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first church

WEST HARTFORD

TIDINGS

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

Positive Transformation



"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."
 –Ecclesiastes 3:1

As the morning and evening temperatures are a bit crisper, the leaves on the trees are showing hints of color and the kids go back to school (not to mention pumpkin spice *everything!*), I cannot help but think of the changing of seasons.

Our church is in a season of changing pastoral leadership. Some are feeling as if this season of change is lasting too long. We've also been in a season of pandemic. I suspect we are all feeling this pandemic is lasting too long! I recently heard that our "change muscles" are really strong right now because, during the pandemic, we've been exercising them so much. We have had major interruptions to our lives. And now (at the time of writing) we're experiencing yet another wave of outbreak due to the Delta variant. Yikes!

Whether good or bad, change is rarely easy. Yet, it is an invitation to positive transformation. What would it be like to really take advantage of this season of change, especially here at church? It can be an

opportunity to exercise our "faith muscles!"

I wonder, in this season of change, what possibilities can we imagine for our future together? How might we look forward to what is to come? How can we leverage the strength of our change muscles? Further, using those change muscles alongside our faith muscles, how might we discern who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do next?

In the meantime, it may be helpful to remember these additional words from Ecclesiastes 3:14 "Whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this so that all should stand in awe before him." Ultimately, our faith is in this enduring God whom we worship. Therefore, all will be well.

Rev. Amie Giguere
 Acting Associate Pastor

Worship in the Meeting House with us live (or livestream) at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings. Watch on YouTube anytime. (Go to p. 6 for more details).

<p>SEPTEMBER 5 <i>Labor Day Weekend</i> <i>Communion Sunday</i> <i>"Be Opened"</i> (Mark 7:24-37) Amie Giguere preaching</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER 12 Homecoming Sunday "I Love the Lord" (Psalm 116:1-9) Michael Newheart preaching</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER 19 "Wisdom from Above" (James 3:13-4:3) Michael Newheart preaching</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER 26 "The Prayer of the Righteous Is Powerful and Effective" (James 5:13-20) Michael Newheart preaching</p>
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Church Family News

- Best wishes to **Lauren Dube**, our Student Minister for Children and Family Ministries, on her engagement to **Alexander Scott**.
- You may submit your prayer requests to our pastors online at any time: http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request

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

DUE DATE for TIDINGS: The next deadline is **SEPTEMBER 14th**, for the **OCTOBER** 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.

Take a Minute for Feedback

The First Church Communications Team (part of Outreach) is working to update and refine the ways we keep in touch and how we share information. Please help us out by answering the following survey via our own Church Community Builder (CCB).

<https://bit.ly/FCCommunicationSurvey>



Thank you!

Amy Melvin, Joy Taylor, and
Jennifer deSimas

A Big Welcome to Our Bridge Minister

From the Moderator

By the time this issue of Tidings is published we will have welcomed the Rev. Dr. Michael W. Newheart to First Church as our Bridge Minister. His first Sunday worship was August 29th. While he is here, he will minister to the congregation and support and guide the staff until the arrival of a new settled Senior Pastor. (Some longer-time members will recall that prior to Rev. Geordie Campbell being called as Senior Pastor in 2004, Rev. Gordon Bates filled a similar role at First Church.)

Rev. Newheart comes to us as an ordained minister of the American Baptist Churches USA – the same denomination as Rev. Erica



Rev. Dr. Michael Newheart shared this photo of himself next to a bridge to announce his journey with us. Facebook photo

Avena. After he retired from Howard University Divinity School in Washington, D.C., as Professor Emeritus of New Testament Language and Literature, he completed training in Transitional Ministry from ABCUSA and has served two churches during the past two years.

Although Rev. Newheart officially resides in Maryland, he will live here in West Hartford while pastoring to our congregation. This is an arrangement that the American Baptist Churches uses with many interim and bridge ministers, and one that Rev. Newheart used in his past two positions. It allows him to join us in body and spirit. He moved to West Hartford in August.

Please join me, and the Coordinating Team, in giving a warm welcome to Michael from our church where we are living in spirit, committed to service, and open to all!

If you have any questions, please speak with me or contact the church office at 860-233-9605.

Faithfully,
-Eleanor Wight, Moderator



ON AIR: Video Live-Streaming System Installed! “It’s Fun!”

After a number of equipment delays due to the pandemic, the video live-streaming system and the new audio system have been installed in our Meeting House!

As previously mentioned in the May edition of the *Tidings*, a total of 6 video cameras, four microphones, and related equipment were installed. Over the past month, thousands of feet of wire were strung from the video and audio rooms in the Meeting House to the various locations of this new equipment, and a separate wired connection was installed from the Meeting House audio room directly to the main switch of our church network. As it so happened, much of this work was done during the several heat waves we experienced over the summer, when the temperature in the attic above the Meeting House was in excess of 120°.

Work started at 6:30 a.m. to take advantage of the cooler temperatures, but had to be curtailed by noon when the temperatures were excessive.

**Volunteers
Wanted**

The system had its inaugural use on August 8 and ran smoothly. On August 15, the technician was not able to be on site to run the equipment, but he was able to run the entire system remotely. Both services are available on the church’s YouTube channel.

Currently the system is being operated by a team of volunteers. Several members of the congregation received initial training on the system in August.

“Being in the church live-stream studio is similar to what I’d imagine a TV production studio experience is like,” commented Amy Melvin, one of the volunteers. “It’s fun to see all the different camera angles and Jim provides the order of worship so I know what to expect and which camera to turn on or off.”

The opportunity to become familiar with how to operate this equipment is open to anyone who is interested. Teens under the age of 18 who are interested may participate with the permission of their parents. Contact Jim Boratko (jim.boratko@whfirstchurch.org) for more information.

Music Ensembles Starting Up this Fall

In line with the latest guidance from health organizations, we are expecting a return to our normal schedule of in-person music ensemble rehearsals this fall. Things will look different than they once were, but we will rejoice in the opportunity to make music in person once again!

All current members of the choir and handbell choir are fully vaccinated, which allows us to make some modifications to our rehearsal practices to enable full rehearsals.

The First Church Choir will begin rehearsals on Tuesday, Sept. 14, at 7 p.m. The current recommendations for choral rehearsals are for people to wear masks during the rehearsal, spread out from one another, and not rehearse for longer than 45 minutes in the same room. In order to adhere to these guidelines, the choir will begin rehearsal in two sections: Sopranos and Altos in the choir room and Tenors and Basses in the chapel. After 45 minutes, we will combine together for a joint rehearsal in the meeting house for another 45 minutes. New singers are welcome in all voice parts. The ability to read music is not required. Also, you don't need to make a regular commitment – we would love your participation as it fits your sched-



ule. We will ask for the date of your last vaccination at the first rehearsal. The choir will begin singing regularly at our worship services on September 19.

The Handbell Choir will also resume rehearsals on Wednesday nights starting at 7:15 p.m. on Sept. 8. The handbell choir normally rings on the second Sunday of the month,

but will ring for the first time as part of our Sept. 19 service. New ringers are also encouraged to attend. As long as you can count to 4 and know your right hand from your left, you have all the requirements you need to ring with us!

See Jessica Berube or Jim Boratko for more information, or send an email to jim.boratko@whfirstchurch.org.

Search Committee Update

Although we may seem invisible, the Senior Pastor Search Committee has continued its work diligently throughout the summer months, often meeting twice per week. We have also remained in touch with our Bridge Area Minister in the Southern New England Conference who is assisting us with our search.

We continue to follow the process approved by the Coordinating Team in April 2020. In this 13-step process, we are currently at Step 7 – the interviewing phase. Since April of this year, we have been communicating with candidates, studying their ministerial profiles, conducting interviews, and watching videos of sermons. In August, we began our first in-person interviews. Our process requires confidentiality, so we are unable to share details about the candidates themselves. However, we still have a way to go before we can recommend a candidate.

To find the right person, many things need to align: a candidate's skills and experience, their sermons, their presentation and responses to our questions, their availability, our discernment, and theirs.

During this pandemic season, we have had to realign some of our expectations, but we want you to know that guided by faith, we continue to work toward finding the right candidate. We remain open to receiving more ministerial profiles, and in the spirit of transparency and partnership, we will continue to provide regular updates to you on our progress. Thank you for your continued patience and trust.

Amber Rottman, Amy Melvin, Doug Evarts, Glen MacLeod, Liz Oman-Wilfred, Robert Schunder, Ryan Mannix, Seth Holmes, and Suzanne Carnes - chair

Gather Round The Table (GRTT) On Hold

This message is in response to recent inquiries about Gather Round the Table. Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, it seems appropriate to put plans on hold.

Stay tuned for more updates and possibility of Zoom gatherings. – Martha Calef and Linda Moffitt

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Rev. Dr. Michael W. Newheart, Bridge Pastor

Rev. Amie Stuart Giguere, Acting Associate Pastor

James Boratko, Director of Music Arts

Lauren Dube, Student Minister for Children and Family Ministries

Dawne Quinn, FCAFYC Director

Suzanne Nardi, Office Manager

Lisa Reed, Business Manager

Jennifer deSimas, JPWL Director

  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

Brief Instructions for Viewing Livestream Services

On Sunday mornings around 10 a.m., go to our YouTube channel (link: [First Church, West Hartford - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)). You should see our video for this Sunday's service first in our content. While the service is streaming live, you will be able to chat with others. After the service ends, the video will be available to view again!





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

Contact us!

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>

We are open!
 Stop in and see us
 We have plenty of new books
 fiction, biographies, children's, and
 more!
 Monday - Thursday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
 Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

UPCOMING EVENTS

Book Mobile Returns!

The JPW Library BOOK MOBILE is available after worship in the Meeting House Narthex through September 12. Stop by to peruse a selection of new books, staff picks, and bestsellers in fiction and nonfiction for all ages. Don't have a JPWL library card? Get one at the Book Mobile!

JPWL Used Book Sale

There is plenty to browse at our upcoming used book sale, including: Discards & Donations...Secular and Spiritual...Adults' and Children's!

September 24-25, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Friday, 9/24, fill a bag for \$10

Saturday, 9/25, fill a bag for \$5

We are accepting donations of gently used books; bring them to the JPW Library. Proceeds from the sale are for the Hartford Public Schools Literacy Volunteers program

Memoir Writing Workshop with David Pontrelli of Writing Works

**An in-person workshop
created to help people
write about unexplored
dimensions of their lives.**



see dates and registration link in caption



September 9, 13, 27 and October 4, 18, 25 • 4:30-6 p.m.

REGISTER: https://bit.ly/Memoir_Writing

A workshop (in person) created to help people write about unexplored dimensions of their lives. Biographical material will be used in a safe environment where the act of writing becomes the means of discovery. These workshops can result in a special gift for loved ones, or as the first step toward more formal publication. David Pontrelli is a graduate of Wesleyan University who teaches writing to a wide range of ages and abilities.

Wallace Stevens, Spiritual Poet

A Three-Week Seminar with Glen MacLeod, PhD

September 16, 23, & 30 at 7 p.m.

REGISTER HERE:

<https://bit.ly/WallaceStevens2021>

Wallace Stevens (1879–1955), one of the great 20th-century American poets, lived in Hartford most of his adult life, from 1916 to 1955. He was a Vice President of The Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. Stevens was raised a Protestant, but in adulthood he lost his Christian faith. That loss left a spiritual void that never ceased to bother him. The central theme of his work is the search for something that could replace the idea of God - a "supreme fiction," as he called it. At times he thought that poetry itself could be the supreme fiction.



Join us as Glen MacLeod, professor emeritus at UConn, presents an exploration of spirituality in Stevens's poetry. MacLeod, a preeminent Stevens scholar, is the author of *Wallace Stevens and Company: The Harmonium Years, 1913-1923* as well as other books. He is a member of the Editorial Board of The Wallace Stevens Journal and Vice President of the Wallace Stevens Society.

ABRAHAM: Out of One, Many

Art Exhibition at the Mandell Jewish Community Center

October 5 – November 16

A timely artistic exploration on living harmoniously, inspired by Abraham, the common ancestor of three celebrated contemporary artists of Middle Eastern heritage from Muslim, Christian, and Jewish traditions. Hosted in collaboration with Hartford Seminary, the JCC, the Episcopal Diocese of CT, and the Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding, and the John P. Webster Library.

Coming in October:

Sacredly Created and Wholly Loved with Indigenous author Kaitlin Curtice on **October 21 at 7 p.m.** Virtual event.

JPWL Lunch & Learn: Days for Girls with Jan Baker, Simsbury Chapter Coordinator on **October 31 at 11:30.**

Days for Girls' goal is to "advance menstrual equity, health, dignity, and opportunity" worldwide by combining menstrual health solutions and education with social entrepreneurs and volunteers.

You are invited to donate 100% cotton quilt fabrics to DFG at the event. The group especially needs red fabrics with bright or dark colors in florals and geometrics or other designs. Please, no fabrics with patterns of people, animals, or faces; no solid colors; no patterns such as military prints that might be offensive.

Historical Marker on Unity Green

The Goodman Green historical marker, erected in 1988 or soon thereafter, will be considered for removal or augmentation as part of a broader town-wide review. For now, however, the sign will remain in place.

The Unity Green committee had suggested that the Goodman Green historical marker be removed and given to the town's historical society for display and interpretation. However, as a result of a recent strategic planning activity conducted by the Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society, an alternative idea is being considered.

The historical society would like to review all 41 designated historical sites in town – where 16 historical markers were posted in the mid-1980s – because many signs are outdated in relation to current historical perspectives. The alternative to removing the historical marker would be to augment the sign with an additional sign that broadens the understanding of the subject.

In the case of Unity Green, an additional sign could reflect a more expansive history, including acknowledgement of the land's Native American history as well as Timothy Green's ownership and his gift to the church.

The Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society proposes establishing a small group of persons to review the current historical markers. Anyone interested in this project can contact Jennifer DiCola Matos, Executive Director at The Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society, for more information.

Representatives of the Unity Green committee, which includes church members (Barbara Lewis, Jennifer deSimas, and Judy Schmitt), town officials (elected and unelected), and members of the Concerned Parents of Color West Hartford, will be included in



the historical marker review.

Questions regarding the Goodman Green or Unity Green signs should be directed to Judy Schmitt.

Confirmation to kick off – Mark your calendar for 2 events

Orientation Sunday Sept 12th 5-6p.m.

Parents and students in grade 8 and above who have not yet been confirmed are invited to attend an orientation meeting to be held in the Auditorium. Please come meet one another and the confirmation team. This time together will provide the opportunity to learn all about the plans for this year's class and ask questions about the expectations, commitment and format. Each student should bring at least one parent along for this meeting, and attendance at the meeting is necessary for participation in the class.

Commissioning Sunday, Sept. 26 @ 10a.m.

The class will begin with participation in a commissioning service as part of worship in the Meeting House. The journey through the confirmation year will be an important one for youth and their families, as well as for the church. This service will create the opportunity to intentionally ritualize the beginning of the journey.

Keeping Our Children and Youth Safe

"Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct." (1 Peter 1:15)

The Coordinating Team approved the formation of a work group to revise our church's Safe Conduct Policies and Procedures. A group of six people was formed, which includes Margaret Coles, Carole Lund, Barbara Lewis, Dawne Quinn, Lauren Dube and Amie Giguere. The group has been working together on the project over the last couple of months. The goal of the Safe Conduct Policies and Procedures is to create a climate of sanctuary here at First Church by providing a statement of expected behavior for all members of our congregation. Additionally, the document puts safeguards in place to protect those under 18 years of age and the volunteers with whom they work. Please feel free to speak with any member of the work group with questions or concerns.

Urgent Need! Food Collection

Drive by Drop off (DBDO!) Food Collection will continue!

Sept. 11 • 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Volunteers from the Outreach Team will be on hand to take your contributions, which will be shared with the West Hartford Food Pantry and Loaves & Fishes' Meals To-Go program.

The West Hartford Food Pantry is especially low on SOUP!

Also cold cereal, fruit/applesauce, tuna,
and canned pasta are needed. .

Thank you for your generosity. -The Outreach Team



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12 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107



SEPTEMBER REACH OUT: **FOODSHARE**

Connecticut Food Bank / Foodshare Walk Against Hunger

The first ever statewide Walk Against Hunger will take place on Saturday, September 18, 2021. Thanks to the Hartford Yard Goats, the Walk will return to Dunkin' Donuts Park. Last year's Walk raised over \$300,000 to benefit the work that Foodshare and their community partners do year-round to help serve the estimated 545,000 people who are food insecure in the state of Connecticut.

Our First Church Striders Team hopes you will be able to join the Foodshare Walk Against Hunger. If you cannot make the walk, please support our walkers by going to the Foodshare website and choose to support a team. Find First Church Striders to make your donation or you may send a check to the church marked as a donation for Foodshare. Please write Loaves and Fishes on the memo line

First Church Striders has walked to support Foodshare and our partner Loaves and Fishes for many years.

To join our team and support Foodshare please go to the Foodshare website: <http://site.foodshare.org/>

Thank you for your support



Church School - Welcome Back!

Homecoming Sunday: Join us on September 12th for a homecoming celebration! At 10 a.m. we will have an exciting all-ages worship in the Meeting House, followed by fun activities and food on the front lawn. We hope you'll join us! You can find out more information about homecoming on the website page just for church school:

<https://bit.ly/FCWH-Homecoming>

Church School Registration: Faith Formation is hard at work reopening our Church School program for the Fall. Because the Pandemic conditions are rapidly changing, please keep an eye on Sunday Notes and the e-News for the most up to date information. All children must be registered to join us in Church School. You can register your kids using the link above, and scroll to the registration section. We will be using a new curriculum this fall called Shine, which you can read about on our website.

Calling All Volunteers! With Church School opening back up, the Faith Formation workgroup needs all hands on deck. If you're interested in volunteering with the Church School, please fill out the volunteer form on our website, so we can begin the application process.