



# Sunday Notes

First Church Happenings for the week of February 1, 2026



## Sunday Worship

"For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes. But, often with tears in their eyes, they demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And of course, that's Moses, not Jesus. I haven't heard one of them demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere." – Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Friends:

I didn't reprint that quote with any agenda other than to agree with Kurt that the reason people mention the Ten Commandments more than the eight Beatitudes ([Matthew 5:1-12](#)) is not self-evident. "For some reason", it seems to be true. Perhaps, as a function of early childhood education – basic Sunday School learning -- the Commandments come more easily to adult minds. You probably remember more than half of the 'shall nots' that Moses downloaded from cloud atop Mount Sinai.

But the Beatitudes – the series of blessings that Jesus taught in a mountainside sermon? Maybe, not as memorable? It's cool. We'll revisit them together in search of the truth about what it takes to live right side up in an upside-down world. I'll say more when I see you. Sunday's reflection is entitled: **Mourning. Meekness. Mercy.**

Blessed are you.

rev.fredd



## Altar Flowers

This week our Altar Flowers are donated by **Pam Hastings and Linda Rosania** in loving memory of **Richard and Lorain Hastings, Richard Hastings III, Mr. and Mrs. R. Cleveland Hastings, Marcia Hastings Peck, and Charles and Lucy Jaworski.**

## Today's Events

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 today, Sunday, February 1, 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 [BUDGET LINK](#)
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

## Celebrating Dottie Stone's Dedication to Our Lunch-Making Program

We're celebrating our amazing Dottie Stone as she retires from leading and organizing our monthly lunch-making program for Loaves and Fishes. Dottie's selfless dedication has made a difference in so many lives—both for our volunteers and for those who receive these meals. We are so grateful for everything she's done! Exciting news: a new team of leaders has stepped up so the program will keep going strong (Stay tuned for that announcement!)

## **Opportunity Fair, Sunday, February 8, 2026, 11 am**

First Church is bustling! Have you ever wondered about the various energetic groups and teams that seem to be having fun? Have you ever considered joining in but were hesitant to ask? On Sunday, Feb.8, during coffee hour, representatives of these groups will be happy to chat with you. We are even going to pass the mic for anyone to briefly showcase their work. Think of it as Karaoke at First Church! Perhaps something will capture your interest and you will find yourself warmly welcomed to actively participate. Welcome to a vibrant First Church!

## **Giving Statements**

Check your email next week for link and instructions for Giving Statements! Any questions? Contact the office!

## **Storm Closings**

Just a reminder that storm closings will be posted on [WORSHIP](#) and [SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP](#) pages or go directly to [NBC](#) or [CBS](#).

## **Member Photos Needed**

Is your profile lacking a photo? If so please share a pic to add to your CCB, by taking a selfie or see Amy Melvin and she can photograph you. Share via text or email; 860-798-5829, [communications@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:communications@whfirstchurch.org). Thank you.

## **Friends of Silver Lake**

Our Southern New England UCC Conference (SNECC) will be ending its ministry at Silver Lake Camp and Retreat Center with this summer's program, where many generations have experienced great camps and retreats. However, an independent group called the **Friends of Silver Lake** has been formed consisting of Connecticut and Massachusetts ministers, former campers, camp counselors and parents with a goal to provide a life-changing ministry to youths and young adults. George Stone spoke with several people last week, and he provided a link to the Friends website where you can learn more about Silver Lake and the efforts to continue this ministry:

<https://www.friendsofsilverlake.com/connect/>

## **Bible Study – February 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 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)

## **Let the Games Begin!**

Wednesdays, 2:30-4pm.- 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.

## **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.

## **Volunteer Opportunity**

**Fern Street Backpack program** needs 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!**

This is 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.

**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.

### **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. If you would like to donate, reach out to Bethany in the church office or [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!

---

### **February Reach Out: My Sisters' Place**

Every day, throughout the greater Hartford area, there are hundreds of people—the overwhelming majority often women and children—who have found themselves homeless due to domestic violence, eviction, unemployment, or mental illness.

Since 1982, **My Sisters' Place** has provided a safe, nurturing environment for those who find themselves without a home. Through a unique combination of services and support, guidance, encouragement, and outreach, we work to help empower disadvantaged people in becoming independent.

**My Sisters' Place** provides shelter, food for women and their children, and services designed to get them back onto the road to independence, including medical care, management of financial affairs, and much more.

**My Sisters' Place** Core Values: Resilience, Safety, Adaptability

Resilience – honoring courage and strength; viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth.

Safety – provide safe, secure, and trauma informed environments that foster healing and stability.

Adaptability – capacity to adjust to new situations and changing environments, embracing flexibility in the face of uncertainty.

To learn more and donate please use the links provided or donate in church (note **My Sisters' Place** on your envelope) or online thru the church: <https://pushpay.com/g/whfirstchurch>

To learn more or to donate directly: <https://sistersplacect.org/donate/>

---

### **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)

## 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!

Saturday, February 21, 6pm · 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](#). A Q&A with Director Tara Erica Moore will follow. 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. Learn more at [legacydocumentary.org](http://legacydocumentary.org), or see Cathy Mieczkowski or Jennifer with questions.

### **FREE Wellness Classes – Start a Healthy Habit in 2026!**

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 – 6:45pm. [More info and registration here.](#)
- **Tai Chi & Qi Gong** – Thursdays, 10:30-11:30am. [More info and registration here.](#)

---

### **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 JPW Library

Next Meeting: February 2

Book: *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* by Amy Jill Levine.

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

Next meeting: This Tuesday February 3 in the JPW Library

Book: *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans

March Book: *Where are All the Kids?* By Teri Michaud

#### **Believe in YourSHELF Middle School Book Group**

Next Meeting: February 15th at 10:15am in the Community Room

Book: *Two Tribes* by Emily Bowen Cohen

---

### **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).

