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Living in Spirit • Committed to Service • Open to All



first church

WEST HARTFORD

TIDINGS

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



When will we rise?

We are the church without a building. We always were. The spirit of Easter has the capacity to live and dwell in human hearts. It always has.

I hope that this finds you safe and well. Many of us are struggling in this pandemic, if not from COVID-19 directly, then from grief in isolation, and the side effects of a myriad of lifestyle changes we all are challenged to be making collectively.



In particular, we are praying for:

- the family and friends of those who have died due to the Covid-19 virus world wide
 - those who work in health care
 - All of those dealing with other crises during this pandemic season and whose healing and wellbeing are compromised by it
- Clearly this has not been the beginning to our Interim season

that any of us anticipated. The Interim season is usually all about managing change... I am hopeful that as we rethink our ministries we will emerge from the pandemic with a clearer appreciation of what it means to be the church in the center of West Hartford: with stronger connections between our members, commitment to service, and with a reach which has gone beyond those who are able to attend our services in person. These are areas we can continue to strengthen in the future. This is definitely not the process we would have chosen, but it is the process we are in.

We have been encouraged to see that so many have been able to join our virtual worship experiences. Although our building is closed, ministry is continuing in a variety of other ways. I have appreciated how willing the church staff has been to learn to do their work virtually. Likewise, many of our people have been willing to do whatever it takes to figure out this new normal. Most of us have no training for this – we are learning new skills on the fly. And

We are the church, page 2

Please worship with us online on Sundays at 10 a.m. See the Sermons page here: <http://www.whfirstchurch.org/worship/sermons/>

<p>May 3 Powerful Witness "In Green Pastures and Beside Still Waters" Psalm 23 John 10:1-10 Erica Avena preaching</p>	<p>May 10 Enduring Witness Mother's Day; "Do not let your heart be troubled" John 14:1-14 Amie Giguere preaching</p>	<p>May 17 Witness of Love "The Church as Ark" I Peter 3:13-22 Erica Avena preaching Taíze worship at 5 p.m</p>	<p>May 24 Spirit of witness Memorial Day Sunday; "Enough of a Messiah?" Acts 1:6-14 Erica Avena preaching</p>	<p>May 31 Pentecost Sunday Acts 2:1-21 Welcome Holy Spirit! Erica Avena preaching Celtic Worship at 5 p.m.</p>
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Church Family News

- Our prayers are with **Patti Malahan** whose mother passed away on April 20 at Saint Mary's Home.
- **Colleen** and **Jeff Mitchell** are pleased to announce the engagement of their son **Nathan** to **Emily Rachael**. Best wishes!
- Thank you for filling the **36 Easter baskets** for the **Covenant to Care** families.
- Our Church School, along with the Outreach Ministry, had a **Rock-n-dance Marathon** on Facebook to raise money for Foodshare. Lauren Dube was our "Jerry Lewis" emcee, and we had 40 volunteers dancing throughout the day! We raised over \$2,230! Thank you to all who participated and donated.
- You may submit your prayer requests online! Please use this link: <https://whfirstchurch.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/66/responses/new>

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

We are the church

from page 1

because this is an unprecedented time, and we are certainly no experts, I invite your ideas and creativity as we imagine a church without a building, as we imagine sharing faith – good news– which thrives best in the human heart.

The Easter message is that Jesus rose from the tomb and went out to greet his friends in resurrection. How will we emerge? When will we rise?

Keeping faith,

Erica

The Reverend Erica Wimber Avena, Interim Senior Pastor

Call to Special Meeting of the Congregation

Sunday, May 3, 2020 via Zoom following online worship

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 a.m. 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

From the Moderator

Our church-without-a-building is still our church community. Members continue to show how we put our faith into action. We miss gathering together in person (but the Sunday Morning Cyber Coffee Hour on Sunday is a nice alternative). With the many needs in our community right now, I hope everyone has found a means of expanding outward, even while we are being told to shelter in.

The organizational work of the church continues without interruption. I sent a letter to the congregation in early April explaining how the Business Team and Coordinating Team are working to ensure the financial stability of the church. The Coordinating Team has called a Congregational Meeting for May 3rd via Zoom in order to discuss finances further and to ask for congregational support should we need to withdraw funds from the endowment. (The call has been included with the electronic church notes the last two weeks of April. You will also find it printed in this Tidings.)

The Coordinating Team decided at its April meeting how best to move forward with the search for a new settled Senior Pastor. In March, church members nominated persons for the Search Committee, which will be announced soon by the Coordinating Team. The Coordinating Team and Futures Team will start to draft the church profile, with the goal of having a document that members can review in late May. Members' input will be requested as part of the process.

As you read the pages of Tidings, you will see that we, the church community, are "zooming" ahead with our faith opportunities. The Outreach and Inreach Teams provide us with many opportunities to connect with others – either to respond to others' needs or to nurture our own souls. I encourage you to utilize these opportunities and expand in ways that you have not previously had time to do so. Keep your faith in perpetual motion.

Judy Schmitt, Moderator

Holy Connection and Sacred Conversations

Members of the In-Reach team, along with other volunteers are making phone calls to members of our congregation to check in with them. These conversations are such an important and valuable part of how we are able to be the church, and often become sacred conversations. Helping one another to feel connected is especially important during this time of crisis which prevents us from gathering. 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.

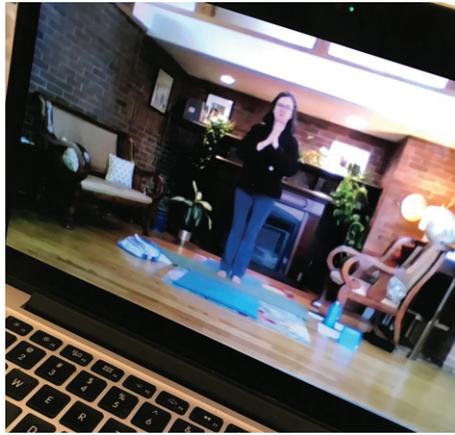


Coffee Hour

We are now gathering at 11 a.m. for Sunday Morning Cyber Coffee Hour! Please join our Zoom meeting following our traditional hour of worship to share in a time of fellowship. Check the church's website or the weekly email for the link to join via computer. No computer? No problem! If you do not have a computer, you can call on the telephone to join! One tap mobile +16465588656,924416446#; or by land line +1 646 558 8656. Password: 899935

Yoga classes are open to all

While the building has been closed, Nancy Murray has continued to hold the yoga classes via Zoom. We have kept our usual meeting times of Tuesday evenings at 7 and Wednesday and Thursday mornings at 9:15. This has been a nice way to connect with our yoga community and an added benefit is that we have been joined by people who have moved away! Also, the zoom room has no space limitation, so all of the classes have "room!" In addition, Nancy is holding a daily meditation class seven days a week at 12:15. If you would like to join the classes, please email Nancy at nancy@deepeacect.com for the links and reasonable fees.



OUTREACH:

Neighbors in Need

The During this uncertain time the three organizations listed here need your help.

■ **LOAVES AND FISHES MINISTRIES:** Donate online: <http://www.loavesfishesministries.org> or send a check: 646 Prospect Ave., Hartford CT 06105.

■ **TOWN THAT CARES:** Donate online: https://www.westhartfordct.gov/gov/departments/social_services/towncares.asp, or send check to: 50 South Main St., Rm 306, West Hartford, CT 06107

■ **FOODSHARE:** They are committed to staying open throughout this crisis. To donate please go to their website: site.foodshare.org

Living in Spirit • Committed to Service • Open to All



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

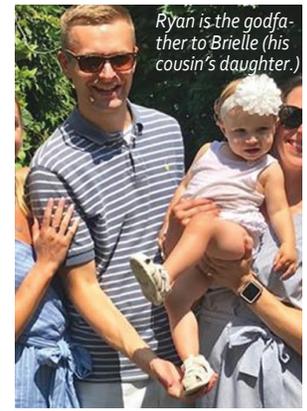
J.P. Webster Library: 860-232-3893

First Church Academy for Young Children: 860-232-2106

12 South Main St., West Hartford, CT 06107 • www.whfirstchurch.org

Treasures & Hearts

I grew up in Granby, CT attending Pilgrim Covenant Church as a child and later I was confirmed at South Congregational Church. Both of these churches had wonderful youth programs, creating lots of fond memories. The one that stands out the most I would say was a mission trip to Summers County, West Virginia. I don't know why, but I'll never forget how good those peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were that we had for lunch each day!



Ryan is the godfather to Brielle (his cousin's daughter.)

While pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering at UConn, I found myself falling out of touch with attending the church, but I was able to maintain a strong faith through loss and personal growth due to the friends and family I had around me.

Even after graduation, for a few years there was a growing feeling that something was lacking in my life. So I started looking for a local church and a community of faith. It was hard to miss First Church's proud steeple in the center of town.

Geordie's service that first Sunday blew me away, and I felt like it spoke to me personally. After attending a few services I was able to get to know the community a bit more and I immediately started feeling right at home, bringing back the comfort I felt in my faith community as a kid. Everyone was extremely welcoming and I wanted to find a way to give back.

Soon after, Elliott Munn asked if I wanted to join the youth group on a mission trip. Remembering the wonderful experience I had in my youth, and eager to give back, I said yes. Without fail, I yet again had another most memorable week of my life at Epworth Project in Slidell, Louisiana. That week our team was assigned to help Tony, the homeowner, install a bathroom. Like a lot of her community she was still working to rebuild over 10 years after Katrina. The work was extremely gratifying. The most memorable parts for me however were all the small things in between. I am a big fan of playing cards, and it was really great teaching the different games and getting to know all of the kids and their plans for the future. Since then, I have been on the youth group team at First Church and it has been an absolute pleasure getting to know our kids and finding creative ways to give back to the community with them.

Email amie.giguere@whfirstchurch.org for more information.

Most recently I have had some fairly significant health issues with my right lung. After 3 collapses I was in the hospital a few weeks ago undergoing a VATS procedure. This was a lot, but through it all I felt very blessed with a lot of support from my friends, family and church. I can certainly vouch for the fact that the church is not a building, and not having walls right now has not slowed us down at all! I would like to say a heartfelt thank you for helping me in my time of need. I can fortunately say that I have been recovering very well. It was a pleasure seeing a lot of the church on Zoom during the Easter virtual coffee hour! This church has had such a very large influence on my life in such a short time. I am excited to see where we go and what we do next! *Ryan Mannix*

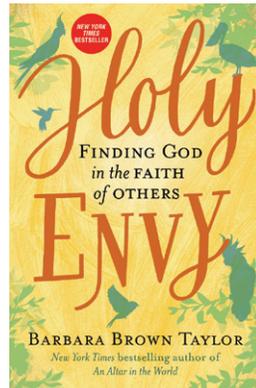


**JOHN P. WEBSTER
LIBRARY**
Resources for Faith & Life

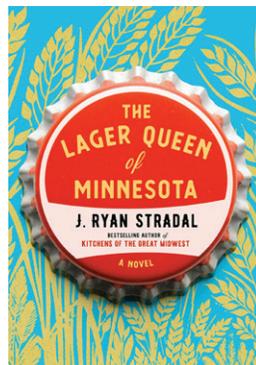
The Library will be closed to the public, but our groups are meeting virtually. The emergency order runs through April 30, 2020, but may be modified at any time. Please stay in touch! 860-232-3893, jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org
Jennifer deSimas, Library Director: jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org
Karla Grafton,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

BOOK GROUPS:

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



Food for Thought group meets every other Thursday afternoon at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Their current book is *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). Our next book is *Evvie Drake Starts Over* by Linda Holmes. When Dean Tenney, former Major League pitcher dealing with the "yips" moves into an apartment at the back of Evvie Drake's house, the two make a deal: Dean won't ask about Evvie's late husband, and Evvie won't ask about Dean's baseball career." (Amazon).



To join either discussion, email Jennifer deSimas, JPW Library Director, at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

Try the new JPWL Curbside Pickup!

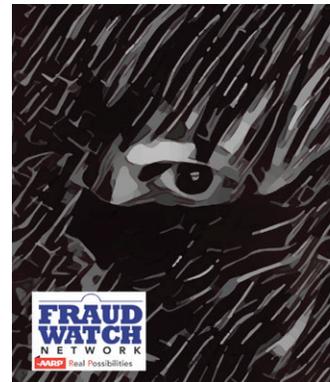
Are you running out of things to read? The JPW Library can help! We're starting a curbside pickup service during the pandemic. Here's how it works:

- Search our collection online here.
- Email us the title and author 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. Just drive up to the rotunda entrance and the materials will be brought to your car. Stay safe and happy reading!

JPWL Lunch & Learn



Zoom-cast: Scams – Learn the Facts

May 3 at 12 noon

A Zoom-cast of the AARP's "Fraud Watch Network: Con-Artist Playbook," led by a live presenter. 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. Followed by time for Q&A. 1 hour.

To register, visit the library page of our website:
www.whfirstchurch.org/jp-webster-library/programs/

Zoom-cast: Family Caregivers

May 17 at 12 noon

Caring for a loved one can be one of the most challenging things you'll ever do. Learn the specific tools for navigating and connecting with available services, gain an understanding of care options and costs, and stay informed on the legislative issues impacting seniors and family caregivers. 1 hour.

To register, visit the library page of our website:
www.whfirstchurch.org/jp-webster-library/programs/

Spiritual Writing Group

Jennifer deSimas is offering a spiritual writing group that meets on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. The group will meet every week until May 27 via web-conference, and you can join anytime. If you find joy and release through writing, join us. If writing brings you closer to understanding and loving God, join us. It doesn't matter if you haven't written in years. If you are yearning for a writing community, you are welcome to join us.

Members will hear/read prompts, then spend time responding in writing. Those who want to share are welcome to do so. 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 in knowing and hearing the Holy.

If interested, please contact Jennifer via email at:
jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

Christ is Risen!

The call to worship on Easter included a video montage of First Church members proclaiming the traditional Easter greeting!



PRAYER

O, God,
by necessity,
we have learned,
how love can be shown,
even when the doors of our church buildings,
are closed.

Yet,
O, God,
in times like these,
the doors of our minds,
the doors of our hearts,
the doors of our waking up to our being one people,
the doors of our waking up to our interconnections,
the doors of our waking up to our interdependence,
the doors of our waking up to our shared responsibilities,
the doors of our waking up to caring for one another and all life,
on this one home we share, the earth...
these doors, thank God,
are opening.

Keep them open, God.
Keep them open.
Amen.

By Rev. John R. White is "Pastor John" of First Congregational Church of Dudley, MA (UCC)





first church
WEST HARTFORD

12 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107



Church School News

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 a.m., as well as Wednesdays at 6 p.m for our families that cannot make morning meetings.



Our older congregants are invited to join us by reading stories, sharing games, and just checking in!

The Faith Formation workgroup will host an online parent group on Monday nights at 6pm. This is a space to express frustrations, share creative ideas, and seek support around parenting during a pandemic. For the log-in credentials, please email Lauren at lauren.dube@whfirstchurch.org.

Because of the Covid-19 Virus, this month's Taizé will be an on-line video Service

Taizé

WORSHIP SERVICES

May 17 (Virtual service)

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

Celtic

Evening Worship

May 24 (might be live in the Chapel if the state reopens. Please check our website for updates)