



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of November 23, 2025

Sunday Worship

"When we practice gratitude and it feels good, we become more likely to repeat it. Gratitude perpetuates itself." – Dr. Charles Stone

If I had to publish my annual report right this moment, looking back at the year of our Lord 2025, I'd be sure to mention the Awakening the Spirit book group as a high point. It has blessed my heart to ponder the pages of stress less: 9 Habits from the Bible and Brain Science together with the thoughtful souls who have gathered thirty-strong for the past three Mondays.

During our final session, we'll consider Dr. Stone's suggested 7th practice, Growing Gratitude. The "big idea" is that when we write down and reflect about the things we're thankful for, we pay more attention to those things and we...wait for it...stress less. I'll say more when I see you on Thanksgiving Sunday since the topic is obviously timely.



The sermon is entitled: **5 Days. 4 Ways. 3 Good Things.**

Be your best self.

Be a blessing.

rev.fredd

Altar Flowers

This week our Altar Flowers are donated by **Ellen Meinke** in loving memory of **Kenneth, Jean, John, and Debbie Meinke**.

Light the Steeple

This week our Steeple is lit by **Jim and Liz Kuhn** in honor of our parents **Ray and Ginny Kuhn** and **Vi and Ross Campbell**.

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

New Member Information Session – TODAY! Sunday, November 23 at 11:30am Following Worship. We expect to receive new members into the life of the church during the 10 a.m. worship service on Sunday, November 30th. Please contact Rev. Fredd in person, by telephone at 860.798-6768, or via email fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org.

Let's Make Lunches! Upcoming 2025 dates: **TODAY 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

Monthly Celtic Worship Services in the Chapel

Today, 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 TODAY! 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

Upcoming Events and Announcements

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

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, **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.

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](#)

Help for Jamaica Today is the last day to drop off items!

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.

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*



DONATE MONETARILY

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.

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 jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org.

Awakening the Spirit meets Mondays from 12-1:30 pm. Rev. Fredd leads November's discussion on [Stress Less: 9 Habits from the Bible and Brain Science](#) by Dr. Charles Stone.

Food for Thought meets Tuesday, December 2nd, 5-6:30 p.m. We'll discuss [The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife](#) by Anna Johnston.

Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group's next meeting is **January 18 at 10:15am** in the Community Room. We will discuss [Blue Stars Mission One: The Vice Principal Problem](#) by Kekla Magoon and Cynthia Leitich Smith; illustrated by Molly Murakami. "When cousins Riley Halfmoon and Maya Dawn move to Urbanopolis to live with their activist grandma, they get off to a rocky start. Just when they start to feel at home, their school culture is threatened by an influential foe in disguise. Joining student council feels like a way to help, so both cousins toss their hats in the ring for sixth-grade class president. In no time, this dazzling duo is off to save the day!"

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.

Cultivating Resilience & Presence - A 6-Session Group Coaching Series - Led by Stephanie Simpson, MA, MFA, PCC

Sunday, February 8: Lunch and Learn kick-off in the JPW Library, 11:30

Remaining VIRTUAL Sessions: Feb. 19 and March 5, 12, 19, 26

Cost: \$150 per person (Sponsored in part by the John P. Webster Library)

Life is full of uncertainty—and yet we all have the capacity to meet it with resilience, presence, and purpose. Join this unique group coaching experience designed specifically for the West Hartford First Church community to deepen emotional intelligence, strengthen connection, and cultivate leadership from the inside out. Rooted in the [Core Energy Leadership™](#) framework, this series will help you gain practical tools to navigate stress, lead with intention, and build more meaningful relationships—with yourself and others. Class includes personalized report,* 90-min in-person session, and five 60-min virtual sessions. (dates above) *Space is limited—registration required.* [More information and registration here.](#)

Stephanie Simpson, MA, MFA, PCC is a West Hartford native and an Executive + Leadership Coach, Educator, and Facilitator who helps individuals and organizations unlock their full potential through emotional intelligence, resilience, and conscious leadership. She holds an MA in Clinical Psychology (Spirituality, Mind-Body Studies, and Organizational Change) from Columbia University, Teachers College, and an MFA in Dance Performance/Choreography from Smith College. Learn more at www.stephanie-simpson.com

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](#)

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. Donations will be added to the Save the Steeple fund. [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](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request) http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request.

