



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of November 3, 2024

Sunday Worship

"But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go...Where you die, I will die – there I will be buried.'"

– Ruth 1:16-17

You're probably familiar with the opening line of Brian Chalker's poem that suggests: "People always come into your life for a reason, a season and a lifetime. When you figure out which it is, you know exactly what to do." I don't know when it was published, but I know that those words live in the world as an adage – a refrain that people regularly repeat. It irritates me a little bit because, perhaps, it sounds too simplistic...or formulaic?



When I'm irritated, I try to get over myself and go deeper. Which is why the whole poem will be our looking glass as we study the story of Naomi and her daughters-in-law (Ruth 1:1-18). Ruth figured out that some complicated relationships are worth clinging to...even unto death. I'll say more when I see you.

Be the light. Lead with love.

Rev. Fredd

Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Courtland Lewis and family in loving memory of Nancy Gillett Lewis and Jean Jaeger Amols.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple is lit this week by:

~ Nicole Roser and Rachael Edlund in honor of Kathy Horner's birthday.

~ The Spirit Team in loving memory of Barbara Amols Lewis.

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.



INREACH

First Sunday Breakfast, This Sunday!

November 3 from 8:30-9:30 a.m. in the Auditorium this Sunday! Tasty gluten-free options, too. All are welcome!



Unity Green Bench Dedication

This Sunday, November 3 at 11:15 a.m. on the Church's Front Lawn following worship

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.

Thanksgiving Baskets

Our food collection for Thanksgiving baskets is here! Please bring items to church and place them in a Food for Friends barrel by November 24. We will use these items to fill the baskets. If you would like to help, please bring in a food item, using the following guide:

If your last name begins with...you'll bring:

- A-D: Bread and roll mix, stuffing mix
- E-H: Gravy and Cranberry Sauce, Spanish Food (i.e. Goya Products)
- I-L: Canned fruits and vegetables
- M-P: Juice, tea, and coffee
- Q-T: Rice and potatoes
- U-Z: Breakfast cereals and juice boxes

We will also be collecting Stop and Shop gift cards, which each family will receive along with their basket of food items. We are looking for volunteers to fill and organize the baskets on November 24 after worship.

If you can help out or have any questions please contact Diane Bohman at dmbhman@comcast.net or Molly Bohman at jpwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org.

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. Questions, please contact Eleanor Wight, ejwight@comcast.net.

Volunteer at the Festival of Trees

If you would like to volunteer at the FOT, please [click here](#). You can sell tickets, bake cookies, greet visitors, or direct folks through the building. On Sunday, December 1, we'll need volunteers to help set up the Festival after church. On Sunday, December 8, volunteers will be needed to break down the Festival and call the winners of the tree. Please see Eleanor Wight or Amy Melvin with questions. Thank you!!

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 (terrerschmittwh@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!

November Reach Out: Hands On Hartford

Hands On Hartford is a social service nonprofit organization that serves Hartford's most economically challenged residents in the areas of food, housing, and health. Founded in 1969 as Center City Churches, the agency has had a longstanding commitment to providing respectful, comprehensive services with help from volunteers and community partnerships.

- Gather55 restaurant pay as you can philosophy.
- MANNA Community Pantry, and the Backpack Nutrition Program for children provide meals and groceries to individuals and families facing food insecurity.
- Day Program and Neighborhood Services team provides community connections, referrals, security deposit & utility assistance, basic health screening, nutrition education, and employment & education expense assistance.
- Homeless Outreach Team connects unsheltered individuals in the Hartford area to services, shelter, and housing.
- HOH Housing provides individuals and families with safe and affordable housing, supportive services, and individualized housing case management.
- Licensed Shared Use Kitchen enables start-up and small food businesses and entrepreneurs to scale up their operations before they are able to afford their own commercial kitchens.

To learn more or donate online: <https://handsonhartford.org>. Or to donate online through the church, click [HERE](#).



WORSHIP ARTS

Chamber Music Concert

Sunday, November 17 at 3 p.m. in the Chapel

The Chamber Music Series is in its second season at First Church, designed to bring great music performances to an audience in an intimate setting. The concert is free to the public. A Free Will Offering will be collected by the door.



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, comfortable 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!

FREE Fitness Classes -- Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Spirit!

- **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 14. [Register here.](#)

Interfaith Art Exhibition

"Holy City – A Spiritual Pilgrimage" by Brian Whelan -- Through November 22 at HIU

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" depicts Whelan's "vision of unity amongst the three Abrahamic faiths." Check out the schedule of related events that will be hosted by participating communities [HERE](#).

GOAT* Bible Study!

Starts November 17 - Sundays from 9-9:45 a.m. in the Friendship Room (305)

Join Rev. Tom Carr on November 17 and each Sunday afterwards for a deep dive into scripture! Explore historical contexts, find out who was duped (and by whom), or find out how and where the Gospels echo the ancient Hebrew Bible. "Tom's engaging style and knowledge of scripture have really helped me understand the Bible's ongoing story and meaning in our own lives" (participant).

*Greatest Of All Time

Entering the Season of Advent: A Day of Reflection for Women

Saturday, November 23 from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. in the Friendship Room (305)

Advent is the liturgical season of hope, peace, love, and joy when we prepare our hearts and homes for the celebration of Christmas. In recent times, Advent has become a countdown of ticking things off our to-do list rather than a season of reflection. With all the holiday preparations at the church and at home, you may be thinking that a day of reflection sounds like a frivolous waste of time. But when we neglect our interior lives, distracted by all our busy-ness, we can miss the deeper meaning of the holiday season and find ourselves exhausted and unfulfilled.

Join the JPWL staff and workshop leader, Janice Olson, for a special, half-day, Pre-Advent program designed to offer you time for reflection, refreshment, and some overdue self-care in the company of other women. We will reflect on the holiday traditions that most warm our hearts and find new ways to bring deeper meaning to the season of Advent. A light lunch and afternoon tea will be served. Register [HERE](#) by Saturday, November 16.

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 on 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.

Of Interest

CCIU Love Thy Neighbor Dinner

Monday, November 18 at 5:30 p.m. Register at ccfiu.org.

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*.

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.

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 December 1.

West Hartford Food Pantry

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.

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
- **Website, printed pieces, and Social Media additions or changes** can be sent to Amy and Joy anytime.
Amy Melvin: Communications@whfirstchurch.org, Joy Taylor: Communications2@whfirstchurch.org

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

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