



# Sunday Notes

First Church Happenings for the week of January 4, 2026



## Sunday Worship

*"On entering the house, [the magi from the east] saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road."*

– [Matthew 2:11-12](#)

I trust that I'm not the only person on the planet to have had this happen; but I'll ask anyway. Have you ever read something a thousand times and supposed you knew what it meant every single one of those times? And then, once upon a time, you finally realized that your assumption was utterly unfounded?



The writer of the Epiphany story ([Matthew 2:1-12](#)) testifies that mystic travelers followed a star in the sky until it stopped over the place where the holy infant was located. When it was time to head home, however, they heeded a hunch. I wonder what in the world that means. Finally! Unless I'm alone in my wondering, I'll say more when I see you.

Sunday's sermon is entitled: "...having been warned in a dream..."

New year. Same love.

rev.fredd

---

## Altar Flowers

This week our Altar Flowers are donated by **Kathryn Beers** in loving memory of **Mildred and Robert Beers**.

## Light the Steeple

This week our Steeple is lit by **Michael M. Dore** in loving memory of **Linda Lee Dore**, the light of my life for 64 years.



## Calling All Chili Chefs!

Do you have a favorite chili recipe? Join us for a Chili Cook-Off during coffee hour on January 18, during coffee hour! We are looking for volunteers to bring a pot of chili to share. All styles welcome. Please Sign up by emailing Amanda at: [faith.formation@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:faith.formation@whfirstchurch.org)

## 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!

During these cold winter months ... let us not forget the less fortunate!

### **January Reach Out: South Park Inn**

Founded in 1982, South Park Inn provides a range of programs and services to assist people experiencing homelessness as they transition back to permanency. The agency's goal is to provide a safe, temporary place to stay as individuals identify the supports and opportunities that will yield long-term housing solutions.

South Park Inn's emergency shelter, opened in 1984, operates 24/7/365 and provides 55 beds to men and women.

South Park Inn has 15 Transitional Housing beds for Veterans, ten of which are dedicated for high-barrier Veterans exhibiting acute and/or active substance use and mental illness.

South Park Inn also operates 17 respite beds to provide people recovering from recent medical or behavioral health hospitalizations with a safe place to stay that includes staffing to monitor for complications/side effects, follow-up care, treatment compliance, and/or medication errors; case management, and rehousing support.

### **Your support changes lives!**

When you donate to South Park Inn, you support our mission to improve our community by providing equal access to shelter and solutions for all people to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. The cycle of homelessness CAN be broken, and it happens with your support!

To learn more and donate please use the links provided or donate in church (**note South Park Inn on your envelope or check the Reach Out box**) or online thru the church: <https://pushpay.com/g/whfirstchurch>

To learn more and to donate directly: <https://www.southparkinn.org/donate>

---

### **Bible Study Announcement**

Join us on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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)

### **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.

---

**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!

**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

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. 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!*

### **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 [jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org](mailto: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.

**Food for Thought meets this coming Tuesday, January 6, 5-6:30 p.m.** to discuss *Take My Hand* by Dolan 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. Dolan 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 will meet on 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."

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:Communications@whfirstchurch.org), Joy Taylor: [Communications2@whfirstchurch.org](mailto: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](mailto:Office.Manager@whfirstchurch.org) or 860-233-9605.  
Submit Prayer Requests: [http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\_request](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request).

