



Sunday Notes

First Church Happenings for the week of January 11, 2026



Sunday Worship

"...but in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to [God]...everyone who believes in [God] receives forgiveness..."
– Acts 10:35, 43

Hi there:

May I remind you about the essential truth that we extracted from the Epiphany episode last Sunday? We learned that the visit of the wise ones from the east is not an addendum to the story of salvation. Rather, it's a crucial ingredient of the story. Yes, Jesus came as a Jewish Messiah. And! Regardless of worship tradition; or religious orientation; or country of origin, God can satisfy the hopes of every human heart. Even if you don't know that God's love is the stuff your soul is searching for, there's a star in the sky that will lead you to it!

**THEN PETER BEGAN TO
SPEAK: "I NOW TRULY
UNDERSTAND THAT GOD
DOES NOT SHOW
FAVORITISM,
– ACTS 10:34**



This week's reading ([Acts 10:34-43](#)) affirms that truth. We'll eavesdrop on Peter's prophetic realization – the moment he finally figured out that God does not discriminate by ethnicity or nationality. But! God does single out specific people for two specific reasons. I'll say more when I see you.

Sunday's sermon is entitled: **Anyone Who Fears. Everyone Who Believes.**

Love you. Mean it.

rev.fredd

Holiday Closures

- The office and JPW Library will be closed Monday, January 19 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

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, January 25, 2026 at 11:15 AM following morning worship to address the following items of business:

1. To consider and approve the agenda for the meeting.
2. To consider and vote on the minutes of First Church congregational meetings held on 2/23/25, 6/8/25, and 11/30/25
3. To consider and vote on the proposed budget for First Church for the budget year 2026.
4. In accordance with the By-laws of First Church, action will be taken only on matters included in the Call to Meeting.

Notice given on January 11, 2025

Linda Bronstein, Secretary of the Church

Calling All Chili Chefs!

Do you have a favorite chili recipe? Join us for a Chili Cook-Off during coffee hour on **January 18!** 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

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.

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 support 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 - January 18 - 9-9:45am - Community Room (next to the JPW Library)

Join us 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. (First and Third Sunday of the month) 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.

Altar Flower Donations

Donating altar flowers is a meaningful way to honor loved ones and is part of our Inreach ministry. If you would like to donate, please reach out to Bethany in the church office or [CLICK HERE](#)

Light The Steeple in Honor of a Loved One

For a \$25 donation, you are invited to "Light the Steeple" for one week in honor of a loved one. Donations will be added to the Save the Steeple fund. [CLICK HERE](#)

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

FREE Fitness Classes -- Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Spirit!

The JPWL invites you to attend a free Faithful Fitness class. Both classes provide opportunities 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.](#)

Kathi Boratko leads a well-rounded class with resistance training, cardio, and balance using multiple fitness modalities. Chairs may be used for seated and standing support. Bring a mat, light weights, and a small ball. No tools? No worries! We have some you may borrow.

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

Gain balance and mindfulness through movement with Cynthia Hoag! QiGong and Tai Chi promote the flow of qi, or energy, in the body, helping to reduce stress, depression, or fatigue while providing a sense of balance and clarity. Each session concludes with a short heartfelt meditation intuitively curated for those in attendance (seated or standing).

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.

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

Post-Holiday Spiritual Reset -- A Weekend Retreat for Women Join spiritual director and retreat facilitator Janice Olson January 16-18 for a restful and rejuvenating women's retreat at the Guest House Retreat & Conference Center in Chester. 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.

Grace in Action: Cultivating Resilience & Presence - A 6-Session Group Coaching Series - Led by Stephanie Simpson, MA, MFA, PCC - *A fantastic opportunity for anyone thinking about working with a life coach!*

Sunday, February 8: Lunch and Learn kick-off in the JPW Library, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

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

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

**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!*

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: Mondays from 12-1:30 pm in the JPWL.

Next Meeting: January 12. *NOTE: No Meeting January 19 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.*

Reading: We're finishing up *The First Christmas* by Marcus Borg and John Crossan. Starting Jan. 26, Rev. Tom Carr will guide our exploration of *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* by Amy Jill Levine. "Jesus was a skilled storyteller and perceptive teacher who used parables from everyday life to effectively convey his message and meaning. Levine relates a robust sense of what Judaism was and wasn't in Jesus' day, and she does so without chiding, showing how the parables are not just about Jesus, but are also about us—and when read rightly, still challenge and provoke us."

Food for Thought: First Tuesdays of each month, 5:00-6:30

Next meeting: February 3 - Reading: *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans - Sybil Van Antwerp has throughout her life used letters to make sense of the world and her place in it. Most mornings, Sybil sits down to write letters—to her brother, to her best friend, to the president of the university who will not allow her to audit a class she desperately wants to take... But when letters from someone in her past force her to examine one of the most painful periods of her life, she realizes that she cannot move forward until she finds it in her heart to offer forgiveness. "Charming, engrossing, and deeply moving...explores the way everyday choices and relationships shape a life and shows it's never too late to make amends or even fall in love" (Booklist).

Believe in YourSHELF Tween Book Group

Next Meeting: January 11, 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. "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."

Let the Games Begin!

Wednesdays, 2:30-4 p.m.- JPW Library

Join us in the JPW Library on Wednesday afternoons for some mad board game fun! Bring your own games or play one of ours. We have several traditional games like "Scrabble" or "Guess Who?" and a few newer ones, such as "Really Loud Librarians (*Think fast, not hard*)." We also have a nice selection of jigsaw puzzles for all ages. All games and puzzles are available to borrow with your JPW Library card.

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.

