



Sunday Notes

First Church Happenings for the week of June 22, 2025



Sunday Worship

"Stand! They will try to make you crawl.
And they know what you're sayin' makes sense and all.
Stand! Don't you know that you are free?
Well, at least in your mind if you want to be."

Those lyrics were written by Sylvester Stewart (bka Sly Stone). The song was released in 1969 – a year that saw the first moon landing, the Woodstock Music Festival, and the Stonewall Riots in New York City which sparked the gay rights movement.

Some songs are more than musical recordings. Somehow, the sound and the spirit and the statement can coalesce to create a social anthem. Sly issued an inclusive call for people to speak up for themselves, and their communities, and the causes and concerns they believe in.



Sunday's sermon (based on Psalm 139) is an inclusive call to action and alliance with and advocacy on behalf of LGBTQIA persons. Why? Because we're all "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" by the same inescapable God. I'll say more when I see you.

My reflection is entitled: **Stand! Short Stories Suitable for Pride Sunday.**

Be blessed. Be a blessing. Be the church.

Rev. Fredd

Altar Flowers

This week our Altar Flowers are donated by **Bob and Ginny Vocelli** in loving memory of **Louis and Clara Vocelli**.



TODAY !!! In the Auditorium after Sunday Service....

Let's Make Lunches! Every month as part of our Outreach mission, we make 80 sandwiches and fill lunch bags for folks in the Asylum Hill neighborhood with "very low food security." A Half-hour activity for all ages following Sunday Worship in the Auditorium. Lunch bag contents includes: sandwich, chips, apple, and homemade cookies

Upcoming dates:, TODAY! June 22, July 27, Aug 24 <https://whfirstchurch.org/ministry/outreach/>



Greetings From the Spirit Team

September will be here before we know it! The Spirit Team looks forward to hosting a luncheon after worship on Sunday, Sept. 7 to celebrate Homecoming! Sunday School will begin on Sunday, September 14. Amanda will be providing enrollment information as the time draws nearer. Finally, the first Celtic Service of the year will be Sunday, September 28 from 5-6pm in the Chapel.

The Spirit Team wishes everyone a summer filled with fun and relaxation. Don't forget your sunscreen, hats, bug spray, and water. Enjoy!



Coffee Hour Helpers

Are you looking for a commitment-free way to be involved with First Church? If so the Inreach Team has just the opportunity for you!! You probably have noticed that coffee hour is thriving. It's such a joy to see the fellowship of our church community. The coffee hour hosts do a fabulous job of providing treats and cleaning up afterwards, but a little help is always appreciated. As they say, many hands make light work!

The Inreach Team is compiling a lists of bakers and clean up helpers. These lists will be provided to the hosts, so that they may reach out for some assistance if they wish. These lists may also be utilized for other events for which we are asked to provide treats!

If you would like to help out as needed, please reach out to Diane Bohman at dmbohman@comcast.net.



Upcoming GHIAA Workshops on Combating Racial and Religious Hate

We are all invited to register for any or all of these free workshops. Each one is limited to 20 participants, so don't delay.

Combating Anti-Semitism: Activating Allies training with Project Shema (see brochure [HERE](#)), Thurs., July 10, 2025, 12:00-4:00pm (in person, at Jewish Federation, 333 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford). Explore Anti-Semitism, including how it intersects with and fuels other forms of bigotry, notably white supremacy, and how anti-Jewish conspiracy theories erode democratic, pluralistic societies. For additional information and to register, click [HERE](#).

Combating Anti-Muslim Bigotry training with Chaplain Aida Mansoor of Muslim Coalition of CT, Wed., Aug. 13, 2025, 12:30-3:00pm (in person, at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace, 55 Sherman St., Hartford). Learn about the various ways anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobia present themselves, and what we can do as a community to address them. For additional information and to register, click [HERE](#).

Combating Racism: (Up)Rooting Racial (In)Justice training with consultants Shae Washington and Jason Fredlund, Thursdays, Oct. 23 & 30, Nov. 6 & 13, 6:30-9:00pm (mostly via Zoom). Learn and practice skills to uproot racial injustice and root ourselves more deeply in a lifelong commitment to racial justice and collective liberation. For additional information and to register, click [HERE](#).

Upcoming Events and Announcements

Levo International Volunteer Opportunities at Levo's 441 Homestead Ave

Friday, June 27th, 5:30pm until 7:30pm – pizza party and planting seedlings; and Saturday, June 28th, 9:00am until 12:noon – building farming systems. (Rev Fredd will be there!) Visit www.levointernational.org. Click 'Get Involved'. Then click 'Volunteer'. Select the date(s). See you at the lot!

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.

Visit the Church Library

At the John P. Webster Library, you can:

- Watch First Church's live-streamed worship services
- Find a separate place to worship when you need one
- Set your toddler free in the children's area
- Have a cup of tea or coffee (or hot chocolate!) at our Coffee Bar

The JPW Library is also open Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.!



Stonewall Speakers Community Forum

Thursday, June 26, 7 - 8:30pm

First Church Auditorium

Join us for an inspiring evening in celebration of Pride Month, as we honor diversity, inclusion, and the power of authentic storytelling. Three remarkable speakers from the LGBTQ+ community will share their personal coming-out journeys—stories of self-discovery, resilience, and triumph over adversity. Their insights will shed light on the challenges they've faced and the strength it takes to live openly and authentically.

All ages are welcome. A Q&A session will follow, offering space for questions, shared experiences, and meaningful dialogue. Let's come together to celebrate identity, embrace diversity, and support one another in the spirit of acceptance and understanding. Presented by the JPW Library and Stonewall Speakers, a program of the Connecticut Stonewall Foundation, Inc., an all-volunteer speaker's bureau comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, pansexual, queer people and their allies.

At the JPWL Gallery...

"Paradise Lies at the Feet of the Mother: A Special Photo Exhibit Honoring Mothers"

compiled by Chaplain Aida Mansoor **Ending next Monday June 30** JPW Gallery and the Auditorium Hallway

The latest JPWL exhibit is a gorgeous photographic display of motherhood from the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut. Photographers contributed images of mothers and families that convey the affection, humor, and pride these moms and their offspring share. We thank Chaplain Aida Mansoor, Instructor and Director of Field Education at Hartford International, for arranging the loan of this lovely display.

The [Muslim Coalition of CT](#) is a not-for-profit organization working to build bridges in communities by providing opportunities for the Connecticut Muslim community to integrate with the greater community, while maintaining core Islamic values.

Gallery Talk

Sunday, June 29, 11:30 a.m.

Chaplain Aida Mansoor will lead a Gallery talk through the above exhibit on Wednesday, June 29 (please note the date change!) starting in the Auditorium Hallway. Please join us to hear about these intriguing images! Contact Jennifer with questions.

Upcycled First Church Totes & Clutches

Cost: Freewill donation!

People are using our unique totes and pouches for quick grocery trips, kids' beach bags, lunch, "church stuff," cosmetics, garden tools, and more! What will you do with yours? Come check out these upcycled, one-of-a-kind First Church-branded bags during Hospitality Hour in the Auditorium. Proceeds will be shared with [KNOX](#) of Hartford, "committed to connecting and empowering communities to grow a greener, healthier Hartford."

Practicing Presence: Finding Purpose through Meditation

Mondays, June 23 -- July 28 at 12 Noon, First Church Chapel

The benefits of meditation include lowered stress, improved memory, increased focus, and better sleep. Join Janice Olson for **Practicing Presence** on Mondays in June and July and learn a different method each week. Sponsored by the John P. Webster Library through the generosity Florence S.M. Crofut. [Tap here](#) to register, and for dates and types of meditation to be demonstrated.

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** is taking a short break. They will reconvene at noon on Monday, July 21 to discuss [Help Thanks Wow: The Three Essential Prayers](#) by Anne Lamott. "Combining her personal insight with an exploration of spirituality, Lamott addresses what it means to pray, and the life-opening power of prayer, independent of your faith or lack thereof...Discover how these three essential prayers – Help, Thanks, and Wow -- help us endure difficult times and continue to move ahead."
- **Food for Thought** is on hiatus until October 6. Happy reading – have a wonderful summer!
- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group**
This group has concluded for the summer. Visit us for books and chats! We will return in October.

Camp Courant June 2025 Reach Out

Camp Courant is the oldest and largest FREE summer day camp in the nation.

For 131 summers, Camp Courant has adapted to meet the needs of Hartford's most at-risk children by providing a dozen educational programs, all designed and taught by certified teachers, to lessen summer learning loss during the summer months. Camp Courant offers campers a safe, enriching and fun place to be kids, to play, to learn to make friends in an environment where they will learn as many social skills as they will academic skills.

To learn more and donate please use the links provided or donate in church (**note Camp Courant on your envelope**) or online thru the church: Designation>Reach Out Monthly Collection: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/giving>

For more information about Camp Courant: <https://campcourant.org/history/>

To donate directly to Camp Courant: <https://www.classy.org/give/658931/#!/donation/checkout>

Altar Flower Donations

Donating altar flowers is a meaningful way to honor loved ones and is part of our Inreach ministry. If you would like to donate, please reach out to Bethany in the church office or [CLICK HERE](#) **These dates are open: July 13, and 20, 2025...and more!**

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](#).

Four Ways to Give

1. **Sunday Morning Offertory** Please note the designation of your donation on the envelope. (Pledge, Reach-Out, General Fund)
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. 9:30am-3pm. **Contact:** Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605.

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.

