



# Sunday Notes

February 25, 2024



## Looking Towards Sunday

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.'" – Genesis 17:1

Friends:

Two things.

First, let me remind you about the Dialogue Circles event this Sunday after worship. The Peacebuilders – students pursuing the Master of Arts in International Peacebuilding degree at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace – will worship with us and then help us workshop this important question: "How does our faith shape our approach to national and international issues when we gather?" I hope you are willing to bring your perspective and your prayerful presence to the break-out groups. You can register [here](#); and walk-ins are welcome.



Secondly, this week's scripture selection conveys another appearance story. God shows up and speaks to Abram, saying essentially: "Following faithfully changes everything – your name, your identity, and your future...forever." Which is totally true. It happened on Wednesday morning when we were strolling Farmington Avenue after coffee and conversation. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon (based on Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16) is entitled: **The One About Walking**.

Lenten blessings,

Rev. Fredd

## Today's Altar Flower Dedication

Our altar flowers this week were donated by Suzanne and Webb Carnes in loving memory of their fathers, Stephen B. Kostyal and Webb M. Carnes, Jr.

## Light the Steeple

Our steeple this week was lit by Mark and Jane Tamaccio in loving memory of Joan Carol Tamaccio Hammeal.

## Call to the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Congregation

Notice is hereby given that a Congregational Meeting of the First Church of Christ Congregational of West Hartford, Connecticut, UCC, will be held in the Meetinghouse on Sunday, March 10, 2024 starting at approximately 11:15 a.m.

This meeting is called to transact the following items of business:

To consider and vote on the minutes of the Annual Meeting of First Church held on March 12, 2023.

To consider and vote on the proposed slate of Officers, Team Leaders and Team Members for First Church for the coming year.

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 February 20, 2024

Linda Bronstein, Secretary

### Please join us for the following Lenten activities at First Church:

- February 25 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent – 10 a.m. worship service
- February 27 – Open Chapel – 12 to 1 p.m. in the Chapel
- March 3 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent – 10 a.m. worship service with Communion & Open Chapel from 5 to 6 p.m.
- March 10 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent – 10 a.m. worship service
- March 12 – Open Chapel – 12 to 1 p.m. in the Chapel
- March 17 – 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent – 10 a.m. worship service followed by Soup and Sharing at 11:15 a.m.
- March 19 – Open Chapel – 5 to 6 p.m. in the Chapel
- March 24 – Palm Sunday – 10 a.m. worship service with music and palm fronds
- March 29 – Good Friday - 6 p.m. service in the Meeting House & Open Chapel from 12 to 1 p.m.
- March 31 – Easter Sunday – 10 a.m. worship service featuring a brass quintet

\*Continue reading Sunday Notes or click [HERE](#) for more information and detailed descriptions of upcoming events.

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### Upcoming Events

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#### 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. All are welcome to stop by!

#### 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!

#### Dialogue Circles with Peacebuilders from Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (HIU)

*THIS SUNDAY*, February 25 at 11:15 a.m. in the JPW Library

You're invited to participate in Dialogue Circles with Master of Arts in International Peacebuilding (MAP) students from HIU. The conversations are conducted as part of the MAP curriculum. Students are training to become community change agents by developing proficiency in conflict transformation and fluency in the religious traditions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The ability to facilitate fruitful conversation is an essential skill for MAP students and all peacebuilding people. Which is why your participation is vitally important. We will form break-out groups to consider the topic 'Beyond Thoughts and Prayers: How does our faith shape our approach to national and international issues when we gather?' The goal is to get 20-25 volunteers. The hope is that everyone who gives to the circles will gain lessons and blessings! [Register here!](#)

**Sunday School Students in Grades 1-6 will** attend a special Communion workshop **This Sunday, February 25** during class time.

#### Introducing "OPEN CHAPEL": sacred space for quiet reflection and prayer

The Spirit Team is offering an alternative way to experience Lent. We are calling it "Open Chapel." Although it will take place in our chapel, it is not a typical worship service. There is no sermon or singing, or even talking, although you may hear a whisper or soft music now and then. Open Chapel offers a still and quiet place for silent reflection and prayer. Open Chapel was inspired by the need for stillness amid the tumult of our world and the demands of our daily lives. Open Chapel welcomes you to come in to sit quietly for just a little while or for the whole hour. You may choose to leave a written prayer request in our prayer basket or pick up a Lenten card on which to reflect. Our weekly schedule will be flexible, and we hope you will find a time that is convenient. Join us to experience the sacred silence of Lent.

Tuesday, February 27 -- Noon to 1 p.m.

Sunday, March 3 -- 5 to 6 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12 -- Noon to 1 p.m.

Tuesday, March 19 -- 5 to 6 p.m.

Friday, March 29 -- Noon to 1 p.m.

#### Virtual Conversation with Author Matthew Desmond

Tuesday, February 27 at Noon - Online Event

The United Way ALICE Program (Asset Limited Income Constrained, Employed) invites you to a virtual conversation with Matthew Desmond – Pulitzer Prize Winner, Poverty Abolitionist, and Best-Selling Author of *Evicted* and *Poverty, By America*. Learn new ways of thinking about financial insecurity and how to find solutions. For more information and to register for this virtual program, click [here](#).

### Harvest Pack Meal Packing 2024

Saturday, March 2 from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Meal packing events are an incredible way to highlight our community, generate positive energy, and foster pride in working together for the benefit of others. Come by yourself or with a friend and join a team to pack meals for a few hours. We'll feed you a pizza lunch for all your hard work. Recommended donation is \$10 per family. [View Flyer here.](#)

### First Sunday Breakfast

Sunday, March 3 from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. in the Auditorium

The JPW Library and the Outreach cordially invite you to join us for breakfast! Enjoy a smorgasbord of fruit, hot breakfast casseroles, bacon or sausage, bagels, pastries, and more – plus coffee, juice & tea. Delicious gluten-free options, too. All are welcome!

### Faith on Film

A March matinee: Wednesday, March 20 at 1 p.m. in the JPW Library. Film TBD!

### Save the Date!

Celebrating Moms and MOMs (Models Of Motherliness)! Luncheon & Tea

Saturday, May 11 from 11:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Brunch and Program in the First Church Auditorium

*Babies are born from the womb. Maternity is born from the soul.*

### 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 to either group! For more information, please contact Jennifer or Molly at 860-232-3893 or [jpwlibrary@whfirstchurch.org](mailto: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 currently discussing Amy-Jill Levine's [The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings](#). Levine addresses some of the interpretive challenges presented by what she aptly terms the 'most perplexing teachings' of Messiah Jesus recorded by the Gospels ([adonaihalom.com](http://adonaihalom.com)).
- **Food for Thought's** next meeting is March 5 from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. (Note the time change!) to discuss [The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store](#), James McBride's "boisterous hymn to community, mercy, and karmic justice" ([kirkusreviews.com](http://kirkusreviews.com)).

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### Announcements

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### Easter Baskets For Our Covenant to Care Children

It is almost Easter and that means Easter Baskets. Please consider signing up to donate a filled Easter basket. We will provide the basket, filler/grass, cellophane bag, and bow. You need to fill the basket with the suggested items from the list we will provide. Sign-ups will start March 3. Please return filled baskets by Palm Sunday, March 24.

For any questions, please contact Maryanne Barry at (860-593-7248 or [maryricbarry@gmail.com](mailto:maryricbarry@gmail.com)) or Diane Bohman at (860-490-5908 or [dmbahman@comcast.net](mailto:dmbahman@comcast.net))

### One Great Hour of Sharing on Sunday, March 10

For over 70 years, the One Great Hour of Sharing has provided churches of many denominations around the world the opportunity to help our neighbors in need. This special Lenten mission offering supports disaster and refugee/immigration and development throughout the world and the opportunity to share God's love with our neighbors. This month make your contribution through the Church Website Giving Page by clicking on One Great Hour of Sharing in the drop-down menu or Text OGHS to (860) 222-7870 or using the special pew collection envelope. The need is great and so is our calling.

### New Exhibit! *Expressing Faith on Canvas – a Form of Prayer, Reflection, and Therapy*

The JPWL Gallery invites you to view our most recent exhibit, featuring the calligraphy paintings of Chaplain Aida Mansoor. Aida is the Director of Field Education at Hartford International University. She also serves in the community and works with the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut and the Islamic Association of Greater Hartford.

## Lenten Devotionals

Lenten Devotionals are available at the entrances to the Meeting House and in the Rotunda entrance hallway. This year's devotional "Bent" was written by the Still-Speaking Writers Group of the United Church of Christ. *"Jesus modeled flexibility: hardship and persecution bent but didn't break him. Change and challenge strengthened his ministry. Impossible situations yielded to healing and release."* You may also access a daily devotional from the United Church of Christ [here](#).

## Other Online Devotionals & Studies for Lent

- [Home-Brewed Christianity](#) presents a series of live and asynchronous lectures beginning 2/20 and hosted by John Dominic Crossan. Guests include Brian McLaren, Jennifer Garcia Bashaw, and Diana Butler Bass. [More information and registration here](#).
- [Unbound: The Intersection of Faith and Justice](#) offers an online Lenten [daily devotional](#). Unbound is "an inclusive and welcoming platform, no matter one's gender, sexuality, race, religion, age, ability or creed."
- [The Upper Room](#) offers a daily devotional [here](#). The site also provides links to readings in over 30 different languages and opportunities to leave prayer requests.

## FCAYC February Love Collection

The First Church Academy is collecting items to be donated to South Park Inn. Items needed include **Everyday Supplies**: laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, white cotton towels and face cloths. **Housewarming Baskets**: pots and pans sets, dishes, silverware. **Retail Gift Cards**: Stop & Shop, Big Y, Target, Walmart. For more information about the South Park Inn or to see the complete list of needed items, click [HERE](#). For more info., contact Dawne Quinn at: [dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org](mailto:dquinn@firstchurchacademy.org) or 860-233-9605 ext. 133. Thank you for your support!

## Acolytes

Church acolytes play an important role in our Sunday services. Children will be lighting the candles before worship as well as putting the candles out to conclude the service. This can be a meaningful way for our children to serve their faith community. If your child is interested in helping out, please see or email Amanda Bethune at [amander14@gmail.com](mailto:amander14@gmail.com).

## First Church Online Technology Assistance is Available!

Struggling with using CCB, online pledging, or trying to create repeating payments on our website? The First Church office staff is happy to help! Please reach out to us in person, via email or call the main office and we can walk you through 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. We 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](#).

Submit Prayer Requests at [http://bit.ly/FCprayer\\_request](http://bit.ly/FCprayer_request).

## February Reach Out: South Park Inn

South Park Inn's Emergency Shelter provides a safe, temporary residence to individuals that are literally homeless. The shelter welcomes individuals from all walks of life and has space to accommodate up to 85 men, women, and children every night. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, never closing their doors.

Their emergency shelter, veterans' programs, respite, and supportive housing provide personalized support to each of the men, women, and children that enter their doors. South Park Inn offers many services, including nutritious meals, personal hygiene supplies, laundry facilities, and bus passes for transportation. South Park Inn's goal is to provide a safe, temporary place to stay as individuals identify the support and opportunities that lead to their own long-term housing solutions.

For more information: [www.southparkinn.org](http://www.southparkinn.org).

To donate on line thru the church: [HERE](#) or you can donate directly at: [www.southparkinn.org](http://www.southparkinn.org). Thank you for your support!

If you would like to make your 2024 pledge online, you can do so by filling out the online pledge card [HERE](#).

#### 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.

#### 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 the 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 - [sarah.kopp@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:sarah.kopp@whfirstchurch.org)  
**Website, flyer, and Social Media additions or changes** can be sent to Amy and Joy anytime.

- Amy Melvin, Communications, [Communications@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Communications@whfirstchurch.org)
- Joy Taylor, Communications, [Communications2@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:Communications2@whfirstchurch.org)

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

**Contact:** [general.mail@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:general.mail@whfirstchurch.org) or 860-233-9605