



Sunday Notes

First Church Happenings for the week of February 15, 2026



Sunday Worship

Friends:

An African proverb teaches us that "clouds do not always mean rain, but smoke is always a sure sign of fire". In other words, appearances can be misleading — evidence does not always point to expected results...what seems to be true may not be the whole truth. At the same time, if you smell smoke, it's wise to suspect fire.

This Sunday, we'll consider two biblical depictions of divine presence that substantiate the first part of the proverb. **Exodus 24, verse 16**: "The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day [God] called to Moses out of the cloud." **Matthew 17, verse 5**: "While [Jesus] was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'"



Theologically speaking, clouds are a good thing...a God thing, moreover. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon is entitled: **Can You Hear God Clearly in Cloudy Conditions?**

Love you. Mean it.

rev.fredd

The office and JPW Library will be closed Monday, February 16, in observance of Presidents' Day.

Today's Events

Believe in YourSHELF Middle School Book Group

Today!: at 10:15am in the Community Room

Book: *Two Tribes* by Emily Bowen Cohen

What is Lent?

It's the 40-day period (not including Sundays) leading up to Easter. When is Lent? It begins February 18th (Ash Wednesday) and ends April 2nd (Maundy Thursday). And, so? We'll take the journey together, beginning with contemplative worship on **Ash Wednesday — February 18th — at 6:00pm in the chapel**. The 30-minute service includes sacred music, a brief pastoral reflection, candle lighting, and imposition of ashes. Come just as you are, without one plea...receive peace and pardon.

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, or see Cathy Mieczkowski or Jennifer with questions.

Sunday February 22, Shrove Tuesday Pancake Lunch and Parade

SAVE THE DATE! Celebrate Shrove Tuesday with a Pancake Lunch and Parade. Join the Inreach Team and Faith Formation following worship in the auditorium. Enjoy pancakes, sausage, fruit and beverages. Plan on wearing your wackiest outfits, put on your beaded necklaces, bring your noisemakers and masks, eat pancakes, join the parade and goof off with us as we get ready for the beginning of Lent.

Updating the Church Directory

Has this ever happened to you? You sit in the same pew behind the same couple each week, but you can't remember their names. A solution is coming!! An up-to-date picture directory is in the works. We will be using any names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and pictures that are in "CCB". If you wish for your information to be included or excluded, please complete this form <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/367/responses/new> by March 1, 2026. Once the directory is complete, it will be made available only to church members and not to anyone outside of the church. Any questions? Please reach out to [Diane Bohman](#) or [Susan Tobin](#).

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. Thank you.

Dialogue Circles, Sunday, March 15 at 11:15am in the Fellowship Room

You're invited to participate in Dialogue Circles with Master of Arts in International Peacebuilding (MAP) students from HIU (Hartford International University for Religion and Peace). The conversations are conducted as part of the MAP curriculum. Students are training to become community change agents by developing proficiency in conflict transformation and fluency in the religious traditions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The ability to facilitate productive conversation is a critical skill for MAP students and all peace builders. Which is why your participation matters. We'll form break-out groups to consider this question: "What does it mean to live out our faith in the world?" The goal is to get 20-25 participants. The hope is that all who join the circles will gain insights and be inspired! Please register here: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/370/responses/new>

Giving Statements

Check your email 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](#).

Let the (Board)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 also have a good selection of jigsaw puzzles for all ages. All games and puzzles are available to borrow with your JPW Library card.

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.

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. 17, and 24, and March 3 (snow date March 10). You can sign up [by clicking here](#), or contact Linda Bronstein (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.

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.

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!

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/>

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 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.](#)

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.

Awakening the Spirit: Mondays from 12-1:30 pm in the JPW Library

Next Meeting: February 23 – this group will not meet Monday 2/16

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: Tuesday March 3 in the JPW Library

Book: *Where are All the Kids? A Mother's Journey of Determination (Based on a True Story)* by Teri Leonard Michaud.

West Hartford resident Michaud shares the story of how her mother overcame 1960s religious and social norms to escape an abusive marriage and protect her six children.

Lunch & Learn: *Navigating the "Goo Stage"*

with Stephanie Simpson

Sunday, March 22 from 11:30-1:30 in the JPW Library

[Register here](#)

Feeling overwhelmed? You're not alone. Ongoing life changes—at work, in relationships, with health, or in daily routines—can add up quickly. During times of transition and uncertainty, many of us find ourselves in the "Goo Stage": the in between space where old ways no longer fit, new ones haven't formed yet, and things can feel messy, unclear, or unstable.

This free 2-hour interactive workshop offers a supportive pause—a low pressure space to slow down and orient to what's shifting, without needing answers or feeling pressure to fix anything. Through guided reflection, structured discussion, and small group conversations, you'll explore the changes you're navigating, how the "Goo Stage" may be showing up in your life, and learn simple, practical tools to stay grounded and care for yourself and others during times of transition. A light lunch will be served.

Stephanie Simpson, MA, MFA, PCC is an executive and leadership coach and facilitator with a background in clinical psychology, mindfulness, and trauma-informed practices. She holds an MA in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Spirituality and Mind-Body Studies from Columbia University Teachers College. Stephanie helps individuals and organizations navigate stress, change, and growth with greater awareness, resilience, and connection.

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.

