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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
October 2025

NORTH STAR



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UCC

October 2025

**Gathered Since 1730**

**Serving, Welcoming,**

**Growing in Christ**

79 Clinton Street

Concord, NH 03301

Phone: 603-225-5491

Email:

[secretary@concordsfirstchurch.org](mailto:secretary@concordsfirstchurch.org)

Website:

[www.concordsfirstchurch.org](http://www.concordsfirstchurch.org)

Office Hours: In-Person,  
Monday and Thursday 9:30am-  
12:15pm

Worship: Sunday 10:30am

**Senior Minister**

Rev. Emilia Halstead

**Musician &**

**North Star Editor**

Annie Papinsick

**Church Secretary**

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

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**FROM THE PASTOR**

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

*I passed on to you the tradition the Lord gave to me: On the same night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread in His hands; and after giving thanks to God, He broke it and said, "This is My body, broken for you. Keep doing this so that you and all who come after will have a vivid reminder of Me." After they had finished dinner, He took the cup and in the same way said, "This cup is the new covenant, executed in My blood. Keep doing this; and whenever you drink it, you and all who come after will have a vivid reminder of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-29, the Voice translation)*

This year, at the NH Clergy Convocation, the focus was on the sacrament of Communion, led and taught by the amazing Mary Luti. Since we are celebrating World Communion Sunday on October 5th, and as I will be inviting the Spiritual Life ministry team to considering purchasing enough copies of Mary Luti's new liturgical book on Communion for the chapel, I wanted to share with you all the amazing introduction to *Do This: Communion for Just and Courageous Living* for my pastor's letter this month:

*On the night he was betrayed, Jesus ate supper with his friends. He gave God thanks for the bread and wine and mysteriously called them his Body and Blood. Giving them to his disciples to eat and drink, he said, "Do this." And ever since, the church has gratefully obeyed, remembering Jesus by giving thanks, sharing a loaf and a cup, and experiencing a real and loving presence, just as he promised we would. Communion occupies a central place in Christian life. Although we often can't fully express what it means to us, we know enough that we've come to call it "holy."*

*Holy as it is, however, the way we think about and practice Communion has sometimes thinned out its thick meanings and toned down its bracing challenges. Communion packs an ethical wallop, but sometimes it's hard to feel it at our tables. For example, Communion is about unity, wholeness, and welcome, but for many people it's also an occasion of judgement and exclusion. We call it a heavenly banquet, but we often betray the lavish generosity by serving only demure bits of bread and polite sips of juice. It's about Body and Blood, but we sometimes get so*

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*spiritual about Communion that we don't notice its implications for real human bodies, especially the violence we perpetuate on human bodies. We cherish God's intimate nearness in Communion, but unbalanced by other considerations, that intimacy leads to a privatization of the sacrament, obscuring its crucial public witness.*

*From the earliest days of the Church, Communion was understood not only as a ritual by which Christ becomes truly present and strengthens our ties of Christian love, but also as a practice that produces just and courageous lives. By the power of the Holy Spirit, participation in the sacrament is meant to shape us collectively into a body that behaves in a distinctive way in the world: a body that looks, sounds, thinks, speaks and acts like communion, doing in the world what we do at our tables whenever we "do this."*

*This is not to politicize Communion. It's to say that Communion is concerned with the ethics of our shared life and always has been. We invite you to reflect with us on some of these life-shaping dimensions of Communion—belonging, memory, bodies, violence, feeding, reconciliation, healing, creation care, resilience, human labor—and encourage you to incorporate them in your congregational practice of Communion.*

*It's a safe bet that some pieces in this resource will not fit your particular theology or your congregational context. Some may even seem old hat. Others may open new perspectives. Some may go too far for you. Some not far enough. That's okay. Consider this resource a starting point, a nudge for further reflection, prayer, and practice. Perhaps it will help you to live into the sacrament more deeply and be more open to the Spirit's work of transforming the church—Communion by Communion—into a table of love and justice in the world.*

Blessings,  
Pastor Emilia

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**FROM THE COUNCIL**

At the September Council meeting, there was a lengthy discussion about upgrading the Wi-Fi to allow Wi-Fi access from the two First Church offices, the Chapel, Wesley's Sanctuary, and Hanna Hall all from one network. This would involve electrical work and would cost just over \$5,000.00 This change would allow us to program Wi-Fi services for any event and provide guest Wi-Fi as well. Since this is a significant expenditure, the Council is looking for feedback/input from any/all members and friends of the congregation. The consensus from the Council was that this facility upgrade would provide a public service to many groups meeting at 79 Clinton Street as well as for Family Promise. This upgrade is being considered for the 2026-27 budget. In addition, we recognized the outstanding service of Brandie Lyons, who served as the First Church Financial Secretary. Pastor Emilia presented her with a gift of appreciation from our congregation at the September Jazz Sanctuary Service. Please mark your calendar to attend the October Circle meeting beginning at 9:30 am on October 26<sup>th</sup> in the Chapel.



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**Ministry of Spiritual Life**

At the beginning of September, we were very pleased to have Pastor Emilia back after a well deserved vacation. She was indeed back in full force with sermons of hope and faith—as well as color!

Regathering/Homecoming Sunday was a delightful event. The fellowship was warm and the food was delicious. Thank you to those who contributed to the feast!

Now we are in the beautiful month of October. Its rich, warm colors of yellow, gold, orange, red and rust make roads and hillside dazzle and remind us, once again, of the beauty and wonder of God's creation. Displays of pumpkins, cornstalks, apples and gourds add to the richness of the scene. We hope you are enjoying these blessings of beauty.

We will be connecting with the larger world in various ways during October. The first Sunday, we will be celebrating World Communion Day, uniting with Christians all over the world.

On the 26th, we will be honoring and remembering our relationship with our sister church in Zimbabwe.

Our Jazz Sanctuary Worship Service will take place on the 19th. Watch for further information.

In addition to our worship services, Pastor Emilia and Tim Wildman will be offering another Circle Meeting on Sunday, October 26, 9:30 - 10:15. At least some of the conversation will be about Pastor Emilia's new schedule.

We will be continuing Racial Justice Steering Team's suggestions of including at least one African American spiritual in our worship service, along with an introduction. We'll also continue to feature African American art on our bulletin covers. Many have commented how impressive and moving the art has been.

Pastor Emilia continues to be in touch with members at Havenwood/Heritage Heights.

Moving into next month, we will be celebrating All Saints Day on November 2nd, remembering members and loved ones who have died in the past year. There will be special Coffee Hour with Pastor Emilia and Inez McDermott discussing a Vermeer painting mentioned in John O'Donohue's book on Beauty.

All in all, October promises to be full, rich month with many opportunities to welcome, serve, and grow in Christ.

May your fall season be blessed with beauty and may you find hope, peace, joy, grounding—whatever your need or focus.

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



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**Ministry of Outreach**

**Kid Kits And Clean Up Buckets:**

School Kits are now called Kid Kits and the list is slightly different. Copies of the new list are posted on the bulletin board and can be found online at

<https://cwskits.org>

**CWS Kits - Help Communities in Need  
Around the World**

CWS Buckets and Kits are small packages of supplies assembled by volunteers and shipped to families and communities in need around the world. [cwskits.org](http://cwskits.org)

Thank you for all the donations we have received. What we need now are bags. Directions for making the bags are on the bulletin board and also can be found at the web site. Please continue to take sticky notes from the bulletin board and buy materials needed for the cleanup buckets.

**Zimbabwe:** Thank you for your donations for the Daisy Dube orphanage. A final total will be placed in the next North Star.

**Strengthen the Church:** Thank you for your donations to Strengthen the Church. A final total will be placed in the next North Star.

**Neighbors in Need:**

This UCC offering is collected on World Communion Sunday. A "five for five" offering which 1/3 goes to Council of Indian Ministries and 2/3 goes to ministries of justice and compassion. Please give generously.

**Crop Walk:** Crop Walk is Oct. 11th. at 10:00am. The 2.5 mile walk starts at the Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Church on Clinton Street. Please consider walking or supporting a walker. Crop Walk has been going for 55 years. The funds raised go towards ending hunger and poverty in the US and around the world.

**Thank you:** A thank you note from Victoria Rosenberg (Sara Nichols' daughter) is posted on the bulletin board. Recently the council voted to send a check of \$50 to help set up a classroom. The students of St. Matthew's Parish School are relocated to a warehouse since the fire in Pacific Palisades. The money received helped brighten up the classroom and hopefully make it more conducive to learning. Ask Sara Nichols to show you a before and after video of the classroom.

*Sara Nichols, Ministry of Outreach*



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**Jazz Sanctuary**

October's fall splendor fits perfectly with Jazz Sanctuary's celebration of the end of our consideration of colors in Pastor Emilia's "brilliant": worship lectionary based on John O'Donohue's "The Invisible Embrace of Beauty!" On Sunday, October 19 at 2:30 PM in Hanna Hall, "Color - The Clothing of Beauty," will be our Jazz Sanctuary theme as we offer songs that celebrate this "clothing" - Rainbow Connection, Over the Rainbow, and Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair to name a few.

As a part of this celebration of color, we will also commemorate and celebrate one of the most colorful and dynamic jazz vocalists ever, the late Nina Simone. Vocalist and Jazz Sanctuary House Band member Rev. Renee' Rouse is preparing six tunes that were frequently performed by Simone during her creative years among us. Our Conversational Time will consider the implications of living in a world where mindfulness of both color (beauty) and justice (music of Nina Simone) creates a frame for living well.

In November, Jazz Sanctuary will return to what has become an annual celebration of the music of the Beatles. Both this celebration and the annual Mardi Gras celebration in February or March have become popular beyond the usual community that forms for Jazz Sanctuary, so invite some friends - it will be a party!!!

Jazz Sanctuary continues to reach out into the community with events like the MUSICIANS' FLEA MARKET ON NOVEMBER 1 IN HANNA HALL, our performance at the Congregational Church in Laconia on October 4 for their day of peace, and a yet to be planned performance at the Friendly Kitchen. And we also continue to reach in to refine our sense of intimacy and spiritual community when we gather, as we have begun setting up card tables for conversation and sharing refreshments at our monthly Jazz Sanctuary jazz worship experiences. Our Jazz Sanctuary ministry team hopes you will feel included in this ministry in any way that works for you - we mean it when we say "wherever you are and BECAUSE OF WHO YOU ARE on you life's journey, you are welcome here!" Come join us on October 19 or ANYTIME!

*Rev. Dr. Tim Wildman, Jazz Sanctuary*

### **Technology Corner**

Do you sometimes struggle to find just the right words when writing, or aren't sure how to best format something for a Facebook post, newsletter article, press release, or other communication? The AI tool **ChatGPT** can be a helpful resource. Here's how to give it a try:

1. On your computer, write the text you need.
2. Select all of it and **copy**.
3. Go to [ChatGPT.com](https://chatgpt.com) in a web browser.
4. In the "Ask anything" box, tell ChatGPT what you're looking for. For example:  
"Can you format this for a church newsletter?"  
"Please turn this into a brief social media post."

You can either paste your text immediately after your question and press **Return**, or, if you've already pressed **Return**, paste it in the box again and press **Return**. ChatGPT will analyze your text and generate a new version based on your instructions.

If you like what you see, simply copy and paste it into your article, post, or document. If it's not quite right, you can ask ChatGPT to make adjustments—such as "Make this more concise," "Use simpler language," or "Polish this as if for a magazine audience." You can repeat this process as many times as you like until you're satisfied, or make further edits yourself in your word processor.

Some people love using ChatGPT for this; others may not. I encourage you to try it for yourself—you might be surprised at how helpful it can be. In fact, after writing this article for the **North Star**, I pasted it into ChatGPT and typed, "*Please polish this up for a church newsletter,*" and that's exactly what you're reading now!

*Jock Irvine*, Technology Integrator

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**Social Media Engagement for September**

YouTube

Subscribers: 184 (1 new subscriber)

Views: 387 (43 less than usual)

Watch Time: 16.2 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: 2,944 (Up 26.1%)

Interactions: 39 (Down 31.6%)

Followers: 579 (Up 0.5%)

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

Interactions = The total number of times 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

*Jock Irvine, Technology Integrator*

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## Birthdays

Rev. Emilia Halstead – 10/2

Linda Baines – 10/4

Rev. Eleanor Kimball – 10/13

Hannah Irving – 10/26

## PRAYER CONCERNS

If you would like your name included in the weekly bulletin prayer list, please contact our church administrator, Kathy. ([secretary@concordfirstchurch.org](mailto:secretary@concordfirstchurch.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

Paula Kust - Healing

Mariah E. - Healing

Family & Friends of Howard "BJ"  
Steinberg - Peace

Family of Carol Emery - Peace

Franklin Richardson Rouse—Healing

