



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of October 27, 2024

Sunday Worship

"James and John came to Jesus...they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask...[let] one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.'"

-- Mark 10:35-37

Last December -- on the first Sunday in Advent -- I suggested (borrowing from environmentalist David Orr) that **hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up**. The idea was that if you're hopeful, you've got to be active. You've got to be working toward the thing you want to realize. While illustrating the point, I referred to this hoped-for 'thing' that my brother Larry was praying about and actively preparing for.

That thing, since realized, was/is the presidency of the University of Hartford. As part of Larry's inaugural celebration this weekend, UHart has invited their community to worship with our community Sunday morning. Which is cool because so many members of First Church are connected to the nearby university. Plus, it's a legitimate excuse to have cake!

The sermon is entitled **The Presidential Impulse: Lead with Love**. It's about harnessing our natural desire for importance and prominence. Like James and John, we all want to be first. Jesus encourages us, however, that *"whoever wants to be first must be servant of all"*. I'll say more when I see you.

Blessings meantime,
Rev. Fredd

Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Wyrot and Fred Ward in honor of the inauguration of their son, Lawrence P. Ward, as seventh President of the University of Hartford.



Upcoming Events and Announcements

Our 2024 Stewardship Campaign is underway, and pledge cards have been mailed out. You can bring your completed pledge card to worship on **November 17** or mail it to the office beforehand. You can also make your pledge online by filling out the online pledge card [HERE](#). Thank you!



MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in joining First Church, please plan to attend an information session for prospective new members following worship on **Sunday, November 10 at 11:15 a.m.** We expect to receive new members into the life of the church during the 10 a.m. worship service on **Sunday, November 24**. Please contact Rev. Fredd in person, by telephone at 860-233-9605, or via email fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org.



SPIRIT TEAM

Celtic Worship Service Today

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

All are welcome to join us for our first Celtic worship service today in the First Church Chapel. This candlelit service includes lovely Irish music and Holy Communion; Rev. Tom Carr will be preaching. Take time this evening for stillness and reflection on the sacred in all of God's Creation. The Chapel is handicap accessible at the South Main entrance. Please see Liz Oman-Wilfred or Jennifer deSimas with questions.



First Sunday Breakfast

November 3 from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in the Auditorium

BREAKFAST IS READY (or will be) in the Auditorium next Sunday! Join your church family for a breakfast party of hot casseroles, fruit, bagels, bacon or sausage, breakfast breads, and more – plus coffee, juice & tea. Tasty gluten-free options, too! Sponsored by the JPW Church Library, and a core of merry cooks! All are welcome!



Festival of Trees, Will You Donate a Tree?

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, and we'll have Saturday hours this year from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. on December 7. 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.

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 carpool 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 (terryschmittwh@gmail.com).

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](#).



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.



Visit the Church Library – We're Open 9-12 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 any other reason. The JPW Library is open to the public -- church membership is not required. Come in and find your next read!

In Conversation with Stephen Drew – this Tuesday! Author of *Into the Thin: A Pilgrimage Walk Across Northern Spain*

This 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.

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

The JPW Library has partnered with Hartford International University, as well as other local faith organizations, to present "Holy City" by Irish artist Brian Whelan at HIU. "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](#). Through November 22.

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.

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.

Next Meeting will be November 5 – [LuLa Dean's Little Library of Banned Books](#) by Kirsten Miller

An engrossing satire about a small town; an homage to the power of books, and the importance of speaking up.

- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group** - November 17 at 10 a.m. in the JPW Library

A book group especially for students in Grades 6-8! We meet (with snacks!) on the third Sunday of the month in the Library. Bring a friend! Our next meeting is November 17 to discuss [We Are Big Time](#) a new graphic novel by Hena Khan and Safiya Zerrougui. "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. And while their new coach really understands basketball, she doesn't know much about being Muslim. 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." Questions? See Molly at the Book Mobile or in the JPW Library.

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. 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.](#)

Of Interest

27th Annual Greater Hartford Multifaith Prayer Breakfast

Thursday, November 7 from 7 - 9 a.m.

Artists Collective Inc., 1200 Albany Avenue, Hartford, CT

This annual event features uplifting, spiritual music; prayers from diverse congregations; and greetings from representatives in City Hall and the state legislature. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, and others have been involved in the planning of the event. A delicious Middle Eastern style breakfast will be served. The theme for 2024 is "Eco-Justice: A Global Issue with Local Impact" with reflections from Rev. Tom Carr, co-founder of the Connecticut Interreligious Eco-Justice Network. Free event; a \$10 donation is suggested, but donations of any size are welcome so we can continue to support this longstanding event. [Tap here](#) for more information and to register.

CCIU Love Thy Neighbor Dinner

Monday, November 18 at 5:30 p.m.

You're invited! Join the CT Council for Interreligious Understanding (CCIU) for their annual *Love Thy Neighbor* Dinner, where they'll be celebrating their 30th anniversary as well as recognizing the service of past and present Board members. The guest speaker will be Professor Frank Harris, Chair, Dept. of Journalism, SCSU, and former columnist for the *Hartford Courant*. Register at ccfiu.org.

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!

Submit Prayer Requests at http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request.

Altar Flowers

If you would like to donate altar flowers, we have weeks available for 2024-2025, including 12/1/24.

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: Mon. - Thurs. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Fri. 9 a.m. - Noon. **Contact:** Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605.