



Sunday Notes

March 3, 2024



Looking Towards Sunday

"And on the seventh day God finished the work that [God] had done, and [God] rested on the seventh day from all the work that [God] had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that [God] had done in creation." – Genesis 2:2-3

Loved ones:

This Sunday, the featured scripture selection is Exodus 20:1-17. Which is where we find the so-called Ten Commandments...or the Decalogue...or the ten statements – God's self-disclosure and pledge to protect and provide for God's people.

Actually, we're just going to look at the statement that seems, on the surface of things, to forbid work: "*Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work...*"

What if I told you that the fourth commandment is, maybe, the most misinterpreted of the ten. It doesn't so much outlaw labor as much as it invites a sacred work stoppage. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon is entitled: **Remember the Sabbath Day.**

Be blessed. Be a blessing.
Rev. Fredd

Today's Altar Flower Dedication

The altar flowers today are donated by Fred and Wyrot Ward in celebration of and thanksgiving for their family members who have March birthdays: Sandra Ward, Emerson Ward and their late matriarch Mrs. Verdell Ward.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple this week was lit by the Ackerman Family in loving memory of Harry L. Ackerman, Jr.

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:

- March 3 – 3rd Sunday in Lent – 10 a.m. worship service with Communion & Open Chapel from 5 to 6 p.m.
- March 10 – 4th Sunday in Lent – 10 a.m. worship service
- March 12 – Open Chapel – 12 to 1 p.m. in the Chapel
- March 17 – 5th 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



Upcoming Events

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!

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.

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.

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.

Antisemitism and Islamophobia: Then and Now

Virtual Program from Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (HIU)

Tuesdays in March, from 12 to 1 p.m. More info and registration [here](#).

HIU will host a four-part lunchtime webinar series that explores the roots – and the current manifestations – of hatred and bigotry toward Jews and Muslims. Two scholars will focus on what's happening today and two will delve into ancient and scriptural connections. Each webinar will take place on a Tuesday in March, beginning March 5, from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. EST. Join all four webinars for \$25.00 or join individual ones for \$10.00 each. There is a free option for those who cannot pay.

Soup and Sharing: Clean Heart Conversations

March 17 at 11:15 a.m. in the Auditorium

We'll engage in guided small-group discussion based on David's desire for cleansing and a new and right spirit (Psalm 51:10). Soup (and bread) will be served! Sign-up [HERE](#) in advance or drop-in that morning.

Faith on Film - A March matinee: "Women Talking"

Wednesday, March 20 at 1 p.m. in the JPW Library.

Based on Miriam Toews novel of the same name, which itself is based on true events that occurred in an isolated Mennonite community in Bolivia. "Women Talking" follows a group of American Mennonite women who have been abused by the men in their colony. As they discover and share their experiences of oppression, and discuss the ethics of their faith, they slowly begin to imagine a world free of the horror inflicted upon them. [Watch the trailer here](#).

JPWL Gallery Talk, *Expressing Faith on Canvas – a Form of Prayer, Reflection, and Therapy* w Aida Mansoor

Thursday, March 21 at 2:30 p.m.

The JPWL Gallery invites you to a gallery talk with Chaplain Aida Mansoor, whose calligraphy paintings are currently on exhibit. 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.

Arts in the Center Series presents an Evening with Andrew Thomson

Friday, March 22 at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel. Please join us for this upcoming Arts in the Center concert!

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.

- **Awakening the Spirit**, led by Rev. Tom Carr, meets Mondays from 12-1:30. Bring a bag lunch; beverages and desserts are provided. On March 4, the group finishes its discussion of Amy-Jill Levine's [*The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings*](#). Their next book is [*On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Growing Old*](#) by Parker Palmer. "This book is not for elders only. It was written to encourage adults of all ages to explore the way their lives are unfolding. It's...a set of meditations in prose and poetry that turn the prism on the meaning(s) of one's life, refracting new light at every turn."
- **Food for Thought's** next meeting is this Tuesday from 5:00-6:30 p.m. (**Please note the time change!**) to discuss [*The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*](#) by James McBride. Their next book is [*The Measure*](#) by Nikki Erlick: "Today, when you open your front door, waiting for you is a small wooden box. This box holds your fate inside: the answer to the exact number of years you will live...Imagine waking up tomorrow with the opportunity to learn when you will die. Would you want to know the date, or would you prefer to remain blissfully ignorant?" (Amazon)

Announcements

A New Sunday School class is forming for students in Grade 6 and up. The class will be led by Michael Protos and will meet 1-2 times per month. They will use Echo the Story, a curriculum prepared especially for upper elementary students that uses storytelling, creative reflection, conversation, and dialogue to dive deeper and find meaning and identity in the biblical narratives. On weeks when there is no class meeting, these students are invited to the PreK-Grade 1 class to assist with reading, crafts, and games.

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) or Diane Bohman at (860-490-5908 or dmbohman@comcast.net).

Easter Donations

This is a wonderful opportunity to make a donation in honor of, or in memory of, a loved one! Easter Lily and Organ & Carillon donations can be made online [HERE](#). Click [HERE](#) for a printable form and return it to the church office with your payment. If you wish to have your donation listed in the Sunday Bulletin, please make your donation by Sunday, March 24. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah at sarah.kopp@whfirstchurch.org or 860-233-9605.

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 spring dates: 3/17, 4/14, 5/5, and 5/26. Please contact the church office for details at 860-233-9605. Please note, the price of a seasonal altar flower arrangement has increased to \$90.

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.

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.

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.

March Reach Out: My Sisters' Place

Every day, throughout the Greater Hartford area, there are hundreds of people who have found themselves homeless due to domestic violence, eviction, unemployment, or mental illness – the overwhelming majority often women and children. My Sisters' Place mission is committed to ending homelessness by empowering women, families, and others in Greater Hartford to achieve independence and stability in their community by providing housing and supportive services. My Sisters' Place provides a comprehensive array of outreach and services that is unmatched by any other organization in the Hartford, Connecticut region. From safe housing and education to employment and empowerment, My Sister Place provides real, life-changing benefits to clients.

For more information please visit: [My Sisters' Place, Inc. \(sistersplacect.org\)](http://www.sistersplacect.org) or call 860-895-6629.

To donate on line thru the church, click [HERE](#) or you can donate directly at: [My Sisters' Place, Inc. \(sistersplacect.org\)](http://www.sistersplacect.org). Thank you for your support.

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
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

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

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