



# Sunday Notes

April 7, 2024



## Looking Towards Sunday

*"Then [Jesus] said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'" – John 20:27*

Friends:

The inset image is a digital rendering of Caravaggio's masterpiece entitled *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1603). Which depicts the apostle's hand being guided by Christ's hand to inspect his crucifixion wounds.

Incredulity, you might recall, is one of the ingredients of Easter joy.

Incredulity says, "I can't believe what's right in front of me even though it's right in front of me." It tastes like doubt but it's not doubt. It has the same texture as suspicion but it's not suspicion. It's wonder...as in: "I wonder if God had a hand in this?!"



My point in repeating what I said last Sunday is that the inability to conceive of the Resurrection is common to the enterprise of faith. The fact that one apostle has had to wear the moniker "Doubting Thomas" in perpetuity has always struck me as an injustice since most of us would have struggled in the same way to make sense of the Savior's appearance.

So, can I encourage you to cease and desist any misconceptions you might have about Thomas? Instead, let's examine the episode (John 20:19-31) with open minds. I think it provides an important clue about how to deal with disbelief. I'll say more when I see you. The sermon is entitled: *The Acquittal of Thomas the Twin*.

Eastertide blessings,

Rev. Fredd

## Altar Flowers

Our altar flowers this week were donated by Harold Steever in loving memory of his mother, Bonnie Steever.

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## Upcoming Events

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### Family Worship April 7!

This Sunday is a Church Family Sunday -- children are invited to remain in the sanctuary during worship. They may sit in the pews with their parents or at the Prayground in the back. Worship Activity Bags are available at both sanctuary entrances for younger (ages 3-6) and older (ages 6-9) children. Parents, please ensure that your child takes just one bag so there are enough for all. ☺

### New Class! Exploring Truth in the Great Biblical Myths: Genesis 1-11

Sunday mornings, April 7 through June 2 from 9 to 9:45 a.m. - World Friendship Room (#303)

Do you wonder what's behind the stories we find in the first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis? What were – and are! - the truths the storytellers wanted us to understand? Did God really create the Earth in seven days? From the two Creation stories, to Adam and Eve, to Cain and Abel, to Noah and his ark, to the Tower of Babel, these ancient myths compel us to ask questions and reflect on their meanings for our individual and collective lives. Join us to explore these eternally relevant stories on nine Sunday mornings before worship. Our conversations will be led by Rev. Tom Carr. See Jennifer with questions.

**If you are interested in joining First Church**, please plan to attend an information session for prospective new members following worship on **Sunday, April 14 at 11:15 a.m.** We expect to receive new members into the life of the church during the 10 a.m. worship service on **Sunday, April 28**. Please contact Rev. Fredd in person, by telephone at 860.233.9605, or via email [fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:fredd.ward@whfirstchurch.org).

**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.

**Middle Schoolers!** Students in grades 6-8 are invited to meet in Room 407 on **April 21** for a new class that focuses on storytelling and conversation about biblical events and people. Why do we remember these stories? What do they mean to us, today? The class meets once or twice per month; we're hoping to meet more often as we go along. There will be snacks! So bring your morning beverage, your open heart, and yourself upstairs after the Message for All Ages.

### **Chamber Music Concert Series**

Sunday, April 28 from 3 to 4 p.m. in the Chapel

This program is designed to bring great music performances to an audience in an intimate setting. Each presentation offers a variety of musicians, often including flute, oboe, piano, and others. The concert is free to the public. A free will offering will be received at the door.

### **Walk Against Hunger**

Walk with or donate to the First Church West Hartford Striders in the annual Connecticut Foodshare Walk Against Hunger **Saturday, May 4** at Dunkin Park, Hartford. Start by going here: <https://ctfoodshare.org>, click on "Register today!" at top of page and choose "Register" or "Donate Now" and enter "First Church West Hartford Striders". Details to follow regarding carpooling, etc. Your donations will help Connecticut Foodshare raise awareness of the problem of hunger in the community.

### **Celebrating Moms & MOMs (Models of Motherliness): A Luncheon & Tea**

Enjoy some downtime with us Saturday, May 11 from 12 to 2 p.m.

Savor a little time off and enjoy a catered meal with a heavenly selection of desserts! Let your spirit free surrounded by the singular jazz sounds of Sandy Lindop and conversation with other moms and caregivers. Our speaker will be Janice Olson, certified Spiritual Director and founder of [Conscious Contact](#), a space for women to explore their spiritual life to find personal meaning and direction. The cost is \$30 per person. Gluten-free and vegetarian options are available.

Register [HERE](#). For more information, or to volunteer, please email Jennifer deSimas ([jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org](mailto:jpwebsterdir@whfirstchurch.org)) or Nina Lawrence ([nina.s.lawrence@gmail.com](mailto:nina.s.lawrence@gmail.com)).

### **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 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 [jpwlibrary@whfirstchurch.org](mailto: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. They are reading [On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity, and Growing Old](#) by Parker Palmer. Tap [here](#) to join the group.

**Food for Thought** is reading [The Guncle](#) by Steven Rowley. "To the outside world, Patrick O'Hara is a former sitcom star. But to Maisie and Grant, his brother's kids, he's Gay Uncle Patrick (GUP, for short). He *adores* Maisie and Grant! But in terms of caretaking and relating to two children, no matter how adorable, Patrick is overwhelmed. When tragedy strikes and Patrick finds himself taking on the role of primary guardian, he has no idea what to expect, despite having a set of 'Guncle Rules' ready to go. Quickly realizing that parenting--even if temporary--isn't solved with treats and jokes, Patrick's eyes are opened to a new sense of responsibility, and the realization that, sometimes, even being larger than life means you're unfailingly human. *The Guncle* is a moving tribute to the power of love, patience, and family in even the most trying of times" (Amazon.com). [Tap here](#) to join this group.

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## Announcements

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### **WeHa Grows, the JPWL Seed Library, is ready for spring!**

Thanks to generous seed donations from the UConn Master Gardener Program and Ocean State Job Lot, we have a variety of flower, fruit, herb, and vegetable seeds for your gardens. Stop by the JPW Library or the Sunday Bookmobile and "seed" for yourself!

### **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 the following spring and summer dates available:** 4/14, 5/26, 7/7, 7/21, 7/28, 8/18, and 8/25. Please contact the church office for details at 860-233-9605.

### **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).

### **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).

### **April Reach Out: Journey Home**

Journey Home has spent more than a decade committed to ending chronic homelessness in the Greater Hartford region. They have been able in less than two years to match 72% of those experiencing chronic homelessness to housing, which means they have been housed or will be housed very soon.

A Hand Up, a program of Journey Home, works to support those who are currently transitioning from homelessness to housing by connecting them to donations of household goods and furniture. Together they are filling a huge gap because clients are often moving into housing after experiencing homelessness with nothing but what they can carry on their back. Yet, many people have excess furniture and household items in their homes without a place to put them other than the landfills. Together with your support they will be able to end homelessness. Thank you for your support!

For more information: Journey Home, 255 Main Street 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Hartford Ct 06106

Tel: 860-808-0336, website <https://journeyhomect.org/>.

To donate online thru the church: [HERE](#) or you can donate directly at: <https://journeyhomect.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.

### **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).

### **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