

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
September 2025

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UCC

September 2025

Gathered Since 1730
Serving, Welcoming,
Growing in Christ

79 Clinton Street

Concord, NH 03301

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Website:

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Office Hours: In-Person,
Monday and Thursday 8-1pm
Worship: Sunday 10:30am

Senior Minister

Rev. Emilia Halstead

Musician &

North Star Editor

Annie Papinsick

Church Secretary

Kathleen Akerman

Historian

Treasurer

Terry Blake

Financial Secretary

Council Chair

Susan Lauze

Council Vice Chair

Phil Kimball

Council Recorder

Sara Nichols

Technology Integrator

Jock Irvine

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FROM THE PASTOR

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. (John 8:6-8, NIV)

The Case for Creativity

I've been shouting at God a lot lately. Except for when I've been giving God the silent treatment, that is. I alternate between shouting and silence, because my heart is raw, burnt, and pulverized by, so much, of what human beings are doing to each other and the planet. As one of the humans that lives a heightened sensory experience, I feel like a canary in a coal mine. And no matter how much I "sing" I cannot convince humanity to "flee the coal mine."

"Hey kiddo...," God whispers. "When was the last time you colored?"

In thinking about what to share in this letter, I found myself caught between whether to offer hope or to speak out... and then I would get nauseous with overwhelm, both emotionally and mentally.

Yes, somewhere my brain understood that it is possible to do both, however the rest of me knew that the pulverized state of my heart would make that nearly impossible for me, personally, at this time.

"Sweetheart...," God murmurs. "When was the last time you collaged?"

Eventually it came to me that being authentic and honest about how my heart feels right now, would be the best course of action in the end, knowing that my heart isn't the only one that feels this way. I don't know about you, but the thought of planning out for a season, let alone for a 'program year' feels like too much.

"Dearheart...," God nudges. "When was the last time, just for the fun of it, you sang?"

Right now I need to hear the words that I offer at the end of our worship services: "Let us take a moment of silence to set our intentions for the week ahead. Or depending on where your heart and mind are right now, maybe just the day ahead, or even just the hour ahead."

Would you be surprised to hear that being creative, regardless of how I'm being creative, is what gives me the internal space to move from being able to set an intention from an hour to a day?

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Or from a day to a week? You might be surprised to learn that sometimes I actively refuse to be creative, almost in protest, because God hasn't "made the pain all go away." It's then that God finds a way to remind me that by holding my creativity hostage, I'm only making my own pain worse, let alone refusing to "let my light shine."

Jesus, in John chapter 8, when things are getting hard, drops down into the dirt to get creative. I don't think anyone would argue that things have gotten hard... So, are you willing to join me in one creative act a day? It absolutely doesn't matter how you enact your creativity.

Draw a stick figure.

Dance (or just wiggle in a chair) to a favorite song.

Build a picture out of rocks, sticks, leaves.

Write a poem.

You don't ever have to share your creative act with anyone else (unless you want to), because the power of hope doesn't ignite by sharing your creativity, it comes from simply BEING creative, for the sake of creativity.

Here's the strongest case that I know for being creative every day, even when the world is on fire: We cannot pray or worship more intensely or intentionally, then when we do what God loves best, create.

Blessings of our Creator,
Pastor Emilia

From The Council

This being the first Council Meeting after July, some small adjustments were made to our software, our financial posting and reporting, and to the office hours.

Council has, in recent months, reviewed how our investments are managed by UBS. At the suggestion of Paul Makris, our Financial Advisor at UBS, Council voted to replace the currently-utilized PACE process of investing with one more directly monitored by UBS. This will make us more aware of the specific stocks and bonds in the portfolio. This will also entail a slight reduction in the management fee charged by UBS. UBS will be asked to continue to mail us their monthly cover sheet, with the balance of the monthly report sent electronically. This will save a few trees.

Phil Kimball for Council

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Ministry of Spiritual Life

Here we are entering a new season. Many consider fall their favorite season with the beautiful, colorful foliage decorating our world.

It is the beginning of a new season in our church year, or, the beginning of our program year, when things start up again after a more relaxed summer. We welcome Pastor Emilia back from her vacation and look forward to hearing her messages of hope, beauty, challenges and love.

We initiate this new season in our church life with a Homecoming Sunday. This year, we will be celebrating Homecoming Sunday on September 14. Our regathering will be reflected in our worship service and afterwards, at a special Coffee Hour where we will have an opportunity to catch up with one another. This special Coffee Hour will be held in the parlor across the hall from the chapel.

Spiritual Life will be hosting Homecoming Sunday Coffee Hour. If you'd like to contribute something, please let one of us know.

Page Turners have met for six years. We will have a brief meeting the last Monday of September to decide on our future.

We will need a facilitator. If you are interested in continuing, joining, or facilitating, please let a member of Spiritual Life know so that we can put you on the Zoom list for that meeting.

The Racial Justice Steering Committee has met this summer. They have recommended "Black Portsmouth"—Three Centuries of African-American Heritage by Mark Sammons and Valerie Cunningham. You are invited to attend a book discussion at the beginning of Racial Justice Steering Committee meetings, and also to stay for the meeting. Watch for dates.

As you will see in our September North Star, there will be many opportunities to welcome, serve, and grow in Christ this coming year. We look forward to seeing you and working with you in these endeavors.

Eleanor Kimball
SLMT
Kellie Heath
Brenda Placenti
Sheila Swenson

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Ministry of Outreach

School Kits And Clean Up Buckets:

The CWS Shipping Report for January - June 2025 stated that 4,380 school kits and 1,332 cleanup buckets were shipped. We were part of that effort and can continue by purchasing items for the school kits at the sale prices which are now available. Please take a sticky note on the bulletin board and add it to your shopping list so we can fill a clean up bucket. By doing so, we are spreading God's love in a tangible way.

Zimbabwe:

The Daisy Dube Orphanage at Mount Selinda in Zimbabwe burned on July 13. They hope to rebuild but donations are needed. Please consider giving a donation and put Mt. Selinda, Zimbabwe in the memo.

Blanket Sunday and Tools of Hope:

You will be glad to know that \$185 was raised for blankets on Mother's Day and that \$195 was raised for Tools of Hope on Fathers' Day. We have made it possible for people to receive warmth, comfort and hope.

Strengthen the Church:

Our UCC offering for summer is Strengthen the Church. This offering supports leadership development, new churches, youth ministry and innovation in existing congregations. By your generosity to this offering, you help ensure a future to the greater church.

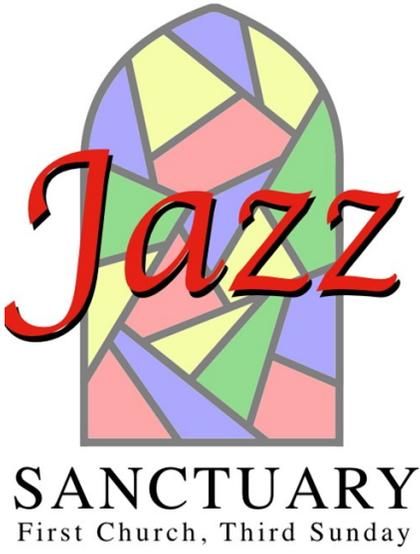
Crop Walk:

This year's walk will be hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on Saturday, October 11, 2025. The walk will start at 10:00 AM and follow the same 2.5 mile route. Please consider sponsoring a walker, donating money or time, or walking for a good cause. Last year \$14,590 was raised by churches in the Concord area. CWS returned \$3647.52 (25%) to the GCIC. The council added \$552.48 to that total and sent checks for \$300 to 14 local programs.

Sara Nichols, Ministry of Outreach



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Jazz Sanctuary

As you read the interesting and engaging articles that come at you at the start of another “program year” at First Church, I hope you can include Jazz Sanctuary on your “calendar” (is that really a word?!) list!!

We begin this season with a celebration of the color “green” in our John O’Donohue ‘Invisible Embrace of Beauty” lectionary - “Green, Growth, and Including All.” Our Conversational Guest will be Lisa Beaudoin, Exec. Dir. of The NH Council of Churches, who will be talking with us

about “ableism” and belonging. The creative force of God’s green creation on planet earth reminds us that, in the words of spiritual writer, Richard Rohr, “Everything Belongs!” Our team of wonderful Jazz Sanctuary musicians will be bringing you tunes like “True Colors” and “Green Onions,” so come prepared to truly enjoy the music, and PLEASE BRING SOME FRIENDS!!!

On Saturday, October 4th. your Jazz Sanctuary House Band will be on the road again, as we have been asked to be part of the Laconia Congregational Church’s day-long gathering for peace. We will be performing in the morning, but the event would be well-worth your making a day of it.

The October Jazz Sanctuary will feature a final celebration of COLOR in the John O’Donohue “invisible Embrace of Beauty” lectionary crafted so wonderfully by Pastor Emilia - “Color Thresholds.” This will be paired with the powerful music of the late jazz singer, Nina Simone as interpreted by our own Rev. Renee’ Rouse - you won’t want to miss this one.

Looking even further ahead, November will be, as it usually is, characterized by:

MUSICIAN’S FLEA MARKET, in Hannah Hall on Saturday, November 1

AND

MUSIC OF THE BEATLES on Sunday, November 16 at 2:30 PM

Jazz Sanctuary is up and rolling for another season - please come join the community, the fun, and THE SPIRIT!!!

Peace, Tim Wildman

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Technology Corner

Worship Services Moving to YouTube on September 14

Beginning **September 14**, our worship services will no longer be streamed on Facebook Live. Instead, you'll find us live each week on **YouTube at [YouTube.com/ConcordsFirstChurch](https://www.youtube.com/ConcordsFirstChurch)**.

Why the change?

Facebook recently updated its policies so that live videos are permanently deleted after 30 days. In addition, many churches have experienced their worship services being muted or blocked by Facebook's automated copyright filters when music is detected. Although we haven't had that issue yet, we want to be proactive and ensure that our worship services remain reliably available to everyone. YouTube provides a more stable and lasting platform for our church's online ministry.

What this means for you:

If you've been watching worship services on Facebook, starting September 14 you should visit [YouTube.com/ConcordsFirstChurch](https://www.youtube.com/ConcordsFirstChurch). Once the live stream begins, you'll see a red circle around our church logo with the word "Live" as seen in the picture here—just click the logo to join the service.



If you've been joining via Zoom, you may continue using the same login details as before. Please note that the video and audio quality on Zoom may be lower after September 14, since our main cameras will be used for YouTube. For the best viewing experience, we encourage you to watch on YouTube.

In summary:

Our church is moving live streaming from Facebook to YouTube on September 14th to provide a more reliable, higher-quality, and longer-lasting way to participate in worship online. Whether you join us on YouTube or continue on Zoom, we look forward to worshipping with you!

Jock Irvine, Technology Integrator

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Social Media Engagement for August

YouTube

Subscribers: 183 (3 new subscribers)

Views: 444 (56 less than usual)

Watch Time: 11.3 hours (About the same as usual)

Subscribers = The number of people who have subscribed to our channel, indicating they want to receive updates and see our content

Views = The total number of times a person intentionally plays one of our videos and watches it for at least 30 seconds.

Watch Time: The total amount of time people spent watching our videos

Facebook

Views: 6.4K (Up 151.4%)

Reach: 2.5K (Up 414.4%)

Interactions: 191 (Up 91%)

Follows: 4 (Down 42.9%)

Views = Total number of times our content was played or displayed, including repeat views

Reach = The total number of unique people who saw our content at least once

Interactions = The total number of times someone interacts with one of our posts including likes, comments, shares, reactions, etc.

Follows = The number of new people who have chosen to receive updates from our Facebook profile

Jock Irvine, Technology Integrator

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Birthdays

Brandie Lyons – 9/1

Linda Sims – 9/3

Sheila Swenson – 9/6

Sara Slawski – 9/26

PRAYER CONCERNS

If you would like your name included in the weekly bulletin prayer list, please contact our church administrator, Kathy. (secretary@concordfirstchurch.org)

The Prayer Circle asks you to keep in prayer for the following members and friends:

Carol Hovey - Healing

Matt Wildman - Healing

Jim J - Healing

Paula Kust - Healing

Mariah E. - Healing

Family & Friends of Howard "BJ"
Steinberg - Peace

Family of Carol Emery - Peace

Franklin Richardson Rouse—Healing

