

Welcome to First Congregational Church



From Notre Dame Paris, 1958

Lois Malou Jones

Watercolor on paper, The Studio Museum in Harlem

Jones was a Boston native who was a much awarded student at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and then completed her degree at Howard University. Her work in her long career focused on both conventional Western European styles and subject matter and influences of African subject matter and styles.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*[Please send any announcements for the bulletin or weekly Enews to the Secretary (secretary@concordfirstchurch.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!]*

Reminder: We will no longer be live-streaming our worship services on Facebook. Go to **Youtube.com/ConcordFirstChurch** to watch the services live.

Next Circle Gathering - SAVE THE DATE: Our next Circle Gathering will be Sunday, October 26th before worship from 9:30-10:15am

NEW Website: Please visit and explore at www.concordfirstchurch.org.

Crop Walk: Crop Walk is Oct. 11th. The 2.5 walk starts at 10:00AM at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Please consider walking or supporting a walker.

Weekly Prayers for the Nation: Join Rev. Renee' for a weekly hour of prayer for our nation on Zoom. Wednesdays at 1pm. Zoom link is in the weekly E-News and in the calendar on the website.

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



Welcome to First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
Rev. Emilia Halstead
September 28, 2025

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude Out on the Ocean (trad. Irish) Annie Papinsick

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (adapted from a prayer written by Nancy Johnson)
Holy God, Creator of Life, you call to us and walk with us in our “blue” places, offering us the grace of new life; come rain or come shine.

When we see nothing but hopelessness, you surprise us with the breath of your spirit.

Call us out of our complacency and routines.

Set us free from our self-imposed bonds and limited vision.

Fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace.

In the name of Jesus, your anointed one, we gather and we pray. Amen.

COMING INTO THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE OF BEAUTY:

Eternal One, whose thoughts and ways are not ours, you alone are God: awesome, holy, and most high. Instruct us in the verbs of faith and wisdom, that we, like Job, may learn to truly see and hear, and in humility, find your blessings of Beauty. Amen.

OFFERING OUR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY

SONG #476 My Life Flows on in Endless Song

How Can I Keep From Singing, ENDLESS SONG, Robert Lowry, Randall DeBruyn

Text: 87 87 with refrain; attr. to Robert Lowry, 1826-1899, alt.; Verse 3, Doris Plenn. Music: Quaker Hymn; attr. to Robert Lowry.

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My life flows on in endless song above earth's lamentation
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation
Through all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing
It finds an echo in my soul how can I keep from singing?

What though my joys and comfort die? My Savior still is living,
What though the shadows gather round? A new song Christ is giving.
No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging;
Since Love commands both heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

When tyrants tremble, sick with fear, and hear their death knells ringing,
When friends rejoice both far and near, how can I keep from singing?
In prison cell and dungeon vile, our thoughts to them are winging;
When friends by shame are undefiled, how can I keep from singing?

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I lift mine eyes; the cloud grows thin; I see the blue above it
And day by day this pathway smooths, since first I learned to love it
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, A fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am Christ's how can I keep from singing?

Hear now our modern lesson, "The Blue Crusade."
Words by Ben Okri and Art by Rosemary Clunie...

Hear now from the book of Job...
Hebrew Scriptures Job 6:1-7 (The Message)

Sara Nichols

Job answered: "If my misery could be weighed,
if you could pile the whole bitter load on the scales,
It would be heavier than all the sand of the sea!
Is it any wonder that I'm howling like a caged cat?
The arrows of God Almighty are in me,
poison arrows—and I'm poisoned all through!
God has dumped the whole works on me.
Donkeys bray and cows moo when they run out of pasture—
so don't expect me to keep quiet in this.
Do you see what God has dished out for me?
It's enough to turn anyone's stomach!
Everything in me is repulsed by it—
it makes me sick.
Here ends the lesson.
Amen.

Let us share together from the book of Psalms...
Psalter Lesson Psalm 42 (The Message)

Sara Nichols

A white-tailed deer drinks from the creek;
I want to drink God, deep drafts of God.
I'm thirsty for God-alive.
I wonder, "Will I ever make it—arrive and drink in God's presence?"
I'm on a diet of tears—tears for breakfast, tears for supper.
All day long people knock at my door, pestering, "Where is this God of yours?"
These are the things I go over and over, emptying out the pockets of my life.
I was always at the head of the worshiping crowd, right out in front,
Leading them all, eager to arrive and worship,
Shouting praises, singing thanksgiving—celebrating, all of us, God's feast!
Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul?
Why are you crying the blues?
Fix my eyes on God—soon I'll be praising again.
God puts a smile on my face.
God is my God.

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When my soul is in the dumps, I rehearse everything I know of you,
From Jordan depths to Hermon heights, including Mount Mizar.

Chaos calls to chaos, to the tune of whitewater rapids.

Your breaking surf, your thundering breakers crash and crush me.

Then God promises to love me all day, sing songs all through the night!

My life is God's prayer.

Sometimes I ask God, my rock-solid God, "Why did you let me down?"

Why am I walking around in tears, harassed by enemies?"

They're out for the kill, these tormentors with their obscenities,

Taunting day after day, "Where is this God of yours?"

Why are you down in the dumps, dear soul?

Why are you crying the blues?

Fix my eyes on God—soon I'll be praising again.

God puts a smile on my face.

God is my God.

Here ends the lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the book of John...

Sara Nichols

Gospel Lesson

John 11:33-35 (The Living Bible)

When Jesus saw [Mary] weeping and the Jewish leaders wailing with her, he was moved with indignation and deeply troubled. "Where is [Lazarus] buried?" he asked them. They told him, "Come and see." Tears came to Jesus' eyes.

Here ends the lesson.

Amen.

SERMON

'Blue: The Color of Faraway'

Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSING FOR MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

SONG: #475

God's Eye Is on the Sparrow (Public Domain)

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home,
When God is ever my portion? My constant friend will be:
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

Chorus

I sing because I'm happy—

I sing because I'm free—

God's eye is on the sparrow,

And I know God watches me.

"Let not your heart be troubled." Christ's tender word I hear,

And resting on God's goodness, I lose my doubts and fears.

Though by the path God leads me but one step I may see:

God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;

God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me. **Chorus**

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Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When song gives place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I then draw the close to my Savior, from care I am set free:
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me;
God's eye is on the sparrow, and I know God watches me.

Chorus

I sing because I'm happy—

I sing because I'm free—

God's eye is on the sparrow,

And I know God watches me.

Global Ministries Weekly Prayers: Indonesia
(Mission Moment written by Rev. Feiberd. D. Tombakan, S.H, S.Si.Teol – The General Secretary of GKSB. Prayer written by Rev. Sem Samboy, S.Th, M.H – The First Deputy of GKSB. Both parts were translated by Ms. Charlie Wuisan, the International Relations staff person of GKSB.)

Mission Moment with Indonesia

Responsive Prayer with Indonesia:

Dear Lord, our Heavenly Father, we come before you with a grateful heart for your mercy and grace. We thank You for walking with us through the opportunities, in every place and time, and in every situation we have faced. We realize that without You, we would never live our lives as we have them now. We beg that Your mercy and grace will never fail us.

Lord our Father, by this prayer, we lift up the GKSB and the West Sulawesi Seminary. Grant us wisdom in facing all of the social problems, poverty, and limited education of our children. We keep asking these so that the Holy Spirit would take us to be Christ's witnesses and to be a reform agent for our members and for the people of West Sulawesi and Indonesia.

We beg for Your wisdom and guidance for this ongoing partnership between GKSB and our friends and fellows at the Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We seek for Your strength in shepherding our work and programs, especially for the mission development for the congregations, to improve the quality and capacity of education, to guide the children and teenagers to be our church's future leaders, for the ministers and church leaders, and for our program to give illumination and stimulus to improve the economy of our members and the community around us.

Lord, we believe that You would move every obstacle, break every fetter, and lift up our burdened heart. We beg You to be our strength and sustainer.

We pray for us, Your servants who are now carrying responsibilities in the Synod Board. Let every word we speak and every act we do reflect Your glory.

Give us Your wisdom, and let us be rooted in Your word and always reflect the light of Your coming Kingdom. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

