



# Sunday Notes



First Church Happenings for the week of January 18, 2026

## Sunday Worship

"One of the most agonizing problems within our human experience is that few, if any, of us live to see our fondest hopes fulfilled."

– Martin Luther King Jr.

Loved ones:

I didn't say it at the start; but we've since embarked upon a three-part sermon series about dreams. Two weeks ago, we studied the last line of the Epiphany story (Matthew 2:12) in search of answers. What might it mean to be warned in a dream? Who did the warning? Whose voice said, "Go home by another way."



Last week, we considered Peter's public speech to the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10:34-43). Peter declared, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality...anyone who respects God and does the right things is acceptable to God." We learned that his realization was derived from a daydream.

This Sunday -- MLK Sunday -- we'll consider Dr. King's timeless message about long-held desires and deeply rooted dreams. No, not that one.

Sunday's sermon is entitled: **A Sermon About Shattered Dreams**. I'll say more when I see you.

Love you. Mean it.

rev.fredd

---

## Altar Flowers

Today our Altar Flowers are donated by **The Denton Family** in loving memory of **Diane D. Denton**.

---

## TODAY'S EVENTS

Chili Cook-Off during coffee hour today! Rock Voices are singing with the church choir today!

**"Let's Talk" about the proposed budget for First Church for FY 2026.** After Sunday Service in the Auditorium 11:15  
[BUDGET LINK](#)

**Arts in The Center Concerts Presents: Chamber Music Concert** Sunday, January 18 at 3:00 p.m. in the Chapel. Great music performed to an audience in an intimate setting. The concert is open to the public. A Free Will Offering will be received at the door. Park for free in church lot. If handicap access is needed, please pull up to the curb on South Main Street and enter via ramp that will be placed at Chapel entrance.

---

## Holiday Closures

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

## First Church Bag Lunch Program Seeks New Leader

For the past five years, wonderful volunteers have prepared bagged lunches for Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen on one Sunday per month, right after worship. Helpers of all ages fill 80 bags with sandwiches, mustard, apples, chips, and homemade cookies. With Dottie Stone retiring as leader, the Outreach Team seeks a new leader or co-leaders to handle food purchasing and oversee bagging sessions. As Dottie often says, "It's a very rewarding experience knowing that you've provided a meal for someone who is struggling." If you're interested or have questions, contact Dottie or Carol Lorenzo. Dottie: 203-856-7403, [dottie@stone-stonect.com](mailto:dottie@stone-stonect.com) Carol: 860-614-1068, [ctlorenzo@comcast.net](mailto:ctlorenzo@comcast.net)

## Curious about GHIAA and Faith-Based Organizing?

Here's your chance to learn how it all works. GHIAA's annual basic training series will be held in person at Temple Sinai (41 W. Hartford Rd., Newington) on Tuesdays 6:30-8:30pm, Feb. 10, 17, and 24, and March 3 (snow date March 10). You can sign up [by clicking here](#), or contact Linda Bronstein ([lindadiane275@gmail.com](mailto:lindadiane275@gmail.com)). If you are not yet familiar with GHIAA, use the same registration form to sign up for a one-hour Zoom (or in-person) orientation as well.

Participating with GHIAA allows us to join with over 50 diverse faith communities in the Hartford area to help create a more just, generous, and loving world.

---

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

---

### Bible Study – February 1 & 15 - 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 its 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)

### 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.

### 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](#)

### 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!

## 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>



### 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*

---

### Movie Night with our UU friends!

February 20, 6 p.m.

Universalist Church of West Hartford (433 Fern Street)

The JPW Library is partnering with the Universalist Church of West Hartford to present [Legacy: Apartheid's Shadow](#). The film "follows the grandson of the so-called 'Architect of Apartheid' as he grapples with his family's role in one of history's most brutal regimes. LEGACY is a global call to confront the past in order to re-imagine a more equal future. A vital meditation on accountability and social justice that resonates far beyond one nation, mirroring struggles playing out worldwide today" ([legacydocumentary.org](http://legacydocumentary.org)). A Q&A with Director Tara Erica Moore will follow.

### 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.

**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 uncertain, and how we meet it matters.** Now, members and friends of First Church have an opportunity to lead with greater intention, strengthen their emotional intelligence, and deepen connections with family and friends. Rooted in the [Core Energy Leadership™](#) framework and facilitated by Executive + Leadership Coach and West Hartford native Stephanie Simpson, this program offers practical tools for navigating stress and building more meaningful relationships—with yourself and others. 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 offset fees for each participant – *you'll pay just \$150 for the class!* The series includes an Energy Leadership Index Assessment with a personalized report, one 90-minute in-person session, and five 60-minute virtual sessions. (*Dates above.*) Space is limited — registration required. [TAP HERE](#) for more information and to register. Learn more about Stephanie at [www.stephanie-simpson.com](http://www.stephanie-simpson.com).

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

Next Meeting: January 26. *NOTE: No Meeting January 19 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.*

Book: *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 - Book: *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 Middle School Book Group** will meet on February 15th at 10:15 a.m. in the Community Room.

This month we will discuss *Two Tribes* by Emily Bowen Cohen: "When a school bully declares that Mia is "not a real Indian" because she doesn't conform to his stereotypes, the tween questions her right to claim a Native identity. Since her Jewish mother separated from her father when she was 3, Mia's contact with her Muscogee relatives has been limited...A powerful graphic novel about honoring every part of our identity." (Kirkus)

## **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: \[http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\\_request\]\(http://bit.ly/FCprayer\_request\)](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request)

