



Sunday Notes

April 5, 2020



This Sunday is Palm Sunday and with Palm Sunday's mixed messages -- Jesus' celebrated entrance to Jerusalem followed immediately by the events leading to his crucifixion -- we are invited to reflect on his life this year during this unwelcome season of COVID19. My sermon title will be: *Crowding Jesus*. Jesus had mixed results with crowds: they were the recipients of his teaching, healing and many of his miracles, yet they often misinterpreted his acts of mercy, and in Jerusalem it was the crowd that turned against him. Who is Jesus this year, when we cannot crowd in for Palm Sunday and Easter services? What difference does it mean for us as we maintain social distance for the sake of those whose lives may be saved? His parable of the sower invites imagination and interpretation. Holy Week will be different this year for all of us, yet the spirit of God invites meaningful unity.

Palm strips have arrived and are available for pickup outside the rotunda.

Sunday Morning Cyber Coffee Hour at 11 am

Please join others who will gather following morning worship for a "virtual" coffee hour via Zoom! Join by computer [here](#), Meeting ID: 924 416 446, Password: 899935; One tap mobile +16465588656,924416446#; by phone +1 646 558 8656.

WE NEED YOU FOR OUR EASTER SERVICE!

Every year on Easter, the service begins with the words Christ is risen! Alleluia! This year, we would like to start our virtual Easter service off the same way--but with a video montage of First Church members proclaiming the traditional Easter greeting. We want you to take part.

Here's what we need you to do:

Step 1: Put on your best Spring/Easter/bright color clothes, an Easter bonnet, or go outside and find something in bloom and stand next to it.

Step 2: Record yourself with your smart-phone saying, 'Christ is Risen! Alleluia!' with gusto and smile. (Important: the recording must be horizontal) Keep your recording to 5 seconds or less.

Step 3: Send it to jim.boratko@whfirstchurch.org with Alleluia! as the subject line by midnight on Thursday, April 9.

Whole family? Yes! Kids squirming? Great! Got a pet? Include them! Make it fun. We are looking to spread good Easter cheer.

Happening Today

Church School

Our lessons are 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!

Submit prayer requests [here](#).

Sunday Morning Bible Study

Sundays at 10 am via Zoom meeting

We will be studying the book of Genesis. Please join us any Sunday morning that you are available. Contact Jim Warner for Zoom information at jwarneriv@hotmail.com.

Taizé Service

This contemplative service of song, scripture and quiet meditation is a wonderful opportunity for reflection and opening our hearts to the presence of The Holy One. All are welcome. A video of the service will be posted on our website [here](#) on Sunday afternoon.

Easter Baskets for Covenant to Care Children

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

Easter Donations – Organ & Carillon Fund

Fill out our online form [here](#) to donate to the Organ & Carillon Reserve Fund. Online donations can be made by filling out the form by Friday, April 10th, or checks can be mailed to the church by Monday, April 6th after filling out the form or printing the form [here](#). We will not be collecting for Easter Lilies this year, if you already made a donation for lilies, you will receive a refund.

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.

Events

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

Awakening the Spirit meets at noon on Mondays via Zoom web-conferencing until further notice. We are finishing up Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan's *The Last Week, What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem*. Our next book is Barbara Brown Taylor's *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. All are welcome! To join the discussion, please contact Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director, at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

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.

Witness Stones COMMUNITY PROJECT 2020

Would you like to be part of a community history project with Witness Stones West Hartford? Dr. Tracey Wilson (Town Historian) and Liz Devine, Project Directors, invite you to collaborate in four, one-hour per week, online sessions reading, analyzing, and discussing historic documents to uncover the lives of Lew, Kate, and Caesar, who were enslaved in West Hartford by the Hosmer family around 1825. Help the team commemorate this family by adding their stories to our community's. The first class begins April 8th. [Click here](#) for more information. [Register HERE.](#)

Maundy Thursday Virtual Service of Tenebrae

As we journey into Holy Week without an ability to gather in person and celebrate a meal, communion, or even foot washing, we are turning to the ancient practice of Tenebrae -- scripture reading followed by the extinguishing of candles. The service will be available [here](#) as of 7 pm on Thursday, April 9th, our Deacons will help lead this service by reading from John's gospel. Join us as we reflect on how Jesus prepared to leave this life, and his charge to his friends -- that they love one another. All are welcome-- right where you are!

Good Friday Prayer Vigil – April 10th, from Noon to 3pm

The virtual prayer vigil will be taking place between Noon and 3 pm via Zoom, so join any time. At the top and bottom of each hour, the 30-minute power point will repeat. Those who join will be able to observe the power point via their screen and may follow the prompts on the screen, if desired. Click [here](#) to join Zoom meeting, Meeting ID: 691 072 296, Password: 452247.

Announcements

Caring Ministry Program

The In-Reach team has recruited a group of 14 people who are making phone calls to members of our congregation to check in with them during this time apart. These conversations provide much-needed connection for many. We hope that if you or someone you know in the congregation would like to have a "phone buddy" please let Pastor Amie know at amie.giguere@whfirstchurch.org.

Church Updates

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

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](#).

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.

Text Alerts

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

April Reach Out: Foodshare

Foodshare is changing what it means to be a food bank. Founded in 1982, Foodshare is the regional food bank serving Connecticut's Hartford and Tolland counties, where 118,000 people struggle with hunger. In partnership with the food industry, donors, community leaders and volunteers, Foodshare works to maximize access to nutritious food and other resources that support food security. With food assistance as their cornerstone, Foodshare will continue this work for as long as there are people in need.

But hunger is bigger than food. Hunger is one piece of a patchwork of social issues and it needs solutions that deal with all sides of the causes and consequences. Collecting and distributing nearly 12 million meals worth of food each year through a network of partner programs gives Foodshare a stark understanding of the everyday realities of food insecurity. Foodshare collaborates with anti-hunger organizations, policy makers and the community to build effective solutions to end hunger. For more information, visit www.foodshare.org, or 860-286-9999. 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 hopes 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 their 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 S Main Street, Rm 306, West Hartford, CT 06107

How to Sew a Face Mask

A tutorial on how to make your own fabric face mask from common household materials:

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/how-to-make-face-mask-coronavirus.html?smid=em-share>

Beware of Email and Online Scams

During this time of sheltering in place, many of us rely on our digital connections. Computer hygiene is very important during this pandemic time. We remind you to be suspicious of all emails during this time, and consider if any email could possibly be a "phishing expedition" (scam). Do not click on embedded links in any email; think twice, pause, and consider if the email is truly from an authentic and trusted source. Scammers are getting very good at replicating major brand logos. Be especially careful of email coming from Erica, check to make sure the email address is erica.avena@whfirstchurch.org, if not, delete immediately. Don't buy any online gift cards if asked to do so by email. Please be very careful digitally, as well as personally.