



Sunday Notes

September 17, 2023



Looking Towards Sunday

"Monarch, Music City, or Moses...miracles have many moving parts." -- me

Amy Melvin provided the inset photo of the Monarch butterfly. It's the last in a series of snapshots that she took in capturing the insect's life cycle – the transition from egg to adult. It's a miraculous metamorphosis. Which doesn't happen instantaneously but in about three weeks, assuming the weather conditions are warm enough; and the larva doesn't perish; and the caterpillar survives predators.

NFL fanatics will recall a famous football play that took place on January 8, 2000. It occurred during the final sixteen seconds of the AFC Wild Card playoff game between the Tennessee Titans and Buffalo Bills. Lorenzo Neal received a kickoff; pitched the ball to Frank Wycheck; Wycheck threw a lateral pass across the field to Kevin Dyson; and Dyson ran 75 yards to score an improbable winning touchdown. The play has since been referred to as the Music City Miracle. It wasn't just one thing but a series of things that happened to produce the phenomenal final score.

Read Exodus 14:19-31 – The Israelites Crossing the Red Sea. If you study the story closely, you will notice that their providential passage actually consisted of lots of little miracles – more than twelve! I'll say more when I see you.

Be blessed and be a blessing meantime,

Rev. Fredd

Today's Altar Flower Dedication

Our altar flowers today were donated by Bob and Ginny Vocelli in loving memory of Kay Gilmore.

Call to a Congregational Meeting

Sunday, October 1, 2023

Notice is hereby given that a Congregational Meeting of the First Church of Christ Congregational of West Hartford, Connecticut, UCC, will be held on Sunday, October 1, 2023 at 11:15 AM following morning worship to address the following items of business:

1. To approve the minutes of the Congregational Meeting held on February 19, 2023 (Vote on authorizing funding for the Steeple Project).
2. To consider and vote on the proposed budget for the First Church Academy for Young Children, for the budget year 2023-2024.
3. 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 September 15, 2023

Linda Bronstein, Secretary of the Church

With Sorrow

Bob Carter, a longtime active member, passed away on August 30. A memorial service will be held at First Church on Saturday, September 23 at 11 a.m. in the Meeting House.

Sadly, Jane Hazen passed away on Friday, September 8. A memorial service will be held at First Church on Saturday, September 30 at 1 p.m. in the Meeting House.



Upcoming Events

Coffee and Conversation - Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.

Join Rev. Fredd at the Hartford Baking Company in West Hartford Center for coffee and conversation!

Bible Study Resumes this Sunday!

Meets Sunday mornings from 8:30 to 9:15 a.m. in the World Fellowship Room (Rm. 303)

No Charge – Sponsored by the JPW Library

Join Rev. Tom Carr each Sunday before worship for an in-depth look at the Bible! We are currently studying the Gospel of Mark, exploring how the stories, sayings, and teachings speak to us individually and collectively on our journeys of faith. No advanced preparation is necessary. *All are welcome* to come with open minds and hearts as we discuss the meanings of the Gospel of Mark for our individual lives and the life of the world today. [Register here](#).

Race, Religion, and Contested Identities: A Christian-Muslim Dialogue

September 19 from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Live Streamed from HIU

With the rise of White Christian Nationalism, it has become evident how integral race and ethnicity are to religion in America. Religion has been used to produce and maintain oppressive and prejudicial systems -- and it has been a beacon of hope for those who would resist a dominant culture. This panel discussion, sponsored by the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, will explore the intersection of race and religion for Muslims and Christians.

Event will be livestreamed here: <https://www.facebook.com/hartfordinternational>. Please [Register Here](#).

Potluck Dinner

The Inreach Team invites you to a fall potluck dinner on Friday, September 22nd at 6:00 p.m. Come catch up with your church family and share stories of your summer as we get back to our fall routines! [Sign up HERE](#) and let us know how many will be joining us and what you'd like to bring. We look forward to seeing everyone!

If you are interested in joining First Church, please plan to attend an information session for prospective new members on **Sunday, September 24th at 11:15 a.m.** We expect to receive new members into the life of the church during the 10a.m. worship service on **Sunday, October 8th**. Please contact Rev. Fredd in person, by telephone at 860.233.9605, or via email fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org.

Chamber Music Series Inaugural Concert

Sunday, September 24 at 3 p.m.

The Chamber Music Series is a new series at First Church, designed to bring great music performances to an audience in an intimate setting. Some of the music that will be featured in this concert will be Beethoven's Trio in B Flat Major for oboe, bassoon, and piano, and the Four Seasons of Buenos Aires by Astor Piazzolla for violin, cello, and piano. The concert will be held in the Chapel of First Church. The concert is free to the public. A Free Will Offering will be received at the door.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS -- a simple service of worship to honor God's gift of creation, especially our furry companions! This event is open to people of all faiths and creatures of all kinds. Bring your pets (on a leash or crated, please!); or, if worshipping in person is not a comfortable option, bring a picture!

Sunday, October 1 at 12:30 p.m. on the front lawn, Officiated by Rev. Fredd

Qi gong/Mindful Movement, September 26 & October 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 from 3:30 to 4:15 p.m. on the Front Lawn Labyrinth

No Charge – Sponsored by the JPW Library

Join us Tuesday afternoons this fall as we learn about and practice Qi gong with Linda Clark. *Qi* ("chi") *gong*: *Qi* means *energy*, *gong* means *practice*. Qi gong literally means *energy practice*. Qi gong consists of gentle movements to loosen the joints, tendons, ligaments. It improves balance, relaxes the mind, and lowers blood pressure, to name a few benefits. Instructor Linda Clark is a long-time practitioner of qi gong and taiji chuen, and is a student at Yin Yang Tai Chi Academy in West Hartford. Linda has many years of experience leading classes, especially with beginner students. [Register here](#).

Thunderbird American Indian Dancers Return in October!

Saturday, October 7 from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. in the First Church Auditorium

We are delighted to welcome the Thunderbird Dancers back to First Church! Founded in New York in 1963, the Thunderbird American Indian Dancers include descendants from Mohawk, Hopi, Winnebago, and San Blas tribes. They strive to keep alive the traditions, stories, and dances they learned from their parents and grandparents. Their stunning show features live music, storytelling, and traditional dance in full regalia. Co-sponsored by the WH Public Library, the WH Office of Equity Advancement, and the JPW Library. This program is for families with children of all ages. Registration required; [register here](#). This event is for all ages.

Southern New England United Church of Christ (SNEUCC) 2023 Justice Summit – *Trans and Nonbinary Belonging in the Church*

Saturday, October 7 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Old South Church, Boston, MA - *Hybrid event*

The SNEUCC 2023 Justice Summit will center on trans and nonbinary belonging in the church. This full-day event will include worship and preaching, workshops, relationship-building, and connection. This is a hybrid event, with options for in-person or online participation. Note: a group is forming to attend this conference. If interested, please see Eleanor Wight. For more information and to register, [follow this link](#).

Memoir Workshop with David Pontrelli

October 16, 23, 30 & November 6, 13, 20 at 4:30 – 6 p.m. in the John P. Webster Library, Sponsored by the JPWL
David Pontrelli of Writing Works returns with another memoir writing workshop starting Monday, October 16. This time, participants will have the opportunity to write in a form of their choosing – poetry or prose or a little of each. We'll do a warm-up activity as a group, and then write alone – together. There will be an optional time for sharing with the chance to receive safe, positive feedback from other group members. No experience is necessary, and all genres and skill levels are welcome. David Pontrelli, a graduate of Wesleyan University, leads writing classes for a wide range of ages and abilities. He has taught at Capital Community College and in local schools and non-profit organizations. [Register here](#).

Book Group News:

The church's John P. Webster Library coordinates two regular book groups:

Awakening the Spirit meets Mondays from 12-1:30. Discussions are centered on interfaith dialogue, ethics, theology, environmental issues, biblical scholarship, and spirituality in fiction and nonfiction writing. Copies of the books are provided by the library. New members are always welcome! Bring a bag lunch; beverages and desserts are provided. The group is currently discussing [If God is Love, Don't Be a Jerk](#) by John Pavlovitz. For more information, please contact Jennifer deSimas at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org or 860-232-3893.

Food for Thought meets on the first Tuesdays of each month from 5:30-6:30. They resume meeting on October 3. This group is led by JPWL staff Jennifer deSimas and Molly Bohman. They explore spirituality, relationships, faith, life, and more as portrayed through both fiction and nonfiction. Copies of the books are provided by the library, and new members are always welcome. Our current read is [The Maid](#) by Nita Prose. Please bring your own dinner; refreshments and desserts are served. For more information, contact Jennifer or molly at jpwebster@whfirstchurch.org or 860-232-3893.

Faith Formation Notes and News

Sunday School officially begins September 17 [Register Here](#).

All children are welcome to attend Sunday School. Parents and guardians planning to enroll their children (ages 3-17) in any programs at First Church (Youth Groups, Confirmation, Sunday School) should register them at the link above. Hard copies of this form are available at the JPW Library. This year all classes will be held in the John P. Webster Library and the Community Room, downstairs from the Meeting House). Children may also remain in the sanctuary with their families during worship. The Nursery (Room 216) is open and staffed every Sunday morning from 9:45 a.m. to 11:15 p.m.

Questions? Contact Jennifer deSimas, Director of Faith Formation & the JPW Library, at 860-233-9605 or jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org.

Confirmation Class Forming

Rev. Fredd Ward will be offering a Confirmation class for students in Ninth Grade and up this year. If you are interested in enrolling, please contact him in person or give him a call at 860-233-9605.

Parent Meeting

The Faith Formation Work Group invites all parents, guardians, and caregivers to a meeting on Sunday, September 24 after worship. Come meet our new Faith Formation Director, ask questions, and offer your ideas for your children's and youths' spiritual growth. The meeting will be held in the Fellowship Room (#303) following worship.

Find Your Place in the Faith Formation Ministry!

The Spirit Team depends on the shared gifts and skills of adults to nurture and enliven First Church's Sunday School and Youth programs. In return we offer an abundance of fun and love: exploring Bible stories together, celebrating Christmas and Easter (along with myriad celebrations in between), playing games, carrying out service projects, sharing our creativity, and doing lots of wondering together. No special teaching skills are necessary – we provide training and support. Contact Jennifer deSimas, Director of Faith Formation and the John P. Webster Library, at 860-233-9605 or jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org. Come feel the love in the FCWH Sunday School!

Announcements

Get Involved with the music program at First Church!

The **First Church Choir** welcomes people of all skill levels and those who sing do not need to be members of the church, just people who love to sing to the best of their ability and have fun doing it! We would love to have new singers join us. Contact Jim Boratko: jim.boratko@whfirstchurch.org for more information. No experience is required. We practice on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. in the Choir Room.

The **Whitechapel Handbell Choir** rings on the third Sunday of each month in worship, as well as at special services and concerts. The Bell Choir rehearses on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. in the Meeting House.

About the Deacons

The Deacons support the Minister(s) in all aspects of worship at the Church. They read the Bible passages in Sunday services. They assist with the Sacraments of Communion and Baptism. They represent the congregation at events such as memorial services, alternative worship services (Taize, etc.), and meetings for new members. Each Sunday the Deacon of the Day remains in the transept after the service to welcome visitors and speak to members of the congregation who have any questions or concerns. Please feel free to talk with us!

Join the Hospitality Team!

Looking for a way to make a meaningful contribution to First Church? Do you enjoy socializing at coffee hour? Then why not join the Hospitality Team and host hospitality a few times a year! (Or once or twice a year.). During the summer we serve lemonade & goodies. September through mid-May we serve coffee, lemonade, and goodies. You don't even have to be a good baker - some of us buy our goodies! Interested? Contact Al Day - 860-305-8714 or awday@snet.net.

IRIS (Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services) serves the needs of many families. In addition to helping with employment, housing and education, IRIS seeks to provide families with transportation to medical appointments, interviews, training, and field trips. With the increase of arrivals of Afghan, Syrian and Congolese refugees, the need for additional vehicles is critical. If you have a car that you are willing to donate to IRIS, please contact IRIS. Consider helping fund the purchase of a vehicle and registration, title, and insurance fees. Every donation will make a difference to Connecticut's newest Americans. Contact Diana Empsall at dcempsall@irisct.org. Thank you! -The Outreach Team

Save First Church Steeple: We have two very happy winners! Congratulations Sue Brannick and Jane Cave!

Our fundraising campaign is winding down, but you now have until October 8 to make your contribution. We will celebrate the project on the 8th and then starting on October 9 you will have the chance to honor a loved one for a week with "Light the Steeple" for \$25 a week. Week one the Steeple Fundraising Workgroup will light it in honor of all First Church Pastor's past and present. All who honor will be noted weekly or you can choose to be anonymous. Stay tuned for places to request a lighting!

Donated diapers make a difference! Please consider donating to our October Diaper Drive!

Diapers can take a big chunk out of a family's budget costing on average \$70-\$80 a month and the costs are not covered by WIC or SNAP benefits. All size diapers and wipes are needed but particularly Pull-Ups and diapers in sizes 4,5,6. From October 1 through October 29, Outreach is collecting diapers, baby wipes and Pull-Ups to be distributed through the Bridge Family Resource Center at Charter Oak International Academy and their Mosaic Family Center in Hartford. Please drop in the marked boxes at church entrances

Job Posting – Assistant Director of Worship Arts

Do you enjoy making music? Have you ever considered a side career as a music director of a church? First Church is looking to fill an Assistant Director of Worship Arts for our music program. This position will work as an assistant to our Director of Worship Arts, learning the aspects of church music leadership as an apprentice. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to experience leading church music by participating in our church choir during the year. One Sunday a month, they will have the opportunity to lead a worship service by playing service music, accompanying hymns, preparing the choir, and conducting the choir during worship. The Assistant Director will also have the opportunity to learn the nuts and bolts of the behind-the-scenes aspects of being music director to include service planning, budget tracking and preparation, and maintaining the music library. This is a part time, 12-month position, amounting to approximately 20 hours/month. For more information visit: <https://www.whfirstchurch.org/job-listings>.

Trouble viewing last week's Worship Service? If so, it wasn't you, it was us! We are working to prevent this from happening again, but in the meantime, you can view the service on our YouTube channel by [clicking here](#).

The John P. Webster Library (JPWL) – Just the FAQs

What is it?

The JPWL is a place to read about social justice issues, explore the religious books and resources, do research on family or faith, learn about other religions, and nourish your spirit!

Where is it, exactly?

It's beneath the meeting house, on the second floor, Room 211. Follow the signs posted around the building.

What's in this magical place?

A lot! We have a children's area, a seed library, a beautiful meeting space, newspapers and magazines, a coffee bar, a good collection of popular fiction books, and of course, a huge collection of spiritual resources!

Who can use the marvelous JPWL?

Everyone! You don't have to be a member of First Church. You don't have to live in West Hartford! We will issue you a unique library card if you choose to borrow a book, audiobook, or DVD. We are handicapped accessible.

Who oversees the fabulous JPWL?

Jennifer deSimas (Library Director) and Molly Bohman (Assistant Librarian)

How and Why is the beautiful JPWL here? In the mid-1970s, church member Florence Crofut bequeathed 1/3 of her estate to First Church, with the stipulation that the funds be used to create "an outstanding New England church library." In the 40+ years since, library staff and volunteers have built up this amazing collection of faith resources for all to access.

When is the beloved JPWL open?

Monday – Thursday: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Fridays & Sundays: 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Got more questions? We love questions! Come meet Jennifer and Molly at the JPWL!

Have You Heard?

The John P. Webster Library is now open on Fridays from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.!

Stop in and see us!

Check out these new books at JPWL:

- [*Good Inside: A Guide to Becoming the Parent You Want to Be*](#) by Becky Kennedy
- [*Banyan Moon*](#) by Thao Thai
- [*Granny's Garden*](#) by Susan Schenck Izard; illustrated by Carroll Semmes Schenck

For more click here: [The Online Catalog - First Church of West Hartford CT \(whfirstchurch.org\)](http://www.whfirstchurch.org)

September Reach Out: Mental Health Connecticut

Established in 1908, Mental Health Connecticut (MHC) is a statewide, nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve mental health for all Connecticut residents. MHC has worked to improve mental health services, promote recovery for people with mental health conditions, educate the community about the importance of mental wellness, and combat discrimination resulting from a mental health diagnosis. Through advocacy, education, and service, MHC empowers people to promote mental wellness, instigate meaningful systems change, and engage in mental health recovery. MHC serves more than 3,200 people annually through residential services, case management, supported and transitional employment, supported education, psychosocial rehabilitation, and peer support services. Furthermore, MHC offers services and support for adults who are deaf and have a mental condition as well as transition-age youth. Visit www.mhconn.org for more information. To donate online through the church [HERE](#) or you can donate directly at: www.mhconn.org. Thank you!

Submit Prayer Requests at http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request.

Family News!

We now have a family news page on our website: [click here](#). Family news will be shared when it is submitted to [Amy Melvin](#) or [Joy Taylor](#). Send your photo(s) with caption(s) any time! We may edit content to fit. Check it out under the Inreach Menu! (Please note, this is a public page. In other words, it is not password protected).

Spreading Your News

The Communications Team is made up of members of our Outreach Ministry, and the church Office Administrators.

Sunday Notes/Happenings submissions are due by noon on Tuesdays to Sarah and Linda.

- Sarah Kopp, Office Manager, sarah.kopp@whfirstchurch.org
- Linda Clark, Office Manager, FCWHAdmin2@whfirstchurch.org

Website, flyer, and Social Media additions or changes can be sent to Amy and Joy anytime.

- Amy Melvin, Communications, Communications@whfirstchurch.org
- Joy Taylor, Communications, Communications2@whfirstchurch.org

Four 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.

Office Hours: Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Contact: general.mail@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605