



Sunday Notes

December 10, 2023



Looking Towards Sunday

It has been said that peace is not the absence of pain, but the presence of God. This weekend, we light the second candle of Advent in contemplation of the Christ child's imminent arrival – God with us. You may recall that a certain angel foretold the birth. God sent Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth to young woman named Mary. Gabriel came to her and said...hang on...

It's not my story to tell. You really should hear it from the source. Which is part of the Sunday morning worship plan. Rev. Thomas Carr will offer an embodied message for all ages – a living, breathing bible story. He'll say more when you see him. I mean, Gabriel in the flesh! Do not be afraid, beloved, for you have found favor with God!



By the way, Rev. Carr is a retired ordained minister (American Baptist Churches, USA). He is a certified Spiritual Director who works with individuals and groups in spiritual and vocational discernment. He is an activist for local, state, and national environmental and human justice concerns; co-founder and coordinator of the American Baptist Churches, USA, Creation Justice Network (ABC, CJN) and the Connecticut Interreligious Eco-Justice Network (IREJN). Rev. Carr also facilitates book groups and bible studies here at First Church.

Be blessed. Be a blessing.

Rev. Fredd

Today's Altar Flower Dedication

Our altar flowers this week were donated by David H. Simpson and Barbara L. Laurain in loving memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Simpson.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple this week was lit by:

Brian and Jane Ranagan in loving memory of Margaret Francis Cross.

Susan Ross in loving memory of F. Douglas Ross, Jr.

The Rottman family in loving memory of their uncle, Al Roach.

Upcoming Events

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

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 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).
- **Food for Thought's** next meeting is January 2 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. to discuss Geraldine Brooks' latest novel, [*Horse*](#). 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

Christmas Pageant

The Faith Formation team is happy to announce a retelling of the beloved Nativity story will take place at the 4:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service! And 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. 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 – and Anyone Else!

Pick up a copy of the 2023 Reverse Advent Calendar at the entrances to the meeting house. Kindle the true spirit of Christmas by filling a bag with groceries and toiletries for those who need them. Please bring your filled bags to church by January 7, 2024.

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!

Welcome, Children!

Start your Sundays at First Church in the Meeting House/Sanctuary, in the Prayground, 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. The group is currently doing a special Advent-focused study. All are welcome!

Announcements

New Emergency Response Fund

First Church has established an "Emergency Response Fund" which replaces the old Deacon's and Pastor's Discretionary Funds. The account was re-established (and renamed) to address more urgent financial needs for members of the community. Reverend Fredd, in collaboration with the Deacons will manage the use of the funds in order to serve its highest purpose. Should you wish to make a contribution to the account, please notate "Emergency Response Fund" on your donation.

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)

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. Please see Jennifer if interested.

Christmas Gift Idea! Joyce Darling, whose paintings were displayed in the JPWL Gallery last spring, has agreed to share images of her work to create a 2024 wall calendar. Calendars are \$20 each; all proceeds will go to the steeple fund.

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](#) (*Please note: page one of the form is for Wreaths, you will need to hit "NEXT" to get to Poinsettia & Organ donations). You can also 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.

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.

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

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 \(ucc.org\)](https://www.ucc.org/giving-opportunities)

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