

The Messenger

**First & Wesley
United Methodist Church
89 Center Street
West Haven, Connecticut 06516
203-933-8795
December 2025**



The Role of the Holy Spirit in Church Growth - Part 2

As you are all aware, the book of the Acts of the Apostles is our focal point, and I pray that you will walk with me as we journey through the book. This is because the growth of the Church is not merely a product of human strategy, eloquent preaching, or organizational efficiency. It is, first and foremost, the work of the Holy Spirit. From the birth of the early Church in the book of Acts to the modern-day body of believers, the Holy Spirit has been the unseen but powerful force driving transformation, unity, and expansion. Without the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes a lifeless institution; with Him, it becomes a living, breathing organism that reflects the very presence of God in the world.



Rev. Frank Sarpong

In the final part of this two-part series, I will look at The Holy Spirit as the glue of the church, The Holy Spirit as the distributor of gifts, and more.

3. The Holy Spirit Unites the Body of Christ

Unity is essential for growth. Division, gossip, and strife weaken the Church, but the Holy Spirit brings believers into one accord. Paul writes,
“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” *Ephesians 4:3*

The Spirit breaks down barriers of race, culture, and social status, forming one body with many members. When the Church walks in unity, it becomes an unstoppable force. This unity attracts the world, as Jesus prayed, “that they may be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

Spirit-led unity fosters collaboration, shared vision, and love among believers, fertile soil for growth and multiplication.

The Holy Spirit Distributes Gifts for Ministry

Every believer is endowed with spiritual gifts, given by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Church. Paul teaches,

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.”

1 Corinthians 12:4

These gifts, whether teaching, healing, prophecy, administration, or service, equip the Church to function effectively. When believers operate in their Spirit-given gifts, the Church grows both numerically and spiritually. Growth happens when every member recognizes that ministry is not reserved for pastors alone but for all who are filled with the Spirit.

A Spirit-filled church releases people into their callings. It becomes a community where each member contributes, and the whole body is built up in love.

The Holy Spirit Convicts and Transforms Lives

True church growth is not just about numbers; it's about transformed lives. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He draws people to repentance and sanctifies believers to reflect Christ's character.

When the Spirit works in a congregation, repentance flows freely, worship deepens, and hearts are changed. A growing church is a Spirit-filled church, one that sees marriages restored, addictions broken, and lives made whole through the power of God.

The Holy Spirit Provides Divine Direction

The early Church thrived because it followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13:2, the Spirit instructed the believers at Antioch, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Every major missionary movement in the New Testament was directed by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, when churches today rely on His guidance rather than human wisdom, they experience divine growth and impact. Spirit-led leadership is crucial for growth. The Spirit gives vision, strategy, and timing. He knows when to plant, when to build, and when to move. Churches that listen to the Spirit's voice will never lack direction.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is the unseen architect of church growth. He gives life, empowers witness, unites believers, distributes gifts, transforms hearts, and provides divine direction. The Church can build buildings, create programs, and organize events, but without the Spirit, all efforts will fall short.

For the Church to grow in power, holiness, and impact, it must once again yield completely to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit moves, revival breaks forth. When He fills, the Church multiplies.

Let us therefore pray as the early Church did:
"Lord, stretch out Your hand... and grant that Your servants may speak Your word with great boldness." (Acts 4:29-30)

May our church today be revived by the power of the Holy Spirit and may His presence bring growth that glorifies Christ and transforms the world.



Lectionary Readings for November 2025



November 2, 2025

[Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4](#), [Psalm 119:137-144](#), [2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12](#), [Luke 19:1-10](#)

November 9, 2025

[Haggai 1:15b-2:9](#), [Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21](#), [2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17](#), [Luke 20:27-38](#)

November 16, 2025

[Isaiah 65:17-25](#), [Isaiah 12](#), [2 Thessalonians 3:6-13](#), [Luke 21:5-19](#)

November 23, 2025

[Jeremiah 23:1-6](#), [Psalm 46](#), [Colossians 1:11-20](#), [Luke 23:33-43](#)

November 30, 2025

[Isaiah 2:1-5](#), [Psalm 122](#), [Romans 13:11-14](#), [Matthew 24:36-44](#)

First & Wesley United Methodist Church

December 2025



	1	2	3	4 10a–12p “K” Café After School Prog 5p Youth Choir	5 After School Prog 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	6 9a Breakfast with Santa
7 10:00a Family Worship Service, Communion, Birthday/Anniversa ry celebration and Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon) 3p Shoreline Parish Christmas Concert	8 After School Prog 7p Adult Monday school	9 After School Prog 7p Finance	10 After School Prog 7p Adult Group Study	11 10a–12p “K” Café After School Prog 5p Youth Choir 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	12 After School Prog	13 8a Men’s Fellowship Breakfast
14 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon) Special Church Council meeting – 7p on ZOOM	15 After School Prog 7p Adult Monday school	16 After School Prog 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	17 After School Prog 7p Adult Group Study	18 10a–12p “K” Café After School Prog 5p Youth Choir	19 After School Prog	20 5p Agape Meal (Free) All Welcome *Articles Due for the January Messenger
21 10:00a Family Worship Service & Sunday School (begins after Children's Sermon)	22 After School Prog 7p Adult Monday school	23 No After School Prog 6p Bell Choir 7p Adult Choir	24 Christmas Eve 7p Candlelight Service	25 Christmas 6 :30a Christmas Morning Candlelight Service	26	27
28 10:00a Family Worship Service)	29	30 7:30p Trustees	31 New Year’s Eve Crossover Service 9-12p		After School returns 1/5/26	

Zoom Link for all Worship Services and meetings!

(exceptions – SPR, CNLD,)

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/147691027>

Call-in: [1-646-876-9923](tel:1-646-876-9923) Meeting ID: [147691027#](https://zoom.us/j/147691027#)

For more information go to the church website at www.firstwesleyumc.org

Grow in Faith with Us

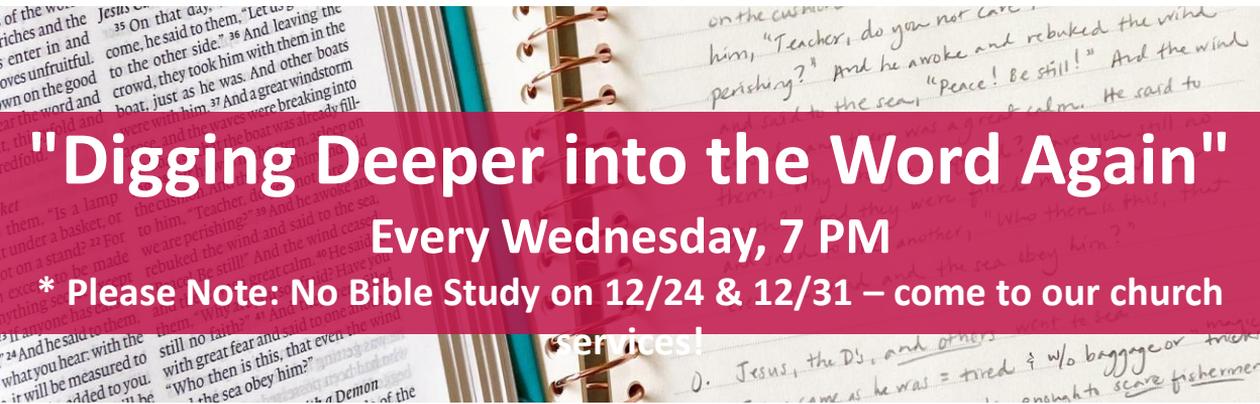


Together, we're learning what it means to know God's character, understand the work of Christ, and live faithfully in relationship with God and one another.

Join us Sunday mornings right after the Children's Moment during the 10:00 AM service. We'd love to have you with us!

*Please note: No Sunday School on December 28th – We resume on January 4th!

ADULT BIBLE STUDY*



"Digging Deeper into the Word Again" Every Wednesday, 7 PM

* Please Note: No Bible Study on 12/24 & 12/31 – come to our church services!

- ▶ Do you have any questions about the Sunday Service sermons?
- ▶ Have you experienced something or have a story that connects with those sermons?
- ▶ Do you want to explore the texts, themes, or theology used in the Sunday Service?

If so, you're invited to join our Wednesday Bible Study!

This will be a time to dive deeper into the Scriptures preached in the previous Sunday's service.

Havens/Shoreline Parish Healing and Wholeness Services

First & Wesley UMC
Tuesday, December 2nd at 6pm (New Time)
(1st Tuesday of each month)

Branford UMC
Wednesday, December 10th at 1pm in the sanctuary
(2nd Wednesday of each month)

Hamden Plains UMC – will meet on **January 28th***
(4th Wednesday of each month)

*There is no service on Wednesday, Dec. 24th

Services are led by Rev. Cindy Dodd, retired UM minister.
All are welcome! Questions? Call Pastor Dodd at 203 889-6934



MISSION & OUTREACH

Free Santa's Breakfast



December 6th, 9-11:00am

Come down and enjoy a hot breakfast (pancakes & scrambled eggs) and meet Santa!!! The kids can make a holiday craft, take a picture with Santa and pick out a free hat and pair of gloves.

Also, our mission project for November and December is \$25 Stop & Shop gift cards to families in need. At Thanksgiving, 50 were given to our social worker, the Hill area of New Haven and to Pastor Frank for the need in West Haven. At Christmas, 50 will be given to the Hill area of New Haven and to Pastor Frank for the need in West Haven. We have a list from our social worker of Christmas presents for 21 children of her clients that we will be fulfilling. Anyone who signed up to fill a request needs to bring the wrapped gift with the gift tag attached to the church by Sunday, Dec. 7th.

Prayer Shawl Ministry



"We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"

There will be NO December meeting.

*We will resume January 22, 2026 at 1PM in person
at the home of Edith Mulligan*

65 Messina Drive, Apt A761, East Haven, CT

Prayer shawls are in the Church Office if someone needs one.

Be sure to sign your name and the person it will go to.

You can also contact;

Edith Mulligan – (203) 821-7533 or Sharon Ewen (203) 464-1995

Fellowship

Every Thursday – **Koinonia Café**, 10am-12pm

Please note: If you would like to help Judy Jennette with the cafe, please contact her.

FREE Community meal followed by games.

Every 3rd Saturday of each month – 5pm

Volunteers always welcome – see Dave Smith or Judy Jennette.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

This month we will be gathering on Dec. 13th at 8am for our Men's Fellowship Breakfast. Plan on joining us for a delicious hot cooked breakfast, Bible devotional and good fellowship.

Dads and sons, Grandads and grandsons are welcome!

Worship Committee News

Christmas Eve Service – 7pm

Our Christmas Eve candlelight service will be on December 24th at 7:00pm. We will be worshipping together with the Ghana United Methodist Church congregation. Let us celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ together!

Christmas morning service – 6:30am

Join us for our Christmas Morning candlelight service on December 25th at 6:30am as we welcome Christmas Day with praising our Lord Jesus Christ.

Shoreline-Havens Parish Concert

Our choir will be singing at this concert on Dec. 7th at 3pm. We hope you can come and enjoy this time of fellowship with the other churches in our parish during our Advent season.



1ST ANNUAL

Shoreline Havens
Christmas
FELLOWSHIP
Cooperative Parish
Concert

DECEMBER 7, 2025. – 3:00PM

SPEAKERS

Come and let's make a joyful noise unto the Lord!

HAMDEN PLAINS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
15 CHURCH STREET, HAMDEN, CT 06514

December Birthdays 2025

- 3 - Diane Soares
- 5 - Judy Juzwiakowski
- 6 - Julia Werle
- 8 - Hannah Cascio
Shirley Henries
- 9 - Christine McGregor
- 10 - Bill Hunt
Bob Clinton
Hyacinth Young
- 11 - Lisa Ammon
Tom Mark
Jennifer Skipper
- 12 - Katelyn Napier
- 17 - Michele Sablone
- 18 - Matt Heafy
- 20 - Jayden Abekah
- 21 - Mark Cascio
Isaiah Singleton
- 29 - Raymond Geissler
- 30 - Florence Dzikas
Stephanie Wilson
- 31 - Gina Quinn

December Anniversaries 2025

- 3 - Peggy and Jim Jerrell
- 11 - Helen and Dave Smith
- 16 - Becky and Tom Baker
- 27 - Linda and Dennis Kopec

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not see your birthday or anniversary listed, please let the church office know so we can update our list and make sure you are not missed.

Also, please send information re any name changes, address changes, marriages, births, deaths, etc., to the Church Office, or by Email to: firstwesleyumc@gmail.com

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pastor, Rev. Frank Sarpong
860-938-1845 (phone or text))
franksarpong@nyac-umc.com
Layleader, Mary Rolfe
475-988-7666 (phone or test)
mary.kate527@icloud.com

Being Alone in the Church

For those of you who need to go into the church, do not forget to sign in each time you enter the church. If you are going to be working in the church alone, please make sure someone knows you are there, and let them know when you leave.



Craft Corner

Card Ministry

Reaching Out with Care

Our **Card Ministry** creates and sends *Get Well* and *Thinking of You* cards to those who could use a little extra encouragement or support. If you know someone who would appreciate a card, or if you have questions about the group, please contact Gail.

You can call the church office or email her at

gbartozzi@yahoo.com.

We will meet NOT meet in December. We will resume on Saturday, January 17th, **9:30 to 10:30 AM** to make cards together.

All are welcome to join us!



Native American Coin Collection

We continue to collect coins for the Native American Ministries. We would like to send many thanks to our Church Family for helping us to continue with this Ministry.

Special Church Council meeting

Sunday, Dec. 14th at 7pm

The sole purpose of this meeting will be to discuss funding the After School program through June of this year. As of the council meeting we will have applied for two grants to fund the program. If we get these, there will still be a lag time in receiving the money.

From the Finance Committee

Thank you to everyone who helped set up, made crafts, baked goods, helped the day of the Fair and helped with clean-up. The Harvest Fair brought in over \$2,900 as on November 23rd.

Thank you to all who have submitted a pledge for 2026. This helps our finance committee plan our missions and ministries for the upcoming year. Your generosity is very much appreciated!

Holiday Gift Card Fundraiser

Thank you to all who have placed orders for this fundraiser. Order forms are due by **8pm, Sunday, November 30th**. I need to place the order on Monday, December 1st in order to receive them before December 7th.

This gift card fundraiser is going to provide a way for you to contribute to First & Wesley while spending what you normally spend on gift cards at Christmas. The way it works is very similar to the Stop & Shop and ShopRite gift card fundraisers we already do (if you would like to make use of this ongoing gift card fund raiser, please contact Dave or Helen Smith). You purchase the gift card and the church receives a percentage of the face value of what you bought. (You receive the gift card for the amount you asked for) On the order forms, you will see 38 different retailers or restaurant choices and the % amount of the face value that the church will receive.

1. **Orders need to be submitted by November 30TH.**
2. Ordered gift cards will be available on December 7th after church



GIFT CARD FUNDRAISER

We are providing First & Wesley members and friends of the church an opportunity to buy gift cards for Christmas gifts and at the same time support the church financially. Simply fill out the form below & send form to First & Wesley Methodist Church, 89 Center Street, West Haven, CT 06516 or give to Helen Smith
ALL ORDERS need to be received by 11-30-2025

RAISERIGHT
ORDER FORM



Name _____

Phone # _____

E-mail (for confirmation) _____

cards ordered _____ Amount enclosed _____

Submit the order form to Helen Smith by November 30th

Email

Ordered gift cards will be available for pickup starting on Sun. 12/7(after church)

All checks make payable to FWUMC - please put "gift card fundraiser" in memo line

#	Store/Business	Amount	% earned	Subtotal	#	Restaurant/Food	Amount	% earned	Subtotal
	Amazon.com	\$25	1.50%			Bob Evans	\$25	15.00%	
	Amazon.com	\$100	1.50%			Buffalo Wild Wings	\$25	8.00%	
	Apple Store,Apple.com	\$25	5.00%			Buffalo Wild Wings	\$50	8.00%	
	Barnes & Noble	\$10	8.00%			Chili's	\$25	10.00%	
	Barnes & Noble	\$25	8.00%			Chili's	\$50	10.00%	
	Best Buy	\$25	4.00%			Cracker Barrel	\$25	12.00%	
	Best Buy	\$100	4.00%			Dave & Buster's	\$25	13.00%	
	Bosco's	\$25	8.00%			Dunkin Donuts	\$10	3.50%	
	Carter's	\$25	12.00%			Dunkin Donuts	\$25	3.50%	
	CVS	\$25	7.00%			Olive Garden	\$25	8.00%	
	CineMark Theaters	\$25	6.00%			Olive Garden	\$100	8.00%	
	Dick's Sporting Goods	\$25	8.00%			On the Border	\$25	10.00%	
	Dick's Sporting Goods	\$100	8.00%			On the Border	\$50	10.00%	
	Game Stop	\$25	5.00%			Outback Steakhouse	\$25	10.00%	
	Home Depot	\$25	4.00%			Outback Steakhouse	\$50	10.00%	
	Home Depot	\$100	4.00%			Panera Bread	\$25	8.00%	
	Ikea	\$25	5.00%			Panera Bread	\$50	8.00%	
	Kohl's	\$25	7.00%			Sonic	\$10	8.00%	
	Lowe's	\$25	6.00%			Sonic	\$25	5.00%	
	Lowe's	\$100	6.00%			Starbucks	\$10	4.50%	
	Mobil	\$50	1.50%			Starbucks	\$25	4.50%	
	Shell	\$25	1.50%			Subway	\$10	6.00%	
	Shell	\$50	1.50%			Subway	\$50	6.00%	
	Staples	\$25	5.00%			Taco Bell	\$10	5.00%	
	Target	\$25	2.50%			Taco Bell	\$25	5.00%	
	Target	\$50	2.50%			Texas Roadhouse	\$25	10.00%	
	Uber	\$25	3.00%			Wendy's	\$25	6.00%	
	Walgreen's	\$25	5.00%						
	Walmart	\$25	2.50%						
	Walmart	\$50	2.50%						



Scrambled Christmas

How many of these Christmas words can you unscramble?

1. nStaa _____

2. rsM. asClu _____

3. nkgsciot _____

4. glhist _____

5. edrnerie _____

6. ncday cnae _____

7. niehcym _____

8. cebmeDer _____

9. lseev _____

10. eret _____



11. ylohl _____

12. oospwhkr _____

13. rtNho loeP _____

14. lsbel _____

15. okicose _____

16. enreg _____

17. sfitg _____

18. irwetn _____

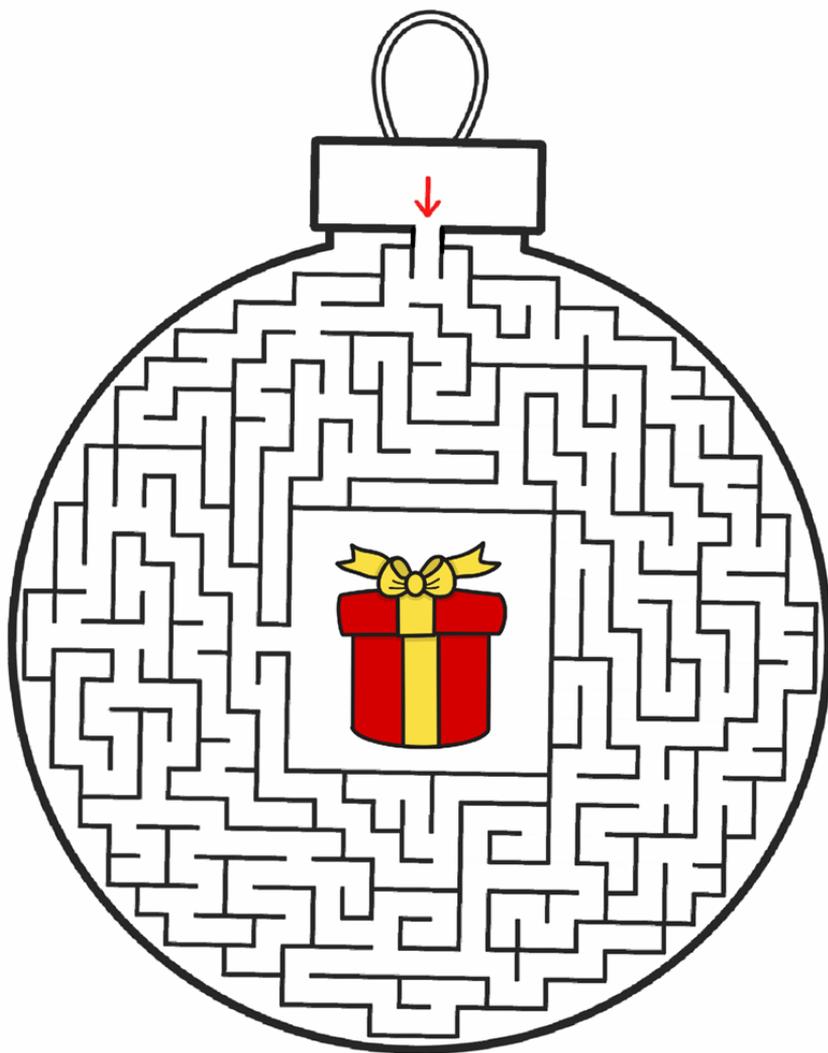
19. rnetmsoan _____

20. rhcGni _____



Christmas Bauble Maze

Can you work your way through the Christmas bauble to get to the present?





The Messenger

First & Wesley United Methodist Church

89 Center Street, West Haven, CT 06516

Phone (203) 933-8795

www.firstwesleyumc.org

Email: firstwesleyumc@gmail.com

Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/firstwesleyumc.

Pastor Frank Sarpong

“Sunday Worship Time: 10:00am”

The December 2025 Newsletter

STRONGER TOGETHER



“We can do all things
through Christ who strengthens us.”
(Philippians 4:13)

IN-PERSON & ONLINE SUNDAY WORSHIP @ 10:00 AM

COME JOIN OUR CHURCH FAMILY!