



Sunday Notes

March 24, 2024



Looking Towards Sunday

"Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." – Psalm 118:25-26a

That's what the throngs of thousands – those who went ahead and those who followed – were shouting as Jesus entered Jerusalem riding upon a colt. The psalm's lyrics were part of the liturgy of the Jewish festival of Passover. They had traveled to the holy city for that reason...praying about freedom and picturing a society of peace and justice. Jesus' triumphal arrival was a beacon of hope. It signaled to them that the kingdom of God was close at hand.



The people begged him, "Please save us!" Which is how "Hosanna" is often translated. I've read this text many, many times; but never applied the Lectio Divina method. Thanks to Rev. Susan, I've discovered a different, deeper wisdom than in years past.

The shouting echoes across the ages and it resonates with our present-day pleading for success and salvation. It hurts my heart to hear it. I'll say more when I see you. The Palm/Passion Sunday sermon (based on Mark 11:1-11) is entitled: **Hosanna's Hard Edge.**

Be blessed. Be a blessing.

Rev. Fredd

Today's Altar Flower Dedication

The altar flowers today were donated by Carole Carter and family in loving memory of Bob Carter.

Light the Steeple

Our steeple this week was lit by:

- Carole Carter and family in loving memory of Bob Carter.
- Ed and Carol Lennig in celebration of Leona's second birthday.
- Kathryn and Carolyn Joy in loving memory of Lawrence Joy.

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

- 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 followed by an Easter egg hunt.

Upcoming Events

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!

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 lively conversations about how the stories, sayings, and teachings of ancient scriptures speak to us individually and collectively in the here and now. All are welcome to come with open minds and hearts! No registration necessary.

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

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

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. Join us to experience the sacred silence of Lent.

DO GOOD Friday - March 29 at 9:30 a.m. in the Auditorium.

On Good Friday, some of us have a day off from school or work. Let's take time to honor the good work of Jesus, who shared his life and love with everyone he met! We're calling it DO GOOD Friday. Join us to make go bagged lunches and Easter/Spring cards for Loaves & Fishes; bake brownies for the lunches; and stuff eggs for our annual Easter egg hunt. All Ages are welcome to participate – and if you can't make it, please consider making a donation toward the lunches! See Jennifer for more information or contact her at jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org. Let's Do Good Friday on March 29!

First Church Easter Egg Hunt! - Easter Sunday, March 31

The Faith Formation Work Group invites you to our annual Easter Egg Hunt following the worship service on Easter morning. All ages welcome – seek and you will find! Bring your own baskets or bags. Please see Jennifer with questions.

Of Interest: *Breaking the Silence About Mental Health Challenges with Children and Teens*

With the Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund, In Person at Yale Divinity School - Saturday, April 6 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Fee: \$25
Join Rev. Dr. Sarah Griffith Lund for conversations about the growing mental health crisis facing children and teens. The day also includes a panel of experts. Rev. Dr. Lund is Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice on the national staff of the United Church of Christ and is the senior pastor of First Congregational UCC of Indianapolis, IN. She is the author of [*Blessed Youth: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness with Children and Teens*](#), among other titles. Lunch is provided. [Tap here](#) for more info and to register.

What should GHIAA work on next? The answer will come out of small-group meetings where people are invited to share a story about an experience that happened to them or someone close to them -- something that made them think, "That's not right!" or "There ought to be a law against that!" The more people who share stories, the better chance we have of zeroing in on the most important issues that need our attention. [Click here to register](#) for one of the upcoming meetings. First Church is hosting several small-group meetings at First Church on **April 14**, 4:00-5:30pm, along with our partners Congregation Beth Israel and Westminster Presbyterian Church. If you can't make it on April 14, choose a session on another date, at another local GHIAA congregation. Any questions? Contact Linda Bronstein or Terry Schmitt.

Annual Event for Journey Home, one of our Outreach Partners

Journey Home works to end homelessness in Connecticut's Capital region through system change work. You are invited to attend their annual event on **Friday, April 19th**, at West Hartford Town Hall for a totally awesome 80's Prom! Get out that blue eyeshadow, those totally 80's clothes (or just come as you are!), that big hair, and join them for a radical and bodacious good time. All of this fun AND you are also supporting the amazing work at Journey Home. What could be more totally tubular? <https://www.journeyhomeevents.org/>

Book Group News:

The church's John P. Webster Library coordinates and sponsors two book groups that meet regularly 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 jpwlbrary@whfirstchurch.org.

Awakening the Spirit, led by Rev. Tom Carr, meets Mondays from 12-1:30. **Please note: this group will not meet on Monday, April 1.** Bring a bag lunch; beverages and desserts are provided. They are reading [*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." Tap [here](#) to join the group.

Food for Thought's next meeting is Tuesday April 2 from **5:00-6:30 p.m. (Please note the time change!)** to discuss [*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 learn when you will die. Would you want to know the date, or would you prefer to remain blissfully ignorant?" (Amazon) [Tap here](#) to join this group.

It's Nearly Planting Time -- Our donated seed packets from UCONN/Ocean State Job Lot have arrived! Stop by WeHa Grows, the JPWL Seed Library, this Sunday, March 24 during coffee hour to find out more, and to pick up seeds for this year's harvest. You'll find us right next to the Bookmobile in the Auditorium.

Announcements

Director of Faith Formation

Please join the Spirit Team in thanking Jennifer DeSimas for her capable leadership as Director of Faith Formation. Through her efforts, our children are actively engaged in weekly Sunday School, worship services, and other organized activities.

A workgroup has been formed to search for new leadership. An overview of the position reads as follows:

"Under the supervision of and reporting to the Senior Pastor, the Director of Faith Formation provides leadership to the educational and faith formation ministry of First Church. This is a part-time position, 22 hours per week, 52 weeks per year with two weeks paid vacation. The Director nurtures, guides and implements all aspects of faith formation from birth through fifth grade in accordance with the goals, objectives and policies established by the Faith Formation Workgroup and Spirit Team, and collaborates with clergy and other staff in the planning and coordination of the church's educational program and mission." To view the complete job description and requirements, click [HERE](#).

In addition to searching externally, the workgroup invites internal candidates to apply. Resumes and references may be sent to lisa.reed@whfirstchurch.org. Interested persons are asked to respond by March 25, 2024.

WELCOME CHILDREN & CARE-GIVERS!

Start your Sundays at First Church in the Meeting House/Sanctuary Prayground or together in the pews. After the Message for All Ages, children should follow Ms. Jennifer to church school or stay with their parents during worship.

- PreK – Grade 1 – Room 404. Teachers will lead students to the Auditorium after Sunday School.
- Grades 2-5 – Room 406. Students will be dismissed to the Auditorium after Sunday School.

You may also watch the livestream of the service on the large screen in the church library (beneath the sanctuary), which also has a beautiful children's reading/play area!

Easter Baskets For Our Covenant to Care Children

Thank you to everyone who signed up to donate Easter baskets for our Covenant to Care children! Please return filled baskets by this 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.

Oxen Hill Farm is partnering again with First Church to offer their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to the WH community, with pick up on Thursday afternoons at the church. Oxen Hill is a family-run, USDA Certified Organic vegetable farm with land in both Suffield and East Granby, CT, and First Church has been a pick-up point for shareholders for many years. Vegetable shares are available in three different sizes/fees. Flower shares are also available. [Tap here](#) for more information or to purchase a share.

Altar Flower Donations Needed!

Sponsoring altar flowers is a meaningful way to honor or remember loved ones and is also part of our Inreach ministry. **We have dates available for 2024**, including these spring dates: 4/14 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.

Coffee Cans Needed

Please donate empty coffee cans for the Parish Care Ministry. Each Sunday, the altar flowers are broken down into smaller flower arrangements and delivered to church members.

A Request from the Inreach Team

If you have taken any tablecloths or dish towels home to be laundered, please return them to the church at your earliest convenience. We will be using them for upcoming events. Thank you!

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.

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://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://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