Welcome to First Congregational Church



Flag Day, 1966

Benny Andrews (1930-2006)

Benny Andrews attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1954 to 1958 on the G.I. Bill. Upon graduating, he moved to New York, where he began agitating for black artists to be represented at major museums in the city. A cofounder of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC) in 1969, Andrews was increasingly categorized as a "protest artist." *Flag Day* can be read as a harbinger of two later projects—a program Andrews organized through the BECC to teach art to inmates in New York City prisons, and a large body of work from the early 1970s he made to mark America's bicentennial. This intimately scaled, potent painting shows a black man imprisoned by the "bars" of the American flag. (Art Institute of Chicago)

ANNOUCEMENTS

*[Please send any announcements for the bulletin or weekly Enews to the Secretary (secretary@concordsfirstchurch.org) by **9am Thursday morning**. Please include the exact wording of how you would like the announcement to appear. Any information received after 9am will be included in the following week's bulletin and Enews. Thank you!]*

Your **smartphone** wants to know what's happening at First Church!
Scan this QR code with your phone's camera



Java & Jazz at William & Sons Coffee Company
Saturday July 18th

Start your Saturday morning with smooth bossa novas, fresh brews, and a whole lot of soul! From 9:00–11:00 AM, members of the Jazz Sanctuary House Band will be serving up live jazz to pair perfectly with William & Sons' Brazilian-inspired coffee, decadent pastries, and breakfast sandwiches.

Every tip dropped in the jar goes straight to Family Promise of Greater Concord, supporting young families facing homelessness. (Tips optional, good vibes guaranteed!)

Don't miss this chance to sip, snack, and swing along — you might even catch a crowd favorite, "What a Wonderful World."

Clinton Street Summer Concert Series

Join us for the upcoming free outdoor concerts sponsored by First Church and Wesley. Concerts are held from 6:00–7:15 PM and are rain or shine. Bring a chair, bring a friend, and enjoy an evening of live music in the heart of Concord.

Welcome to First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
Rev. Emilia Halstead
July 5, 2026

Welcome & Announcements

PRELUDE

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
The earth is alive with the wisdom of the Holy Conversation.
The mountains, rivers, forests, and fields sing their ancient songs.
Before the foundations of the world were laid, Wisdom danced beside the Creator.
And that same Wisdom still shines through all creation.
Consider the lilies of the field.
They teach us trust, beauty, and wonder.
Come, let us worship the One in whom all things are held together.
We come with grateful hearts to praise the Creator of earth and heaven.

COMING INTO THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE OF BEAUTY (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Holy Wisdom, open our eyes this day to the sacred hidden in ordinary places. Quiet our anxious striving and teach us again the wisdom of the lilies. Root us deeply in your love, so that we may discover our place within the great communion of creation. In the spirit of Christ, through whom all things hold together, we pray. Amen.

OFFERING OUR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY & PRAYERS OF JOY
(*Response to each offering/prayer:*)
O Love of our hearts,
Receive our praise.

OPENING SONG: #571 O God of Love, O God of Peace (Public Domain)

1. O God of love, O God of peace, make wars throughout the world to cease;
   The wrath of human wrong restrain: Give peace, O God, give peace again!
2. Remember, God, your works of old, the wonders that our people told;
   Heal every malice, harm, and pain: Give peace, O God, give peace again!
3. Whom shall we trust, O God, but you? For you are constant, strong, and true.
   None ever called on you in vain: Give peace, O God, give peace again!

Let us share together from the Wisdom in Proverbs, in which Wisdom rejoices in creation…
Hebrew Scriptures Proverbs 8:22-31 (The Voice, edited for inclusive language using Chat GPT) Rev, Renee` Rouse
The Eternal created me when creation was beginning,
one of Wisdom's first companions long ago.
Before time, the Holy One established me,

before the earth saw its first sunrise.
I was born before the deep existed,
before any springs poured out their water.
Before the mountains were placed on their foundations,
before the hills rolled across the land,
before all this, I was brought forth.
When the earth was yet unformed,
and the fields were not yet nestled beneath the wind,
even before the first dust of the earth,
When the Holy One created the heavens, I was there.
When the Creator drew a circle upon the deep, dividing the oceans from the sky, I was there.
I was there when the Creator established the heavens.
I was there when the springs of the deep were set in place.
I witnessed the Holy One give the sea its boundaries
and set limits for the waters, and lay the foundations of the earth.
All this time I was beside the Creator, a master craftsperson.
Day after day, I was the Creator's delight,
rejoicing continually in the Divine Presence,
Delighting in the inhabited world, rejoicing in every living creature,
and finding my greatest joy in humanity.
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Hear now from Paul in his letter to the church in Colossae (modern day Turkey), which he wrote while he was in prison, in which he shares that it is in the Universal Christ in which all things are held together…

Hebrew Scriptures Colossians 1:15-20 (The Message, edited by Chat GPT to reflect Womanist theology) Rev. Renee` Rouse

We look to Christ and see the God who cannot be seen. We look to Christ and glimpse the Creator's original dream for everything that exists. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, every power and every possibility, came to life through Christ and finds its purpose in Christ.

Before anything came into being, Christ was present, and even now Christ holds the whole creation together. And when it comes to the church, Christ gathers us into one body, nurturing us with the care of a loving heart.

Christ was present at the beginning and, as the Firstborn of the resurrection, opens the way into God's new creation. From beginning to end, Christ is present, filling all things with life and love. So spacious is Christ's embrace, so boundless is Divine Love, that the fullness of God dwells within Christ without limit.

Through Christ, God is gathering together every broken and scattered part of creation, people and creatures, forests and rivers, stars and soil, every living thing and every smallest particle of the universe, restoring them to harmony through the reconciling love revealed on the cross. In Christ's self-giving life, poured out in love, all creation is being healed and made whole.
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Hear now from the Gospel of Matthew, in which Jesus invites us to consider the lilies of the field…

Gospel Lesson Matthew 6:25-30 (The Voice) Rev. Renee` Rouse

Here is the bottom line: do not worry about your life. Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will drink. Don't worry about how you clothe your body. Living is about more than merely eating, and the body is about more than dressing up. Look at the birds in the sky. They do not store food for winter. They don't plant gardens. They do not sow or reap—and yet, they are always fed because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are even more precious to Him than a beautiful bird. If He looks after them, of course He will look after you. Worrying does not do any good; who here can claim to add even an hour to his life by worrying?

Nor should you worry about clothes. Consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. They do not work or weave or sew, and yet their garments are stunning. Even King Solomon, dressed in his most regal garb, was not as lovely as these lilies. And think about grassy fields—the grasses are here now, but they will be dead by winter. And yet God adorns them so radiantly. How much more will He clothe you, you of little faith, you who have no trust?
Here ends the lesson.
Amen.

SERMON "Terra Illuminata" Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSING FOR MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

SONG:#582 O God of Earth and Altar

O God of Earth and Altar, Jane Parker Huber
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1 O God of earth and altar, bow down and hear our cry,
our earthly rulers falter, our people drift and die;
the walls of gold entomb us, the swords of scorn divide,
take not thy thunder from us, but take away our pride.

2 From all that terror teaches, from lies of pen and voice,
from all the easy speeches that make our hearts rejoice,
from value's profanation, from honor sacrificed,
from sleep and from damnation, deliver us, good Crist!

3 Awaken us to action and forge us into one,
defying sect and faction; O God, your will be done!
Oppressive systems snare us; out apathies increase.
Great God, in mercy spare us for justice and for peace!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - MOVING PAIN TO POSSIBILITY
(*Response to each prayer:*)
Divine Attraction,
Receive our prayers.

PASTORAL PRAYER (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Lord's Prayer:
Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sung Amen: Johnny Appleseed Grace (Public Domain)

Oh, the Lord is good to me,
And so I thank the Lord
For giving me the things I need:
The sun, the rain, and the appleseed.
The Lord is good to me! Amen

Offertory

Global Ministries Weekly Prayers: Fiji
(Written by Global Ministries staff)

Mission Moment from Fiji

Prayers with Fiji:
God of Creation, we give thanks for the ministry of Pasifika Communities University and for the Pasifika Philosophies Course that is helping people rediscover wisdom rooted in community, relationship, and care for creation.
We thank you for the students in the Pasifika Philosophies program and throughout the University. As they learn, teach, research, and lead, deepen their understanding of the gifts you have placed within their cultures and communities. Reveal your wisdom through the knowledge, traditions, and experiences of Pacific peoples, and inspire new generations to treasure and carry them forward.
God of the oceans and islands, of ancestors and future generations, we pray for the peoples of Fiji and the Pacific as they face the challenges of climate change, economic uncertainty, and social change. In times of burden and uncertainty, renew their strength and hope.
Strengthen the partnership between Global Ministries and Pasifika Communities University. May our shared witness continue to foster learning, friendship, and mutual transformation, so that together we may seek the well-being of communities and the fullness of life you desire for all people. Amen.

INVITATION TO GIVE (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

GRATITUDE MUSIC

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Generous Creator, receive these gifts and receive our lives. May what we offer today help bring healing where there is hurt, hope where there is despair, and beauty where humanity has forgotten its own goodness. Use us as instruments of your love
and caretakers of your illuminated earth. Amen.

RITUAL OF COMMUNION
(We serve gluten-free bread and grape juice)

COMMUNION HYMN "O Christ, We Cannot Cling for Long" by Mary Luti (pg. 122 of *Do This*), Hymn tune: FOREST GREEN

PRAYER OF CONFESSION "Holy Accountability for Racism" by Liz Miller (pg. 119-120 of *Do This*)

THE PRAYER GREAT THANKSGIVING "Reconciliation" by Molly Phinney Baskette (pg. 125-6 of *Do This*)

CLOSING SONG: We Shall Overcome (Civil Rights Anthem)

1 We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
we shall overcome someday!

Refrain:
Oh, deep in my heart
I do believe
we shall overcome someday!

2 We'll walk hand in hand … some day!
3 We shall live in peace … some day!
4 We are not afraid … today!
5 God will see us through … today!

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

BENEDICTION & SENDING (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

POSTLUDE