



Sunday Notes

May 3, 2020



Looking towards Sunday:

In scripture, Jesus is the "lamb of God," the "good shepherd," and in John 10:1-10 Jesus compares himself to the gate that keeps the sheep safe in an enclosure. Jesus also says his voice is like the voice of a shepherd that sheep have learned to know and trust. Whose voice are you listening to now? Which voices do you trust? I'm thinking about the barrage of voices many of us are listening to especially now while so many of us are isolated from one another in the pandemic, and how we listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd now.

Virtual communion?!

Several people have asked about making a communion service available. This Sunday we will also offer a brief service of communion as a separate short service available [here](#). You will need to provide your own bread or cracker, and cup (beverage of your choice) to be blessed. Since this is a recorded service, you can make use of it at any time and/or share it with friends and loved ones. We will also offer this service in connection with a zoom gathering that we share at a later date -- to be determined.

Happening Today

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 on Sunday mornings at 10 am. For more information, please reach out to Lauren at lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org. Our older congregants are invited to join us by reading stories, sharing games, and just checking in!

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. Join by computer [here](#), Meeting ID: 740 403 746, Password: 694795; One tap mobile +16465588656, 740403746#; by phone +1 646 558 8656.

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. Stay online for the Congregational Meeting at 11:30 am. The same meeting number is being used for both the Cyber Coffee Hour at 11 am and the Congregational Meeting at 11:30 am.

Congregational Meeting at 11:30 am

You can participate in the Congregational Meeting by using a computer or telephone: To use your computer, join the Zoom meeting [here](#): Meeting ID: 924 416 446, Password: 899935. To use your telephone, dial +1 646 558 8656, and enter the Meeting ID: 924 416 446#. Please join 5-10 minutes before the meeting starts. [Please read this before the meeting starts.](#)

Call to Special Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, May 3rd, at 11:30 am via Zoom

In light of the continuing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on First Church, including the First Church Academy for Young Children, notice is hereby given that an online Special Congregational Meeting of the members of First Church of Christ Congregational of West Hartford, Connecticut, UCC, will be held via Zoom on Sunday, May 3, 2020 following the morning online worship service, with the meeting to start at 11:30 AM to act on the following items of business:

1. To consider and vote on a proposal from the Coordinating Team and the Business Team that the Congregation authorize an additional withdrawal from the General Endowment Funds of First Church to meet the fiscal needs of First Church, including the First Church Academy for Young Children, through the month of June, 2020. [Note: The amount of the anticipated withdrawal may be up to \$200,000 and will depend in part on the success of the application submitted in early April by First Church to the federal Paycheck Protection Program, a component of the federal CARES Act.]

2. 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 April 16, 2020

Charlie Goodwin, Secretary of the Church

VIRTUAL JPWL Lunch & Learn: *Scams -- Learn the Facts*

Sunday, May 3rd, at noon via Zoom

A look inside the mind of a criminal, with Byron Peterson, AARP-CT. Take a look at the psychology behind ID theft, fraud, and scams through actual footage of scammers. Learn ways to protect your information or update your security profile. 1 hour, followed by time for Q&A. To register, click [HERE](#).

Zoom Instructions

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

For those hosting meetings, here is information on [Host Controls](#) and [Running a Meeting and Screen Share](#).

Events

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](#). Please join us! Contact Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director for Zoom link at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

Parent Group

The Faith Formation workgroup will host an online parent group on Monday nights at 6 pm. This is a space to express frustrations, share creative ideas, and seek support around parenting during the pandemic. For the log-in credentials, please email Lauren at lauren.dube@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 "check-in" lessons throughout the week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 am. We've added a third check in time on Wednesdays at 6 pm for our families that cannot make morning meetings. 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.

Spiritual Writing Group

Wednesdays, May 6th to May 27th, at 10 am via Zoom

Jennifer deSimas is offering a writing group meets at 10:00 AM Wednesdays through May 27 via Zoom. This group is not for critique or to improve writing skills -- although the latter will happen as you continue. This group is for engaging in writing as a spiritual practice. Each week we will read short pieces from diverse authors and genres and respond in writing. Participants are not required to share their work. If you would like to experiment with a new spiritual practice, or if you find joy and release through writing, join us, it doesn't matter if you haven't written in years -- if you yearn for a writing community, you are welcome. If interested, please contact Jennifer at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org. To register, click [HERE](#).

Food for Thought Book Group

Thursday, May 14th, at 5:30 pm via Zoom

We will discuss our current book [Evvie Drake Starts Over](#) by Linda Holmes. "A joyful, hilarious, and hope-filled debut" (Amazon). To join the discussion, email Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director, at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

VIRTUAL JPWL Lunch & Learn: *Family Caregivers*

Sunday, May 17th, at noon via Zoom

Caring for a loved one could be one of the hardest things you will ever do. Tia Murphy and Betty Bajek of AARP-CT will offer specific tools for navigating and connecting with available services; help you gain an understanding of care options and costs; and discuss how to stay informed on the legislative issues impacting seniors and family caregivers. 1 hour, includes Q&A. To register, click [HERE](#).

Announcements

Gov Lamont has recommended the use of this website, <https://get.howwefeel.org/share>, to report how we are feeling (it can also be downloaded as an app to your phone). Although Covid testing is essential and currently far below where it should be had the federal response been adequate, symptom reporting may be helpful at the state level in identifying any new "hotspots" that pop up. The reporting is anonymous and easy (even for a retired orthopedic surgeon . . . not known for following directions well). Please consider using it daily. Be safe & healthy, Court Lewis

Virtual Photos

Please share photos of you and your family including pets, as you are watching church services on-line. We will use them in Social Media posts and to have for future slide shows and any other church publishing. Send them as jpeg's to Amy Melvin at: amybmelvin@gmail.com.

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.

Submit prayer requests [here](#).

NEW - JPWL Curbside Book Pickup!

Are you running out of things to read? The JPW Library can help! We've started a curbside pickup service for patrons during the pandemic.

Here's how it works:

- Search our collection online [here](#).
- Email us the title and author of the item(s) at jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org.
- We are also happy to provide book recommendations and basic reference services. Just send your query to the above email address and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.
- Due dates will be approximately one week after we reopen. However, items can also be returned on curbside pickup days.

If you don't have email, you can call the library at 860-232-3893 but please be aware that we are not actually present in the library and are only checking phone messages once per day.

Currently, a pick up time of Monday afternoons at 5:00 is planned, but we will adjust this as necessary. Just drive up to the rotunda entrance and the materials will be brought to your car. We can place them in your trunk or through an open car window.

Stay safe and happy reading!

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.

Sunday worship, Celtic Service, and Taize Service are all well "attended" on-line (including non-members who need spiritual support these days). Add Sunday Morning Bible Study and Monday book 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

Online Giving!

Making monetary contributions to First Church is quick and easy! For peace of mind you can even sign up for autopay! Visit our website at <http://www.whfirstchurch.org/donate/give> and click on the blue Donate Online button. Watch this video for detailed instructions on [How to Give](#). Checks can be mailed to the church at 12 South Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06107.

Text Alerts

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

Church Updates

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

May Reach Out: Foodshare, Loaves and Fishes Ministries, and Town that Cares

During this uncertain time the three 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.

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.

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