Welcome to First Congregational Church



Free Clinic, 1937

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000)

Lawrence painted a number of images of patients waiting at the Free Clinic at Harlem Hospital. Although not officially part of the WPA mural program, he may have created these alongside his mentor, Charles Alston, who was working on murals at the hospital.
(Art Institute of Chicago)

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*

SAVE THE DATES:

Regathering Sunday: On Sunday, September 13, we invite you to join us as we begin a new program year and regather after our summer season of rest. Following worship, we'll share coffee hour in the Parlor, across the hall from the Chapel. If you would like to bring something to share, please contact a member of Spiritual Life: Kellie Heath, Eleanor Kimball, Brenda Placenti, or Sheila Swenson.

Tending Our History/Turning 300: Beginning Monday, September 14, from 11:00–12:30, Spiritual Life and Pastor Emilia invite you to a monthly gathering as we begin exploring the archival treasures currently stored in Pembroke. Each month, we'll tackle three boxes, one for each member of the Trinity! Together, we'll decide what to donate to the Congregational Library & Archives in Boston, what to keep as we approach our 300th anniversary, and what can be recycled. Afterward, we'll enjoy fellowship over brown-bag lunches.

Circle Gatherings for 2026/2027: Beginning Sunday, September 27, and continuing on most fourth Sundays through May, we will gather *after* worship from approximately 11:45–12:45 for conversation and shared discernment. As we approach our 300th anniversary, our gatherings will center around one important question: *How is God calling us to live with intention into the next season of life as First Congregational Church of Concord?*

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 30, 2026

Welcome & Announcements

PRELUDE Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin by Richard Wagner Annie Papinsick

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
We come from roads already traveled, from places of joy and places of weariness.
And God has accompanied us here.
We stand upon the threshold of roads we cannot yet see.
And God is already present there.
The Holy One blesses our beginnings, shelters our becoming, and walks beside us through the unknown.
We lift our eyes toward the hills. Our help comes from the One who made heaven and earth.
Come, beloved travelers. Rest for a while in the shelter of grace.
Then bless us, Holy One, and brighten the road before us.
Let us worship God.

COMING INTO THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE OF BEAUTY (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Holy One of every beginning, we enter this sanctuary carrying roads within us: roads traveled, roads abandoned, roads we still grieve, and roads whose names we do not yet know. Meet us here. And when the time comes for us to leave this sanctuary space, send us into the beautiful unknown trusting that wherever the road leads, your love has already gone ahead of us. Amen.

OFFERING OUR MOMENTS OF BEAUTY & PRAYERS OF JOY
(*Response to each offering/prayer:*)
O Love of our hearts,
Receive our praise.

OPENING SONG: #18 Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer (Public Domain)

Guide me, O my great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but you are mighty, hold me with your powerful hand;
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more;
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, where the healing waters flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through;
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, ever be my strength and shield;
Ever be my strength and shield.

When I reach the River Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side;
Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever sing to thee;
I will ever sing to thee.

Let us share together from the book of Numbers in which the ancient priestly blessing reminds us that God's desire is always to turn toward us with tenderness, grace, and peace…

Hebrew Scriptures Numbers 6:22-27 (the Message translation) Eleanor Kimball

God spoke to Moses: "Tell Aaron and his sons, This is how you are to bless the People of Israel. Say to them,
God bless you and keep you,
God smile on you and gift you,
God look you full in the face, and make you prosper.
In so doing, they will place my name on the People of Israel—I will confirm it by blessing them."
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Hear now from the Psalms, in which the blessing becomes a traveling song…

Hebrew Scriptures Psalm 121 (the Voice Translation) Eleanor Kimball

I look up at the vast size of the mountains—from where will my help come in times of trouble? The Creator of heaven and earth, and these mountains, will send the help I need.

The Eternal holds you firmly in place and will not let you fall.
The One who keeps you will never take their eyes off you and never drift off to sleep. What a relief! The One who watches over Israel never leaves for rest or sleep.

The Divine keeps you safe; you are so close to God that God's shadow is a cooling shade to you. Neither the bright light of the sun nor the dim light of the moon will harm you.

The Eternal will keep you safe from all of life's evils, from your first breath to the last breath you breathe, from this day and forever.
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Hear now from the book of the Acts of the apostles, in which we remember that sometimes blessing is not about keeping people close. Sometimes love blesses them by letting them go…

Gospel Lesson Acts 13:1-3 (the Message translation) Eleanor Kimball

The congregation in Antioch was blessed with a number of prophet-preachers and teachers: Barnabas, Simon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul.

One day as the congregation was worshiping God—they were also fasting as they waited for guidance—the Holy Spirit spoke: "Take Barnabas and Saul and commission them for the work I have called them to do."

Continued on next page

So they commissioned them. In that circle of intensity and obedience, of fasting and praying, they laid hands on their heads and sent them off.
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

SERMON "A Blessing Brightens the Road" Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSING FOR MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

SONG: #497 Guide My Feet (African-American Spiritual)

1 Guide my feet, while I run this race (x3)
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

2 Hold my hand, while I run this race (x3)
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

3 I'm your child, while I run this race (x3)
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

4 Stand by me, while I run this race (x3)
For I don't want to run this race in vain.

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: Morocco
(Written by Rev. Clément Mputu, responsible for pastoral care, and Rev. Antoinette Bailu, pastor of the Agadir congregation of the EEaM. Both are appointed as partner-to-partner mission co-workers serving with the Evangelical Church in Morocco.)

Mission Moment from Morocco

Prayers with Morocco
Omnipotent God, you are the creator of the world, and the fate of each nation is in your hands. We pray to you for Morocco, a country that welcomes numerous foreigners for different reasons. We ask that you watch over them so that they are treated with dignity. Protect those who risk their lives crossing the deep waters to reach Europe. For those who do not find work in Morocco, open doors so they may return safely to their countries of origin and find new perspectives on their futures. **Constantly grant the whole Church the necessary discernment to use its spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, faithful to your Word. Give the church's members the will to participate in training programs organized by the EEM to grow in their faith, be rooted in your Word, and mature in their spiritual lives. Amen.**

Invitation to Give (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Gratitude Music Canon in D by Johann Pachelbel Annie Papinsick

Prayer of Dedication (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Holy One, receive these gifts and send them farther than we can see. May they provide shelter to someone who feels exposed, feed someone who is hungry, encourage someone who has grown weary, and brighten a road that has become difficult to see. Amen.

Closing Song: #526 We Are Marching in the Light of God
(South African Freedom Song)

We are marching in the light of God (x2)
We are marching in the light of God (x2)
We are marching, marching, we are marching, oo-OO,
We are marching in the light of God.

Setting our Intentions for the Week Ahead

Greatest Commandment

Benediction & Sending (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

Postlude Wedding March from A Midsummer Night's Dream by Felix Mendelssohn