



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of March 30, 2025

Sunday Worship

"Unlike a fairy tale, the parable provides no happy ending. Instead, it leaves us face to face with one of life's hardest spiritual choices: to trust or not to trust in God's all-forgiving love." -- Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*

You're probably familiar with the parable of the so-called prodigal son. The principal character was decidedly willful; and wandered far away from home; and wasted part of his life being reckless. At the end of the story, the wayward one made his way back home. While he was still a distant speck on the horizon, his father saw him; and ran toward him; and put his arms around him; and kissed him. Can you believe it?



Jesus shared that story in the context of a conversation with some folks who opposed his ministry of inclusiveness. They criticized him for welcoming sinners and transgressors. Jesus argued that God's forgiveness is comparable to the father who willingly and warmly welcomed his long-lost son's return.

Sunday's message focuses on the fact that before the prodigal person headed for home, "...he came to his senses" (Luke 15:17, NIV). That's a fascinating detail. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon is entitled: **The Foundation of Forgiveness**.

Be a blessing. Be the church.

Rev. Fredd

Altar Flowers

Our Altar Flowers this week are donated by Carole Carter and Family, in loving memory of Bob Carter.

Light The Steeple

Our steeple is lit by Amazing Grace Foundation in loving memory of Grace Livingston Miller, and by Amazing Grace Foundation in honor of Rev Fredd <3.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

New Member Information Session – Sunday, April 13th at 11:15 a.m. Following Worship

We expect to receive new members into the life of the church during the 10 a.m. worship service on Sunday, April 27th. Please contact Rev. Fredd in person, by telephone at 860.233.9605, or via email fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org.

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](#).

All Dates in April are open!



March Reach Out: Mercy Housing and Shelter

Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation provides housing assistance and supportive services to persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Mercy offers permanent supportive housing programs across Hartford, Tolland and Middlesex Counties. We combine rental assistance and supportive services for homeless persons with very low incomes, serious and persistent conditions including, but not limited to, substance use disorder, HIV/AIDS, mental health challenges or co-occurring disabilities. We support hundreds of people in Connecticut establish permanent housing annually. The goal of supportive housing is to help clients be successful in housing and give them a place to call "Home". Our Community Supportive Housing offers services and supports designed to assist residents in recognizing their value, nurture self-esteem and attain emotional and economic stability. Mercy works to empower its clients to become independent, so they may live and work with dignity and respect. Mercy welcomes and serves all in need in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, who founded the organization in 1983. Mercy's Core Values: Respect, Compassion and Responsibility!

To learn more and donate please use the links provided or donate in church (**note Mercy Housing on your envelope**) or online thru the church: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/giving>

To learn more and donate directly visit <https://mercyhousingct.org/donate/>

GHIAA joins movement to protect CT's immigrants

In response to the federal government's increased efforts to deport immigrants -- often without any due process protections -- GHIAA is joining CT immigrant advocates in efforts to strengthen CT's 2019 Trust Act, and to raise awareness of the constitutional rights that all persons here have. GHIAA participated in a rally and press conference on March 3, and expects a public hearing to be held soon, for which we all will be invited to submit comments.

ICE has already begun to increase enforcement activity in CT, causing many immigrant families to fear going to work, going to school, obtaining health care, or participating in their faith communities. It is important for every person or organization who may have contact with ICE to know that they have the right to (a) remain silent when questioned, (b) have an attorney present during any questioning, and (c) be free of unreasonable search and seizure.

If you have questions about this, or if you want to participate in either or both parts of this new initiative, please email Linda Bronstein (lindadiane275@gmail.com) or Terry Schmitt (terryschmittwh@gmail.com). Thank you!

TODAY!

One Great Hour of Sharing, March 30th

"You're here to be the light, bringing out the God-colors in the world." Matthew 5:14

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you are light for people in need. You offer light when disasters strike, and when chronic conditions threaten families and communities. You are light not just in the immediate future, but also for the long haul. When you give, you restore not only structures but also transform lives. Your gift ensures that no matter how difficult the situation, light shines.

Be the light. Give to One Great Hour of Sharing.



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 Bethany in the church office at 860-233-9605 or office.manager@whfirstchurch.org or [CLICK HERE](#)

These dates are open: May 18, July 6, 13, and 20, 2025.

Easter Lily and Organ & Carillon Donations

This is a wonderful opportunity to make a donation in honor of, or in memory of, a loved one! Easter Lily and Organ & Carillon donations can be made online [HERE](#). Click [HERE](#) for a printable form and return it to the church office with your payment. If you wish to have your donation listed in the Sunday Bulletin, please make your donation by Sunday, April 13. If you have any questions, please contact Bethany at office.manager@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605.

Easter Baskets

See Diane or Molly in the Auditorium to sign-out an Easter Basket to fill and return by April 13th! Age-appropriate suggestions will be included with each basket. Thank you!



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. Sunday, April 6, 5-6 pm, Friday, April 18, 12-1 pm



Try something new for Lent! Instead of giving something up for Lent, why not try adding a spiritual element to your Lenten journey by singing with the choir through Easter or learning to play with the Handbell Choir. No experience is necessary! We will teach you everything you need to know. See Jim Boratko or Jessica Berube-Sengupta for more information.



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!

*For more detailed information on library programs read the First Church Happenings Newsletter on our website. *
<https://whfirstchurch.org/welcome/first-church-newsletters/>

WeHa GROWS Returns

The JPWL's Seed Library, WeHa Grows, is back with a variety of flower, fruit, herb, and veggie seeds for your garden. Stop by the JPWL Bookmobile in the Auditorium during the Fellowship Hour and "seed" for yourself! Four seed packets per family limit, please. Thank you for your support!

Do Good Friday Community Event, Friday, April 18, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., First Church Auditorium

Good Friday is an ideal time to engage in acts of service and charity. This year, the Outreach Team invites you to do just that at our "Do Good" Friday community compassion event. By giving time and resources, you embody the spirit of Christ's selflessness and make a tangible difference in the lives of others.

Join us to make brown-bag lunches and no-sew blankets for Mercy House in Hartford. We'll also bake brownies and create Easter cards to add to the lunch bags. AND we're stuffing plastic eggs for First Church's Easter morning Egg Hunt! All are welcome! **Admission:** A package of men's underwear (L-XXL) or a bag of laundry detergent pods. Please see Jennifer with questions.

New! at the JPW Library

Fiction:

[*Good Dirt*](#) by Charmaine Wilkerson

Youth & Children's Books:

[*Dear Manny*](#) by Nic Stone

Nonfiction:

[*The Tears of Things*](#) by Richard Rohr

[*The Migrant Chef*](#) by Laura Tillman

[*Praying with Jane Eyre: Reflections on Reading as a Sacred Practice*](#)

by Vanessa Zoltan

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.

- **Awakening the Spirit**

Mondays from 12-1:30 p.m. Next Read: [*The Choice: Embrace the Possible*](#) by Dr. Edith Eva Eger

- **Food for Thought**

First Tuesday of the month from 5-6:30 p.m. Next Meeting: April 1 [*Under a Painted Sky*](#) by Stacey L

Ongoing Announcements

●**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!

●**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.

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

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.

Four Ways to Give

1. **Sunday Morning Offertory**

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. – Fri. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. **Contact:** Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605.