



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of November 24, 2024

Sunday Worship

Last month, the choir sang (and I sermonically suggested) the following strategy: **"When God is Silent...Believe in the Silence"**. The basic premise was that silence and reliance can coexist. We saw that Jesus suffered grave injury upon the cross and maintained great intimacy with God.

We also considered our own relationships with three different types of close companions – the ones with whom we can pick-up-where-we-left-off after an extended absence; the ones who know exactly what to say and when to say nothing; and those with whom we can share elegant quiet time.

Since then, I've received a series of signs that have convinced me to preach the other side of the subject. Which is that sometimes silence is a shortcoming – when we're reluctant to speak, we make certain situations worse. I'll say more when I see you. The message (based on John 18:33-38) is entitled **"A Subsequent Sermon About Silence: To Tell the Truth"**.

Lead with love!
Rev. Fredd

**SILENCE
GIVES
CONSENT.**

Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Ellen Meinke in loving memory of Kenneth, Jean, John, and Debbie Meinke.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

Please note that First Church will be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 28 and 29 for the Thanksgiving holiday.



CONFIRMATION

The Confirmands Are Coming...and Going Bowling!

Sunday, December 8 at 2 p.m.

We're excited to announce that Rev. Fredd will lead a six-week expedition for high-schoolers who want to confirm their baptism. The group will meet on Sunday afternoons starting February 23 through March 30. Confirmation Sunday is scheduled for April 6. Details are forthcoming. Meanwhile, we've organized a get-to-know-you gathering for prospective confirmands at Spare Time Windsor Locks on Sunday, December 8 at 2 p.m.

Contact Rachel Tenney 516-906-2840 or Michelle Killion 860-256-9763.



SPIRIT TEAM

Celebrating Our Covenant on December 1

Has it been a year already? It has!

A little over one year ago, Rev. Fredd joyfully and humbly accepted the call to serve as our settled Senior Pastor. Since then, the "match" found between our congregation and Fredd's ministry has flourished!

Please join us on Sunday, December 1 when we affirm Fredd's ministry during the 10:00 a.m. worship service and celebrate afterwards during coffee hour in the auditorium.

If you are so inspired, send a card or write a note of appreciation. These may be dropped off in advance at the church office or, on Sundays, during coffee hour. They will be presented to Rev. Fredd during our fellowship time on December 1.

Please join the celebration!

Celtic Service

This Sunday, November 24 at 5 p.m. in the Chapel – Led by Rev. Tom Carr

Celtic Christian Worship is a contemplative liturgical tradition that invites everyone to experience the sacredness of all creation. It's a sensory journey that combines ancient rituals with the enduring message of Christianity, creating a space for deep connection and reflection. In this tradition, you'll find a path to encounter the divine in the beauty of the everyday through prayer, poetry, music, and shared silence.



Deck the Meeting House

Saturday, November 30 from 9 - 11 a.m.

Let's kick off the holiday season together as we decorate our beloved Meeting House for Advent and Christmas. Come hang the garlands, set up the trees, and get out the candles! No registration necessary – just come and be with us!

Wreath, Poinsettia and Organ & Carillon Donations

Wreaths will adorn the doors of First Church during the season of Advent. Poinsettias can be used to brighten the holiday for another or taken home after worship on December 22. Donations can also be made to the Organ & Carillon Reserve Fund. Online orders and donations can be made [HERE](#) or you can print a form [HERE](#) to mail in with your payment. All donations must be received in the office by Monday, December 16.



Festival of Trees

Volunteers are needed for the Festival of Trees! Sell tickets, bake cookies, greet visitors, or direct folks through the church building.

Sunday, December 1, volunteer to help set up the Festival after church.

Thursday and Saturday, December 5 and 7, volunteer to help during festival hours.

Sunday, December 8, volunteers will be needed to break down the Festival and call the winners of the trees.

Please [click here](#) (click NEXT to see all jobs) or find us at our table during coffee hour. See Eleanor Wight, Amy Melvin or Ginny Vocelli with questions. Thank you!

Share A Gift Tree for Our Covenant to Care Children

'Tis the season to share Christmas joy! Take a tag from the tree in the auditorium starting November 24 and bring the unwrapped gift to the church by December 15. Thank you for helping our Covenant to Care children have a Merry Christmas! For any questions, please contact Diane Bohman at dmbohman@comcast.net or Molly Bohman at jpwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org.

Hat and Mitten Collection for Covenant to Care -- and Sock Collection for The House of Bread

Now through December 31, we will be collecting new or gently worn mittens, hats, scarves, and other winter clothing for Covenant to Care! We will also be collecting NEW socks for The House of Bread. Please bring items to the church and look for designated boxes for collection. Thank you!

Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. [The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund](#) is one of the UCC's special mission offerings. Individuals can also [donate directly online or by mail](#). The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross is managed by the Pension Boards. [Get more information here](#).

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](#).



First Church Academy - Substitute Teachers

Do you enjoy working with children? First Church Academy for Young Children is looking for substitute teachers. The Academy serves children six-weeks to five years old and is open from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Coverage is needed for all classrooms and for a variety of shifts. We can work with you! If you are interested in learning more, contact Dawne Quinn, Education Director at dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org.

Click [HERE](#) to view the job description.

Registration for the 2025-2026 Program Year is Open

In-house family and First Church member priority registration is open now and runs through November 15. First Church Academy provides care for children 6 weeks to 5 years old in a loving, nurturing, play-based environment. We are a licensed and nationally accredited program open Monday - Friday 7:30 am until 5:30 pm. If you would like more information about our offerings, please visit our website, firstchurchacademy.org, or reach out to Director, Dawne Quinn [@dquinn firstchurchacademy.org](https://www.instagram.com/dquinn_firstchurchacademy.org)

Applications can be found on our website and submitted via email or dropped off directly at the Academy. Registration will open to the community on December 2.



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.



Worship is Live-Streamed Every Sunday in the Church Library

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 also open Monday-Thursday 9-5. Everyone is welcome -- church membership is not required! Come in and find your next read!

Advent Devotionals

The JPW Library is offering two different Advent devotionals this year. Each contains scripture reflections, personal essays, and prayers to guide our hearts during this very busy, very tender season. Please take just one devotional, so that all who are interested may receive one:

- "Waiting in Joyful Hope" from Saint Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN includes focuses on the "many stories from people, places, and experiences that can help us come to know the incarnate Christ more deeply." The stories resonate with the theme of life as readers explore the conception, preparation, labor, and beginnings of new life.
- "The Mess in the Messiah" by the StillSpeaking Writers group at UCC/Pilgrim Press has a lighter tone: "The Christmas message of 'God with us' is messy...Angels interrupt a good night's sleep, crusty shepherds and foreign stargazers intermingle, a family flees political persecution...and there is God, in the flesh. This Advent, sort through the mess to find the message! Each day includes a scripture reading, reflection and prayer. Also included: guidance for lighting a weekly Advent wreath in your home."

GOAT* Bible Study!

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

Join Rev. Tom Carr for a deep dive into the book of Isaiah! Explore historical contexts, find out who was duped (and by whom), and see 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!

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. Starting 12/2, we will begin discussing

[The Whole Language: The Power of Extravagant Tenderness](#) by Gregory Boyle. "Heaven was not a goal for Jesus, but loving was," writes Boyle. "...Bursting with encouragement, humor, and hope, he invites us to treat others—and ourselves—with acceptance and tenderness" (online reviews).

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

Next Meeting: December 3 – [God, Grace, and Horses: Life Lessons from the Saddle](#) by Laurie Brock. From barely-there trails in the Grand Tetons to muddy fields in the Kentucky Bluegrass, God is revealed in the simple ways of these magnificent creatures. For anyone feeling doubtful, distracted, or anxious in these challenging times, Brock brings us back to center, reminding us to breathe, get back on the saddle, and move beyond the familiar into the freedom of something new.

- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group** – Sunday, December 15 at 10 a.m. in the JPW Library

For students in Grades 6-8: We meet (with snacks!) on the third Sunday of the month in the Library.

Our next book is [Invisible](#) by Christina Diaz Gonzalez, illustrated by Gabriela Epstein.

"Five students meet in the school cafeteria when they're forced to complete their school community service hours. Even though their school administration has decided that they all belong together, none of the kids wants to be there. But when they encounter someone who truly needs their help, they might just be able to come together to work as a team—and help their community—after all. Questions? See Molly at the Book Mobile or in the JPW Library.

Ongoing Announcements

Our **2024 Stewardship Campaign** is underway. You can bring your completed pledge card to worship or mail it to the office. You can also make your pledge online by filling out the online pledge card [HERE](#). Thank you!

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

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 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.

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: Mon. – Thurs. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. and Fri. 9 a.m. - Noon.

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