and her new basketball team is...well, they stink. Aliya's still excited to have teammates (although the team's captain, Noura, isn't really Aliya's biggest fan), and their new coach really understands basketball (even if she doesn't know much about being Muslim). This season should be a blast...if they could just start to win. As they strengthen their skills on the court, Aliya and the Peace Academy team discover that it takes more than talent to be great--it's teamwork and self-confidence that defines true success.

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.

- **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 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.

Ongoing Announcements

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

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

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.

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.

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

Contact: Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605.