Welcome to First Congregational Church



***Civil Rights Congress*, 1949**
Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012)

Although this print was produced in Mexico, where Catlett spent many years, it represents her continued concern for the condition of the African American community in the United States. The piece commemorates William Patterson, a member of the Communist Party and the national executive secretary of the Civil Rights Congress.
(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 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!]*

Tending Our History/Turning 300: We have 3 boxes completed! Our next gathering is *Monday, October 12th from 11:00–12:30*. Each month, we are processing 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. Don't forget your brown-bag lunch!

Next Circle Gathering: *Sunday, October 25th* after worship from approximately 11:45–12:45pm. The recording of the Circle Gathering from September 27th is available to view. Simply click on the link in the weekly ENews. Through the month of October, Pastor Emilia invited us to engage in a thought-experiment: *If we imagine that we chose the option "Continuing our ministry together, as we've known it, for as long as we are called and able" what emotions, reflections, and questions arise in you?* We will spend the Circle gathering in October sharing what has come up for us.

Outreach: We need 2-pocket folders, 12 count colored pencils and bags for the kid kits. Please take a sticky note from the bulletin board and add it to your shopping list so that we can start filling a 2nd Clean Up Bucket.

Neighbors in Need is one of our "Five for Five" UCC fund raisers. One third of the money raised goes to the Council for American Indian Ministry and two thirds goes to a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, direct service projects and grants. Please give generously.

We are celebrating Ukama Sunday Oct. 11. The Congregational Ministries founded the church there on Oct 19, 1893.They need donations for food insecurity and for schools. Some children have to walk over 6km to get to a Mureni school. One school near Chikore has no water.

Crop Walk is Oct. 10 at 10:00 AM. The walk is 2.5 mi. Please consider sponsoring a walker or walking yourself. Sara Nichols is walking. Please join her or make a donation. Checks need to be made out to CWS/crop. Cash is accepted also.

Welcome to First Congregational Church
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ
Rev. Emilia Halstead
October 4, 2026

Welcome & Announcements

PRELUDE Pues se vivimos Annie Papinsick

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR WORSHIP

CALL TO WORSHIP: (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
In the beginning, when darkness covered the deep, the Spirit of God moved over the waters.
Before we had names, words, or anyone told us who we were "supposed" to become, God knew the mystery of our beginning.
We have been born into bodies, families, histories, cultures, and communities.
And still the Spirit moves within us.
Some things about us were named before we could speak for ourselves.
And still the Spirit calls us toward the truth of who we are.
From every nation, language, body, identity, and beautiful expression of humanity,
The children of God gather at one Table.
Come, children of earth and breath.
Come, children of water and Spirit.
Come and worship the God who is still creating us.
Come, Holy Spirit. Give birth to something new among us.

COMING INTO THE INVISIBLE EMBRACE OF BEAUTY (Created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Creating God, we come before you carrying all that has shaped us: the bodies into which we were born, the families who received us,
the names we were given, the identities we have discovered, and the selves we are still becoming. Remind us that creation did not end in Genesis, and give us courage to become more fully the people you are calling us to be. Amen.

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

OPENING SONG: #11 Bring Many Names
Bring Many Names (WESTCHASE), Brian Wren, Carlton R Young
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1. Bring many names, beautiful and good, Celebrate, in parable and story,
   Holiness in glory, living, loving God. Hail and Hosanna! Bring many names!

2. Strong mother God, working night and day, Planning all the wonders of creation,
   Setting each equation, genius at play: Hail and Hosanna, strong mother God!

(continued on next page)

3. Warm father God, hugging every child, Feeling all the strains of human living, Caring and forgiving, till we're reconciled: Hail and Hosanna, warm father God!

4. Old, aching God, grey with endless care, Calmly piercing evil's new disguises, Glad of good surprises, wiser than despair: Hail and Hosanna, old, aching God!

5. Young, growing God, eager, on the move, Saying no to falsehood and unkindness, Crying out for justice, giving all you have: Hail and Hosanna, young, growing God!

6. Great, living God, never fully known, Joyful darkness far beyond our seeing, Closer yet than breathing, everlasting home: Hail and Hosanna, great, living God!

Let us share together from the book of Genesis in which we hear again the beginning of creation: darkness, water, Spirit, light, and humanity bearing the image of God…
Hebrew Scriptures Genesis 1:1–5, 26–28 (the Voice translation) Rev. Renee' Rouse

In the beginning, God created everything: the heavens above and the earth below.
Here's what happened: At first the earth lacked shape and was totally empty, and a dark fog draped over the deep while God's spirit-wind hovered over the surface of the empty waters. Then there was the voice of God.
God: **Let there be light.**
And light flashed into being. God saw that the light was beautiful and good, and separated the light from the darkness. God named the light "day" and the darkness "night." Evening gave way to morning. That was day one.
God: **Now let Us conceive a new creation—humanity—made in Our image, fashioned according to Our likeness. And let Us grant them stewardship over all the earth—the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, the domesticated animals and the small creeping creatures on the earth.**
So God did just that. God created humanity in their image, created them male and female. Then God blessed them and gave them this directive: "Be fruitful and multiply. Populate the earth. I make you trustees of My estate, so care for My creation and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that roams across the earth."
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Hear now from the book of Job, in which God speaks to Job from the whirlwind, recalling creation itself as an act of birth: the sea bursting from the womb, wrapped in clouds and held within boundaries.
Hebrew Scriptures Job 38:1-11 (the Voice translation) Rev. Renee' Rouse

Eternal One said, "Who is this that darkens counsel, who covers over sound instruction with empty words void of knowledge?
Now, prepare yourself and gather your courage like a warrior.
Prepare yourself for the task at hand.
I'll be asking the questions, now—you will supply the answers.
Where were you when I dug and laid the foundation of the earth?

(continued on next page)

Explain it to me, if you are acquainted with understanding.
Who decided on the measurements? Surely you know that!
Who stretched out a line to measure the dimensions?
Upon what base was the foundation set?
Or who laid the cornerstone,
On the day when the stars of the morning broke out in song,
and God's heavenly throng, elated, shouted along?
Who held back the sea behind doors and brought the earth bursting forth from the womb of the deep, when for clothes I gave it a cloud
and for swaddling I wrapped it in darkness, when I placed shore around its limits and put up the doors and the bars;
And I said to the sea, 'Here you may come, but no farther.
And here is the shore where your grand waves will crash.'"
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

Let us share now from the Gospel of John, when Nicodemus comes to Jesus in the darkness. Jesus speaks to him of another birth, a birth of water and Spirit, and of a wind that cannot be controlled…

Gospel Lesson John 3:1-8 (the Voice translation) Rev. Renee' Rouse

[Narrator] Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees, a man with some clout among his people. He came to Jesus under the cloak of darkness to question Him.

Nicodemus: **Teacher, some of us have been talking. You are obviously a teacher who has come from God. The signs You are doing are proof that God is with You.**

Jesus [Pastor Emilia]: I tell you the truth: only someone who experiences birth for a second time can hope to see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus: **I am a grown man. How can someone be born again when he is old like me? Am I to crawl back into my mother's womb for a second birth? That's impossible!**

Jesus [Pastor Emilia]: I tell you the truth, if someone does not experience water and Spirit birth, there's no chance he will make it into God's kingdom. Like from like. Whatever is born from flesh is flesh; whatever is born from Spirit is spirit. Don't be shocked by my words, but I will tell you the truth. Even you, an educated and respected man among your people, must be reborn by the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. The wind blows all around us as if it has a will of its own; we feel and hear it, but we do not understand where it has come from or where it will end up. Life in the Spirit is as if it were the wind of God.
Here ends the Lesson.
Amen.

SERMON "After Birth"
Rev. Emilia Halstead

PAUSING FOR MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

SONG: La Laine des Moutons *(see last page of bulletin)* Annie Papinsick

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: SRI LANKA
(Weekly Prayer and Mission Moment written by Rev. A. S. Thevagunananthan, Chairperson, Church of the American Ceylon Mission (CACM), Sri Lanka.)

MISSION MOMENT FROM SRI LANKA

PRAYERS WITH SRI LANKA
Gracious and loving God, our Heavenly Father, we praise and thank You for Your unfailing love, mercy, and faithfulness. You are our refuge and strength.
We remember those longing to return to their homes within the High Security Zones. Grant them justice, peace, and restoration. Comfort all who mourn the loss of loved ones through war, disasters, and the recent Dithwa cyclone. Heal their hearts and renew their hope.
We pray for young people struggling with alcohol and drug addiction. Set them free and lead them into Your saving grace. Strengthen young widows, separated families, vulnerable children, and elderly people in care homes, especially those who feel abandoned.
Bless the Church of the American Ceylon Mission, its pastors, leaders, volunteers, and partner congregations. Strengthen its ministry among children, plantation communities, the poor, and marginalized.

We thank You for the enduring partnership of CACM, UCC, and Global Ministries since 1816. Continue to unite us in faith and service, especially in times of suffering and disaster. Guide us to be faithful witnesses of Your love, justice, peace, and hope. We ask all this in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

INVITATION TO GIVE (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

GRATITUDE MUSIC O Bread of Life Annie Papinsick

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)
Creating God, receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude and use them as instruments of new beginnings. Take what we offer and breathe your Spirit through it, so that our giving becomes another way your love enters the world. Amen.

RITUAL OF COMMUNION
(We serve gluten-free bread and grape juice)

COMMUNION HYMN "Now We Tell the Ancient Story" by Mary Luti (pg. 52 of *Do This*), Hymn tune: Glory, Glory

THE PRAYER GREAT THANKSGIVING "One Holy Body" by Vince Amlin (pg. 53-55 of *Do This*)

CLOSING SONG: #525 This Little Light of Mine (African American Spiritual)

1. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

2. Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine
Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine
Everywhere I go, I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

3. All through the night, I'm gonna let it shine
All through the night, I'm gonna let it shine
All through the night, I'm gonna let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

SETTING OUR INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

GREATEST COMMANDMENT

BENEDICTION & SENDING (created by Pastor Emilia using ChatGPT)

POSTLUDE Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love Annie Papinsick

A BLESSING FOR A NEW CALL

Pastor:
There are moments when the Spirit moves within us quietly for a long time, and then something new is born.

Today, we will surround our sister and colleague in ministry, Rev. Renee' Rouse, as she prepares to begin serving the First Congregational Church of Dunbarton, UCC.

This is not the beginning of her ministry, nor is it the ending of her place among us. It is another birth, another unfolding, another place where the Spirit is calling forth what has been growing within her.

So we do what the people of God have done for generations:
We gather. We lay hands. We pray. And we send her with our blessing.

Those gathered lay hands upon her or the shoulders of the person in front of them.

Pastor:
Holy Spirit, rest upon your servant Renee'.
Bless the gifts she carries into this new congregation.
Bless the wisdom born of all she has already lived.
Bless the questions she has not yet answered
and the ministry she cannot yet imagine.

Give her courage when the road is unfamiliar,
gentleness when hearts are tender,
wisdom when choices are difficult,
humor when things become far too serious,
and rest when the work must be laid down.

Congregation:
We bless you in your going.
We bless you in your becoming.
We bless the people who will receive you,
and the ministry you will create together.

Pastor:
May the God who called light from darkness go before you. May Christ walk beside you. May the Spirit rise within you like breath and wind.

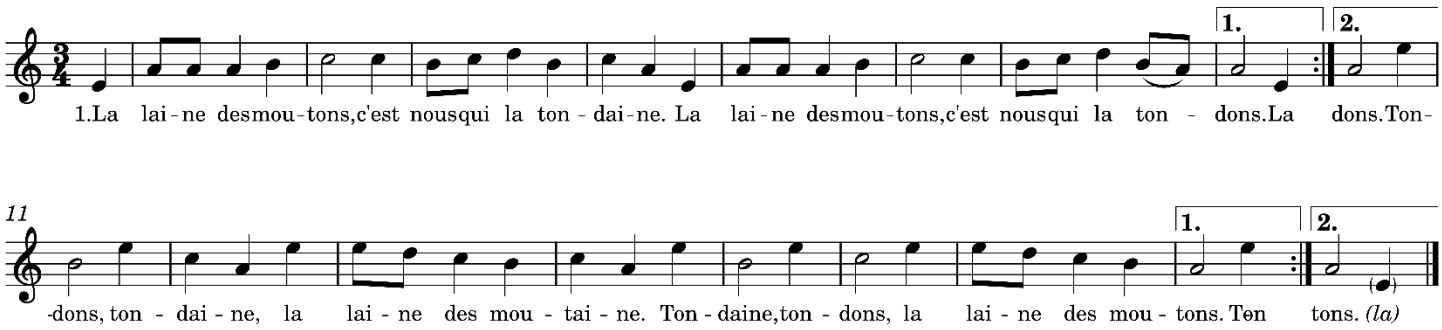
And when something new begins to emerge may you have the grace to recognize it, the courage to nurture it, and the wisdom to let it become what God intends.

Congregation:

Renee', go with our love.
Go with our gratitude.
Go with our blessing.
Amen.

La Laine des Moutons

trad. Francophone lullaby



1. La laine des moutons, c'est nous qui la **tondaine,**
La laine des moutons, c'est nous qui las **tondons.** (repeat)

Tondons,tondaine, la laine des moutaine,
Tondaine,tondons, la laine des moutons. (repeat)

2. La laine des moutons, c'est nous qui la **filaine**
La laine des moutons, c'est nous qui la **filons** (repeat)

Filons,filaine, la laine des moutaine
Filaine,filons, la laine des moutons (repeat)

3. **...portaine/portons...**

4. **...chaintaine/chantons..**