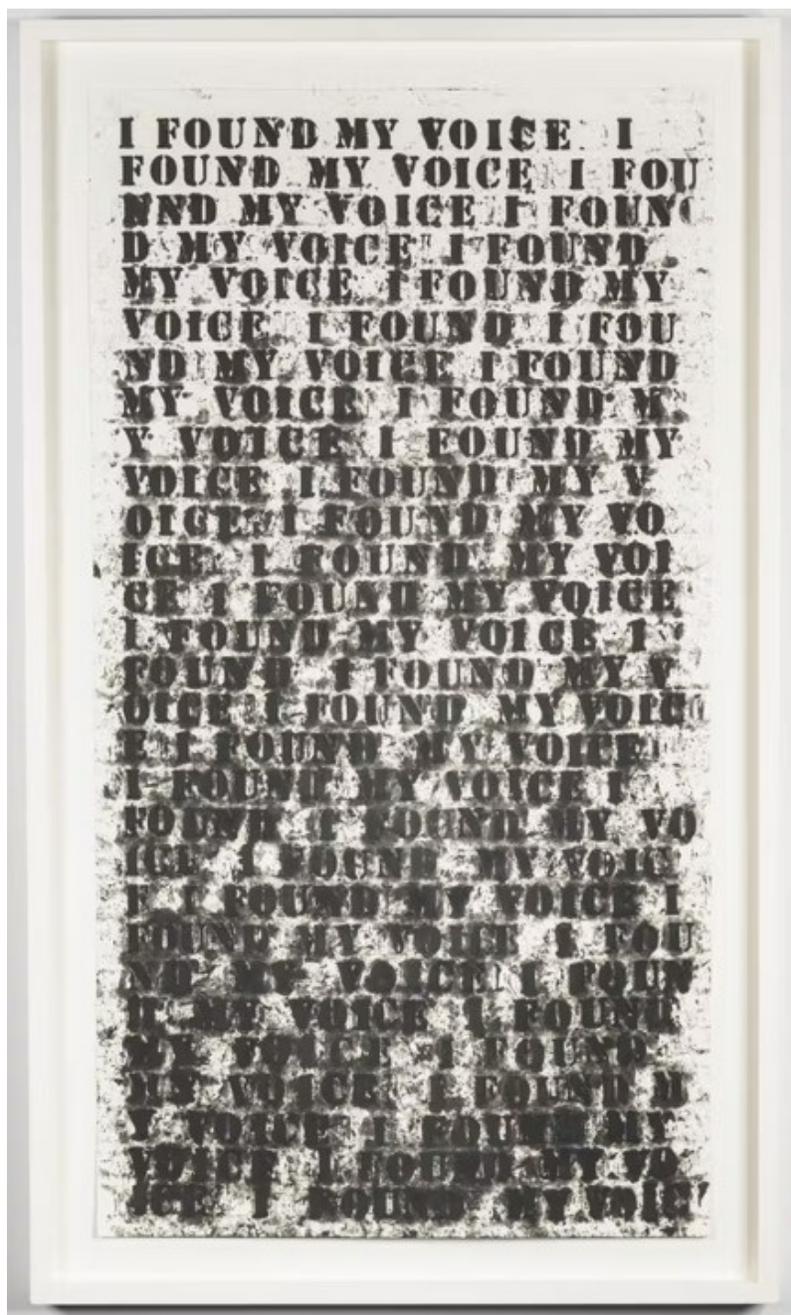


Welcome to First Congregational Church



I Found My Voice,
Glenn Ligon, 1990,
Oil stick on paper
Studio Museum in Harlem

Glenn Ligon is a conceptual artist who explores race, language and identity through examining speech and literature from the 20th century.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*[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!]*

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

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

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
November 9, 2025

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude Polska Fran Harjedalen (trad. Swedish) Annie Papinsick

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (written by John O'Donohue)

A river somehow illuminates the beauty of time.

In a river, past, present, and future coalesce into the one passionate flowing.

A river is the continuous flow of future.

Though it flows through the landscape, it never divides space into 'sooner' or 'later,' 'before' or 'after.'

The river is a miracle of presence.

Each place it flows through is the place it is.

The river holds its elegance regardless of the places it flows through.

COMING INTO THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE OF BEAUTY: (written by John O'Donohue)

If we could but find a rhythm of being which could balance a contemplative grace, a poetry of motion, and an accompanying stillness and silence, our pilgrimage through this world would flow, in beauty, through the most ragged and forsaken heartlands of confusion and dishevelment. The grace of a river is a reminder of how nature seeks elegance and achieves immense beauty of cohesion and balance.

OFFERING OUR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY

SONG: #327

Jesus Loves Me

Jesus Loves Me, William Bradbury

Text: St. 1, Anna B. Warner, 1860; st. 2, 3, David R. McGuire, c. 1970. Music: William B. Bradbury, 1862.

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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.

Jesus loves me! This I know, as He loved so long ago,

Taking children on His knee, saying, "Let them come to Me." **(Refrain)**

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)**

Here now our modern lesson: "Passing Time" by Maya Angelou

Here ends the modern lesson.

Amen.

Hear now the Psalter Lesson...

Hebrew Scriptures Psalm 46:4-6 (The Living Bible) Eleanor Kimball

There is a river of joy flowing through the city of our God—the sacred home of the God above all gods. God himself is living in that city; therefore it stands unmoved despite the turmoil everywhere. God will not delay their help. The nations rant and rave in anger—but when God speaks, the earth melts in submission and kingdoms totter into ruin.

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Let us share now together from the prophet Amos...

Hebrew Scriptures Amos 5:21-24 (The Message) Eleanor Kimball

The Eternal says: "I can't stand your religious meetings.

I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.

I want nothing to do with your religion projects,
your pretentious slogans and goals.

**I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,
your public relations and image making.**

I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.

When was the last time you sang to me?

Do you know what I want?

I want justice—oceans of it.

I want fairness—rivers of it.

That's what I want. That's all I want."

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the prophet Isaiah

Hebrew Scriptures Isaiah 43:18-19 (The Living Bible) Eleanor Kimball

The Eternal says: "But forget all that—it is nothing compared to what I'm going to do! For I'm going to do a brand-new thing. See, I have already begun! Don't you see it? I will make a road through the wilderness of the world for my people to go home, and create rivers for them in the desert!"

Here ends the Lesson.

Amen.

Hear now from the Gospel of John...

Gospel Lesson John 7:37-39 (The Living Bible) Eleanor Kimball

On the last day, the climax of the holidays, Jesus shouted to the crowds, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water shall flow from the inmost being of anyone who believes in me." (He was speaking of the Holy Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him; but the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet returned to his glory in heaven.)

Here ends the Gospel Lesson.

Amen.

SERMON

“Breaking Stillness: the River as Ideal Sequence”
Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Song: #168

O Radiant Christ, Incarnate Word

O Radiant Christ, Incarnate Word, Ruth Duck

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O radiant Christ, incarnate Word, eternal love revealed in time:

Come, make your home within our hearts, that we may dwell in light sublime.

Our bartered, busy lives burn dim, too tired to care, too numb to feel.

Come, shine upon our shadowed world: your radiance bathes with power to heal.

Your glory shone at Jordan’s stream, the font where we were born anew.

Attune your church to know you near; illumine all we say and do.

O Light of Nations, fill the earth; our faith and hope and love renew.

Come, lead the peoples to your peace, as stars once led the way to you.

Global Ministries Weekly Prayers: Sri Lanka

(Prayer and Mission Moment written by Revd. Jayanath Panditharatne, Director, The Ecumenical Institute for Study & Dialogue)

Mission Moment from Sri Lanka

Prayers with Sri Lanka

We give you thanks, Oh God, for the nation of Sri Lanka, its rich religious diversity, and the unity it aspires to and strives to have in and through its diversity, even when it is never perfect.

God, we pray for the Church in Sri Lanka, which continues to be divided into many denominations. We pray to God for a renewal among Christians in their lives so that they can share the Gifts of the Spirit and set an example to their nation to struggle for the common good of the masses.

God, the one who initiates transformation, we pray for those engaged in new areas of ministry in Sri Lanka and uphold them in our prayers today, seeking God’s assistance and intervention to strengthen their work.

God, we remember the work and witness of the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue. We pray unto you, O gracious God, that we continue working to strengthen people for active service in the fellowship of the gospel.

We pray that love may abound evermore, and so do knowledge and all discernment, that the churches in Sri Lanka, and all the people in this country and all over the world seek “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable.”

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(Response to each prayer:)

God of the River,

Receive our prayers.

PASTORAL PRAYER (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Lord's Prayer:

Our father, who 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, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sung Amen: Take Me to the Water (African American Spiritual)

Take me to the water (x3)
To be baptized.
[We will sing it through twice]

Offertory

Invitation (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

GRATITUDE MUSIC Polska efter Batsman Dack
("Tune from the playing of Dack, the boatsman") (trad. Swedish)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Flow through us, O God, as rivers flow through the valleys and plains. Take these gifts—tokens of our gratitude, signs of our hope—and carry them to the places where your beauty and balance are most needed.

Bless what we offer, and bless us to live as tributaries of your love, flowing with compassion, courage, and peace. In the name of Christ, the Living Water, we pray. Amen.

*CLOSING SONG: #169 What Ruler Wades through Murky Streams

What Ruler Wades through Murky Streams, Thomas H. Troeger

Text: Thomas H. Troeger, © 1986, Oxford University Press, Inc.

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What ruler wades through murky streams and bows beneath the wave.

Ignoring how the world esteems the powerful and brave?

Refrain: Water, River, Spirit, Grace, sweep over me, sweep over me!

Recarve the depths your fingers traced in sculpting me.

Christ gleams with water brown with clay from land the prophets trod.

Above while heaven's clouds give way descends the dove of God. **(Refrain)**

Come bow beneath the flowing wave. Christ stands here at you side

and raises you as from the grave God raised the crucified. **(Refrain)**

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

SENDING & BENEDICTION (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

POSTLUDE

Kyrkmarsch fran Ostervalva (trad. Swedish)

Annie Papinsick