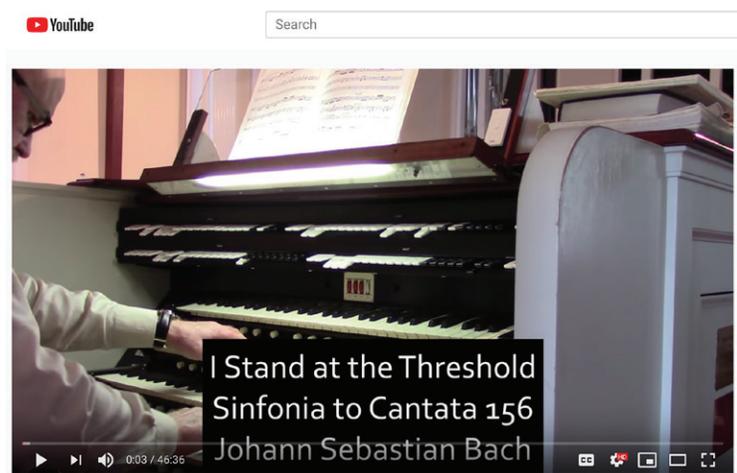


March 22, 2020



It is time for us to show that church has never been about the building...



Top left: Rev. Erica Avena recorded her messages for virtual worship (go on-line to: whfirstchurch.org, >Worship >Sermons.)

Top right: A-Frame sign alerts the passerby about our plans for worship.

Middle: Music Director Jim Boratko pre-records some beautiful music for us to hear while being closed in at home.

Above: Rev. Susan Izard with members of the Jolly Beggars recording the monthly Celtic service.

Right: Even our yoga classes, by Nancy Murray, were presented "virtually" through the live meeting platform called Zoom.

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.

Our first online-produced Sunday worship and the virtual Celtic service were well "attended" with over 277 and 159 on-line participants respectively (including non-members who need spiritual support these days). Add to that count a Monday book group, Tuesday Lenten prayer group, yoga, and meetings 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



Turn page for Tidngs.

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Yoga..... p. 6

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WEST HARTFORD

TIDINGS

APRIL 2020 • NEWSLETTER • WWW.WHFIRSTCHURCH.ORG • 12 SOUTH MAIN STREET, WEST HARTFORD, CT • 860-233-9605



Strength is for Service

Beginning this Interim season with you as I did on March 1, I will say that the first week seemed to go very smoothly... however during my second week things changed dramatically for our community, nation and world, as we seek to respond appropriately to the pandemic. So we are going to be re-thinking what it means to be the church, and people of faith, on many levels – in a process likely none of us would have designed in our wildest dreams.

This is a fearful time; it may also be a faithful time. If ever there were a time to be gentle with others, to be compassionate to those suffering, to reflect and reflect again on how our actions affect our neighbor– the time has arrived. Not everyone is getting it right, and not everyone is getting it wrong either.

I have been reminded during these early days that for many of us, other crises, other illnesses, and other obligations are continuing – made all the more stressful and complicated with new restrictions and obstacles appearing daily due to the pandemic. I have been thinking about these words from the book of Romans:

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?" Romans 15:1-2 (*The Message*)

As I write this, plans will be re-written for Holy Week and Easter and we will communicate with you.

While I do not welcome this season of pandemic, I am looking forward to walking into this season of faith with you as partners in healing and faith.

Friends, please care for yourselves, and one another -- our people are our greatest assets and we are entering unprecedented days.

Sincerely in ministry,

Erica

The Reverend Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor

Please worship with us online on Sundays at 10 a.m. You may visit our website and click on the "Updates and Closings" Banner.

<p>Sermon Series: <i>The Parables of Jesus</i></p> <p>Please watch for more information from the church about Holy Week Services</p>	<p>APRIL 5: Palm Sunday <i>The parable of the sower,</i> Erica Avena preaching</p>	<p>April 12: <i>Easter Sunday:</i> John 20:1-18 <i>Easter's Evidence:</i> Seen and Unseen</p> <p>Taizé Worship, watch online</p>	<p>April 19: <i>John 20:19-31</i> <i>Belief and Doubt</i> Amie Giguere preaching</p>	<p>April 26: <i>Acts 2:14a,</i> <i>36-41 Joy and Sadness</i> Erica Avena preaching</p> <p>Celtic Worship, watch online</p>
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We Hear Your Prayers

You may submit your prayer requests online! Please use this link: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/66/responses/new>

We pray for our community during this time of personal and national crisis. We pray for all who are struggling physically, mentally, and spiritually during this trying time.

Eleanor Wight

There are so many prayers that are needed right now - let's just pray for the whole world to be held in God's hands. I think of looking at the planet Earth in that iconic photo from space - our little blue marble needs a big fuzzy prayer shawl... now!

Nina Sakun

My friend Paulina died March 11. She had just been moved to a nursing home. So: prayers for Paulina's journey and for all the people in nursing homes, patients and caretakers.

Bev Truebig

Prayers for health and safety for our daughter-in-law, who works in the ED at Yale-New Haven Hosp., as well as for our son, who is a first-responder.

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

From the Moderator

This Eastertide season, I have a new sense of awe about the invisible plague we remember as Passover. The suddenness of our need to respond to community leaders' directions for the health and safety of our community may be similar to what the Israelites felt when Moses and Aaron gave them specific and strict instructions on how to act (Exodus 12).

I will not take the comparison with the Exodus passage any further, because we have not been enslaved for 430+ years similar to the Israelites, nor are we being driven from our homes into a desert for 40 years. Rather, we have had to self-isolate in order to protect others' health and to be able to let the medical community serve those most in need.

The suddenness of this emergency has caused many of us to consider what we value: relationships. Relations with family, friends, neighbors, classmates, service providers - even people whose names we do not know, but whom we realize are very important for helping us live in our community (such as the clerk at the store who stocks shelves every night or the medical personnel who support the front lines of the health care organizations). Relations with God's community of people - all people.

As a result of the immediate virus threat, we are confronted to think again about our relationship with God - as individuals and as a worshiping community. Although we may have been driven out of congregating in an actual building, this pandemic experience provides us with the challenge and opportunity to learn new ways as to how to care for those who need support. How can we do so directly and put our faith into action? How can we do so indirectly by supporting the church organization which is able to reach people that we cannot directly reach ourselves because many of us remain in physical self-isolation?

But we should not stay in mental self-isolation. During this crisis when we are told not to congregate physically, we need to congregate in other ways to remember God's love for humanity. Our pastors and lay leaders have been creating remarkable ways for us to congregate spiritually. We are sharing experiences, helping each other where we can, and learning more about God's presence in our lives so that we may again go out and serve the community beyond the walls of the church when and as we are able.

In the original Passover, a lot of people died. In this pandemic time, we focus on what we can do to maximize health, and to ensure we remember that nothing separates us from the love of God (Roman 8: 38-39).

Judy Schmitt, Moderator

OUTREACH:

Foodshare Walk Against Hunger - POSTPONED

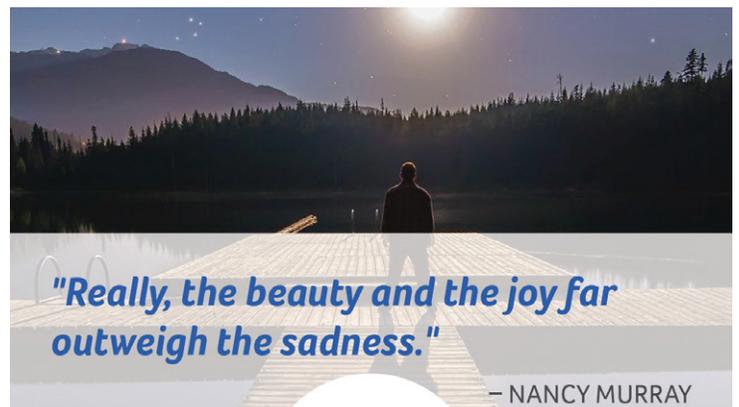
The Foodshare Walk Against Hunger support Foodshare's efforts to fight hunger year-round will be held at Dunkin' Donuts Park - home of the Hartford Yard Goats, in the fall.

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. www.foodshare.org or 860-286-9999
Thank you for your support.





Troop 12: Hiking and Camping News



With winter ending, Troop 12 Scouts made the most of a great opportunity to spend Saturday, February 22, hiking at Penwood State Park. The weather was warm and sunny. The assembled Scouts were able to complete a six-mile hike as part of their rank advancement. Lunch was enjoyed atop Talcott Mountain in a setting that provided everyone with a glorious view across the Farmington River Valley.

Troop 12 held its first overnight campout of the year at Camp Mattatuck on March 7 and 8. The Scouts met up at First Church at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday morning to pack up their camping gear and set off for Plymouth. Upon arrival, gear was unpacked, and lunch prepared. In the afternoon, the Scouts hiked around Lake Kenosha, which sits in the middle of the camp's five hundred acres. A campfire was held at the end of the afternoon before sunset. After breakfast on Sunday, gear was packed up and the campsite carefully tidied up before returning to First Church.

The advent of a statewide health emergency caused by the spread of COVID-19 into Connecticut has required Troop 12 to suspend its activities for the remainder of March and April. The current plan is to resume activities by May, once health restrictions have been lifted.

Yours in Scouting,
Will Mackey
Scoutmaster, Troop 12, West Hartford

Troop 12 Scouts hope to resume meeting weekly in May, on Tuesdays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at First Church. Parents and youth 11 to 17 years old are welcome to come check us out. You may contact Committee Chair: Sandra Tranquilli, 860-992-7183, or email santran73@sbcglobal.net. Scoutmaster Will Mackey, william.mackey@yahoo.com

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Rev. Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor
Rev. Amie Stuart Giguere, Acting Associate Pastor
Rev. Susan Izard, Minister of Spiritual Life
James Boratko, Music Director
Lauren Dube, Director of Children & Family Ministries
Dawne Quinn, FCAFYC Director
Suzanne Nardi, Office Manager
Lisa Reed, Business Manager

  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



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

The Library will be closed to the public, but our groups are meeting virtually. The emergency order runs through April 30, 2020, but may be modified at any time. Please stay in touch! 860-232-3893, jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org
Jennifer deSimas, Library Director: jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org
Karla Grafton, Assistant Librarian: jpwebsterlib@whfirstchurch.org



BOOK GROUPS:

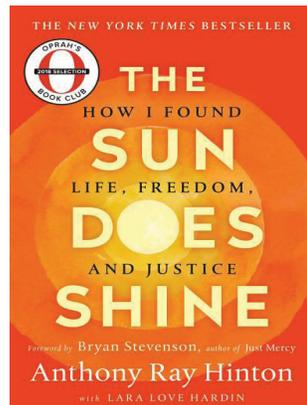
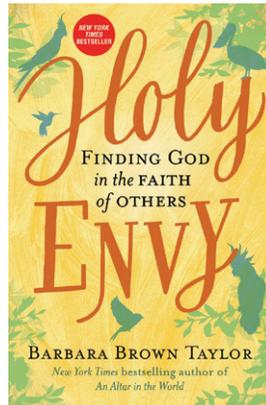
We are hoping to have book group books available for pick up at the church. Watch for more details. Please contact Jennifer to arrange pick up.

Awakening the Spirit is meeting at noon on Mondays via Zoom remote conferencing until further notice. They 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.

Our next book is Barbara Brown Taylor's *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others*. Taylor found herself both inspired and troubled as she explored the myriad ways other faith traditions encounter the Transcendent. Throughout *Holy Envy*, she reflects on how her spiritual journey has been renewed by connecting with people of other faith traditions - even those whose truths are quite different from hers. The one constant in her journey is the sense that God is the one calling her to disown her version of God - a change that ultimately enriches her faith in other human beings, and in God. We hope to arrange for participants to pick up their books -- we will let you know the details ASAP.

Food for Thought will meet Thursday, April 2 at 5:30 via Zoom remote conferencing. Jennifer will send an invitation to the group; if you are not a regular member but would like to join the discussion, please contact Jennifer at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

We will discuss *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life, Freedom, and Justice* by Anthony Hinton. In 1985 Hinton, found guilty of kidnapping and murder, was sentenced to death row. He was 29, black, living at home with his mother - and innocent of all charges. The *Sun Does Shine* tells us how he found justice, after nearly 30 years, and with the help of Bryan Stevenson (Just Mercy). A heart-wrenching yet ultimately hopeful story about truth, justice, and the need for criminal justice reform (Kirkus Reviews). Books are available at the JPW Library.



WeHa Grows Seed Library

Last fall Jackson Carbone, a Boy Scout in Troop 163 in West Hartford, created WeHa Grows, a seed-lending library, for his Eagle Scout project. WeHa Grows is housed in a cabinet in the John P. Webster Library reading room. The cabinet is nearly full of seeds ready for gardeners to take and plant in their own gardens.

The mission of WeHa Grows is "to provide seeds to the community while connecting gardeners to one another and to nature, while increasing our sense of self-reliance in that we can grow our own food." Jackson added that "humans have been saving seeds for over 12,000 years," but "much of that knowledge has been lost over the last hundred years, along with significant biodiversity." Saving seeds helps to "save money, develop seed stock that is well-suited to our climate, and helps mitigate our dependence on agro-business." More information about WeHa Grows is on the First Church website.

Since its start, First Church folks and the greater community have embraced WeHa Grows, and enthusiastically brought seeds to the library. With seeds donated by merchants and larger seed libraries, WeHa Grows seeds will be available to you in May!

Treasures & Hearts

I was baptized as an infant at Asylum Hill Church, but moved soon thereafter and came of age here at First Church where I was confirmed, stayed active as a young adult, and met and married Andy here. Speaking of my wedding, my twin Amy may like to forget the puffy-sleeved, peach maid-of-honor dress I "made" her wear, but hey, it was the 80s! Both children (Lindsay and Nate) were baptized here, and graciously, the senior pastor at the time allowed my father-in-law Ken to perform the baptisms.



Back in the 80s, Andy's mom JoAnne was the church school director, and my mom Jean was a faithful choir member, and a loyal volunteer in the JPW Library when it first opened. My dad George was an usher, as well as the Building and Grounds chairperson for a long stretch. Did you know he and I made the "Quiet, Chapel in Service" sign together? I smile and give a little nod to my dad whenever I see that.

Needless to say, First Church has an important place in my heart! These simple, yet sweet, memories may not be particularly interesting to anyone else, but they illustrate how intertwined my family and my church family are. I cherish that my actual family has been on this journey with me, and I am so grateful for my extended family of church friends. I give because I love First Church and I get so much out of it. Very recently, I converted to online giving and I can't believe I didn't do it sooner. It's really nice to not worry about my weekly donation being made right on time!

I can't really imagine not being active and part of this community. In gratitude, *Joy Brigham Taylor*

DUE DATE for TIDINGS: The next deadline is **APRIL 14th**, for the **MAY** 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.

Nurture

**“Instructions on
Living a Life:
Pay Attention
Be astonished.
Tell about it.”**

— MARY OLIVER



PHOTO: LAUREL PEPIN

Prayer

Now, O God,
calm me into a quietness that
heals and listens,
that molds my longings and passions,
my wounds and wonderings
into a more holy, human shape.
In the silence let me listen
and hear the truth you have put into me;
trust the love you have for me
which you call me to live out
with all my sisters and brothers
in your human family. Amen.

-Ted Loder

A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold. As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Matthew 8:5-8

ORGAN & CARILLON RESERVE FUND

Anyone wishing to donate may do so by filling out and returning this form to the Church Office with your payment. If you wish to have your donation listed in the Sunday Bulletin, please make your contribution by **Monday, April 6th.**

Given by: _____

Dedication (please be specific—in loving memory of, in honor of, etc.):

Daytime telephone: _____

Email address: _____

Please make checks payable to First Church with “Carillon” on the memo line.
First Church * 12 South Main Street * West Hartford, CT 06107.
Or, place order online at <http://bit.ly/2HgCRW3>





first church
WEST HARTFORD

12 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107



Our worship services, book groups, ministries, yoga classes, church school and more have taken to "gathering" virtually via "Zoom" teleconferencing, and other online and virtual means to keep our community connected! Bravo to all who have embraced this new, and temporary way of communicating. Please don't forget to continue to reach out to each other, pick up the phone, drop a letter or email so that we keep our community strong!

Visit: <http://www.whfirstchurch.org/about/updatesandclosings/> for full schedule, links and updates, and thank you for your patience.

Church School News

Sunday School is entirely online starting at 10 a.m. on Sundays. You can access our lessons through Zoom by following this link: <https://uso4web.zoom.us/j/955478264> Meeting ID: 955 478 264.

In an attempt to foster an adaptive sense of community, 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 led by Ms. Lauren.

Taizé

Worship Services

Upcoming dates are:
April 5 and May 17

Celtic

Evening Worship

Upcoming dates are:
April 26 and May 24

YOGA

Sponsored by First Church West Hartford

Please join us for Meditative Yoga
(via Zoom until restrictions are lifted)!

Take a break from the stress of life and connect with your body, mind, and spirit. Through yoga postures, breathing, and meditation techniques, quiet your mind and learn to hear the quiet voice of spirit, while strengthening your body.

This Kripalu yoga class, taught by Nancy Murray, ERYT-500, is appropriate for students at all levels, including beginners.

Contact Nancy to join a class:

Tuesdays: 7 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

Wednesdays: 9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Thursdays: 9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Please contact Nancy Murray at 860-521-8186 or nancy@deepeacect.com for more information.