NORTH STAR



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UCC

June 2026

Gathered Since 1730

Serving, Welcoming,

Growing in Christ

79 Clinton Street
Concord, NH 03301
Phone: 603-225-5491

Email:
secretary@concordsfirstchurch.org

Website: www.concordsfirstchurch.org

Worship: Sunday 10:30am

Senior Minister

Rev. Emilia Halstead

Musician &
North Star Editor

Annie Papinsick

Church Secretary
Part Time

Kathleen Akerman

Historian

Treasurer

Terry Blake

Financial Secretary

Council Chair

Susan Lauze

Council Vice Chair

Phil Kimball

Council Recorder

Sara Nichols

Technology Integrator

Jock Irvine

FROM THE PASTOR

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

"The passion of the imagination is nourished from a deeper source, namely, Eros. The force of Eros keeps the thresholds of our lives vital, dangerous and inviting." - John O'Donohue

"Set me as a seal over your heart; wear me as an emblem on your arm

For love is as strong as death, and jealousy is as relentless as the grave.

Love flares up like a blazing fire, a very ardent flame. No amount of water can quench love; a raging flood cannot drown it out. If a person tried to exchange all of their wealth for love, then they would be surely rejected." (Song of Songs 8:6-7, The Voice)

Starting on June 21st we will begin the next chapter of vignettes in worship with John O'Donohue's book, *The Invisible Embrace of Beauty*, called "Attraction: the Eros of Beauty." This chapter will bring us through the heat of summer and into the gentle shift into autumn in early October.

In Greek philosophy and mythology, Eros defines passionate, romantic, and sensual love. It is often characterized by intense physical attraction, infatuation, and desire. The Greeks often viewed this type of love as a wild, overwhelming force; akin to a form of temporary madness or an intoxicating life energy sent by the gods. Later philosophers like Plato reinterpreted Eros, arguing that while it begins as physical desire, it can ultimately be channeled into a higher spiritual pursuit of beauty and truth.

Of Eros, O'Donohue says, "Eros is a divine force. It infuses all the earth. Yet, too often, in our culture Eros is equated with lust and sexual greed. But it is a more profound and sacred force than this. Eros is the light of wisdom that awakens and guides the sensuous. It is the energy that illuminates the earth. Without it, the earth would be a bare, cold planet for Eros is the soul of the earth." There's a reason we refer to the act of informing the youngest among us about Eros as telling them "about the birds and the bees." Essentially, without Eros - there would be no Spring.

With everything currently going on in the world and in the lives of our congregation, spending time reflecting on the Eros of Beauty could be viewed as "frivolous" at best and "blasphemous" at worst. Yet, as Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "We are made immortal by this kiss, the contemplation of beauty."

What better time to reflect on what makes life worth living, than when we are emotionally and psychologically overwhelmed by seeming "powers outside of our control"?

Within this chapter there are many perspectives that O'Donohue reflects on with Eros. Yes, he begins with attraction and spring, but he also talks about different forms of longing, of parenthood, and of the intimacy of our human relationship with the Divine.

Jesus tells us, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) O'Donohue describing Eros as "vital, dangerous and inviting" echoes Jesus continually inviting us beyond safety and predictability into fuller life.

Or as the poet Mary Oliver wrote in her poem entitled *The Summer Day*, "Tell me what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Blessings of the Eros of Beauty,

Pastor Emilia

COUNCIL

The primary focus of the May Council Meeting was to firm up the Budget for the 2026-2027 year.

Annual Meeting will take place on June 7, 2026. The day will start with Worship at 10:30 in the Chapel. A potluck meal in Hanna Hall will follow. Then we will reconvene in the Chapel for the Annual Meeting.

Phil Kimball for Council

Ministry of Outreach

Clean Up Buckets and Kid Kits:

On May 1st, Sheila Lugg and Sara Nichols delivered 49 Kid Kits and 4 Clean Up Buckets to Bow Mills Methodist Church.

Thank you to all who made this effort possible! Now, let's start planning for next year. Watch for the summer sales of back-to-school items. What we need are some 2 pocket folders and boxes of 12 colored pencils and, of course, bags.

Items needed for the **clean-up buckets** are on the bulletin board. Please take a sticky note and purchase the requested item. Let's see how many buckets we can fill!

Zimbabwe: has a food insecurity problem and a plea for donations has been issued by the Ukama coordinator for UCCZ. The rains stopped abruptly in February and then there were high temperatures which resulted in poor or no harvest of crops. Also, Zimbabweans are affected by the high fuel prices which has led to an increase of food prices. Please consider making a donation to Zimbabwe.

OGHS: We received $213.87 in donations for One Great Hour of Sharing. Thank you. This money will help emergency disaster relief around the world.

Blanket Sunday and Tools of Hope: Our mothers will be proud. A final count of the money raised in memory of or in honor of our mothers will be in the next North Star. Our fathers need to be remembered too. Father's Day is June 21. Please sign the clipboard being passed around at church or let the secretary know the name of the father figure you want to donate money in memory of or in honor of. These names will be in the bulletin on Fathers' Day. The money raised goes to buy tools needed to help families feed themselves.

Sara Nichols, Outreach



Spiritual Life Ministry

We enjoyed a lovely Pentecost/Birthday of the Church Celebration on May 24th. Our chapel was "afire" with red, orange, yellow decorations symbolizing the Holy Spirit descending in flames on Jesus' followers. Pastor Emilia's sermon "The Imagination Offers Revelation" which included the significance of conversation in our lives was truly inspiring and energizing. As usual, those gathered seemed reluctant to leave after worship, especially since we completed our celebration with refreshments of delicious pastries, iced tea and lemonade, and conversation.

Memorial Day was celebrated at our May 31 worship service. This is the Sunday for transitioning from Pentecost to Ordinary Time. Watch for the banner and decoration changes.

June 7 will be another special Sunday as we gather for our Annual Meeting. Worship will be followed by a Potluck Luncheon. Beverages and paper goods will be provided by SLMT. Following our Luncheon we will gather for our meeting.

Pastor Emilia will be beginning John O'Donohue's Chapter on Attraction: The Eros of Beauty. As a separate issue, she has made some changes in our worship service which we will review in the fall. We would appreciate any feedback on the changes.

June 21, Jazz Sanctuary Worship, will be in our chapel in the morning.

Looking forward to July, Pastor Emilia will be on vacation from July 12 to August 1. If you need pastoral assistance, please call the church office.

During Pastor Emilia's vacation, Rev. Renee' Rouse will be our worship leader on July 12. We'll have Jazz Sanctuary on the 19th. Watch for details. Then on July 26th, we'll have, as we have had in the past few years, a Sabbath Sunday when we are invited to re-create in whatever way we need. Perhaps it will be a day of rest, or a visit to another church, or even a visit to "Cathedral of the Pines."

May your summer be a time of relaxation, renewal, and full of beauty.

Eleanor Kimball
For Spiritual Life Ministry Team
Kellie Heath
Brenda Placenti
Sheila Swenson

June 2026

"Seeking Peace" – A daily prayer practice for the summer of 2026

You are invited to take some slow deep breaths. Feel your feet on the ground, or your body supported by a chair, patch of grass, or wherever you are today. You do not need special words or perfect focus. Just a willingness to arrive in the present moment.

Begin by reflecting on the question: Where is peace for me today?

We're not talking about perfect calm. We're not asking you to pretend everything is fine. We're just inviting you to enter the quiet, steady peace that lives underneath the noise of the world and ask "Where is that peace inviting me now?"

When you are ready to close your time of contemplation, we invite you to pray the following prayer, knowing that the rest of our community is praying the same words.

Pray:
God, I hear your invitation to shift from striving toward companionship, from rushing toward listening, from fear toward trust.

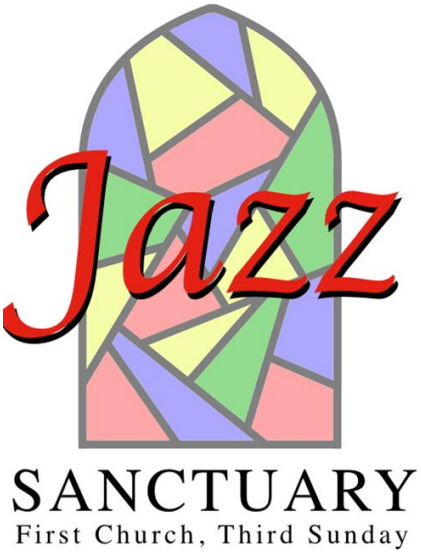
Teach me how to wait without clinging to false certainties, while old things fade and new life quietly grows beneath the surface. Through every shadow and every season of rooting, be my vision, O Love of My Heart.

Guard my tongue from harm, my lips from cruelty or deceit, as I seek peace and pursue it. Give me the wisdom, boundaries, and courage that help me receive your light, trusting that even the darkness is not dark to you.

Jesus said, "Peace be with you. Go in peace, your faith is saving you."
May that peace meet me today. May it guide me today. May it flow through me toward others today. Amen.

(If you wish, we invite you to sit in silence for a few moments, to allow the prayer to settle on your shoulders like sunlight through leaves.)

Prayer practice created by Susanne Driscoll, Pastor Emilia Halstead, and Pastor Renee' Rouse.



Welcoming summer is such a wonderful tradition in northern climes! The Jazz Sanctuary House Band and ministry team will be welcoming summer in a variety of ways on the third Sunday of June, June 21st. For that happy reason, there will not be a Jazz Sanctuary worship service on Sunday afternoon that day. Instead, Pastor Emilia and Joey Placenti (who both will be here that day) will be creating liturgy and music for morning worship in the chapel at 10:30 AM. Please join them to see what they've cooked up!

In June, the congregation will begin a new section of John O'Donohue's book on "Attraction: The Eros of Beauty," so Jazz Sanctuary on July 18 at 2:30 PM will feature some songs of attraction - you won't want to miss that! Weather permitting, we may also attempt to have the service outdoors in the space we use for the Clinton St. Summer Concerts. Bring a lawn chair and enjoy!

Finally, in August, Jazz Sanctuary will return to our mission of bringing music to the community by shifting the time a bit to 3:00 PM on the afternoon of August 15 when we will be bringing our "road show" to the Havenwood Auditorium at 33 Christian Ave. That will correspond with their weekly worship time. We brought Jazz Sanctuary to Havenwood once years ago and had such a good time! We know that will happen again - please come join us there, as we'll be issuing a special invitation to our church members who reside at HHH.

That's all for now - now GO OUT AND ENJOY SUMMER!!!

Peace, Tim Wildman for Jazz Sanctuary

June 2026

Technology Corner



This month's Technology Corner features an unusual entry: a reflection on our 300th Anniversary Service held on May 26, commemorating the first recorded religious service in central New Hampshire on May 26, 1726. Despite a chilly, damp day, more than 20 people gathered at the monument site on East Side Drive for the occasion. Led by Pastor Emilia Halstead, the service honored three centuries of faith, community, and perseverance. Music was provided by South Church's Memorial Bells, with Rev. Tim Wildman offering accompaniment on cornet for the hymn "O God Our Help in Ages Past." Attendees shared in worship, reflection, and fellowship while remembering the generations who helped shape six enduring congregations in Concord, as well as the Havenwood-Heritage Heights community. While the weather kept attendance modest, the service was a fitting way to recognize this important milestone in our church's history.







Jock Ivine for Technology

Social Media Engagement for May 2026

YouTube

Subscribers: 224 (8 new subscribers)

Views: 726 (About the same as usual)

Watch Time: 26.4 hours (About the same as usual)

Subscribers = The number of people who have subscribed to our channel, indicating they want to receive updates and see our content

Views = The total number of times a person intentionally plays one of our videos and watches it for at least 30 seconds.

Watch Time: The total amount of time people spent watching our videos

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Facebook

Views: 443 (+18%)

Engagement: Up 11.5%

Followers: 580 (Two less than last month)

Views = Total number of times our content was played or displayed, including repeat views

Engagement = When someone interacts with one of our posts including likes, comments, shares, reactions, etc.

Followers = The number of new people who have chosen to receive updates from our Facebook profile

Happy Birthday

Philip Poehler – 6/9

Susan Lauze – 6/14

Junietta McCall – 6/22

Richard Butts – 6/26



PRAYER CONCERNS

If you would like your name to be included in the weekly bulletin prayer list, please contact our church administrator, Kathy. (secretary@concordsfirstchurch.org)

The Prayer Circle asks you to keep in prayer for the following members and friends:

Carol Hovey - Healing

Matt Wildman - Healing

Jim J - Healing

Family of Franklin Richardson Rouse - Peace

Family of Barbara Smallage - Peace

Family of Chuck Booth - Peace

Bill Swenson - Healing