



# Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of January 19, 2025

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## Sunday Worship

The “rabbit hole effect” is a real thing. It describes the process whereby a person searching the internet gets sidetracked (distracted) -- sucked into an abyss of information that has nothing to do with his original intention. During a recent research session about a speech that Martin Luther King Jr. delivered in 1956, I followed a link that led to a list of *The 35 Greatest Speeches in History*.

Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” was number 35 – last on the list. It was immediately preceded by Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream”. Honestly?! That’s all the caution a person might ever need about the reliability of internet information.



Anyway. The speech. 1956. In my humble estimation, it’s one of Dr. King’s best both in terms of topic and timelessness. It’s about standing in the space between two worlds -- the expiring old and the emerging new. The challenges that Martin outlined back then are the same that we face now. Sunday’s tribute sermon is entitled: **Be the Best of Whatever You Are**. It combines the central points of Martin’s speech with Paul’s counsel about spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). I’ll say more when I see you.

Yours in faith,  
Rev. Fredd

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## Upcoming Events and Announcements

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### Holiday Closures

The JPW Library and the church office will be closed on Monday, January 20 in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

### With Sorrow

A Memorial Service for Linda Dore will be held in the Meeting House on Saturday, January 25 at 11 a.m. There will be a reception to follow in the Auditorium.

### Informational Meeting

There will be an informal meeting regarding the budget following worship in the Meeting House on Sunday, January 26 in preparation for the February 9 Congregational Meeting.



**SPIRIT TEAM**

### Celtic Worship Service

Sunday, January 26 at 5 p.m. in the Chapel

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, live music, and shared silence.



## Volunteers Needed

Seeking members and friends interested in supporting and/or attending this year's SOGIEcon March 21-22 Storrs, CT. We'd like to form a group who will take the lead and represent FCCC for this event. Please connect with anyone from the Outreach committee or Yvonne Tafuto, [ytafuto@yahoo.com](mailto:ytafuto@yahoo.com) or Carol Lorenzo, [ctlorenzo@comcast.net](mailto:ctlorenzo@comcast.net).

True Colors SOGIEcon (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression) conference is the largest LGBTQIA+ youth conference in the world. This conference brings together LGBTQIA+ youth, their peers, allies, family members, educators, social workers, clinicians, clergy and community members to educate themselves, promote connection and support the next generation of LGBTQIA+ Leaders.

For more information please go to: <https://www.healthcollective.org/true-colors-lgbtq-conference>

**A Big Thank You** to all of you who contributed in 2024 toward First Church's commitment to support GHIAA financially. We reached our goal of \$2500 in donations (which together with \$2500 from the Outreach Team make up our \$5000 annual commitment to GHIAA). Not only that, but we surpassed our goal, giving us a few hundred dollars to carry over and use as a head start on our 2025 commitment!

The CT legislative session began on Jan. 8, which means that the next few months will be busy ones. GHIAA will be focusing on affordable housing, and on freeing up funds in the state budget to meet a wide range of human needs. There will be opportunities to express support of or opposition to specific bills, both by contacting our own legislators and by testifying or writing letters to legislative committees. If you'd like to be kept up to date as those opportunities arise, send an email to Linda Bronstein ([lindadiane275@gmail.com](mailto:lindadiane275@gmail.com)), or talk to Linda or Terry Schmitt at coffee hour.

Thank you again!

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



## 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!

## 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 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](#).

## Memoir Workshop

Wednesdays from 1:30-3 p.m. -- January 29, February 5, 12, 19, 26, and March 5 in the Community Room (Rm. 232)  
Join Jennifer Wednesday afternoons for 90 minutes of writing, reading, and friendly feedback. Writing enhances memory, helps process trying times, and clarifies thinking. It even improves your dreams! Space limited; please [register here](#).

## Faithful Fitness Classes Continue

The JPWL invites you to attend free Faithful Fitness classes! Both classes provide 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.  
Qi Gong, 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** – Tuesdays 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 Classes

Wednesdays from 9:30-10:45 a.m. in the First Church Chapel

Join local Yoga instructor Cynthia Wolcott for drop-in, in-person Yoga classes in the First Church Chapel Wednesday mornings from 9:30-10:45! Bring a mat and a blanket (Cynthia has extras you may borrow). Attend as you wish; payment is accepted at the start of each class: \$20 per class - cash, Venmo, or check to Cynthia Wolcott. Contact Cynthia at [cjwolcott@gmail.com](mailto:cjwolcott@gmail.com).

## 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 as we discuss Brian D. McLaren's [Do I Stay Christian? A Guide for the Doubters, the Disappointed, and the Disillusioned](#). McLaren publicly addresses the powerful question that many people—including pastors, priests, and other religious leaders—are asking in private.

- **Food for Thought**

**Next Meeting: February 4**

Meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 5-6:30 p.m.

JPW Library Staff, facilitators

We will be discussing [Samba of Survival: My Light Within](#) by Maria Leda Souza Hogan. A vivid account of life on the margins of Brazilian society, chronicling the author's childhood 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 will be here with us at First Church on January 23 -- see registration above.

- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group**

**Next Meeting: This Sunday, January 19**

Meets on the third Sunday of the month at 10:15 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. Join us this Sunday to discuss [El Deafo](#) by Cece Bell.

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## Ongoing Announcements

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### Coffee and Conversation

Join Rev. Fredd and friends at Nero Kitchen on 13 South Main Street in West Hartford Center for coffee and conversation!

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.

### 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.

### 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.