



# Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of February 23, 2025

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## Sunday Worship

"And the wind whispers, 'Mary'" – Jimi Hendrix

Dearly beloved,

An anonymous adage teaches us that absence makes the heart grow fonder. While that is certainly true, enough with the weather-related absences already!

This Sunday, we'll welcome guest preacher, Mary Hanson. I was introduced to her during our recent office manager search. Though she didn't emerge as the finalist for that position, the wind whispered her name nonetheless because Mary has extensive ministry education and experience – received a Master of Ministry degree from Evangelical Theological Seminary; worked with children for 21 years at Glory Chapel International Cathedral; served as licensed minister with Youth Challenge International for 20 years; and provides occasional pulpit supply at Berlin Congregational Church. I was moved, therefore, to extend an invitation to preach. That's how the wind works!

Mary's message is entitled '**God is Love**'. It's informed, in part, by Paul's description of love as it appears in 1 Corinthians 13. If love is patient and kind and not irritable or resentful...if love bears all things and endures all things, it follows that God is like that too. She'll say more when we see her.

Please know that the twice-postponed congregational meeting to approve the 2025 operating budget takes place immediately following worship!

Just! Can't! Wait!

Rev. Fredd



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## Altar Flowers

Our Altar Flowers this week are donated by Suzanne and Webb Carnes in loving memory of their fathers, Stephen B. Kostyal and Webb M. Carnes, Jr.

## Light the Steeple

Our steeple was lit last week by Tandy & David Jarvis in loving memory of Josephine Riley Medlin and by Anonymous in loving memory of Gary Briggs.

This week the steeple is lit by Harry, Angie, and Lee Ackerman in loving memory of Bud and Fame Ackerman.

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## Upcoming Events and Announcements

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### Call to Congregational Meeting

**\*This meeting was rescheduled due to the weather on February 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. \***

Notice is hereby given that a Congregational Meeting of the First Church of Christ Congregational of West Hartford, Connecticut, UCC, will be held in the Meetinghouse today, **Sunday, February 23** starting at approximately 11:15 a.m. to transact the following items of business:

Approve the minutes of the First Church Budget Meeting held on January 28, 2024.

Consider and vote on the First Church Annual Operating Budget for calendar year 2025.

In accordance with the By-laws of First Church, action will be taken only on matters included in this Call to Meeting.

Notice given on January 26, 2025

Linda Bronstein

Secretary of the Church

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### Call to Congregational Meeting

Notice is hereby given that a Congregational Meeting of the First Church of Christ Congregational of West Hartford, Connecticut, UCC, will be held in the Meetinghouse on **Sunday, March 9, 2025**, starting at approximately 11:15 AM.

This meeting is called to transact the following items of business:

To consider and vote on the minutes of the Annual Meeting of First Church held on March 10, 2024.

To consider and vote on the proposed slate of Officers, Team Leaders and Team Members for First Church for the coming year.

In accordance with the By-laws of First Church, action will be taken only on matters included in the Call to Meeting.

Notice given on February 23, 2025

Linda Bronstein, Secretary

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### Celtic Worship 2/23

First Church Chapel, 5 p.m.

You are warmly invited to join us for Celtic worship on Sunday, February 23. Celtic Christian Worship is a contemplative service that emphasizes the sacredness of all creation. It is 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. Our February service will be led by Janice Olson. Please contact Liz Oman-Wilfred or Jennifer deSimas with questions.

**Try something new for Lent!** People often want to know what you are giving up for Lent. Instead of giving up something, why not add something to your life for Lent. Both the Adult Choir and the Handbell Choir are looking to add people to our ensembles. Don't worry that you might not have the best voice or enough experience. We want YOU to join our community. We'll be happy for you to join us where you are. We will teach you everything you need to know to participate, and you'll have fun doing so! The choir rehearses Tuesday nights from 7:00 to 8:30, and the Bell Choir rehearses Wednesday nights from 7:00 to 8:15. Speak to Jim Boratko or Jessica Berube-Sengupta for more information.

## **Women's Retreat: *The Spiritual Practice of Self-Care***

Led by Janice Olson, Yogi and Spiritual Guide

The Guest House Retreat Center, Chester CT, 3 p.m. Friday, May 2 – 3 p.m. Saturday, May 3

Self care is a popular topic these days -- but what is it? More than just "me" time or a day at the spa, true self care involves a mindset of self-compassion and acceptance of imperfection in ourselves and others. Join Janice for an exploration of what self-care means to you and how you might incorporate small changes that will bring more joy and fulfillment into your life. Our time together will include self-reflection and journaling, guided group discussion, prayer and meditation, yoga for relaxation, and a creative activity. There will also be time for rest and relaxation on your own. The cost: \$100 -- includes overnight accommodation, meals, and materials. A list of what to bring will be sent via email prior to the retreat. Don't miss this special opportunity because of a lack of funds – there are scholarship monies available! In the meantime, contact Jennifer deSimas or Janice Olson if you have any questions. Space is limited

**Register here by April 13: [The Spiritual Practice of Self Care](#)**

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**INREACH TEAM**

## **Pizza & Game Night POSTPONED**

Unfortunately, we have decided to postpone Pizza & Game Night. Stay tuned for a new date to be determined.

–Inreach Team

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**SPIRIT TEAM**

## **Open Chapel**

The Spirit Team is pleased to once again offer Open Chapel during Lent. This is an opportunity to rest and quietly reflect in the sacred space of the First Church Chapel. You are welcome to drop by for any part of the hour. We hope that you will find peace.

Wednesday, March 12, 12-1 pm

Wednesday, March 19, 5-6 pm

Wednesday, March 26, 12-1 pm

Sunday, April 6, 5-6 pm

Friday, April 18, 12-1 pm

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**OUTREACH TEAM**

## **February Reach Out: Support California Wildfire first responders and impacted families**

Fueled by powerful winds and dry conditions, wildfires erupted on January 7 and roared across the Los Angeles area, killing at least 28 people. Over 200,000 people were under evacuation orders as crews tried to battle back the fires. The fires have destroyed entire neighborhoods and blocks, leaving an unknown number of people homeless. The insured losses from the fires may exceed \$20 billion, and total economic losses could reach \$50 billion!

First Church Outreach team responding to the need has chosen to donate to the UCC's California Wildfire 2025 appeal and The World Central Kitchen to support first responders and families impacted by wildfires in the Los Angeles area. To learn more and donate please use the links provided, or donate in church (**note UCC or WCK on your envelope**) or online through the church: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/giving> (Designation>Reach Out Monthly Collection).

[California Wildfires 2025 - United Church of Christ](#)

[Donate to World Central Kitchen](#)

## Harvest Meal Packing Event 2025

Saturday, March 8 from 10 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (Snow date March 15) **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE**

Join your friends and neighbors to pack meals to be sent to those in need. It is an incredible way to generate positive energy, foster pride in working together for the benefit of others and have fun! Come by yourself or with a friend and join a team to pack meals for a few hours. We'll feed you a pizza lunch for all your hard work. Recommended donation is \$10 per family. Use Cash or Venmo for your donation! [View Flyer here.](#)

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## FIRST CHURCH ACADEMY



### FCAYC February Love Collection

The First Church Academy is collecting items to be donated to South Park Inn. Items needed include **Everyday Supplies:** laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, white cotton towels and face cloths. **Housewarming Baskets:**

pots and pans sets, dishes, silverware. **Retail Gift Cards:** Stop & Shop, Big Y, Target, Walmart. For more information about the South Park Inn or to see the complete list of needed items, click [HERE](#). For more info., contact Dawne Quinn at: [dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org](mailto:dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org) or 860-233-9605 ext. 133. Thank you for your support!



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

### Lenten Book Study

Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. (hybrid)

March 11, 18, 25

April 1, 8, 15

Join JPW Library Director Jennifer deSimas Tuesday evenings in March and April. Using short videos and readings from Dr. Amy-Jill Levine's 2021 book, [Witness at the Cross: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Friday](#), we will explore the events of Holy Friday. "Levine reminds us that the story of Jesus's death is something we do not just read; we are meant to experience it. Here, she takes us by the hand and walks with us through the story, pausing alongside each of the characters to see and hear and feel how they individually experienced it, how each was affected by it. This is not just a fresh retelling of the Crucifixion narrative; it is a remarkably personal immersion and participation in the narrative. Levine breaks open new dimensions and possibilities of the story's meaning for all of us" (review). Free program; 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)

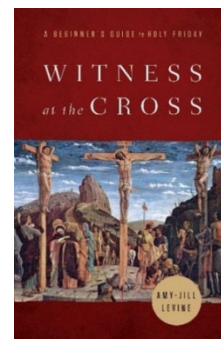
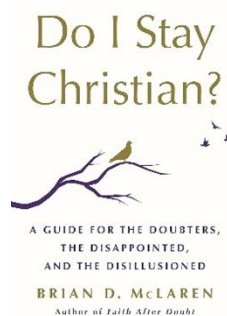
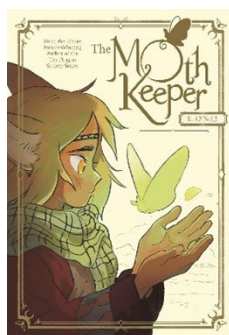
- **Awakening the Spirit**- Meets Mondays from 12-1:30
- **Food for Thought** Meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 5-6:30 p.m.

- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group Meeting this Sunday**

Facilitated by Molly Bohman, JPWL Assistant Librarian

**Meets this Sunday 2/23**

For students in Grades 6-8: We meet (with snacks!) in the Library. Join us to discuss *The Moth Keeper* by K. O'Neill..



### Faithful Fitness Classes Continue

The JPW Library invites you to attend **free** Faithful Fitness classes! Both classes provide an opportunity for meditation as well as movement. Perfect attendance is not required! 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. Register [here](#).
- **FitMix** with Kathi Boratko – Tuesdays from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. in the Auditorium. [Click here](#) to sign up.

### Yoga Classes

Wednesdays, 9:30-10:45 a.m.

First Church Chapel

Join Cynthia Wolcott for drop-in, in-person Yoga. Bring a mat and a blanket (or borrow from Cynthia). Attend as you wish; payment is accepted at the start of each class. \$20 per class - cash, Venmo, or check to Cynthia. Contact her at [cjwolcott@gmail.com](mailto:cjwolcott@gmail.com).

### Of Interest ...

- **"Agreeing to Disagree: How Jews and Christians Interpret the Same Scriptures Differently"**  
Amy-Jill Levine at Asylum Hill UCC Thursday, March 6, from 6-8 p.m. In person only. A respectful and thought-provoking exploration of how sacred texts are understood differently within Jewish and Christian traditions. [More info here](#).
- **"Religion of Revolution: Congregational Voices on Liberty"**  
A new digital exhibition from the Congregational Library & Archives highlighting the stories of New England Congregationalists, featuring rarely seen print works, including church records, letters, and sermon literature from the CLA's collections or digitized for their *Hidden Histories* project. The exhibit can be accessed only through their [website](#) – on view at no charge anytime of the day! Fascinating reading for fans of American history!
- **Climate Action Group Film Series:**  
"Spring into Action" at Asylum Hill UCC and Immanuel Congregational. Click the links below for trailers. 6 p.m. fellowship; the films start at 6:30.  
[April 30: "The Revolution Generation"](#) – at Asylum Hill Congregational Church  
[May 7: "On Sacred Ground"](#) – at Immanuel Congregational Church  
[May 21: "Buy Now"](#) – at Immanuel Congregational Church.



## SAVE THE DATE!!

### *Shrove Tuesday Pancake lunch on Sunday MARCH 2*

Join the Inreach Team and Faith Formation following worship in the auditorium for pancakes, sausage, fruit and beverages.

Plan on wearing your wackiest outfits, put on your beaded necklaces, eat pancakes and goof off with us as we get ready for the beginning of Lent.

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## Ongoing Announcements

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### Coffee and Conversation

Join Rev. Fredd and friends at Nero Kitchen at 13 South Main Street in West Hartford Center on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. for coffee and conversation!

### 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

### 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. Please keep in mind that this is a public page.

### 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](#).

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.

