



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of December 8, 2024

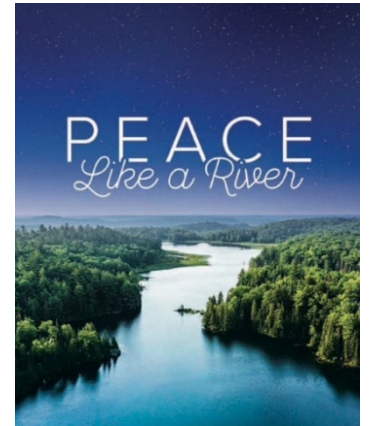
Sunday Worship

"I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river in my soul."
– Chalice Hymn #530

Last week, the poet Emily Dickinson helped us find Advent hope within. She said it's the thing with feathers that perches in the soul. There is a beloved African American spiritual that suggests something similar. Peace, we pray, is something that streams in the soul.

The question is: What does your river look like? Waterways work in different ways. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon for the second Sunday of Advent is entitled: **The Rippling of Rivers**. By the way, that phrase is attributed to another poet, Henry David Thoreau.

Be blessed. Be a blessing.
Rev. Fredd



Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Barbara Laurain and David Simpson in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Simpson.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple is lit this week by:

- ~ Terry and Judy Schmitt in honor of Rev. Fredd Ward's year of leadership.
- ~ Sue Ann Collins in loving memory of Sara Ann Gay.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

Please note: The West Hartford Mitten Run will take place on Sunday morning, December 8. Traffic patterns around the church will be impacted, however Farmington Avenue and Trout Brook Drive should remain open. Click [HERE](#) to view the traffic advisory from the town. Click [HERE](#) to view the route map.

AED Training

We will be offering a training session for anyone interested in learning how to use the AED's you now see throughout the Church. The class will be held on Tuesday, December 17 at 5 p.m. in the Fellowship Room and will be taught by members of the West Hartford Community Emergency Response Team - there is no cost to you. We need at least 8 people to hold the class. Thank you! Click [HERE](#) to register.



Advent Services and Events

- [West Hartford Festival of Trees](#), Thursday, Dec. 5 from 5-8 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 7 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- December 8 – Second Sunday of Advent, Peace – 10 a.m. worship service
- Saturday, December 14 at 4 p.m. – City Singers Concert in the Meeting House
- December 15 – Third Sunday of Advent, Joy – 10 a.m. worship service
- Saturday, December 21 at 4 p.m. – Celtic Lessons and Carols in the Chapel
- December 22 – Fourth Sunday of Advent, Love – 10 a.m. worship service
- December 22 at 4 p.m. – Arts in the Center Concert, Chorus Angelicus in the Meeting House. [Order tickets Here.](#)
- December 24 – Christmas Eve Services: 4:30 p.m. – Family Service & 9 p.m. – Contemplative, candle-light service.
- December 25 – Merry Christmas!
- December 29 – Colossal Puppets & Trombone Choir return during the 10 a.m. worship service.



CONFIRMATION

The Confirmands Are Coming...and Going Bowling!

This 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

Celtic Lessons and Carols

Saturday, December 21 at 4 p.m. in the Chapel

Come enjoy some calm before the rush of the holiday season! Our Lessons and Carols service takes place on the Winter Solstice this year. Many cultures see this time as a period of rebirth. In Celtic tradition it is seen as the return of the light as the days begin to lengthen. Invite light and renewal into this hectic time with meditation and music, featuring members of the Jolly Beggars.



WORSHIP ARTS

Christmas Angelicus Concert

Sunday, December 22 at 4 p.m. in the Meeting House

Join Chorus Angelicus and Gaudeamus in welcoming the holiday season across Connecticut! A New England tradition, hear a diverse assortment of Christmas classics, seasonal music, works from the past, and works by contemporary composers.

Order tickets [HERE](#).

Ring in the New Year with Colossal Mary and Joseph!

The Colossal Puppets of St. Michaels Church (Litchfield) are returning to First Church Sunday, December 29 for the 10 a.m. service! Come see this collection of massive shepherds, angels, kings, and the Holy Family as they march throughout the Meeting House. It's a memorable way for children of all ages to commemorate the end of the Christmas season and look forward to greeting the New Year. Want to get involved? Volunteers are needed for the following:

- Assembling/preparing the puppets Friday, December 27 from 2 - 4 p.m.
- Puppeteers for the Dec. 29 worship service. This involves rehearsing on Saturday, Dec. 28 from 10 - 11:30 a.m.
- Disassembling and transporting the puppets back to St. Michaels Monday, December 30 at 10 a.m.

Sign up for any of these spots [HERE](#), or speak to Jim Boratko.



INREACH

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.



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.

After the GHIAA Campaign Kick-off, now what?

Ten members and friends of First Church participated in the Campaign Kick-off on November 21, and now it's time to get to work!

GHIAA is forming town-by-town Housing Affordability Teams (HATs) to look into what each town needs to do to remove its own barriers to affordable housing. A HAT team is forming in West Hartford, as well as in many other towns. If you are interested in joining a team, contact Linda (lindadiane275@gmail.com) or Terry (terryschmittwh@gmail.com). Also, First Church needs to fulfill its commitment, as a founding member of GHIAA, to contribute \$5000 each calendar year to help pay for the staff that keeps GHIAA functioning and the materials and events that make it possible to get the work for justice done. Every year our Outreach Team contributes \$2500, and the rest needs to come from individual donations. So far in 2024, donations total \$850. If you can help -- whether it's \$5 or \$500 -- please make your donation soon. If you give online or by text, you will find GHIAA is one of the categories you can designate your gift for. If you donate by check, please write "GHIAA" in the memo line. Thank you for your support, financial and otherwise!

Thanksgiving Baskets for Covenant to Care!

Thanks go to Oxen Hill Farm, our CSA that donated 5 boxes of sweet potatoes for the Covenant to Care families. The sweet potatoes are part of the Thanksgiving food gift for our families, adding a nutritional benefit to their table. Together we filled baskets for 27 families. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

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](#).

December Reach Out: The Village for Children and Families

For more than 200 years, The Village has been dedicated to building a community of strong, healthy families who protect and nurture children. Established in 1809 by a committed group of women, the Hartford Female Beneficent Society, The Village's name and services have changed but the desire to assist children and families has remained constant. To learn more: <https://thevillage.org/programs-services/>.

Programs and services include:

- Addiction and recovery support
- Adult mental health and wellness
- Children and teen mental health and wellness
- Early childhood care and development
- Financial and career support
- Foster care and child welfare
- Integrated care
- Parent education and family strengthening
- School based support
- Support for justice-involved youth

To donate online: <https://thevillage.org/give/>. Or to donate online through the church, click [HERE](#).

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!

G.O.A.T.* Bible Study!

Every Sunday from 9-9:45 a.m. in the Friendship Room (305) -- *Please note: No class 12/15 or 12/29*

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).

Bibles provided; [register here](#). *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 jpwlbrary@whfirstchurch.org.

- **Awakening the Spirit** - Meets every Monday from 12-1:30 p.m. - Rev. Tom Carr, facilitator
Join us to discuss [The Whole Language: The Power of Extravagant Tenderness](#) by Gregory Boyle. In this follow-up to *Tattoos on the Heart* and *Barking to the Choir*, Boyle is "incandescent, always hope-filled, and often hilarious, sprinkling his narratives with theological and spiritual reflections from a variety of theologians, poets, and other writers" (Christian Century). Don't miss reading this encouraging and uplifting book!
- **Food for Thought** - Meets on first Tuesdays of the month from 5-6:30 p.m. - JPW Library Staff, facilitators
Next Meeting: January 7 - This month we will be reading *First Ladies* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray. A novel about the extraordinary partnership between First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune. This unlikely friendship between two different, yet equally formidable and committed, women helped form the foundation for the modern civil rights movement.
- **Believe in YourSHELF** Tween Book Group
Sunday, December 15 at 10 a.m. - Facilitated by Molly Bohman, JPWL Assistant Librarian
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" (back cover) Questions? See Molly at the Book Mobile or in the JPW Library.

Faithful Fitness Classes Continue

The JPWL invites you to attend, or continue attending, 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 of classes. More information is available on each class's registration page:

- Qi Gong with Cynthia Hoag resumes Thursday, December 5 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Chapel.
QiGong, a Chinese exercise that promotes the flow of qi, or energy, in the body, can reduce stress, depression, or fatigue while providing a sense of balance and clarity. Each session will conclude with a short meditation. More info and registration [here](#).
- FitMix with Kathi Boratko will resume Tuesday, January 7 from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. in the Auditorium.
This is a well-rounded class including resistance training, cardio, and balance using multiple fitness modalities. Chairs will be used for seated and standing support. Please bring a mat, light weights, and a small ball. No tools? No worries! Some tools can be provided. [Register here](#) to join the class!
- Janice Olson's Chair Yoga will no longer meet in person, but will continue online:
Yoga for Every Body - Balance, Flexibility, and Mobility - On Friday mornings from 9:00 am - 10:00 am you can join Janice for an uplifting and invigorating Chair Yoga class from the comfort of your own home! This all-levels class is being offered online via ZOOM. To receive the ZOOM login details, please email Janice at janiceolson756@gmail.com.
Class is offered on a donation basis but there is no financial requirement. Grab a chair and see you there!

In the JPWL Gallery

We are delighted to present the work of three women artists: Dolores Howard, Michelle Peterson, and Michele Quinn. "Reveries and Reflections: Three Local Artists" will be on display from December 1 through January 12 in the JPW Gallery and in the Alcove to the right of the Rotunda Entrance. Many of the pieces are for sale -- these would make unique Christmas gifts! A percentage of the proceeds will be donated to First Church Outreach Ministries.

A Great Green Gift

Here's your opportunity for local, "green" gift buying! The JPWL is selling bags that were sewn from old church banners. These upcycled, one-of-a-kind First Church-branded totes and clutches will be for sale during Hospitality Hour. Totes are \$20 each; clutches are \$10 each, or 3 for \$25. All proceeds will be used by the Outreach Team to support nearby environmental charities.

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!

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.

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, please contact Sarah in the church office. Many dates available in the new year.

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](#).

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.

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

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.

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.