



# Sunday Notes

First Church Happenings for the week of December 7, 2025



## Sunday Worship

*"The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the [little goat]; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them." – Isaiah 11:6*

The header above this week's scripture selection ([Isaiah 11:1-10](#)) reads "The Peaceful Kingdom". The prophet paints a picture of a realm -- a reality -- where natural enemies will live together peacefully...where violence and fear will cease...where everlasting knowledge of God will encompass all the earth.

We'll consider the truth of that text, of course. I'd also like to add some texture to the topic. Literally. And. Figuratively. In any case, I've been wondering what hope, peace, joy and love might look like if we were to wear them as Advent apparel. So, I'm preparing a two-part series to satisfy my wondering.



The first installment is entitled The Fabric Sermons (1 of 2): Peace Like Blue Denim.

I'll say more when I see you. Also, I encourage you to show up Sunday morning wearing something denim. Seriously! Be comfortable. Be tasteful. Be there.

be.blessed  
stress.less  
rev.fredd

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## Altar Flowers

This week our Altar Flowers are donated by **David Simpson and Barbara Laurain** in loving memory of **Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Simpson and Kristine M. Simpson**.

## Light the Steeple

This week our Steeple is lit by **Helen B. George** in loving memory of **Daniel George** on what would have been his **100<sup>th</sup> birthday**, December 7, 2025.

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## Today's Events

### Gingerbread Nativity Scene Decorating Dec. 7

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

### West Hartford Festival of Trees offers you one more chance to see and bid after church!

Come down to the auditorium for coffee and to browse the trees. You can purchase GREEN tickets for a chance at winning a tree or RED tickets for a chance at one of 3 Gift Card Packages. We can accept cash, check, or use QR code to use credit, debit, Apple Pay, or Google Wallet. Please stay after to help us draw and contact winners and clean up the space.



### 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.

### **Thanksgiving Basket Collection - Thank You!**

Once again we were overwhelmed with the generosity of this congregation!! Thanks to you, we were able to fill 27 baskets of food and provide \$50 gift Stop & Shop gift cards for our Covenant to Care partners. They were so appreciative!! Thank you to all who donated food and gift cards! With gratitude, Molly and Diane

### **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!

### **Share A Gift Tree For Our Covenant to Care Children**

'Tis the season to share Christmas joy! Take a tag from the tree in the auditorium starting December 7th and bring the unwrapped gift to the church by December 21. Thank you for helping our Covenant to Care children have a Merry Christmas! Contact Diane Bohman at [dmbohman@comcast.net](mailto:dmbohman@comcast.net) or Molly Bohman at [jwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org)

### **Celtic Christmas Service Next Sunday**

December 14, 5 pm, First Church Chapel

Take a moment to find peace and joy amidst the bustle of December at our monthly Celtic worship service. Rev. Tom Carr will share the stories behind cherished Christmas carols, accompanied by traditional music, candlelight, and the sacrament of Holy Communion. Join us for a special time of music and reflection, and welcome light and renewal into your holiday season.

### **Advent Devotionals Are Here!**

Please pick up a copy of the United Church of Christ's Advent Devotional, located at the entrances to the Meeting House. Also available in large print. An Advent gift from the John P. Webster Library!

### **Join the Choir for Advent and Christmas!**

There isn't a better way to feel the joy and celebration of the holiday than by singing beautiful music with the choir for the Advent and Christmas season! We need singers in all voice parts. Experience is helpful, but not necessary. We will teach you all you need to know. We rehearse on Tuesday nights in the Choir Room (near the JP Webster Library) from 7:00-8:30. Come sing your favorites and learn a few new ones!

### **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](mailto: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.

### **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.

## December 2025 Reach Out Veterans of the Cross Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a Special Mission Offering that congregations have been supporting for over 100 years. The offering is administered through the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, the charitable arm of the Pension Boards. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks.

To learn more and donate please use the links provided or donate in church (**Write Christmas Fund on your envelope**) or online thru the church: <https://pushpay.com/g/whfirstchurch>  
Or to give directly to Christmas Fund: <https://pbucc.donorsupport.co/page/christmasfund2025>  
To learn more about UCC: <https://www.ucc.org/who-we-are/>



### 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 9am to 5pm., and Sunday from 9am-12pm.*

Dear Church,

I want to thank you for your kindness and prayers over the past two months while I've been recuperating. Your visits and notes were absolute day-lifters! Thank you for thinking of me during this challenging time. I am very happy to be back among you again! With love, Jennifer

### 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. These make great lunch, accessory, book, or gift bags! Suggested donation: Totes: \$10; clutches: \$5. 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 [jwebster@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jwebster@whfirstchurch.org).

**Awakening the Spirit meets Mondays from 12-1:30 pm.** Rev. Tom Carr returns to lead a discussion of *The First Christmas: What the Gospels really teach about Jesus's Birth* by Marcus Borg and John Crossen. "Borg and Crossen explore the literal story of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, exploring the inner truth rather than the historical facts – to offer a clear and uplifting message of hope and peace, and a fresh understanding of the nativity story."

**Food for Thought meets Tuesday, January 6, 5-6:30 p.m.** Our next book is *Take My Hand* by Dolen Perkins-Valdez. "This illuminating novel exposes a dark episode in American history: the forced sterilization of mostly poor recipients of welfare benefits in Alabama in the 1970s. Dolen Perkins-Valdez probes the many ways institutional racism and classism inflict lasting scars, and the grace, courage, and love necessary to begin to heal those wounds" (online reader review).

**Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group's** next meeting is **January 18 at 10:15 a.m.** 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 – until 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) **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.

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

[The Guest House Retreat & Conference Center](#) | Chester, CT

Come and reflect on the holiday season just passed and explore patterns or triggers that you noticed. Through guided reflection, group conversations, journaling, quiet time, and embodied practices, you will create a personalized plan to gently reset and nourish your spirit in the months ahead.

Retreat Includes: Two nights lodging at The Guest House (Friday & Saturday), six delicious, chef-prepared meals, comfortable rooms with private baths, 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 is available at the Sunday Book Mobile. Register [HERE](#)

## **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 info available at the Sunday Book Mobile. [Register 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](http://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!

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## **Four Ways to Give**

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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](mailto:Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org) or 860-233-9605.

[Submit Prayer Requests: http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\_request.](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request)

