



Sunday Notes

December 3, 2023



Looking Towards Sunday

Hope /hōp/

noun 1. a feeling of anticipation or wanting something to happen.

verb 2. to desire with expectation of success or achievement.

The hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" conveys the church's spiritual attitude during the season of Advent:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

We sing those lyrics remembering the arrival of the Christ child long ago and looking forward to the Savior's second coming in the future. Fittingly, the worship themes this Sunday are alertness and anticipation. The sermon is entitled "Hope Is a Verb with Her Sleeves Rolled Up". Which is a way of suggesting that hope is not merely a feeling word. It is an action word too! Hope is more than wanting and waiting. It also involves working. I'll say more when I see you.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Fredd

Today's Altar Flower Dedication

The altar flowers today are from Margaret (Peg) Johnson, a long-term member, as a tribute to her family, relatives, and friends and in gratitude for their love and support.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple this week was lit by Sandra Ward in loving memory of Mother Inell Evans and in loving memory of Rev. Fred Ward, Sr.

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

Reception of New Members

The following new members were received into the church on Sunday, November 26:

Dale Comstock, Ray Epps, Nicole Jackman, Kathy Joy, Miles Lawrence, Nina Lawrence, Liz Murray, Maria Soaft, Yvonne Tafuto, Sara Thompson, and Christine Thomson.

To read more, click [HERE](#).



Upcoming Events

Please join us for the following Advent festivities at First Church! Click [HERE](#) for more information.

December 3 – First Sunday of Advent, *Hope* - 10 a.m. worship service with Communion.

December 10 – Second Sunday of Advent, *Peace* – Rev. Tom Carr will provide the message during the 10 a.m. service.

December 17 – Third Sunday of Advent, *Joy* – 10 a.m. worship service featuring a brass quintet.

December 17 – Arts in the Center Concert, Chorus Angelicus at 4 p.m. in the Meeting House.

December 24 – Fourth Sunday of Advent, *Love* – We will have 2 Christmas Eve Services of Lessons and Carols

4:30 p.m. – Festive Service with a walk-on children's pageant.

9 p.m. – Contemplative, candle-light service.

*(Please note there will be no 10 a.m. worship service on Dec. 24 and there will not be a service on Christmas Day, Dec. 25.)

December 31 – Colossal Puppets return during the 10 a.m. worship service.

Christmas Angelicus Concert- Please join us for this "Arts in the Center" concert!

Sunday, December 17 at 4:00 p.m. in The Meeting House

The award-winning children's choir, Chorus Angelicus, presents their annual concert of music for the season. Old and new arrangements of carols and seasonal songs, sung by *Chorus Angelicus & Gaudeamus*, are interwoven with stories, poems, and readings, topped off with traditional carols which the audience can join. Click [HERE](#) to buy tickets.

Coffee and Conversation - Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

Join Rev. Fredd and friends 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 Mondays from 12 to 1:30. 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).

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). Their next book will be [Horse](#) by Geraldine Brooks: *Based on the remarkable true story of the record-breaking thoroughbred Lexington, Horse is a novel of art and science, love and obsession, and our unfinished reckoning with racism...A discarded painting in a junk pile, a skeleton in an attic, and the greatest racehorse in American history: from these strands, a Pulitzer Prize winner braids a sweeping story of spirit, obsession, and injustice across American history.*

Faith Formation Notes and News

Welcome, Children!

- Start your Sundays 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.
- Infants and toddlers -- Nursery, Room 216 (parents, please inform Jennifer by the Friday before worship if you will require Nursery care)
- PreK - Grade 1 -- Room 404. Parents, pick up at 11 a.m. These children are not allowed to leave on their own.
- Grades 2-5 -- Room 406.
- *You may also watch the livestream* of the service on the large screen in the church library (beneath the sanctuary), which also has a great toddler area! Join us for coffee afterwards!

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!

Create Your Own Advent Wreath- Sunday after worship! There will be a table set up next to the stage in the auditorium with all the materials you need to make an Advent wreath to use at home. Daily devotional booklets also included. See Jennifer with questions.

Christmas Pageant The Faith Formation team is happy to announce a retelling of the beloved Nativity story will take place at the 4:30 Christmas Eve service! In addition, we are inviting you – and you – and you! – to tap your inner shepherd, magi, or angel and join in the telling. Costumes will be available at the door the evening of the service – first come, first served. A brief practice will be held for Sunday School students during class on 12/17. Volunteers are also needed for special backstage tasks, including child wrangling, prop allocations, and a little heavy lifting. See Jennifer to join the production!

Sunday School Students -- pick up a copy of the 2023 Reverse Advent Calendar at the entrances to the Meeting House!

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.

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

Share A Gift Tree for Our Covenant to Care Children

Take a tag from the tree in the auditorium starting December 3, buy a gift, and bring the unwrapped gift to the church office (or auditorium on Sundays) by December 17. Help our Covenant to Care children have a Merry Christmas! For any questions, please contact Maryanne Barry at (860-593-7248 or maryricbarry@gmail.com) or Diane Bohman at (860-490-5908 or dmbohman@comcast.net)

Covenant to Care Thanksgiving Baskets

We would like to extend our gratitude to the congregation. Due to your generosity, First Church provided enough food for 27 families in need of assistance on Thanksgiving. Maryanne Barry and Diane Bohman.

Update from the First Church Academy Workgroup

In April of this year, our Coordinating Team, led by Moderator Wendy Wigglesworth, convened a work group to examine the relationship between the church and the First Church Academy for Young Children. The members of the work group were: Suzanne Carnes, Chair; Jenny Clark, Co-Chair; Diane Bohman; Linda Lacasse; Dawne Quinn, Lisa Reed, and Jim Warner.

Our charge from the Coordinating Team was to "discern the pros and cons of a legal separation of the Academy from the church" as its own entity.

After consulting with several church leaders, staff members, our insurance provider and three attorneys, we completed our work in October. The final report was sent to the Business Team, which in turn presented it to the Coordinating Team. Our unanimous decision was that the First Church Academy should remain as part of First Church. It should not be separated as its own entity. To see the complete report, please click [HERE](#).

Calling all Crafters, Artists, Collectors: Do you have something that you've created or curated – something you'd like to share with others? Consider a display in the JPWL Gallery! There is plenty of wall space, a flexible hanging and lighting system, and a secure display case. That collection of antique bottles or lace? Yes! Your assortment of paintings by Appalachian folk artists?! If you'd like to share it – or have a friend who might – please see Jennifer to discuss it!

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](#).

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.

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.

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.

Help make holiday wishes come true! Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation and My Sisters' Place are holding their annual Holiday Wish Program, which provides individuals and families served by Mercy Housing and My Sisters' Place with one physical gift and one \$25. gift card the week of Christmas. Donors are needed to help fulfill this year's wishes. Please visit <https://mercyhousingct.org/news-events/> or <https://sistersplacect.org/news-events/> to access our gift registry.

December Reach Out: Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years. Funds provide direct financial support to those who serve the church and are facing financial difficulties. Active and retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses may be eligible for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and/or Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks. Your generous support will be a blessing to servants of the church old and young, retired and active, lay and authorized". Thank you for your support!

For more information: https://www.ucc.org/ocwm_special-support/ To donate online thru the church: [HERE](#) or you can donate directly at: [Giving Opportunities - United Church of Christ \(ucc.org\)](http://Giving Opportunities - United Church of Christ (ucc.org))

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).

Taking Photos in Church and Sharing Policy

Taking photos and documenting life events is commonplace now and more and more common in church settings, so 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