



Sunday Notes



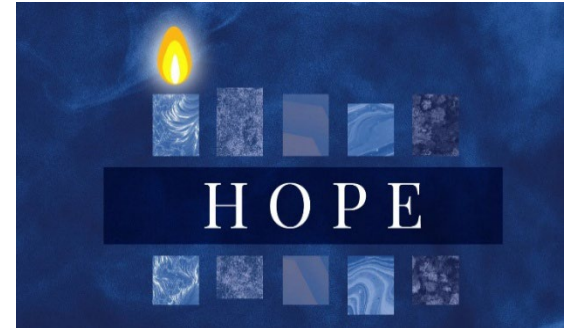
First Church Happenings for the week of November 30, 2025

Sunday Worship

Dear Friends,

This week we light the first candle of Advent—the holy season that carries us from the darkest days of autumn toward the turning point of the Winter Solstice, when light begins to grow again. Our longing for light is so deeply woven into our human experience that we instinctively connect darkness with fear and light with goodness, hope, and love.

In today's gospel, John reminds us that *God is light*, and that when we live in fellowship with God and one another, that divine light dwells within us. Created in God's image, we are bearers of that light. During our Advent journey, we might ask ourselves if our inner light is shining at full strength. If we could measure our own spiritual "wattage," would we find our full brilliance expressed—or are we shining at only half our capacity? When we hold back, when we limit our capacity for love and generosity, we step away from the truth of who we are. In many ways, this is its own kind of sin—forgetting the radiant goodness placed within us.



Join me this Sunday as we enter the Advent season with intention, seeking the source of our light and courageously turning up the brightness of God's radiance within us.

Namaste~
Janice

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

GHIAA Turkey Drive

Thank you, thank you, thank you to all you generous people who contributed turkeys for Hands On Hartford to distribute for Thanksgiving! Seven GHIAA congregations contributed 245 turkeys, and 50 of them came from First Church! Because of us, Hands On Hartford is able to give Thanksgiving baskets to at least 100 more families than they originally thought they could serve. Thank you again!

JPWL Art Gallery

Stop by the J. P Webster Library Art Gallery to see our church through the years! Materials on display are all from our archives. The display includes books from the libraries of Thomas Hodgdon, pastor of First Church West Hartford from 1891–1926, as well as Timothy Goodman, who donated the land we now call Unity Green to the Church in 1747. Also displayed is a clay replica of the Library in the Greystone Church, known as the Talcott Room.

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/>



Wreath, Poinsettia and Organ & Carillon Donations

Wreaths will adorn the doors of First Church during the season of Advent. Poinsettias can be used to brighten the holiday for another or taken home after worship on December 21. Donations can also be made to the Organ & Carillon Reserve Fund. Online orders and donations can be made [HERE](#) or you can print a form [HERE](#) to mail in with your payment. All donations must be received in the office by Monday, December 15.

West Hartford Festival of Trees is on Dec. 4 and Dec. 6

We hope to see you at the festival on Thursday, December 4, from 5-8pm, and on Saturday, December 6, from 10am-1pm. A few volunteer positions remain unfilled; please click [HERE](#) or see a committee member at coffee hour. If you are entering a tree or gift card please bring them in on the 30th anytime between 12-3pm.

Gingerbread Nativity Scene Decorating Dec. 7

Families are invited to decorate a gingerbread nativity scene December 7 in the Youth Room during Coffee Hour.

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!

Let's Make Lunches! Dec 21, 2025

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.

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.

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.

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) **This class concludes on Wednesday, December 10th.**

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.



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.

The Great Green Gift is Back!

A unique opportunity to buy local: The JPWL is selling bags that are repurposed from old church banners. These upcycled, one-of-a-kind First Church-branded totes and clutches will be for sale during the Coffee Hour following worship. Totes are \$10 each; clutches are \$5, or three for \$25. All proceeds will be used by the Outreach Team to support nearby environmental charities.

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. On December 1, Jennifer will lead a discussion on the documentary *Revolution of the Heart: The Dorothy Day Story*, which "profiles one of the most extraordinary and courageous women in American history. Day was co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement that began as a newspaper to expose rampant injustices during the Great Depression and soon expanded to become a network of houses of hospitality to welcome the poor and destitute." Day is currently being considered for sainthood in the Catholic Church, having been given the title "Servant of God."

Starting December 8, Rev. Tom Carr returns to explore *The First Christmas: What the Gospels really teach about Jesus's Birth* by Marcus Borg and John Crossen. "Basing their focus on the two nativity narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Borg and Crossen explore the literal story--the inner truth rather than the historical facts--to offer a clear and uplifting message of hope and peace. Readers will find a fresh understanding of the nativity story, enabling a better appreciation of the powerful message of the Gospels."

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!"

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](#)

Grace in Action: 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, 11:30-1:00pm

Remaining VIRTUAL Sessions: Feb. 19 and March 5, 12, 19, 26 7:00pm – 8:00pm

Cost: \$150 per person

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. Program includes Energy Leadership Index Assessment and 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

**As a friend of First Church, Stephanie is offering this class at the discounted rate of \$300 per person. In addition, the JPW Library will help offset fees with a half scholarship for each participant!*

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.

