



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of December 14, 2025

Sunday Worship

*"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing..."*

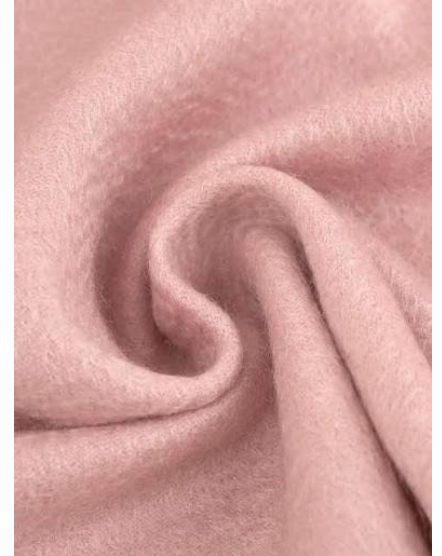
– [Isaiah 35:1-2](#)

Last Sunday we considered a prophetic vision of a 'Peaceful Kingdom' – an expected reality where enmity doesn't exist and where adversaries coexist. This Sunday, Isaiah paints another preview of the coming glory of God's kingdom – barrenness transformed into beauty...an escape route from sorrow to gladness.

We'll consider the truth of that text, of course. I'll also suggest what redemption and spiritual renewal might look like if we were to wear it as Advent apparel.

The second installment of the fabric sermon series is entitled:

Joy Like Pink Cashmere.



If you're wondering about the "dress code" for the day, please know that the color pink matters most, not the particular material. I'll say more when I see you.

Love you. Mean it.

rev.fredd

Altar Flowers

This week our Altar Flowers are donated by **Mary Mattke** in honor of **Wyrot Ward** and in loving memory of Wyrot's brother, **Ronald E. Jones**, Mary's late husband, who shared a birthday, December 19th.

Light the Steeple

This week our Steeple is lit by **Sue Collins** in loving memory of **Sara Ann Gay**, her niece and by **Paul and Bev Truebig**, in loving memory of Bev's grandmother, **Marion H. Smith**.

Today's Events

Celtic Christmas Service

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.

December 21 10am -- Christmas Pageant during Worship (Quiet City Brass Quintet)

December 24, 5pm – Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols featuring brass

Thank you to all who supported and volunteered for the 2025 West Hartford Festival of Trees

Whether you collected or donated gift cards, baked cookies, put a sign in your yard or others, designed a tree or put fake snow out around the trees and more, we are thankful for your help! Our event would not have been possible without you! We are happy to announce 1,083 people came through our display and donated \$5,197.75 (Cash / Checks) and \$1,650 (QR Code) for a total raised amount of \$6,847.75 for our local 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.

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 or Molly Bohman at jwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org

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!

Christmas Angelicus is coming to First Church on Sunday, December 21st at 4:00 pm. Join Chorus Angelicus and Gaudeamus for an evening of seasonal choral music and readings from CT Public Radio's Chion Wolf! Tickets can be purchased at www.chorusangelicus.com.

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.

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, located beneath the Meeting House, is open Monday-Thursday 9am-5pm, and Sundays 9am-12pm

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.

Book Group Info

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. 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 11 at 10:15am** in the Community Room (please note the date change). We will discuss *Blue Stars Mission One: The Vice Principal Problem* by Kekla Magoon and Cynthia Leitich Smith; illustrated by Molly Murakami. "Two cousins take a cue from their activist grandma to save their school culture from an influential foe...Relatable and rich in themes of family, community, and compromise."

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 pm in the Auditorium. [More info and registration here.](#)

Tai Chi & Qi Gong with Cynthia Hoag – Thursdays, 10:30-11:30am in the Chapel. [More info and registration here.](#)

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

A Wonderful Gift Idea!

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, 11:30am-1:00pm

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

Cost: \$150 per person* A fantastic opportunity for anyone looking to work with a life coach!

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

*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.](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request)

