



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of November 16, 2025

Sunday Worship

"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'" – [Matthew 16:24](#)

I trust that, by the time this message arrives, you've received the letter from your Stewardship Team – Sue Ann, "Sugar" Ray, and Rev. Terry. Their invitation to "season and brighten the world by making an annual pledge" resembles and reflects the Savior's summons to the first disciples. He called ordinary people to give themselves to an extraordinary pursuit that takes a lifetime (and longer) to fulfill.



There is no way those fishermen understood what was in store right from the start. Surely, they learned along the way. Trust is earned gradually, and the cost of discipleship is paid incrementally. I'll say more when I see you. The Stewardship Sunday sermon is entitled: **One Marble for Each Moment. 25 Cents at A Time.**

Be a blessing.

stress less.

rev.fredd

Light the Steeple

This week our Steeple is lit by **Peggy Dwyer** in loving memory of **Mary Dwyer**.

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, November 30, 2025 at 11:15 AM following morning worship to address the following item of business:

1. To consider and vote on heat pump/air conditioning system installation in the meeting house.
2. 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 November 16, 2025

Linda Bronstein, Secretary of the Church

Today's Events

Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group meets Sunday, November 16th at 10:15am (when Sunday School starts) in the Community Room. We will discuss [Whale Eyes](#), a memoir by James Robinson.

Arts in The Center Concerts Presents: Chamber Music Concert Sunday, November 16 at 3:00 p.m. in the Chapel. The Chamber Music Series is in its third season at First Church designed to bring great music performances to an audience in an intimate setting. The concert is open to the public. A Free Will Offering will be received at the door.

Upcoming Events and Announcements

TURKEY DRIVE: Thursday, Nov. 20, 10:30am-1:30pm

Please drop off fresh or frozen turkeys to us in the church parking lot, by the rotunda entrance. Hands on Hartford asked GHIAA congregations to help provide a Thanksgiving turkey to each of the 500 households they serve who couldn't otherwise afford to have one.

Thanksgiving Baskets: Due by the 23rd. We're running low on: cranberry sauce, coffee, tea, gravy, canned fruit and vegetables, and juice. Please no more stuffing! If you would like to help, please bring in a food item, using the following guide: If your last name begins with...you'll bring:

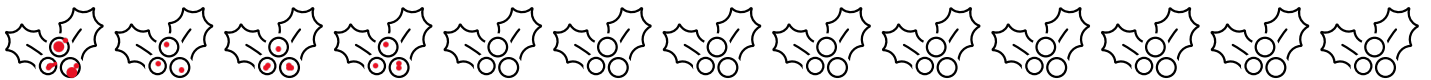
Please bring items to church and place them in a Food for Friends barrel by **November 23rd**. We will use these items to fill the baskets. We will also be collecting Stop and Shop gift cards, which each family will receive along with their basket of food items. We are looking for volunteers to fill and organize the baskets on Sunday, November 23rd after worship. Contact [Diane Bohman](#) or [Molly Bohman](#).

A-D: Bread and roll mix
E-H: Gravy and Cranberry Sauce , Spanish Food (ie Goya Products)
I-L: Canned fruits and vegetables
M-P: Juice, tea and coffee
Q-T: Rice and potatoes
U-Z: Breakfast cereals and juice

Monthly Celtic Worship Services in the Chapel

Sunday, November 23, at 5 p.m.

Celtic Christian Worship is a contemplative liturgical tradition that invites us 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, Communion, poetry, music, and shared silence. Our October service will be led by Janice Olson. The free will offering will be donated to [APK Charities](#), providing support for veterans. Please contact Julia Rosa or Liz Oman-Wilfred with questions.



Deck the Halls with boughs of holly!!

Bring your jolly and join us in decorating our church for Christmas! We'll meet in the sanctuary on Saturday morning, November 29th from 9:00 - 11:00. All are welcome!

WH Festival of Trees NEEDS TREES, VOLUNTEERS, AND GIFT CARDS!

West Hartford Festival of Trees is Coming! The holidays are on their way, and so is a favorite tradition, the 10th Annual West Hartford Festival of Trees! The joyful event takes place on Thursday, December 4, from 5-8pm during the Holiday Stroll, and on Saturday, December 6, from 10am-1pm. Donate a decorated tree by Nov. 23 and sign-up to volunteer to help with the festival.

You can register a tree online [HERE](#) (one tree per form) or gift card [HERE](#). Contact us at: festivaloftreeswh@whfirstchurch.org if you need assistance.

Volunteering for the Events: Sign up for one or more slots during coffee hour (or click [HERE](#)) including: selling tickets, baking cookies, greeting and directing people, or helping with handing out trees to winners

Volunteer Opportunity

Outreach is partnered with **Fern Street Food ministry** and they are seeking volunteers for a variety of different roles and levels of commitment. Opportunities include sorting food, delivering food bags, picking up food donations, unloading and sorting food from the mobile pantry, making sandwiches and more.

If you are interested in getting involved please reach out to Carla Richardson Food Ministry Coordinator (860)233-3669 ext. 109 or email carla@westhartforduu.org [FLYER ON OUR WEBSITE](#) Email any questions to Carol Lorenzo, Outreach team leader. ctlorenzo@comcast.net

Let's Make Lunches! Upcoming 2025 dates: **Nov 23**, Dec 21

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."

- After Sunday worship in the Auditorium
- Half-hour activity for all ages
- Lunch bag contents includes: sandwich, chips, apple, and homemade cookies

Questions: Contact Outreach member Dottie Stone, dottie@stone-stonect.com, 203-856-7403

Coffee and Conversation Join First Church Friends at Nero Kitchen at 13 South Main Street in West Hartford Center on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. for coffee and conversation.

Covenant to Care

Now through December 31st we will be collecting new or gently worn mittens, hats, scarves, and other winter clothing for Covenant to Care! Please bring items to church and look for designated boxes for collection. Thank you!

Family News! We need your family news and photos! [Click here](#) to submit yours and we'll share as soon as we can. Please include captions for your photos, keeping in mind that we may edit to fit, and that this is a public page.

Grace Academy, a tuition-free, private, faith-based, highly successful girls middle school located at 457 Main St in Hartford, CT. We are accepting applications for girls entering 5th and 6th for the 2026-2027 school year. Admission in Grade 6 is on a space-available basis. It is our mission to develop the kinds of personal and educational support that will ensure a student's continued success in high school and college. Please contact the school office at 860-263-7535 for application information or visit our website at www.GraceAcademyHartford.org. Grace Academy- a Star of Hope in Hartford!

Yoga with Cynthia Wolcott, Wednesdays, 9:30-10:45 am in the chapel. \$20 per session (if this causes a hardship please speak to Cynthia), enter via the North Door. Cynthia Wolcott has been leading yoga and healing movement classes for nearly two decades. After healing a double herniated disc with movement, she began to tailor each of her classes to the needs of the students, customizing the movements to address their particular issues. Through her own practices of yoga and meditation, she experienced the gifts of tremendous healing and growth. She delights in offering those gifts to others.

Practicing Presence - Weekly Drop-In Meditation Gathering, Wednesday's from 11:00 am - 12:00 pm, **Has moved from Room 407 to the Community Room, Room 232 (next to the Choir Room)!** Learn techniques to quiet the mind and nurture the spirit during Practicing Presence, the weekly meditation session at First Church. Led by Janice Olson, certified yoga instructor and spiritual director, the session consists of a 20 minute meditation followed by a brief time for journaling and we finish with a discussion of our experience. No meditation experience required; just show up and be curious. Sponsored by the JPW library, there is no cost and no obligation to attend. Drop in and check it out...all are welcome. For more information, contact Janice at (860) 985-1883.

Help for Jamaica

The Academy and the Outreach Team of First Church West Hartford are joining together to support efforts to get much needed supplies to those in need. 3 of the Academy staff from Jamaica have family and friends impacted by the storm.

Help is needed now, so we will start our collection immediately. We will place boxes outside of each classroom and around the church. All donations will be sent through the West Indian Social Club in Hartford and will go directly to those most impacted. Click the QR code to donate monetarily.



Here is a list of items that are most needed:

- *Nonperishable food (canned fruit and vegetables and meat/fish, dry items, baby food and supplies.*
 - *Bottled water and powdered drink mixes*
 - *Baby items: diapers (all sizes), wipes, food, formula (sealed), baby clothing, blanket*
 - *Toiletries: soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine hygiene products, toilet paper*
 - *Clothing: shirts, pants, underwear, socks, shoes*
 - *Towels, bedding, and blankets*
 - *Basic first-aid supplies (bandages, antiseptic wipes)*
 - *Flashlights and batteries*
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November 2025 Reach Out: APK charities

APK charities was established in loving memory of Captain Andrew Michael Pedersen-Keel (PK), Special Forces ODA 3126 Commander, a highly decorated and exceptional leader who gave his life in Afghanistan in March 2013.

APK provides direct financial assistance to Connecticut Veterans, active duty service members, their families, and Gold Star families of all branches and eras of service, who are in need of emergency and hardship assistance. The Direct Assistance Program seeks to alleviate immediate and critical medical, housing, transportation, and other needs. APK partners with CT Army National Guard, CT Veteran's Legal Center, Columbus House, VA Social Services and others.

APK has distributed more than \$660,000 in funds to:

- Cover the cost of medical expenses
- Pay rent, rent arrears, security deposits and utilities
- Defray critical home repairs and maintenance costs
- Purchase and repair automobiles
- Furnish and outfit apartments for unhoused Veterans, and much more ...

To learn more and donate please use the links provided or donate in church (**note APK on your envelope**) or online thru the church: <https://pushpay.com/g/whfirstchurch>

Or to give directly to APK Charities: <https://www.apkcharities.org/donate/>

To learn more about APK Charities: <https://www.apkcharities.org/about-apk-charities/>



Visit the JPWL this Sunday!

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

The JPW Library is open Monday-Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday at 9-12.

FREE Fitness Classes -- Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Spirit!

The JPWL invites you to attend a free *Faithful Fitness* class. Each class provides an opportunity for meditation as well as movement. More information is available on each class's registration page:

- **FitMix with Kathi Boratko** – Tuesdays, 5:45 – 6:45 p.m. in the Auditorium. [More info and registration here.](#)
- **Practicing Presence** meditation led by Janice Olson, Wednesdays from 11am-12pm in the Community Room, Room 232 (next to the Choir Room)
- **Tai Chi & Qi Gong** with Cynthia Hoag – Thursdays, 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Chapel. [More info and registration here.](#)

*These programs are provided for free through the JPWL Crofut Fund.

Join a Book Group!

The John P. Webster Library sponsors three book groups that meet regularly in the library September-June. Copies of the books are provided for participants, and new members are always welcome to any group! For more information, please contact Jennifer or Molly at 860-232-3893 or at jwebster@whfirstchurch.org.

- **Awakening the Spirit meets Mondays from 12-1:30.** November's discussion is based on [Stress Less: 9 Habits from the Bible and Brain Science](#) by Dr. Charles Stone. In late August, Rev. Fredd used parts of the book as the basis for his sermon about building up resilience. This month-long conversation (guided by Rev. Fredd) consists of deeper exploration of Dr. Stone's nine practical insights for combatting our common worries and fears. According to a poll from the American Psychological Association more than a quarter of American adults say they're so stressed they can't function. Young people too. *Stress Less* provides hope and healing.
- **Food for Thought** meets Tuesday, December 2nd, 5-6:30 p.m. We'll discuss [The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife](#) by Anna Johnston. "Frederick Fife was born with an extra helping of kindness in his heart. The problem is, at age eighty-two...he's broke and on the brink of eviction. But Fred's luck changes when he's mistaken for Bernard Greer, a missing resident at the local nursing home, and takes his place. Now Fred has warm meals in his belly and a roof over his head—as long as his look-alike Bernard never turns up. Denise Simms is stuck breathing the same disappointing air again and again. A middle-aged mom and caregiver at Bernard's facility, her crumbling marriage and daughter's health concerns are suffocating her joy for life. As Fred walks in Bernard's shoes and learns about his past, Denise uncovers clues that threaten to reveal his identity. Will she expose the truth before Fred can return a broken life to mint condition?" (HarperCollins)
- **Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group** meets **TODAY Sunday, November 16th** at 10:15am (when Sunday School starts) in the Community Room. We will discuss [Whale Eyes](#), a memoir by James Robinson. "Told through an experimental mix of intimate anecdotes and interactive visuals, this book immerses readers in James's experiences growing up with strabismus, allowing them to see the world through one eye at a time. Readers will get lost as they chase words. They'll stare into this book while taking a vision test. They'll hold it upside down as they practice "pretend-reading" and they'll follow an unlikely trail toward discovering the power of words. (Amazon)

Post-Holiday Detox & Spiritual Reset -- A Weekend Retreat for Women, January 16–18, 2026

The Guest House Retreat & Conference Center | Chester, CT

After the busy holiday season, step away to rest, reflect, and begin the new year with intention. Join First Church member and retreat facilitator Janice Olson for a restorative weekend retreat designed exclusively for women.

Retreat Includes: Two nights lodging at The Guest House (Friday & Saturday), six delicious, chef-prepared meals, all retreat programming, materials, and guided sessions. Cost (includes lodging, meals, and retreat program):

First Church Members: \$390 per person for a single room; \$280 pp for a double room, Non-Members: \$610 pp for a single room; \$500 pp for a double room, a \$100 deposit holds your space. Final payment due January 5, 2026

Come as you are. Leave renewed! [More information and registration](#)

Seed Library Needs Your Donations

Please keep *WeHa Grows!* in mind as you put your gardens to bed this fall. Your donation of locally harvested seeds is what sustains our seed library.

How to collect seeds: After allowing a portion of a plant to go to seed, remove seeds and place them in a sealed paper envelope (available through the JPW Library and Book Mobile). On the outside of the envelope, note your name and the plant's name, variety, and year of harvest. Drop off your seeds during JPW Library hours or at the Book Mobile. Thank you for donating to and supporting this important ministry!

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 http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request.

