



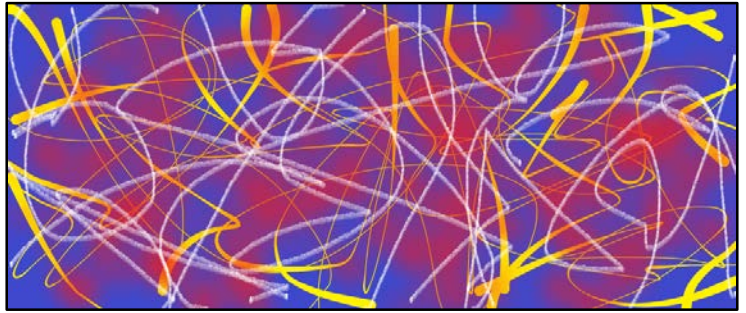
Sunday Notes

November 28, 2021



Looking Towards Sunday

This Sunday, November 28th, is the first Sunday of Advent, in which the focus is on HOPE. The scripture is Luke 21:25-36, in which Jesus predicts all the signs associated with the coming of the Son of Man (or the "Human One") and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. The sermon is entitled, "Testifying to Hope." In Advent, we hope for a more humane future. The painting here, entitled "Hope," is one I did in preparation for today's worship.



Today's Altar Flower Dedication

The flowers adorning our altar today were donated by Pam Hastings, Linda H. Rosania, and the Hastings Family in memory of Richard and Lorain Hastings; Richard C. Hastings, III; Mr. and Mrs. R. Cleveland Hastings; Marcia Hastings Peck; and Mr. and Mrs. Charles N. Jaworski.

Protocols for First Church, West Hartford Meeting House

Masks are required for everyone in the church building. **Please be seated in front of QR codes to maintain social distancing.** These measures are subject to change as metrics and state guidelines evolve.

In-Person Church School and Childcare This Week

If you have children with you today, they will remain with you in worship until after the children's message, when their teacher(s) will lead them up to their classroom on the 4th floor. You will pick them up from there following worship. Please note that we are returning to the pre-pandemic check-in procedures. Please look for Margaret Coles to assist you with checking in your child(ren) at the north entrance to the Meeting House. If you have not yet registered your child(ren) for this program year, please do so [here](#) or by using the QR code which can be found at either entrance to the Meeting House. Feel free to reach out to Rev. Amie Giguere with questions or concerns.

In-Person Coffee Hour

Join us for refreshments in the Auditorium following the service.

Stewardship - *We Are Resilient!*

If you were waiting to hear the exciting news of our next called senior pastor, well, now is the time to make your pledge! So far we have received 78 pledges for a total of \$ 234,000. We have a way to go to get to our pledge budget of \$330,000. Anyone wanting to pledge after hearing the good news, the Stewardship Team would welcome your generosity and for those of you who have already pledged, we thank you for your commitment to the mission of First Church. Pledges can be made online on the church's website at <https://www.whfirstchurch.org/giving/pledge/> or just simply mail in your pledge card! If you need a pledge card, please contact Suzanne at suzanne.nardi@whfirstchurch.org. Your generosity sustains the good work of our church and its congregants. If you have any questions, please call Jeff Mitchell at (860) 874-3086. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

Upcoming Events

Awakening the Spirit Book Group

Mondays from 1 to 2:30 pm in the JPW Library

You're invited to join Awakening the Spirit for an Advent Study. Pastor Amie Giguere will lead discussions of [Those Who Wait: Finding God in Disappointment, Doubt and Delay](#). Author Tanya Marlow addresses how we might find holiness when we're waiting for miracles to emerge: *Everyone is waiting for something: a bus; a spouse; better health; a fresh chance; a true home. Waiting is hard...Follow the lives of four Bible heroes who struggled with waiting: Sarah, Isaiah, John the Baptist, and Mary. [The book] provides empathy, purpose, and perspective for those mired in doubt and disappointment.* Books are available to borrow from the John P. Webster Library.

Submit prayer requests [here](#).

Virtual Bible Study

Tuesdays at 7 pm via Zoom

All are welcome to join Pastor Michael Newheart's virtual Bible study classes. Register [here](#) to receive the Zoom link. Participants will reflect on the coming week's Scripture passages to engage in deeper understanding of the history or events surrounding the text.

Don't Miss The Mini-Festival of Trees

The mini festival of trees will be held throughout the month of December. Enjoy discovering the magic of Christmas through 15 trees, decorated by members of First Church and placed throughout the building, from the church office to the choir room. Take a stroll before or after church or view the video of the trees available on our YouTube channel. You will have the opportunity to make a donation to our Mission Partners at the end of the video. Thank you. The Outreach Team

Food for Thought Book Group

Thursday, December 2nd, at 5:30 pm

We will discuss [The Book of Lost Names](#) by Kristin Harmel, in which a young woman with a talent for forgery helps hundreds of Jewish children flee the Nazis. Inspired by an astonishing true events from World War II. This will be a hybrid meeting – attend in person or via Zoom. Register [here](#) to join the group!

The Nativity Narratives: A Deeper Look with Amy-Jill Levine and John Dominic Crossan

Sundays, December 5th and 12th, at 5 pm via Zoom

We are delighted that Amy-Jill Levine and John Dominic Crossan will be with us over two Sunday evenings during Advent to discuss the beloved Nativity stories from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The two renowned scholars will share fuller viewpoints and observations as well as anecdotes from their own lives and research. Moderated by our own Pastor Michael and in partnership with Hartford International University. Register at <https://bit.ly/CrossanandLevine> to receive the Zoom link to join this event!

Amy-Jill Levine is Rabbi Stanley M. Kessler Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace. She is the author of numerous books, and she is the co-editor of the Jewish Annotated New Testament.

John Dominic Crossan is an Irish-American biblical scholar. His focus is on the historical Jesus as the norm and criterion for the entire Christian Bible. Crossan's method is to situate biblical texts within the reconstructed matrix of their own their own genre and purpose, their own time and place, and to hear them accurately for then before accepting or rejecting them for now.

Advent

Wreath, Poinsettia and Organ & Carillon Donations

Wreaths will adorn the doors of First Church during the season of Advent. Poinsettias can be used to brighten the holiday for another, taken home after worship on December 19th, or delivered to your doorstep if needed. Donations can also be made to the Organ & Carillon Reserve Fund. Donations in memory or honor of a loved one and can be made [here](#).

Volunteers to Deliver Poinsettias

Bring joy to our church members who are homebound by delivering poinsettias! On Sunday, December 19th, we will be delivering plants and we need your help! Contact Nancy Ball at shoedog1961@gmail.com.

Covenant to Care Share a Gift Tree

Please look for the Share-A-Gift Christmas Tree in the Auditorium beginning on November 28th! Please take a tag, buy a gift for the child designated, and bring the unwrapped gift to the office or the auditorium (during coffee hour) by December 19th. Gifts will be given to our two Covenant to Care social workers for the children they work with. If you are still worshipping from home and would like to participate, please call Janice Carter Hall at 860-305-0940 or Carole Carter at 860-690-1338 and we will drop a tag off to you.

Annual Hat and Mitten Drive

Marked boxes will be available in the Narthex and outside the Auditorium to collect your donations. We will be happy to pick up your donations if needed. Any new or used winter outerwear or clothing in good condition are welcome.

The Puppets Are Coming! The Puppets Are Coming!

The Colossal Puppets have been released from quarantine and are making their way east from St. Michael's Parish in Litchfield to tell the wondrous story of the nativity. They will join us for worship on Sunday, December 12th. It's been two years since they have ventured out, and they are anxious to share the good news with us all.

They could use some help getting ready for the event. If you are available for a couple of hours on the afternoon of December 7th, you can help us get them ready for the Sunday service. No prior experience is required. As long as you can follow our instructions, we can get them set up and dressed for the occasion.

We will need 11 volunteers on Sunday, December 12th, to operate the puppets during the worship service. There will be one rehearsal on Saturday, December 11th, at 10 am in the Meeting House. The rehearsal should not last longer than 90 minutes. Again, no prior experience is required, but you will need to be able to hold a 10' high pole. The puppets are not heavy, but they are a little cumbersome and require getting used to them.

Finally, on Monday morning, December 13th, we will again need some assistance for a couple of hours to disassemble the puppets and pack them for their return trip to Litchfield.

Please sign up at [here](#).

Advent Devotionals Are Here!

The JPWL is offering two Advent devotional options this year:

· Heaven and Nature Sing: Devotions for Advent & Christmas from Augsburg Fortress

The story of Jesus' birth in the Gospel of Luke is filled with song. From Mary's Magnificat to Anna and Simeon and even an angel choir! During these days of Advent and Christmas, may the good news of Jesus' birth fill our lives and our world with joy and peace. Let heaven and nature sing! Here are meditations, household blessings, and prayers to enrich your preparations and celebrations. AVAILABLE IN BOTH STANDARD AND LARGE PRINT FORMATS

· Jesus Crisis from the UCC Stillspeaking Writers' Group

"I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Jesus enthusiasts likely cringe at his sharp words in Matthew 10:34. We often imagine a child-inviting, good-news-bringing, body-and-spirit-healing Jesus. Alas, this double-sided Jesus is difficult to witness. Of all the things he could've brought instead of peace, why bring a sword? Precision. With a meticulous commitment to justice, Jesus severs oppressive systems, dissects violent divisions, and hacks at the hate that poisons our shared divinity. After a year of one crisis after another, might we embrace the Crisis who arrives in the form of a tiny little baby?" Read and reflect with these daily devotions, Scripture passages, and prayers.

Christmas Sunday

Sunday, December 19th, at 10 am in the Meeting House – "Mary's Magnificent Song" Michael Newheart preaching.

Christmas Eve Services

4 pm in the Meeting House – Beloved Carols, Tender Light

A Christmas service for children and families of all ages, filled with song and the beloved story.

7:30 pm in the Meeting House – What Child Is This?

We welcome the Christ child with carols, prayer, and a reading from the Gospel of Luke.

Announcements

Senior Pastor Search Committee Update

After consulting with our staff and lay leadership, the Search Committee has set a date for our Candidate Weekend! Please mark your calendars for Saturday and Sunday, January 8th and 9th 2022! In exactly six weeks, our candidate will be introduced to our congregation and participate in the worship service that Sunday. Immediately after the service, we will have a congregational meeting to vote on a call for a new Senior Pastor. There will be more details and updates to come as we consider in-person and on-line ways of gathering. We hope that we will be able to engage all of you in providing a warm welcome to our recommended candidate.

Thank you for your ongoing trust, support, and prayers.

Amber Rottman, Amy Melvin, Glen MacLeod, Liz Oman-Wilfrid, Robert Schunder, Ryan Mannix, and Suzanne Carnes, chairperson

Donations Needed

A local family experienced a fire on Tuesday evening and lost everything. They've asked for our help in providing food and clothing for the parents and their four children. If you feel so inclined, please bring size 22 women's clothing, size 34/34 men's pants, XL men's shirts and XL men's jacket/coat and toddler boy size 3T/4T, and microwavable food as they will be staying in a hotel for the next 90 days. Donations may be left in a box in the church office labeled "Donations for the Rivers Family." Thank you!

Help Resettle a Family Fleeing from Afghanistan!

Five years ago people from First Baptist Church, Congregation Beth Israel, and First Church, came together in an interfaith effort to help resettle a Syrian refugee family fleeing the violence and pain in their home country. We named ourselves "Welcome Home West Hartford." We are back, and are organizing now in order to respond to a new international crisis.

Afghan families are fleeing their country, and many are coming to Connecticut. *Welcome Home West Hartford* needs your help to resettle one of these families.

Here is how you can help:

- 1) Support us with your contributions. We will need to raise \$10,000 within the next few months.
- 2) Donate nice, used, furniture, appliances, or other necessities to furnish an apartment.
- 3) Join the planning team and take on a major responsibility, such as finding housing, preparing a first meal, or gathering furnishings.
- 4) Sign up to be an occasional helper with driving or babysitting types of tasks.

This is an important mission for our town, for our congregations, and for our spiritual well-being, and everyone can do something! For more information, or to volunteer, contact Carrie or Eliot Streim at cestreim@gmail.com, or Terry Schmitt at terryschmittwh@gmail.com. Thanks!

4 Ways to Give

1. Give by Text: Text *GIVE* to (860) 222-7870. **You can now donate using ACH!** If you have already used Txt2Give, text *update* to change payment type from credit card to ACH.
2. Give Online: Visit our website at <http://www.whfirstchurch.org/giving/give>
3. Give by Mail: Mail checks to First Church, 12 S. Main Street, West Hartford, CT 06107
4. Give Gifts of Securities: Contact local Financial Advisor Sue Banville at Edward Jones in West Hartford at 860-521-2119.

November Reach Out: APK Charities

APK Charities seeks to raise awareness and support for our active, retired, wounded, and fallen warriors and their families and to provide financial aid and material assistance to charitable organizations and causes. Thank you for your support of the members of our Armed Forces. For more information or to donate to please visit: <https://www.apkcharities.org>.

Communication Survey

The First Church Communications Team is working to update and refine the ways we keep in touch and how we share information. Please help us out by responding to the survey in CCB. You can find it [here](#). Thank you! - Amy Melvin, Joy Taylor, & Jennifer deSimas