

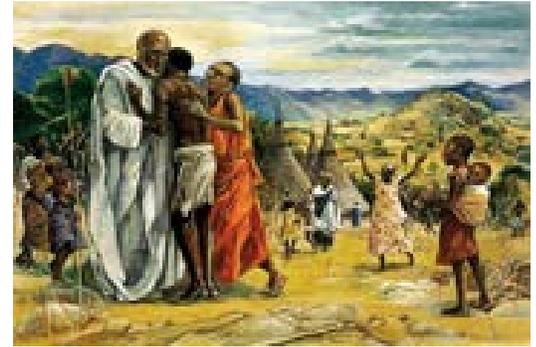


Sunday Notes

March 29, 2020



The parable of the man with two sons, one who stays home and one who is "prodigal," is a story which sounds different to me this week. Some of us are at home, and some of us are separated, yet surely our love extends beyond those who are with us right now. How do we give meaning to that "virtual" love for those who are not with us? And how is that perceived at home? Jesus' parable can be seen from the point of view of either son, as well as the father who loves them both. Recently I even found a poem written from the point of view of a silent character in this story: "The Prodigal's Mother Speaks to God" by Allison Funk.



If you have a few extra minutes before Sunday I recommend this short [Bible study by New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine](#). She has written a helpful book *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*. We are doing our best to put together a meaningful virtual worship service, this week, with additional restrictions now... we are filming by ourselves... yet hoping to gather, if not in body, in spirit. As we did last week, a link will be sent to your email on Sunday morning. Join us!

On Monday of this week our church staff left the building per Governor Lamont's emergency orders, and the plan now is that it will be checked regularly, attending to cleaning, maintenance and safety. Our staff, like many of you, are working from home. Our goals currently include: making our programming -- including worship-- available to you virtually to help to facilitate virtual community by supporting zoom and other online groups -- meetings, prayer groups, study groups, etc.; and to implement a telephone (virtual) ministry of caring.

Some of the big questions we are living with are: Who is the church without a building? What is the church without an ability to gather? These used to be theoretical questions. Today they have become practical. I don't know the full answers to them yet, but I'm paying attention to how the Spirit is moving.

Sincerely in ministry,
Erica

Happening Today

Submit prayer requests [here](#).

Many of our upcoming events are happening online with the Zoom platform. For **instructions on how to join a Zoom meeting**, click [here](#).

Church School

We are moving our lessons completely online through Zoom. Starting at 9:30 am, you can click this [link](#) and join our Zoom classroom. You will need to download the Zoom app on your device ahead of time. You can do that [here](#). Our official lesson will start at 10 am. Last Sunday we had 100% attendance!

Sunday Morning Bible Study

Sundays at 11 am via Zoom meeting

We will be studying the book of Genesis. Please join us any Sunday morning that you are available. Join Zoom Meeting via Computer: <https://zoom.us/j/847366987> or by phone: +1 646 558 8656, meeting ID: 847 366 987; or one tap mobile: +16465588656,847366987#.

Events and Announcements

Church School Mid-Week Check-Ins

In an attempt to foster an adaptive sense of community during a time of isolation, we will have similar "check-in" lessons throughout the week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 am. You can use the same link to join these meetings, where students can listen to stories, play games, and talk together as a community, all lead by Lauren.

Awakening the Spirit Book Group is meeting at noon on Mondays via Zoom web-conferencing until further notice. We are currently reading Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan's *The Last Week, What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem*. To join the discussion, please contact Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director, at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

From the JPW Library

Dear friends, we are thinking of you – and we are praying for you and for our world as we cope daily - hourly - with the pandemic. Those of us who leaped the technological learning curve to maintain (virtual/online) contact with family and friends find ourselves grateful for technology that just a few weeks ago seemed intrusive. We rejoice seeing their faces clustered together on our phones or computer screens, reassured that they are safe. And in those moments of "face to face" conversation, we are filled with relief, gratitude, and hope. Karla and I urge you to try taking that tech leap yourselves, and we want you to know that we are here to assist you. If you would like learn how to join the book discussion groups that are meeting online – via computer or even by phone without using a computer at all – we would be happy to help you. If you need connection, if you are tired of TV, please don't hesitate to contact us at 860-232-3893.

Lenten Prayer Workshop Series - Tuesday, March 31st, from 6:30 to 7:45 pm

You are invited to join our final weekly Lenten Prayer Workshop, on Centering Prayer, which is a type of contemplative prayer. It is essentially a method of meditation which places a strong emphasis on interior silence to become more present to the Holy within. Come practice listening for the still small voice of God. Join us via Zoom [here](#), Meeting ID: 831 193 120, Password: 455487; or by phone: One tap mobile +16465588656,,831193120# or call +1 646 558 8656. Join in to connect with one another and to discover another way to connect with God.

Hope to see you! Pastor Amie

Easter Baskets for Covenant to Care Children

The deadline for turning in your Easter baskets is April 5th. Please call or text Janice Carter Hall at 860-305-0940 and she will pick up the basket from you.

Dear Members & Friends of First Church,

With the lights off and the heat turned low, it may seem that little is happening at church - nothing could be farther from the truth.

Both Sunday worship and the Celtic Service were well "attended" with over 175 and 120 on-line participants respectively (including non-members who need spiritual support these days). Add Monday book group and Tuesday Lenten prayer group, and even more folks joined church activities this week. Lauren Dube is not only doing Sunday programming for the kids but has set up wonderful activity/check in programs mid-week as well. In short, there's a lot going on.

As we are not going to be physically together for some weeks, which for many of us is our "cue" to give, it is important that we stay current in sending our gifts and pledges, whether through the website or via snail mail. Beyond continuing our many ways of "being church", the Outreach Team will be providing our support to the organizations in our community which are more important than ever as so many people face a daunting time even to house and feed their families.

Thanks so much for staying current in your donations and even, if you can, supporting First Church ahead of schedule!

Blessings,

Eleanor Wight & the Stewardship workgroup

Can't make it to church? Give Online!

Making monetary contributions to First Church is quick and easy! Visit our website at <http://www.whfirstchurch.org/donate/give> and click on the blue *Donate Online* button. Checks can be mailed to the church at 12 South Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06107.

Another Way to Give - on MyFirstChurch

You can now give online through MyFirstChurch. Click [here](#) and select Give (log in if you know your username and password, but you don't have to sign in to give). Watch this video for detailed instructions on [How to Give](#).

Church Updates

Visit our website [here](#) for up to date information on church happenings and closing information.

Text Alerts

Sign up today to receive [text alerts](#) for quick dissemination of church information, updates and reminders.

Lenten Prayer Cards

Use the new set of Lenten Prayer Cards for daily or weekly devotional material. If you would like a set mailed to you, email Jess at jessica.chatfield@whfirstchurch.org.

March Reach Out: The Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)

On October 28, 2019, our church and 34 other multi-faith congregations and allied institutions gathered to launch the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). Those gathered agreed to organize together around the following inaugural five campaigns:

1. Criminal Justice Reform: Clean Slate
2. Housing: Abolishing Welfare Liens in CT & No More Slumlord's
3. Education: Districtwide anti-racism training
4. Healthcare: Medical reclamation & creation of safety-net pharmacy
5. Gun Violence

The Outreach Ministry sponsors a monthly offering to benefit a service organization that helps those in greater need than ourselves. We hope you will be able to support those who need our help. Donations can be made online on our website or by mailing a check to the church with "GHIAA" on the memo line. Thank you for your support.

Neighbors in Need

During this uncertain time the two organizations listed below need your help, Monetary donations are greatly needed and will keep you protected from going out in public. You can make donations online for either organization or send a check to the address listed for each. The church has been a strong supporter for both groups and hope you will also be able to help them serve those in need.

Loaves and Fishes Ministries

Loaves and Fishes runs a food kitchen to supply food to people in need. Due to the COVID-19 they have been forced to close the dining room. To try and make sure that the people who depend upon Loaves and Fishes have food, they have created an alternative means to feed or clients in the meantime. Staff are creating full pantry bags with canned goods with an emphasis on the "ready-to-eat" food so that even those who don't have stoves handy can take advantage of them. These will be handed out every Monday for all who come to our door during the normal lunchtime service hours. On March 16th they handed out over 70 large pantry bags as well as the same number of lunch bags with sandwiches and snacks and drinks. They will do the same thing again every Monday until they can reopen.

To donate please go to their website [here](#), or send a check made out to Loaves and Fishes Ministries, 646 Prospect Ave., Hartford, CT 06105.

Town That Cares

The Town That Cares is a special fund administered by the Town of West Hartford Social Services Department. The fund assists residents experiencing a crisis situation including food insecurity. You may wish to indicate in the check memo "West Hartford Food Pantry." To donate please go to their website [here](#). You may also send a check payable to *The Town That Cares* mailed to:

West Hartford Social Services, 50 South Main Street, Room 306, West Hartford, CT 06107