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

An Important Change to Our Congregational Communications

The Council has approved a change to the way we share news and information with our church family. Beginning in September, we will no longer publish a monthly newsletter.

Instead, all congregational news, ministry updates, upcoming events, and important announcements will be shared through our weekly e-news as information becomes available. This change allows us to provide more timely updates while also streamlining our administrative responsibilities by eliminating the production of a separate monthly publication.

As part of this transition, we will also be refreshing and revitalizing the weekly e-news. Many of you have noticed that it has become repetitive over time, and this new approach gives us the opportunity to make it more current, engaging, and useful.

We encourage everyone to read the weekly e-news so you can stay informed about the life and ministry of our congregation. If you are not currently receiving the e-news by email and would like to be added to the distribution list, please contact the church office.

Thank you for your understanding and support as we continue to improve the ways we communicate and stay connected as a congregation.

Sincerely,

Pastor Emilia

FROM THE PASTOR

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

“My soul is dry and thirsts for you, God, as a deer thirsts for water. I long for the True God who lives. When can I stand before Him and feel His comfort?” (Psalm 42:1-2, Voice)

"When I am lifted up from the earth, then all of humanity will be drawn to Me." (John 12:32, Voice)

Are you more attracted to the pounding waves of the ocean or the gentle ripples of a lake? More drawn to the driving rhythms of rock and roll or the lyrical melodies of classical music? Do you find yourself reaching toward the warmth of the sun or the cool blessing of rain?

For the next four months, we will be reflecting together on “Attraction: The Eros of Beauty” in worship.

We often think of attraction as something that happens between people. Yet, as John O'Donohue beautifully describes, attraction is one of the deepest forces in the universe. Flowers bend toward sunlight. Rivers seek the sea. Artists spend years pursuing a vision they cannot quite capture. Scientists devote their lives to mysteries that beckon them forward. And the human heart is continually being drawn toward something.

As we slow our pace a bit this summer, at least in terms of church programming, I invite you to spend some time reflecting on what God is drawing you toward in this season of your life. It may be several "somethings" or "someones." What is your heart and soul attracted to right now? How is the Spirit drawing you into new levels of awareness, connection, and aliveness?

I find myself wondering the same things about our congregation. What are our collective hearts and spirits attracted to right now? How is the Spirit inviting us to continue our

journey of growth and transformation?

On September 13, the Sunday we typically call Regathering Sunday after the summer season, our reflection from John O'Donohue will be "Woman: The Womb of Being." I cannot imagine a more fitting theme for our return. It invites us to consider what God is nurturing and bringing to new life among us as the First Church of Concord.

This fall, we will begin a new Circle journey focused on discerning God's call for our future. With our 300th anniversary now only four years away, I believe this is an important moment to listen deeply together. Once again, we will enter a process of intentional discernment, seeking to discover who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do amid the changing realities and opportunities before us.

For now, though, I invite you to rest. To breathe. To reconnect with the Spirit's presence in your life. I encourage you to make use of the daily prayer practice for peace included in this newsletter. And above all, remember that you are loved and held beyond all understanding.

Blessings of Summer Rest and Renewal,

Pastor Emilia

Ministry of Outreach

Clean Up Buckets and Kid Kits: There are sticky notes on the bulletin board outside the chapel with the needed items to fill a bucket. Please take a sticky note and add it to your shopping list. When we complete one bucket, we can start on another!

We still need boxes of 12 colored pencils and, of course, bags for the Kids Kits. So far, we have 24 completed kits.

Zimbabwe: Churches in Zimbabwe often provide critical support for hungry people in their areas. With our financial support, they can provide food to even more families. Please donate to help with the current food insecurity.

Thank you for your donations on **Mothers' Day** to CWS Blankets and on **Fathers' Day** to CWS Tools of Hope. These blankets and tools will provide people with a start towards rebuilding their lives. A final total will be in the next newsletter.

One of our "Five for Five" UCC offerings is **Strengthen the Church.** Please take an envelope at the back of the sanctuary and make a donation. This money goes towards expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill its commitment to creating a just world, invest in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities. It will plant new churches, awaken new ideas and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults.

Sara Nichols, Outreach

Spiritual Life Ministry

Liturgical calendars often call the period from Pentecost to Advent "Ordinary Time." It is sometimes observed as the period after Christ's resurrection when his teachings spread throughout the world. That was, it would seem, an extraordinary time! Our church calendar, with all its opportunities for worship, fellowship, music seems rather extraordinary too.

Although we will miss Pastor Emilia while she is on vacation in July, we will be blessed to have Rev. Renee` Rouse as our worship leader on July 12. July 19th will be Jazz Sanctuary Sunday, featuring "Songs of Attraction". Sounds lovely. Finally for July, the 28th will be our Sabbath Sunday. There have been a lot of suggestions for Sabbath Sunday. We can consider it a day of rest. Some like to use it as an opportunity to visit other churches. Some have suggested visiting the "Cathedral of the Pines." Whatever way we spend Sabbath Sunday, hopefully, it will be spiritually nourishing.

The Wednesday Clinton Street Concert Series will be providing musical entertainment under the oak trees. Not only will there be great music, but also an opportunity for community and fellowship.

Pastor Emilia will be back on August 2. Jazz Sanctuary on August 16 will be at Havenwood at 3:00. It will be another chance for community and fellowship as well as an opportunity to introduce Jazz Sanctuary to Havenwood residents who may not have yet attended a Jazz Sanctuary Worship Service.

We have been blessed with Pastor Emilia's liturgy and sermons regarding the beauty of our world, so that we can enter this new season with keener vision and appreciation. Whether you're at the beach, the mountains, the lake, with friends, family, or enjoying some restful renewal, may you be blessed with many experiences of beauty, peace and recreation.

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

“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.

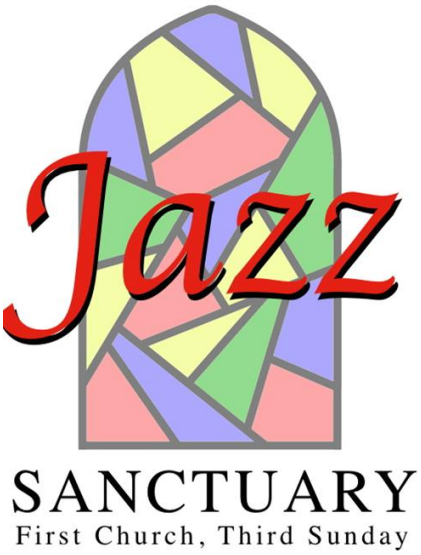
Teach me how to wait without clinging to false certainties, while old things fade and new life quietly grows beneath the surface. Through every shadow and every season of rooting, be my vision, O Love of My Heart.

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.



In recent times, skin has become an increasing canvas for body art with the huge growth in the popularity of tattoos. This is certainly one creative way of loving the "skin we're in!" In our ongoing consideration of beauty from every possible angle as inspired by John O'Donohue, on Sunday, July 19 at 2:30 (hopefully outdoors) at the church Jazz Sanctuary will be celebrating "The Beauty of Skin."

Considering the ways skin is essential to soothing, healing, comforting, and - well - loving one another has led us to songs like "You've Got a Friend, "Lean on Me," and "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free." And in our Conversational Time, there will be space to share ways that you've literally been "touched" in your own life and in the lives of others around you. Come join us for what should be a beautiful afternoon of liturgy and music.

In August we will shift our gathering time for Jazz Sanctuary to 3:00 on Sunday, August 16 and move our service to the auditorium in the Main Building at Havenwood, 33 Christian Ave. in Concord. I've been writing about our efforts to take music out into the community and this is another example of that. After some time away on vacation in July, Pastor Emilia will re-join the Jazz Sanctuary House Band for this one and continue our exploration of the role of Eros in leading us to beauty.

The fall will lead us into some new and some familiar territory theme-wise with a Jazz Sanctuary on "De-Colonizing the Church" and another on "The Beauty of the Beatles." And, of course, there is the annual Musicians' Flea Market and the Jazz Sanctuary presentations of Christmas and Holiday music!

Thanks for riding along on the Jazz Sanctuary train where the Holy Spirit is always saying, "All Aboard!"

Peace, Tim Wildman for The Jazz Sanctuary Ministry Team

Technology Corner

QR Codes—How to Use Them Safely

You've probably noticed the small black-and-white square printed in our church bulletin each week. That's called a QR (Quick Response) code. Simply open the camera on your smartphone and point it at the code. A notification will appear that you can tap to open a webpage—no typing required. QR codes are a quick and convenient way to access information. The QR code printed on this page will take you directly to information about our **Blues Brothers the Next Generation** concert on **Wednesday, July 22**, so you can see how easy it is to use a QR code yourself.

QR codes have become common on restaurant menus, museum exhibits, community bulletin boards, parking meters, doctor's offices, and many other places. Unfortunately, scammers have found ways to take advantage of their popularity. One common trick is placing a sticker with a fake QR code over a legitimate one. When someone scans the sticker instead of the original code, they're taken to a fraudulent website that may ask for credit card information, passwords, or other personal details, or even try to install malicious software on their device.

The good news is that QR codes themselves are not dangerous—it's the website they open that matters. Before tapping the link, take a quick look at the web address your phone displays. If it doesn't match the organization you expected, or if something doesn't seem right, don't continue. When in doubt, ask someone before scanning. QR codes are a wonderful time-saving tool, and by taking a few extra seconds to make sure they're legitimate, you can enjoy their convenience while staying safe online.

Jock Ivine for Technology

Happy Birthday

July

Susan Rineer – 7/15
Sheila Lugg – 7/28
Jim Wildman – 7/30

August

Jock Irvine – 8/13
Sara Nichols – 8/25
Craigann Carlson – 8/26
Carroll Blake – 8/29



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:

Family of Chuck Booth – Peace

Family of Carol Hovey - Peace