



Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of December 28, 2025

Sunday Worship



"I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord,
the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,
because of all that the Lord has done for us..."
– Isaiah 63:7

The fabric sermons were informed by two separate texts from the book of Isaiah. The writers expressed, on God's behalf, what they believed was going to happen in future days. We considered the peaceful kingdom vision: "*The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.*" We also considered the return of the redeemed: "*And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.*"

This Sunday, we'll turn to the book of Isaiah again. This time, however, the writer of the featured text ([Isaiah 63:7-9](#)) is looking backward at what God has done rather than looking forward to what God will do. It's faithful to do so, especially at the close of a calendar year. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon is entitled: **Holiness in Hindsight.**

Fondly,

rev.fredd

Holiday Closures

- The office will be closed New Year's Day, Thursday, January 1st, 2026.
 - The JPW Library will be closed Wednesday, December 31 – January 1st, 2026.
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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/>

Bible Study Announcement

Join us on the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month, beginning January 4, from 9:00 to 9:45 as we discover the history and biblical wisdom to be found in Scripture, and it's meaning for us in our daily lives. Initially we will focus on the New Testament, following as often as possible the scripture reading in worship for that Sunday.

We will meet in the Community Room (next to the JPW Library) and everyone is invited to bring coffee and anything to share. We will use the NRSV and on occasion *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, as well as other biblical texts.

I look forward to our time together.

Rev. Joseph Tobin (Joe, please)

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!

Fern Street Backpack program is looking for more volunteers beginning in 2026

We need brown bag packers, drivers to deliver bags and drivers to pick up food donations! See specific details in link, visit the Outreach webpage [here](#) and scroll down to the Fern Street button to find the link for opportunities to help.

Thank you in advance.

Fill our Food buckets!

We know we have been asking a lot over the holidays, but this is just a gentle reminder that the day-to-day needs for food aren't going away. Please see [suggestions here](#) for ideas and add a few items to your grocery cart.

The Stewardship Team invites flavorful people like you to Stay Salty!



"You are the salt of the earth...You are the light of the world." These are the words that Jesus uses to remind us that we're powerful and brilliant. Our power and brilliance equip us to do God's good work in the world through the church.

Help us season and brighten the world by making an annual pledge. In so doing, you make it possible for us to fulfill the Savior's instruction: "...let your light shine before others". You can bring your completed pledge card to worship or mail it to the office. You can also make your pledge online

[HERE](#) or scan the QR code. Thank you!

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.



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 JPW Library is offering two programs in the coming months to encourage self-care and personal growth.

Post-Holiday Detox & Spiritual Reset -- A Weekend Retreat for Women If the busyness of the Christmas season has left you feeling tired, anxious, or spiritually off-balance, you're not alone. Join spiritual director and retreat facilitator Janice Olson for a restful women's retreat at the Guest House Retreat & Conference Center in Chester January 16-18. Together we'll reflect on 2025, set intentions for 2026, and restore body, mind, and spirit through simple detox practices, reflection, and plenty of time for rest – naps, reading, woodland walks, and fireside quiet. Financial assistance is available – please contact Jennifer deSimas for details. [Tap here](#) for more information and to register. Self-care is a spiritual practice – please join us!

Warmly,

Janice Olson

Retreat Facilitator & Spiritual Director

janiceolson756@gmail.com | (860) 985-1883

www.consciouscontact.us

Grace in Action: Cultivating Resilience & Presence - A 6-Session Group Coaching Series

Led by Stephanie Simpson, MA, MFA, PCC *A fantastic opportunity for anyone looking to work with a life coach!*

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*

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, go-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. 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!*

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 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. These upcycled; one-of-a-kind First Church-branded totes and clutches will be for sale during the Coffee Hour at the Book Mobile.

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

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.](#)

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.

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 jpwwebster@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.

Food for Thought meets Tuesday, January 6, 5-6:30 p.m. to discuss *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 Leitch 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."

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.

Spreading Your News

The Communications Team is made up of members of our Outreach Ministry, and the church Office Administrators.

- **Sunday Notes/Happenings submissions** are *due by noon* on Tuesdays to Bethany: office.manager@whfirstchurch.org
- **Website, printed pieces, and Social Media additions or changes** can be sent to Amy and Joy anytime. Amy Melvin: Communications@whfirstchurch.org, Joy Taylor: Communications2@whfirstchurch.org

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)

