



Sunday Notes

November 19, 2023



Looking Towards Sunday

"To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch Heaven." – Johannes A. Gaertner

During our new member information session last weekend, our icebreaker exercise centered around my personal concern that retail stores have already begun playing Christmas music. I suggested that it's still too early. Are we just going to skip over Thanksgiving? What about mashed potatoes, and gravy, and gratitude?

By the way, the original New England tradition consisted of multiple days of fasting and prayer commemorating the harvest (and other blessings). I think that strategy might suit our ongoing struggle to make this secular celebration more spiritual – to make the nearing national holiday more holy.

To that end Sunday's sermon is entitled: **Assignment: Thanksgiving**. I've devised a serial celebration commencing Sunday and concluding Thursday – five days of guided meditation and centering prayer. The hope is that we might touch Heaven or, at least, enjoy an elevating experience.

The message is informed by two thanks-filled texts. **Philippians 4:4-9** conveys the exhortation: "*Do not worry about anything, but in everything prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" **Colossians 3:12-17** contains several habits for holy living, including: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.*"

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 this week were donated by Ellen Meinke in loving memory of Kenneth, Jean, and John Meinke.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple this week was lit by:

Amy Melvin and Joy Taylor in loving memory of their father, George Brigham.

Fred and Nancy Schpero in loving memory of Barbara Lewis.

Call to a Congregational Meeting

Sunday, December 3, 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, December 3, 2023 at 11:15 AM following morning worship to address the following item of business:

1. To consider and vote on the recommendation of the Selection Committee in regard to the call of a new settled Senior Pastor for First Church of Christ Congregational, West Hartford, CT, United Church of Christ.
2. In accordance with the By-laws of First Church, action will be taken only on matters included in the Call to Meeting.

Notice given on November 16, 2023.

Linda Bronstein, Secretary of the Church



Upcoming Events

Chamber Music – This Sunday, November 19 at 3 p.m. in the Chapel

The Chamber Music Series is a new series at First Church, designed to bring great music performances to an audience in an intimate setting. The ensemble features oboe, bassoon, and piano, as well as violin and cello. The concert is free to the public. A Free Will Offering will be received at the door.

Follow signs from the parking lot up the stairs, around to the front entrance of the Chapel.

Deck the Meeting House – Saturday, November 25 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Help First Church kick off the holidays by decorating the Meeting House! Join us in setting up candles, garland, and trees as we prepare for the holiday season. Thank you!

Reception of New Members - Sunday, November 26

We will receive new members into the life of the church during the 10 a.m. worship service on Sunday, November 26. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Fredd in person, by telephone at 860.233.9605, or via email

fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org.

Coffee and Conversation - Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

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

Book Group News:

The church's John P. Webster Library coordinates and sponsors two regular book groups that meet in the library. Copies of the books are provided for participants. New members are always welcome! For more information, please contact Jennifer or Molly at 860-232-3893 or jpwlibrary@whfirstchurch.org.

Awakening the Spirit, led by Rev. Tom Carr, meets on Mondays from 12 to 1:30 p.m. Bring a bag lunch; beverages and desserts are provided. The group is reading Thich Nhat Hanh's classic [Living Buddha, Living Christ](#) (20th anniversary edition). If the Buddha and Jesus were to meet on the road today, what would each think of the other's spiritual views and practices? Hanh brings to Christianity an appreciation of its beauty that could be conveyed only by an outsider. In lucid, meditative prose, he explores the crossroads of compassion and holiness at which the two traditions meet, and he reawakens our understanding of both.

Food for Thought's next meeting is December 5 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. to discuss [Everything Beautiful in Its Time: Seasons of Love and Loss](#) by Jenna Bush Hagar. In this heartfelt memoir, the former first daughter and grand-daughter shares moving, funny stories about her beloved grandparents and the wisdom they passed on that has shaped her life. A wonderful celebration of the enduring power of family and an exploration of the things that truly matter most (Amazon review).

Faith Formation Notes and News

Welcome, Children!

- Start your Sundays at First Church in the Meeting House/Sanctuary in the Playground or in the pew with your family. After the Message for All Ages, you may follow Ms. Jennifer to church school or remain in the sanctuary during worship.
- PreK - Grade 1 – Room #404
- Grades 2 - 5 -- Room #406
- Infants and toddlers -- Nursery, Room #216 (parents, please inform Jennifer by the Friday before worship if you will require Nursery care)
- You may also watch the livestream of the service on the large screen in the church library (beneath the sanctuary), and join us for coffee afterwards!

Parents of PreK--Grade 1: These students are now meeting in Room 404 (4th floor of the Parish House, the building between the sanctuary and the auditorium). These students must be picked up by a parent or guardian; they are not allowed to leave on their own at the end of class (11 a.m.). Thank you!

Sunday Bible Study

Sunday mornings from 9:00 to 9:45 a.m. in the World Fellowship Room (Room #303)

Join Rev. Tom Carr each Sunday before worship for an in-depth look at the Bible. Starting November 26, the group will begin a special Advent-focused study. All are welcome!

Advent Devotionals Available

The JPWL is offering two Advent devotional options this year. Please pick up yours at the entrances to the meeting house:

Glow: The 2023 Advent-Christmastide Devotional

Once again the Stillspeaking Writers Group offers a daily devotional to guide us through the days of Advent, then Christmastide, and on to the celebration of Epiphany. Glow includes candle-lighting liturgies for home use as well as daily readings with scripture and prayer.

The glow of Advent is a watchfire's embers as a new day begins to dawn.

The glow of Advent is the peace of candlelit faces singing, "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

The glow of Advent is spelled with the "O!" of yearning and, then, with the "O!" of realization as we grasp the season's meaning: everything has changed.

Slow Down. Quiet. It's Advent.

This illustrated calendar poster suggests ways to mark the days through the Advent season. Daily line drawings and quotations march across the calendar blocks, offering ideas for prayer, helping others, or reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas. Perfect for posting on the fridge!

Announcements

Please Note

The JPW Library will be closed on Wednesday, November 22. Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving Baskets

Our food collection for Thanksgiving baskets is here! If you would like to help, please bring in a food item, using the following guide:

If your last name begins with...you'll bring:

A-D: Gravy and Cranberry Sauce, Spanish Food (i.e. Goya Products)

E-H: Rice and potatoes

I-L: Breakfast cereals and juice boxes

M-P: Canned fruits and vegetables

Q-T: Bread and roll mix; stuffing mix

U-Z: Juice, tea and coffee

Please bring items to church and place them in a Food for Friends barrel **by November 19th**. We will use these items to fill the baskets. We will also be collecting Stop and Shop gift cards, which each family will receive along with their basket of food items. We are looking for volunteers to fill and organize the baskets on November 19th after worship.

If you can help out or have any questions please contact Maryanne Barry at maryricbarry@gmail.com or Diane Bohman at dmbohman@comcast.net Thank you! Maryanne and Diane

Festival of Trees

The Festival of Trees is just a few weeks away. If you would like to volunteer the night of the festival (Nov. 30) please click [HERE](#). You may sell tickets, bake cookies, greet visitors, or help people find the auditorium. On Sunday Nov. 26, after church, we need volunteers to help set up the Festival. On December 3, volunteers will be needed to call raffle winners and break down the Festival. Thank you!

Light The Steeple in Honor of a Loved One

For a \$25 donation, you are invited to "Light the Steeple" for one week in honor of a loved one. Similar to making a flower donation we will ask that you pick a date at least one week in advance of the desired week, and all donors will be acknowledged in our weekly *Happenings*. Please note more than one donor can fall on any given week. Donations will be added to the Save the Steeple fund. Click "Light The Steeple for a loved one" found on the "Save the First Church Steeple" web page or [click here](#).

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 17th, or delivered to your doorstep if needed. Donations can also be made to the Organ & Carillon Reserve Fund. Online orders and donations can be made [HERE](#) or you can print a form [HERE](#) to mail in with your payment. All donations must be received in the office by Monday, December 11th.

Pledging for 2024 is underway.

If you would like to make your pledge online, you can do so by filling out the online pledge card [HERE](#). You can also return your pledge card to the church office or place it in the offering plate during worship.

Covenant to Care Hat & Mitten Drive

The Annual Hat and Mitten Drive is underway and will continue through the end of the year. Please bring new or gently worn mittens, hats, scarves, and other winter clothing for children through our Covenant to Care partners. Marked boxes will be available in the Narthex and outside the auditorium to collect your donations. Any new or used winter outerwear or clothing in good condition is welcome.

Altar Flower Donations Needed!

Sponsoring altar flowers is a meaningful way to honor or remember loved ones and is also part of our In-reach ministry. **We have dates available for 2024**, including these upcoming dates: 1/21, 1/28, 2/4, 2/25, 3/3, 3/17, and 3/24. Please contact the church office for details at general.mail@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605. Please note, the price of a seasonal altar flower arrangement has increased to \$90.

First Church Academy for Young Children 2024-2025 Registration

Registration for the 24-25 program year is here! First Church Academy for Young Children will accept applications from our currently enrolled families and church members beginning **November 15th**. The downloadable application and instructions for registration can be found on our website www.firstchurchacademy.org. Registration for the broader community will begin on December 1st.

If you have any questions, please contact Dawne Quinn, Director at dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org.

Five Wishes Booklets Available at the JPW Library

Five Wishes is a living will in which you consider your personal, emotional, and spiritual needs as well as your medical wishes. It is an easy-to-use complete form developed with help from the American Bar Association's Commission on Law and Aging. Once it is filled out and properly signed it is valid in most states, including CT. Five Wishes helps you begin the necessary conversations about your end-of-life care with your loved ones. The booklets are available for free at the JPW Library.

More information, including the option to purchase a digital version of the document, is available at fivewishes.org.

Job Posting – 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>.

Google Review

Do you like First Church? Would you take a minute and write a review? We like stars, so give us 5 if you really like us. Even better, write a comment too. Click here: <https://g.page/r/CSKC8GKwjZ8EEBo/review>. Thank you in advance!

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

November Reach Out: Hands on Hartford

Hands On Hartford is a social service nonprofit organization that serves Hartford's most economically challenged residents in the areas of food, housing, and health. Founded in 1969 as Center City Churches, the agency has had a longstanding commitment to providing respectful, comprehensive services with help from volunteers and community partnerships. Hands on Hartford MANNA Food and Neighborhood Services program provides direct relief to thousands of Hartford neighbors each month. Through Gather55, the Community Pantry, and the Backpack Nutrition Program for children, they provide meals and groceries to individuals and families facing food insecurity. MANNA also provides vital support through community connections, referrals, security deposit & utility assistance, basic health screening, nutrition education and employment & education expense assistance. For more information: <https://handsonhartford.org/> or call 860-728-3201. To donate online thru the church, click [HERE](#) or you can donate directly at: <https://handsonhartford.org/>. Thank you for your support!

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).

Taking Photos in Church and Sharing Policy

Taking photos and documenting life events is commonplace now and more and more common in church settings. Lots of members are asking about taking photos at church events and wondering how to share them and to avoid confusion, we came up with some guidelines. Most important: be sure phone is in silent mode and skip solo selfies when tagging church events! Laminated copies of guidelines are at each entrance to the Sanctuary and at the auditorium entrance, or [view policy here](#) or go to website>Photo Gallery page. Thank you, Amy and Joy.

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