



# Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of January 5, 2025

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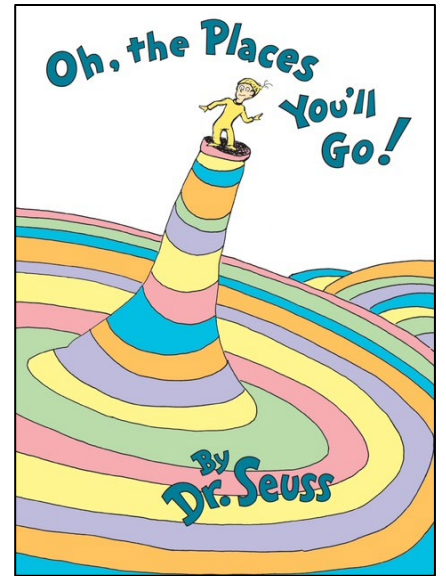
## Sunday Worship

"Congratulations! Today is your day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and away!" – Theodor Geisel aka Dr. Seuss

The featured scripture (Matthew 2:1-12) on the first Sunday of 2025 is undoubtedly familiar to you. We read it during both worship services on Christmas Eve and again this past Sunday during the Colossal Puppet pageant. It describes the visit of the wise ones from the East who came to Jerusalem in search of the newborn king. They had observed the child's star at its rising and followed it until they found him with Mary, his mom.

We've read the story. We haven't yet examined its working parts, particularly the **observing** and the **following** and the **encountering**. Such are the elements of the ancient Epiphany...and every little epiphany since. I'll say more when I see you.

The sermon blends together beginner book and biblical language in order to demystify our ongoing search for the divine. It's entitled **The Spirituality of Seuss: Oh, The Places You'll Go!**



Happy New Year!

Rev. Fredd

## Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers are donated this week by Kathryn Beers in loving memory of Robert and Mildred Beers.

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## Upcoming Events and Announcements

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**INREACH**

### Volunteers Needed

The Inreach Team is looking for a few people to help dismantle the sanctuary trees and carry them to the attic on Sunday, January 5, immediately following worship. It should take about 20 minutes. If you can help, meet Nancy Ball in the chancel right after the service. Thank you for your help!

### No First Sunday Breakfast January 5

Breakfasts will resume on the first Sunday of the month starting February 2 and continue through May. Thank you for your early bird breakfast enthusiasm!

### Altar Flower Donations

Donating altar flowers is a meaningful way to honor loved ones and is part of our Inreach ministry. Each week the altar flowers are broken down into smaller arrangements and delivered to members of the congregation. We have many weeks available in the new year. If you would like to donate, please reach out to Sarah in the church office at 860-233-9605.



### January Reach Out: Fern Street Food Ministry

Fern Street Food Ministry is a program of the Universalist Church at 433 Fern Street in West Hartford. The mission of the Fern Street Food Ministry is to alleviate hunger in our community.

Programs include:

- Every other Monday morning they welcome the local community inside for a free hot and hearty breakfast.
- Once a week, volunteers make and deliver sandwiches to the House of Bread in Hartford.
- Each week during the school year, they provide backpacks filled with nutritious food to West Hartford Public School students who need weekend food support.
- On the third Saturday of every month, they provide non-perishables, fresh produce, frozen meats, poultry, dairy and eggs to qualified recipients.

To donate online thru the church: <https://whfirstchurch.org/ministry/outreach/mission-partners/>

Or to learn more and donate directly: [click HERE](#).

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### Watch Live-Streamed Worship 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 through Thursday from 9-5. Everyone is welcome -- church membership is not required! Come in and find your next read!

### Please Note

G.O.A.T.\* Bible Study has been paused while Rev. Carr attends to a recent medical diagnosis within his family. We hold Tom and his family in our hearts during this stressful time.

### 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** -- Thursdays 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!

- **Yoga with Cynthia Wolcott** will begin on Wednesday, January 8 in the Chapel from 10:30-11:30 a.m. through June.
- **Janice Olson's Chair Yoga** will no longer meet in person, but will continue online:

Yoga for Every Body - Balance, Flexibility, and Mobility meets on Friday mornings from 9-10 a.m. This all-levels class is being offered online via ZOOM. To receive the ZOOM login details, please email Janice at [janiceolson756@gmail.com](mailto:janiceolson756@gmail.com). Class is offered on a donation basis but there is no financial requirement.

### 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 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 gifts! A percentage of the proceeds will be donated to First Church Outreach Ministries. Please see Jennifer with questions.

## A Great Green Gift

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

## Author Event -- Maria Leda Souza Hogan: [Samba of Survival: My Light Within](#)

Thursday, January 23 at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium

Maria Leda Souza Hogan is the eleventh of 14 children born to a Brazilian teenager. The book is an account of life in the *favelas* (slums) of Brazil, where hunger, abuse, lack of opportunity, poor sanitation, and food scarcity compel the poor into a desperate, unpredictable dance in order to survive: *A samba of survival*.

Dr. Hogan has taught Spanish locally and now lives in West Hartford. Her mission is to share the story of how she broke the cycles of intergenerational misery to find a path to persevere and triumph. Her book is an indictment of a deeply unjust Brazilian society, as well as a heartwarming reflection on the human spirit of resilience. It's an immigrant success story. *Samba of Survival: My Light Within* will be available for purchase and signing at the event. Free event; [please register here](#).

## Book Group News:

The John P. Webster Library coordinates and sponsors three 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](mailto:jpwlibrary@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 the first Tuesday of the month from 5-6:30 p.m. -- JPW Library Staff, facilitators

Next Meeting: January 7

We will be discussing [First Ladies](#) by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray. Our next read is *Samba of Survival: My Light Within*, a memoir by Maria Leda Souza Hogan, a vivid account of life on the margins of Brazilian society. The book is an account of life in the *favelas* (slums) of Brazil, where hunger, abuse, lack of opportunity, poor sanitation, and food scarcity compels the poor into a desperate, unpredictable dance in order to survive: *A samba of survival*.

- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group** -- Meets on the third Sunday of the month at 10:15 a.m.

Next Meeting: January 19 -- 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 [El Deafo](#) by Cece Bell. It's a memoir of the author's childhood experiences of navigating the world as a deaf person. After she enrolls in a new school, Bell discovers that her hearing device, the Phonic Ear, has an impressive reach, affording her a kind of super-sonic hearing. Thus, El Deafo is born! Questions? See Molly at the Book Mobile or in the JPW Library.

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## Ongoing Announcements

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**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 8<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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.

### 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.

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:Communications@whfirstchurch.org), Joy Taylor: [Communications2@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Communications2@whfirstchurch.org)

Submit Prayer Requests at [http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\_request](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](mailto:Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org) or 860-233-9605.