Welcome to First Congregational Church



The Train Station, 1935

Walter Ellison (1899–1977)

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!]*

Family Promise Impression Session with Wesley UMC: TODAY! At Noon in Hanna Hall; lunch will be provided. "Wesley UMC envisions becoming a static site for Family Promise of Greater Concord. We need your help to shape this vision for the purpose of building broad community support."

Upcoming Shows in the Clinton Street Concert Series (Sponsored by FCC and WUMC). All shows are 6:00-7:15 PM

August 19 - The Scott Spradling Band

Java & Jazz at William & Sons Coffee Company
August 15th, August 29th.



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!)

Outreach: Save the Date: October 10th – Crop Walk
We received a thank you from CWS for our support of the kits program. The note is posted on the bulletin board outside the chapel.
Please continue to support this effort. We have two more completed kid kits to make a grand total of 34. We still need to take advantage of the back to school sales. Please do so by buying:
Glue sticks
24 count crayons
12 count crayons
12 count colored pencils
blunt, rounded tip scissors
12"/30 cm rulers
unsharpened pencils
Please also buy items needed for the Clean up Bucket.

Welcome to First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
Rev. Emilia Halstead
August 9, 2026

Welcome & Announcements

PRELUDE Annie Papinsick

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Love calls us out from behind our carefully built walls.
Love invites us into lives we could never imagine alone.
We come carrying memories of joy and memories of hurt.
Yet still Love calls our names. The Holy One meets us wherever we are, not demanding perfection, but inviting trust.
Where fear has ruled, may courage awaken.
Where loneliness has lingered, may companionship grow.
Where love asks us to risk, may we discover unexpected joy.
Let us worship the One who forever calls us into covenantal love.

Coming Into the Invisible Embrace of Beauty (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Holy Love, open unexpected doors within us. Teach us again the sacred art of trust. Where we have become guarded, make us courageous. Where we have grown fearful, help us risk compassion. Where we have forgotten joy, restore wonder. May your Spirit steady the fragile boats of our lives as we sail together toward deeper love. Amen.

Offering Our Moments of Beauty & Prayers of Joy
(*Response to each offering/prayer:*)
O Love of our hearts,
Receive our praise.

Opening Song: #73 Enter, Rejoice, and Come In! (Public Domain)

1 Enter, rejoice, and come in. (x2)
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

2 Open your ears to the song. (x2)
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

3 Open your hearts ev'ryone. (x2)
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

4 Don't be afraid of some change. (x2)
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

5 Enter, rejoice, and come in. (x2)
Today will be a joyful day;
enter, rejoice, and come in.

Hear now from the book of Ruth; one of scriptures great covenant love stories…
Hebrew Scriptures Ruth 1:16-17 (the Voice translation) Tim Wildman

Ruth says to her mother-in-law, Naomi: "Stop pushing me away, insisting that I stop following you! Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will also die and be buried there near you. May the Eternal One punish me—and even more so—if anything besides death comes between us."
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Hear now from the book of Ecclesiastes, which shares the beauty of companionship through the storms of life…
Hebrew Scriptures Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (the Voice translation) Tim Wildman

Two are better than one because a good return comes when two work together. If one of them falls, the other can help them up. But who will help the pitiful person who falls down alone? In the same way, if two lie down together, they can keep each other warm. But how will the one who sleeps alone stay warm against the night? And if one person is vulnerable to attack, two can drive the attacker away. As the saying goes, "A rope made of three strands is not quickly broken."
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Let us share now from the Gospel of Mark, in which Bartimaeus receives his sight; Love enables us to see differently. Healing changes how we encounter the world…
Gospel Lesson Mark 10:46-52 (the Voice translation) Tim Wildman

[Narrator] By that time, Jesus and the disciples had reached Jericho; as they passed through the town, a crowd of people followed along. They came to a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, who sat beside the main road. When he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing in that throng, he called out in a loud voice.

Bartimaeus: **Jesus, Son of David, take pity on me and help me!**

[Narrator] Disgusted by the blind man's public display, others in the crowd tried to silence him until the Master passed.

Bartimaeus (still louder): **Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!**

[Narrator] Jesus stopped where He stood. The crowd stopped with Him. He told those near the front of the crowd to call the blind man forward. Bartimaeus cast aside his beggar's robe and stepped forward, feeling his way toward Jesus.

[Pastor Emilia] Jesus: What do you want from Me?

Bartimaeus: **Teacher, I want to see.**

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[Pastor Emilia] Jesus: Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace.

[Narrator] In that moment, Bartimaeus could see again; and from that time on, he followed Jesus.
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Sermon "The Beauty of Love: Every Risk for Growth Will be Rewarded"
Rev. Emilia Halstead

Pausing for Moment of Silent Reflection

Song: #327 Jesus Loves Me
(verses 1-2 Public Domain, verse 3 by David Rutherford McGuire, 1971)

1 Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
little ones to him belong;
they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain:
Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

2 Jesus loves me, this I know,
as he loved so long ago,
taking children on his knee,
saying, "Let them come to me." **[Refrain]**

2 Jesus loves me still today,
walking with me on my way,
wanting as a friend to give
light and love to all who live**. [Refrain]**

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: O Love That Will Not Let Me Go, verse 1 (Public Domain)

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in you;
I give you back the life I owe.
That in your ocean depths its flow may swell ardor true.

Offertory

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

Mission Moment from Korea

Prayers with Korea
God of peace and hope, we thank you for the faithful witness of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and for the mission of the Church of Reconciliation and Peace. Bless this house of faith as it offers a place for prayer, education, vision, and hope beside a border that has divided families and peoples for generations.
Heal the division and distrust that keep open the wounds of war on the Korean Peninsula. Strengthen all who work patiently for justice, reconciliation, and lasting peace. May small but courageous acts of faith continue to open new paths toward understanding and unity.
May your church always be a light in places of darkness, a bridge where others see barriers, and a living sign of your kingdom where justice, peace, and abundant life flourish.
In the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Invitation to Give (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Gratitude Music Annie Papinsick

Prayer of Dedication (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Holy Love, receive these gifts; tender expressions of grateful hearts. Bless them beyond what we can imagine. May they become food for the hungry, friendship for the lonely, hope for the discouraged, and courage for those preparing to risk love once again. Amen.

Closing Song: #81 God Be With You (Public Domain)

1 God be with you till we meet again,
by good counsels guide, uphold you,
with a shepherd's care enfold you;
God be with you till we meet again.

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2 God be with you till we meet again!
Wings of shelter safely hide you,
daily manna still provide you;
God be with you till we meet again!

3 God be with you till we meet again;
when life’s perils thick confound you,
put unfailing arms round you;
God be with you till we meet again.

4 God be with you till we meet again;
keep love’s banner floating o’er you,
smite death’s threat'ning wave before you;
God be with you till we meet again.

Setting our Intentions for the Week Ahead

Greatest Commandment

Benediction & Sending (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Postlude Annie Papinsick