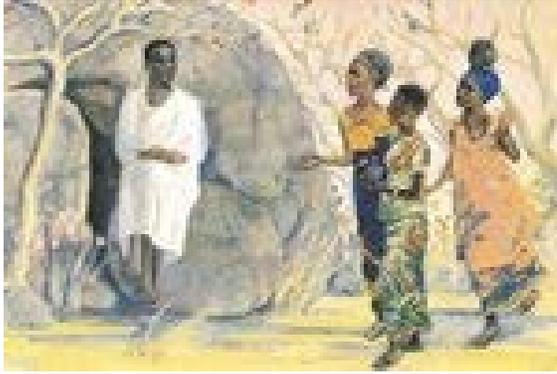




# Sunday Notes

April 12, 2020



This week we are observing the holiest week of the Christian year in a way that none of us could have imagined. Hope never did live in a building of any kind, faith was never the ingredients of a shared meal. The church building and our traditional Easter worship gatherings have served to support the hope and faith we carry in our hearts. This year we are released from tradition, and asked to step into new life in faith. I do not know what that means exactly, but I do know that is what we will do, in one way or another, this week.

The big picture is that we want as many of us as possible to come through this pandemic healthy and well. And that means staying away

from each other. I hope you will do the things you need to do to support your own health, and the health of those you know. Not unlike the era of the first disciples, this is a fearful and confusing time: a time of rumors, obstacles, sequestering and miscommunication. Today, some of us are sick, fighting for our lives, and at the same time, some of us are stuck at home, fighting boredom. When we tell the story later of the year we observed Easter during a worldwide pandemic, how will we report our experience of the living Christ? Christ is risen! Will we?

## Church School

Our Church School has shifted to an online platform, where our students explore our bible stories through games, videos, readings and prayer together. We have lessons, and check-ins on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 10 am. For more information, please reach out to Lauren at [lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org). Our older congregants are invited to join us by reading stories, sharing games, and just checking in!

For Easter Sunday, the Church School will have a "Fancy Hat" party, with online Easter games and with a virtual Easter Egg Hunt! Please feel free to make a "Fancy Hat" out of anything you find around the house and join us at 10 am. Please reach out to Lauren for the link and password to the Zoom meeting.

Finally, the Church School, along with Outreach, had a Rock-n-dance Marathon on Facebook last week to raise money for Foodshare. We had 40 volunteers dancing and rocking throughout the day, and we raised over \$2,230! Thank you to all of our First Church Members who participated and donated.

## 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.

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## *Contributions were made to the Organ & Carillon Reserve Fund by . .*

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**Bob and Nancy Ball** in loving memory of **George and Helen Ball**; and **John and Dorothy McClelland**

**Lisa Carl** in loving memory of her father, **Howard Carl**

**Jane Hazen** in honor of the **Whitechapel Handbell Choir**

**Sid Lovett** in loving memory of **Joan C. Lovett**

**Nancy Passmore** in loving memory of her family, **Ethel Woodworth, John Woodworth and Beatrice, Elizabeth and D.A. Ferguson**; and in memory of **The Reverend Jim Blanning**

**David Simpson and Barbara Laurain** in memory of **Mr and Mrs Edward H Simpson**

**Esther Spafard** in loving memory of her sister, **Betty Spafard DeGraw**

**Bob and Ginny Vocelli** in honor of the **First Church Staff**

**Eleanor Wight and Rayda Bouma** in loving memory of their parents, **Helen and Myron and Lou & Hermina**



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## Events

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### **Sunday Morning Bible Study**

Sundays at 10 am via Zoom meeting (NOT meeting on Easter Sunday)

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](mailto:jwarneriv@hotmail.com).

### **Awakening the Spirit Book Group**

Mondays at noon via Zoom

We are reading Barbara Brown Taylor's [\*Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others\*](#). All are welcome to join us! Contact Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director for Zoom link at [jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto: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.

### **Food for Thought Book Group**

Every other Thursday, at 5:30 pm, starting April 16th via Zoom

We will discuss our current book, [\*The Lager Queen of Minnesota\*](#) by J. Ryan Stradal. "A novel of family, Midwestern values, hard work, fate, and the secrets of making a world-class beer" (Amazon). To join the discussion, contact Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director, at [jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org).

### **Spiritual Writing Group**

Jennifer deSimas is offering a spiritual writing group that will meet Wednesdays at 10 am April 22nd to May 27th via zoom web-conference. If interested, click [here](#) to sign up. Please contact Jennifer at [jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org) for more information.

### **VIRTUAL Lunch & Learn at the JPWL: *Resilience: Weathering the Storm***

Sunday, April 19th, at noon via Zoom

Don't stress out if you're feeling particularly UN-resilient these days. Resilience is not an inborn trait - but it's a simple set of characteristics that can be cultivated. In this session, Rev. Tracy Mehr-Muska, DMin, will detail these characteristics and invite you to consider areas of personal strength as well as areas for growth. She will also provide concrete, proven strategies for building your critical resilience characteristics. If you are finding these uncertain and uncomfortable times difficult to manage, if you are facing a challenging or transitional time in your own life, or if you simply desire to feel more peaceful and prepared for life's inevitable setbacks, this program aims to benefit you in your journey toward increased readiness and resilience. Reverend Tracy Mehr-Muska, DMin, is the author of [\*Weathering the Storm: Simple Strategies for Being Peaceful and Prepared\*](#), and currently serves as the Minister of Mid and Later Life at Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford. To register, send an email to Jennifer deSimas at [jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org).

### **VIRTUAL Lunch & Learn at the JPWL: *The Accidental Beekeeper***

Sunday, April 26th, at noon via Zoom

In honor of the 50th Anniversary of the first Earth Day, the JPWL is pleased to present Carla Marina Marchese, the "Accidental Beekeeper." Marchese fell in love with bees 10 years ago during a tour of a neighbor's honeybee hives. Surprised to find that allowing the docile honey bees to crawl across her hands instilled a serene tranquility and comfort, she decided to quit her job and become a beekeeper. She built her own hives, purchased bees, and began to harvest honey. She eventually opened her own business. Today, Red Bee Honey sells artisanal honey and honey-related products to shops and restaurants all over the country. When Marchese is not writing or working in her apiary, she is sharing her passion around honeybees, pollination, and their direct connection to growing food. Marchese will share her story with us during the JPWL Virtual Lunch & Learn. To join the discussion, contact Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director, at [jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org). Marchese's books and honey products are available at [Red Bee Honey](#).

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## Announcements

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### Caring Ministry Program

The InReach 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](mailto:amie.giguere@whfirstchurch.org).

Submit prayer requests [here](#).

### 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](#).

### JPWL Goes On the Road

Have you read all the books in your house? Need something new to read? The JPW Library can help! We're starting a delivery service for patrons during the pandemic. Here's what to do:

1. Search our collection online [here](#).
2. Find a book, DVD, or audiobook
3. Email us with your choice at [jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org).

We'll deliver your books using the CDC-recommended guidelines for safe contact (i.e., we'll drop it on your doorstep). Our delivery range extends to a 10-mile radius beyond the West Hartford town line.

You also can arrange to pick up your books in the church parking lot. We regret that we can not mail books at this time, as we would like to avoid lines at the post office.

## 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](http://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](mailto: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.