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Living in Spirit • Committed to Service • Open to All



first church

WEST HARTFORD

TIDINGS

FEBRUARY 2021 • NEWSLETTER • WWW.WHFIRSTCHURCH.ORG • 12 SOUTH MAIN STREET, WEST HARTFORD, CT • 860-233-9605

Creativity in Winter



One aspect of creativity is to initiate novelty to match novel circumstances, according to the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. As this month begins, we are in a tender moment in our democracy and by extension, for our communities. Furthermore, the pandemic continues to take a heavy toll; I urge you to be vigilant to guard your own health as well as the health of your loved ones. Although we have certainly moved forward as a country, the reality is that we have been, and still are, deeply divided. Our nation's people are focused on different facts and alternative narratives.



As your Interim Senior Pastor I know that most families report struggling to remain on speaking terms over political divides. In pastoral ministry I have come to recognize that family discord often sets the stage for unintended collateral damage down the line. It has been my intention to create safe space at the churches that I serve for people to gather and to have their spirits refreshed, where they can find and take their own place in the family of faith, and

learn skills to mend family division. That kind of safe space is created by the behavior of the members of the congregation, not by bricks and mortar. I hope that in this season you will be able to be a safe person for others to speak with, listening more than speaking, slow to judge, and slow to anger – and sharing your truth with love.

The challenges ahead will require all of our creativity and imagination. We will be continuing with our theme of creativity in worship. I am confident that by inviting one another into God's presence, listening to God's word, and with the urging of the Spirit, we will come through this. Our faith was meant, to quote the book of Esther, "for such a time as this."

Faithfully yours,

Erica

The Reverend Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor

Children at the First Church Academy for Young Children getting creative and cooperating in the snow. See more photos on page 5.

February Worship Plans: Sundays at 10 a.m. unless noted. All services are archived online at: https://bit.ly/FC_Sermon

<p>FEBRUARY 7: Epiphany 5 Isaiah 40:21-31 "Continuing Creativity" Rev. Erica Wimber Avena</p>	<p>FEBRUARY 14 Transfiguration Sunday Mark 9:2-9 "Creating Transformation" Rev. Amie Giguere Taizé Worship, 5 p.m.</p>	<p>FEBRUARY 21 First Sunday in Lent Genesis 9:8-17 "A Snowmelt (rainbow) Promise" Rev. Erica Wimber Avena</p>	<p>FEBRUARY 28 Second Sunday in Lent Romans 4:18-25 "Reckoning on a Promise" Rev. Erica Wimber Avena Celtic Worship, 5 p.m.</p>
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■ You may submit your prayer requests online at any time. When sharing your prayer request, you will have the option to have it shared with our congregation, or you may opt to have it kept private. Erica and Amie attend to the requests. Please use this link:

http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request

■ Are you on Facebook? If you are, please make sure you are following the church page (First Church, West Hartford). All members and friends are invited to join a private group called First Church, West Hartford Community.

If you have an announcement to share, please call the office at 860-233-9605, x111.

Call to Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, February 7, 2021 via Zoom following worship

Notice is hereby given that a Congregational Meeting for the First Church of Christ Congregational of West Hartford, Connecticut, UCC, will be held via Zoom on Sunday, February 7, 2021 at about 11:15 a.m. following the online worship service to address the following items of business:

1. To approve the minutes of the First Church Budget Meeting held on February 9, 2020.
2. To approve the minutes of the First Church Congregational Meeting held on November 29, 2020 to consider and vote on renaming Goodman Green to Unity Green.
3. To consider and vote on The First Church Annual Operating Budget for calendar year 2021.
4. In accordance with the By-laws of First Church, action will be taken only on matters included in this Call to Meeting.

Notice given on January 15, 2021

Charlie Goodwin, Secretary of the Church



The Outreach Team Wants Your Used Bikes and Bags!

On Saturday April 10 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. we will begin collecting gently used bicycles and small suitcases on behalf of two organizations, below. Additional collection times TBA.

All bicycle donations will go towards a local organization that offers programs for school-based and regional bike clubs, bike repair, and youth bike programming around the state of Connecticut. Bikes in any repairable condition are welcomed and MUCH appreciated!

Bags for Ädelbrook We are collecting small suitcases for individuals who are ready to leave Ädelbrook to start out on their own. Ädelbrook is a licensed, certified, residential treatment facility serving children and young adults who are on the autism spectrum or have other behavioral/health challenges. Please consider donating gently used luggage and sturdy totes to give these young people a hand as they proudly embark on their new journeys. Thank you!

From the Moderator

The novel coronavirus has changed everything. We know that. Considering these changes, which ones should we embrace and use to bring God's message and call to action to even more persons than those who walk through the doors of our magnificent Meeting House?

The greatest change we have faced this past year has been learning to use technology to worship (using recorded or live-stream events) and to connect for fellowship and meetings (using Zoom technology). By embracing the technology, we have continued our life together as a church body. I am concerned, however, that we have not adequately built out the fellowship connections. We need to reach everyone where they are, and keep reaching out to those who do not realize we are trying to connect with them.

As we think to the future when we can resume in-person worship, we need to understand that some of our members will not feel comfortable returning as soon as others. As a result, continuing with live-stream, recorded and virtual meetings will probably continue to be part of our life. And we have to consider how to stay socially connected.

Although many of us may be fatigued from using digital technology this past year, that technology allows us to reach an even greater number of persons than we normally do with the church's message. Using technology, we can emphasize being the church, and not coming to church!

So prepare to see more suggestions on how technology can and should be incorporated into our church life and mission. Ultimately, we want to be sure everyone has a multitude of ways to embrace and act on the challenge posed in Micah 6:8: "God has showed you what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

If advanced technology allows us to include and inspire people in the church's work – whether or not they are able to walk into the Meeting House in the future -- then let us look forward to the future that this novel coronavirus has foisted onto us.

Judy Schmitt, Moderator



Best Wishes Jessica

Jessica Chatfield, Administrative Assistant at First Church has concluded her work for our congregation. She began in November 2017, and her last day with us was Friday, January 15. With great affection, we wish her well in her next endeavors.

Giving is Easy!

You may have started to see notices and e-mails about our "4 ways to give" campaign. We're spreading the word that among other ways, it's very easy to give gifts of stocks and securities to First Church.

For more information on how to give gifts of securities,, simply reach out to our appointed, local Financial Advisor Sue Banville at Edward Jones in West Hartford at: 860-521-2119



The images of snowflakes found in *Tidings* are used with permission of the Jericho Historical Society. They were created by Wilson Bentley, a farmer from Vermont who was affectionately known as "Snowflake" Bentley. On January 15, 1885 Bentley "became the first person to photograph a single snow crystal. He would go on to photograph well over 5,000 snow crystals," which were shared in his 1931 book, *Snow Crystals*, as well as numerous magazines and scientific journals.



2021 Teams & Nominations

At our Annual Meeting in March, we vote to accept the new slate of church leaders. We elect the lead positions of Moderator, Vice Moderator and Treasurer, as well as Team Leaders and members of the teams. (Workgroups are formed as needed, and do not require confirmation by the general membership. Workgroups are listed and acknowledged in the Annual Report.)

One way to learn about First Church and how to put your faith into action is by being a member of one of the "operating" teams:

SPIRIT TEAM: Transformational spirituality in practice and celebration of the Holy One among us through worship, faith formation and music.

INREACH TEAM: Support and caring for members and guests, including through parish care, hospitality, membership development and fellowship.

OUTREACH TEAM: Integral part of the community in which we live and pray, including through outreach, mission, service, communications, marketing and the J.P. Webster Library.

BUSINESS TEAM: Manage assets and business of church, including financial, budgeting, stewardship, human resources, systems, building and real estate matters, and First Church Academy for Young Children.

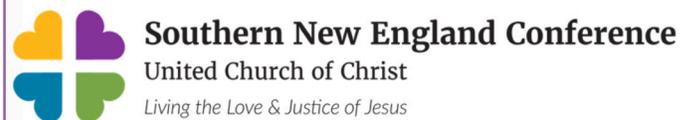
FUTURES TEAM: Support church as diverse, vibrant, inter-generational, financially stable congregation through planning, programming and leadership promotion.



COORDINATING TEAM: Facilitate overall program of the church by coordinating the work of the Teams and offering a venue for communication among the Teams.

If you are interested in any of the teams, contact Judy Schmitt or Eleanor Wight, directly or through the church office, to let us know of your interest. Are you not sure which group is best for you? We will help you make the best choice by talking with you about the teams, what they do, and when they meet.

By being on a team, you have a chance to translate your faith into service. The teams have been wonderfully creative this past year to ensure the worship and mission activities continue. Join one of the teams, and you will find your thoughts and input are encouraged and appreciated to help the church community continue steadfastly with its mission.



Updates from the Search Committee

This month, a draft of the church profile prepared by the Senior Pastor Search Committee will be available on Church Community Builder (CCB) for review. The profile was created using a template provided by the UCC and is organized into six sections: 1) information about the position posting, 2) Who is God Calling Us to Become?, 3) Who are we now?, 4) Who is our neighbor?, 5) References, and 6) Consent and Validation.

The church profile is also being sent to the Southern New England Conference of the UCC for validation and posting on its web site. The validation will mark an important shift in the activities of our search to focus more on the receipt and review of materials from potential candidates.

The information in the profile came from many sources, including our Coordinating Team, Annual Reports, historical records, UCC records, our recent congregational survey, and many hours of research and discussion during our meetings. Thanks to all who contributed to this effort!

With appreciation for your patience and prayers,
Amber Rottman, Amy Melvin, Doug Evarts, Glen MacLeod, Liz Oman-Wilfred, Robert Schunder, Ryan Mannix, Seth Holmes, and Suzanne Carnes

DUE DATE for TIDINGS: The next deadline is **FEBRUARY 14th**, for the **MARCH** issue. Please send items to Joy Taylor:
joy.taylor@whfirstchurch.org

DUE DATES for SUNDAY NOTES & eNEWS: Submissions are due each Tuesday by noon to Suzanne: suzanne.nardi@whfirstchurch.org.

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Rev. Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor
Rev. Amie Stuart Giguere, Acting Associate Pastor
Rev. Susan Izard, Minister of Spiritual Life
James Boratko, Music Director
Lauren Dube, Minister for Children and Family Ministries
Dawne Quinn, FCAFYC Director
Suzanne Nardi, Office Manager
Lisa Reed, Business Manager

  Church Office: 860-233-9605 • Fax: 860-232-8183   

J.P. Webster Library: 860-232-3893

First Church Academy for Young Children: 860-232-2106

12 South Main St., West Hartford, CT 06107 • www.whfirstchurch.org

Fun February Family Programs - 2021

TELL ME A STORY

The JPWL has created a new program for fans of story-telling: *Tell Me a Story* makes its debut this month with two storytellers for story fans of all ages. Each artist will share creation stories from different cultures and time periods.



February 13, 4:00 p.m.

Valerie Tutson

Valerie Tutson draws her stories from around the world with an emphasis on African traditions. Her tales take listeners on dynamic voyages of dance and adventure, leaving them wondering or laughing -- or both! Val's repertoire includes stories and songs she learned in her travels to South Africa, her experiences in West Africa, and stories from African American history.

Register Here: http://bit.ly/Feb13_Story

February 20, 4:00 p.m.

Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo

Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo is a high-energy storyteller based in San Francisco. Robert layers ancient Asian mythologies, folktales, and Asian urban legends with Asian American sensibilities, precision choreography, and lyrical word-weaving, taking his listeners on a mesmerizing ramble through new places and times.

Register Here: http://bit.ly/Feb20_Story

For more information, call Jennifer or Karla in the Library: 860-232-3893



Summer Camp at Silver Lake will be OPEN!

The theme is "Creation Speaks!"

There will be three two-week sessions offered for youth from rising 5th graders to those graduating High School in 2021. This is an amazing opportunity to have the core Silver Lake experience while also keeping everyone safe!

There will be modifications in place, as per the American Camping Association (Silver Lake has been accredited since 2019) as well as the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. Program design, size and number of conferences have been modified and safety protocols will be in place. Registration for the summer programs is now open www.silverlakeect.org/summercamp.

Other information, including a parent information video, is also available on the website. Please note that Silver Lake is a year-round outdoor ministry site! There are opportunities this winter and spring for family retreats (you can rent an indoor building for your household unit!) and adventure program days as well! Please feel free to reach out to Amie Giguere with questions.



Greetings and Gratitude from FCAFYC!



As usual, the Academy has been buzzing with activity. The December snow was a welcome adventure. Snow people, snow angels, and sledding kept us busy. The cold doesn't keep us in - 20+ degrees and we are outside! Inside, classrooms are exploring arctic animals, hibernation, what animals do in winter, as well as snow and ice. This month the Academy launches their annual Love Collection. Families are invited to donate toiletries, socks, underwear, and other much needed items for the South Park Inn. If you'd like to participate, you may drop by, ring the bell and we'll happily accept your donation!

Summer 2021 program applications are now available. This summer, the Academy is offering five, two-week camp sessions. Each two-week session will explore an aspect of Our Natural World. To learn more, please contact Dawne Quinn at dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org or call us at 860-232-2106.

Registration is now open for the 2021-2022 program year at the Academy. If you or someone you know is looking for an accredited, nurturing, play based preschool program, please visit our website, firstchurchacademy.org for an application. PreK slots are available now.

A special note from Dawne:

It goes without saying that it has been challenging from every angle to operate the Academy during a pandemic. I want to express my sincere gratitude for the support the church has provided to us. I am grateful that the congregation continues to embrace the Academy as an integral part of who we are as a church. Whether you see the Academy as a service to the community, or a mission, it is arguably one of our strongest connections to the broader West Hartford community. When I was called to commissioned ministry at First Church, I knew that I wanted to serve the one place that has offered me and my family unconditional acceptance and love. I worried when I left that role, that I might be abandoning my call. I've come to realize, that I was also called to the role of Academy Director and that in this capacity, I am continuing an 80 year tradition that employs some of the most compassionate and capable early childhood educators I've ever worked with. It is a place of joy, laughter, and is full of spirit. I hope that when we are able to welcome guests again, you'll stop by and visit!





**JOHN P. WEBSTER
LIBRARY**
Resources for Faith & Life

Jennifer deSimas, Library Director: jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org
 Karla Grafton, Assistant Librarian: jpwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org
 General Inquiries: jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org Phone: 860-232-3893
 Explore our catalog online! <https://jpwebster.biblio.org/eg/opac/home>
 Please note that the JPW will be closed Monday, February 15 in recognition of Presidents' Day.

Staff Hours:
 Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
 Sunday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Curbside Services
 2 to 3 p.m. on Mondays or
 by appointment.

The Challenge of Easter

A Lenten Series with John Dominic Crossan

"Easter is about a physical event and a theological interpretation, that is, about a fact—the Execution of Jesus—and a metaphor—the Resurrection of Jesus. Metaphors are processes of Seeing—and, as such, they are not literal but real because, as lived out, they create human reality—good metaphors for good and bad for bad but still and always human reality." -John Dominic Crossan



John Dominic Crossan is an Irish-American theologian.

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN is an Irish-American theologian and former Roman Catholic priest best known for his association with the Jesus Seminar. His focus is on the historical Jesus as the benchmark for the entire Christian Bible. "The challenge is this," says Crossan. "If we get the history of the first century right, we will get the theology of the 21st century right (and if not, not). I am never interested in the past as merely ancient history but rather as a contemporary model and challenge." We are pleased to welcome Crossan via Zoom for two evenings during Lent:

February 18, 7 p.m.: The Execution of Jesus

Questions: If Jesus went regularly to Jerusalem for Passover, what happened differently that last and fateful time; if Jesus only went that one time, why did he do so then? Why was Jesus legally and publicly executed by Pilate but none of his closest followers was either arrested or even questioned? Was Jesus executed for violent or nonviolent revolution against Roman law and order? Register online: http://bit.ly/Crossan_Feb18

February 25, 7 p.m.: The Resurrection of Jesus

Questions: Why does western Christianity have an individual Resurrection for Jesus alone but Eastern Christianity have a universal Resurrection for Jesus and the whole human race—represented by and incarnated in Adam and Eve? Should that profound divergence between those two mega-metaphors for Easter be combined for the future of our common Christianity? Bluntly: can Christian Easter change Human Evolution? Register online: http://bit.ly/Crossan_Feb25

Ongoing Services

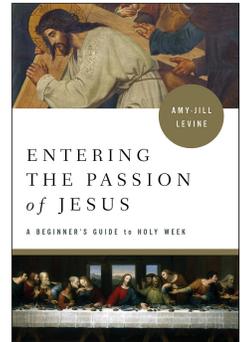
- Reference and reader's advisory services by phone and email
- Curbside service 2-3 p.m. on Mondays, and by appointment
- Device advice to talk you through your gadget's cyber issues
- Church Archives access for researchers
- Place a hold over the phone, or via the JPWL online catalog

Featured elsewhere in Tidings:

- February 13, 4 p.m. Valerie Tutson, Storyteller
- February 20, 4 p.m. Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo, Storyteller

2021 Lenten Book Study

Join Rev. Amie Giguere for a 7 p.m. book study Tuesday evenings in February and March (2/23, 3/2, 3/9, 3/16, 3/23, 3/30). Using short videos and readings from Dr. Amy-Jill Levine's 2018 book, *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week*, we will explore the events of Holy Week and uncover fresh insights into the familiar stories – specifically addressing the notion of risk-taking as a necessary act in the service of certain ethical and spiritual values. According to Levine, "Jesus' final days were full of risk. Every move he made was filled with danger and the potential for great loss or great reward, risking reputation, rejection, and his very life. The disciples took risks of their own when they left behind their homes and families, or when they anointed him with costly perfume." Levine's dry and inviting style of storytelling and analysis, coupled with her deep understanding of Jewish history and culture, provides a coherent narrative of Holy Week for seekers of all backgrounds. We hope you will be able to join us! Books will be available to check out or purchase (\$10) through the JPW Library's curbside service.



Register online: http://bit.ly/Lenten_Bookstudy

JPW Library Book Groups

AWAKENING THE SPIRIT led by Minister of Spiritual Life Susan Izard, meets Mondays at noon via Zoom. They will be reading *Julian of Norwich: Wisdom in a Time of Pandemic* by Matthew Fox. As an anchoress (one who lives a solitary, religious life), Julian of Norwich "sheltered in place" during the bubonic plague and throughout her life. "A theologian way ahead of her time, Julian held a feminist understanding of God as mother at the heart of nature's goodness. Matthew Fox shares her teachings in this powerful and inspiring book."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT led by JPWL director Jennifer deSimas, meets on the first Thursday of each month. The next meeting is 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 4 to discuss Paulette Jiles's wonderful 2016 novel, *The News of the World*. "In the aftermath of the Civil War, an aging itinerant news reader agrees to transport a young captive of the Kiowa back to her people in this exquisitely rendered, morally complex, multilayered novel that explores the boundaries of family, responsibility, honor, and trust" (Amazon). Please contact the library to join.

February 27, 4:30: Food Explorers

Join Carla Sauza, Registered Dietitian from Food Explorers, to make Cinnamon Sugar Knots! This yeast-free dough uses Greek yogurt to make a fluffy texture! Register for ingredient list. The suggested age is 7+, but younger chefs can do this with an older sibling or parent. Limit: 20. Register for this online class: <http://bit.ly/SugarKnots>



Cinnamon Sugar Knots Photo: Katie Shepherd, Food Explorers

FEBRUARY REACH OUT: MY SISTERS' PLACE



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



My Sisters' Place mission is committed to ending homelessness by empowering women, families, and others in Greater Hartford to achieve independence and stability in their community by providing housing and supportive services.

My Sisters' Place provides a comprehensive array of outreach and services that is unmatched by any other organization in the Hartford, Connecticut region. From safe housing and education to employment and empowerment, My Sister Place provides real, life-changing benefits to clients.

For more information or to donate: My Sisters' Place, Inc. (sistersplacet.org) or call 860-895-6629 Thank you for your support.

Thank You Mission Partners

Thank you to our Mission Partners who have provided segments on what our support means to them, especially this year. The recent participants are pictured here.



Top, left to right: Kate Martin, Moms Demand Action and Karriane Moody, Hartford Area Habitat for Humanity.



Bottom, left to right: Gladys Molaro, IRIS and Jason Jakubowski, Foodshare.

West Hartford Police Partner with Interval House to Curb Domestic Violence Abuse.

Last month Interval House and the West Hartford Police Department announced a joint initiative to embed a domestic violence advocate part-time with the department to work on the most serious cases of domestic violence in West Hartford.

Most people do not know that out of the twenty-four towns and cities Interval House works with, West Hartford ranks number four in the number of cases.

Interval House is one of our churches mission partners.

For more information and to read the full *Harford Courant* article please visit www.courant.com.

**Drive-by, Food Donation times (near Rotunda):
Mondays 2-3 p.m. or Second Saturday 10 a.m.-12p.m.**

New!

Donate via text! This program was launched in December and it's an easy way for visitors to donate!

4 Ways to Donate

- **Text to Give**
Scan this or text "Give" to (860) 222-7870
- **In Person**
- **Online**
whfirstchurch.org
- **By Mail**
12 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107

Reach Out Donations

Each month the First Church Outreach Team designates "Reach Out" collections for a worthy organization of their choice.

Should you wish to add to our collection, please send in your check to the church and include "Reach Out" in the memo or make your donation online or through CCB. If you wish to donate to a different cause, please send the payment directly to that organization. They will provide you with the proper tax documentation. - Lisa R. Reed, Business Manager



Enjoy These Heart-felt Thank-you Notes from Loaves & Fishes Board Members



December 27, 2020

Dear Dottie,

Please pass on to your many helpers at First Church the appreciation of their continued support of Loaves and Fishes. The canned goods which you leave for us on Mondays allow us to fill weekly pantry bags which we give to our clients.

The contribution of 42 dozen Christmas cookies was a truly wonderful surprise. It was a welcome addition to our holiday meal.

The Board of Loaves and Fishes as well as its clients are very grateful for your generosity.

Thanks for your work in coordinating this effort.
Beverly Hughes, Board Member Loaves & Fishes

December 26, 2020

Dear Dottie,

What can I say... your ongoing monthly donations really came to us at an ideal time, and your continuing supply of canned goods is so supportive of our clients ongoing needs, but most of all, your 42 dozen homemade Christmas cookies was the best donation EVER to our folks during the Christmas Holiday... you and your "team" are the best!! Thanks SO much for your generosity and caring for those in need.

Happy Holidays!

Tom Trimble, Long-term Loaves & Fishes Board Member



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12 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107



Taizé

Worship Services

FEBRUARY 14

Celtic

Evening Worship

FEBRUARY 28

Yoga classes are open to all

Remember our yoga classes are still going on every week! Nancy Murray has continued to hold yoga classes live, via Zoom. We have kept our meeting times of Tues. at 7 p.m. and Wed. and Thurs. 9:15 a.m. This has been a nice way to connect with our yoga community. The Zoom room has no space limitation, so all of the classes have "room!" Nancy is also holding a daily meditation class at 12:15 p.m. Email: nancy@deeppeacect.com for links and fees.



Weekly Bible Study:

Tuesdays from 6 to 7 pm via Zoom. For more information, contact Jennifer deSimas at jpwwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

Church School

- February 7th: Love is...
- February 14th: Love is... (cont.)
- February 21st: Lenten lesson
- February 28th: Lenten Lesson



Sunday school classes will continue to meet at 10am Sunday mornings via zoom. Reach out to Lauren at Lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org for the link!

Our asynchronous lessons will continue as well, with special "worship-at-home" opportunities for our families! Lent-at-home kits are available and will contain all the materials for these activities, as well as other crafts, games and coloring pages to prepare for Easter. Please reach out to Lauren to receive a kit and the link to our virtual classroom.

Music Worth Noting

The Hot Cat Jazz Band will play for our worship service on Feb. 14.

