

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
January 2025

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
UCC  
January 2025

**Gathered Since 1730**  
**Serving, Welcoming,**  
**Growing in Christ**

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Office Hours: Monday – Friday:  
9:30am – 1pm  
Worship: Sunday 10:30am

**Senior Minister**  
Rev. Emilia Halstead

**Musician**  
Annie Papinsick

**Church Secretary**  
Kathleen Akerman

**Historian**

**Treasurer**  
Carol Hovey

**Financial Secretary**  
Brandie Lyons

**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,

“Because difference constitutes music...

Sound is...the rubbing of notes between two drops of water, the breath between the note and the silence, the sound of thought. To write is to note down the music of the world.”

-Helene Cixous (French writer and playwright)

“To the human ear, however, music echoes the deepest grandeur and the most sublime intimacy of the soul.” -John O’Donohue

*Make music for God in the Divine house of worship, sing to God under the open skies; Make music for God for Divine acts of power, sing to God for their magnificent greatness; Make music for God with a blast on the trumpet; with strumming soft strings; with castanets and dance; with banjo and flute; with cymbals and a big bass drum; with fiddles and mandolin. Let every living, breathing creature make music for, to, and WITH God!*  
(Psalm 150, translation by the Message Bible and adapted by Rev. Emilia Halstead)

January 7th marks the one year anniversary of beginning the Beauty lectionary and sermon dialogue with John O’Donohue’s book *The Invisible Embrace of Beauty: Rediscovering the True Sources of Compassion, Serenity, and Hope.*

I pray that, like me, you continue to be fed by this journey with John’s spiritual and human insights as well as the wisdom and movement of the Holy Spirit.

On January 12th we will begin dialogue with the third chapter of his book called “The Music of Beauty.” There are 16 vignettes in this chapter, and they will carry us through our Good Friday service on Friday, April 18th, which will once again be an acoustic Jazz Sanctuary vigil service in the chapel. I hope you will join us as often as you can: In-person, on Zoom, live on Facebook, or watching the recording of worship afterwards on Facebook or YouTube, as I’ve got some really nourishing things planned.

In particular I invite you to mark the following dates on your calendar: Sometime the week of February 17th I’m going to invite us to be together for a “Movie Night” (or perhaps ‘movie lunch’) in order to be ready for worship together on Sunday, February 23rd. On Sunday, March 2nd I invite you to worship in-person or on Zoom as my plans for that day don't allow us to record or post it online due to copyright restrictions.

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Additionally, Jazz Sanctuary in February (16th) will be our annual celebration of Mardi Gras and March (16th) our annual celebration of St. Patrick's Day and Celtic music.

We will conclude our reflection of chapter 2, "Where Does Beauty Dwell?," in *The Invisible Embrace of Beauty* this Sunday, January 5th, as part of our celebration of Epiphany. I believe this continues to be a vital question to let blossom and take root in our hearts as our nation, and thereby the world, is about to open a chapter that fills many with fear and trepidation.

Everywhere - and - often in the places that we least expect it; that is where Beauty dwells. O'Donohue reflects that "In its graciousness, beauty often touches our hearts with the grandeur and nobility of its larger resonance. In our daily lives such resonance usually eludes us. We only awaken to it when beauty visits us. It turns us towards that primal music from which all silence and language grow."

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day [Beauty] will come." (Matthew 24:42) I invite you to join me in a 4 month celebration of and reflection on the Music of Beauty and the Beauty of Music, praying that this time both opens our hearts wider to give and receive love and deepens our roots with fortitude and strength for whatever storms come our way.

Blessings of Divine Winter Rest  
Be  
Yours,  
Pastor Emilia



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**Ministry of Spiritual Life**

We're entering a new year. Fortunately, we have the aspirations of Advent and Christmas to carry into this year— aspirations of hope, peace, joy and love— for ourselves and for our world.

Christian Churches celebrate Epiphany on the 12th day after Christmas. Epiphany is the culmination of our Advent/Christmas celebrations. The term "Epiphany" comes from the Greek and means appearance or manifestation. It celebrates the arrival of the Magi and the beginning of the spreading of Jesus' light. Throughout the season of Epiphany, Christians remember how Jesus' ministry spread from his baptism by John the Baptist, calling of his disciples, his ministry, his modeling of God's love.

For many of us, the new year offers an opportunity to begin anew or at least make changes in our lives. I, for instance, am considering trying chair yoga.

( We'll see how that turns out.) This is to compensate for the cold, wintry days and icy conditions that might keep me inside reading a good book.

What will your Epiphany be? What will you discover, commit to, look forward to in this new chapter of your life's journey?

First Church will be celebrating Epiphany on January 5. We'll have a King's Cake and star cookies to energize us and send us on our way into the Epiphany Season. You're invited to participate in all of our Sunday worship services, Jazz Sanctuary, Page Turners and our Racial Justice Steering Committee discussions. All of these activities can enrich your spiritual life.

Pastor Emilia's emphasis on beauty has been well received and many have commented about how it has enriched their lives.

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Our moments of naming experiences of beauty in worship have been lovely.

If music is one of your spiritual connections, you'll want to be at January's Jazz Sanctuary on the 19th. There will also be a special concert on January 12. Watch for details.

"The Measure" is Page Turner's January book. It's a novel in which the characters know how long they have to live. The discussion on January 27 should be interesting. The Racial Justice Steering Committee recommends "The First Ladies".

It's about the relationship and endeavors of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune, a civil rights leader.

SLMT continues to work on our items in storage, sorting, consolidating, deciding on items we don't anticipate needing for the future.

We are making progress. Our goal is to have everything in one storage unit. We currently have two units.

We wish you lovely epiphanies, much beauty, and a blessed 2025.

Eleanor Kimball  
SLMT:  
Kellie Heath  
Brenda Placenti  
Sheila Swenson



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**Ministry of Outreach**

**School Kits:**

Now that Christmas is over, please take time to sew some bags for school kits.

**Clean Up Buckets:**

Watch the bulletin board outside the chapel for items needed for the clean up buckets. The items that are needed will be posted on a "post it note". Please take a "note" and add it to your shopping list. Our buckets will be filled in no time!

**Salvation Army Christmas Angels:**

Thank you to everyone who helped make someone happy this Christmas! The presents were delivered to the Salvation Army and were received thankfully.

**Zimbabwe:**

We have finally received our gift from Zimbabwe. Thank you to Rev. Sara Marean for a short slide show presentation of their trip to Zimbabwe and delivering us our gift. The copper clock is shaped like Zimbabwe and the time has been set to their time! What a wonderful gift! Please keep our sister church in our thankful prayers this Christmas.

**Christmas Fund:**

Thank you to all who donated to our UCC Christmas Fund which goes towards helping retired ministers. A final tally will be posted in the next North Star.

**Christmas Eve offering:**

Thank you to all who contributed to the Christmas Eve offering which went to Family Promise. This money will help local families in their time of need.

**Heifer International:**

I am sure all the people who received a card saying that money was donated in their name to Heifer International were appreciative. This money will help improve food security and increase incomes.

Sara Nichols, Outreach Committee



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**Jazz Sanctuary**

Blessings for a 2025 filled with the Jazz of the Holy Spirit from the Jazz Sanctuary Ministry Team!!

We are already planning some pretty cool stuff for the New Year beginning with "Just in Time - Spirituals and The Rhythm of Jazz," on Sunday, January 19 at 2:30 in Hanna Hall. We've collected a number of our favorite African American Spirituals for Pastor Emilia to sing and the Jazz Sanctuary House Band to play just for you. Our journey with poet and philosopher John O'Donahue down the road of "The Invisible Embrace of Beauty" continues with a consideration of how music's rhythm takes us out of human time into the Spirit's time - in biblical theology that's called moving from "chronos" to "kairos" and THAT'S a beautiful thing!

Harkening back to one of my favorite phrases from late night infomercials, "But wait! There's More!" In February, African American History Month, our annual Mardi Gras Jazz Sanctuary celebration will feature a look at the roots of Jazz in the gathering of enslaved persons on Sundays in New Orleans' famous Congo Square. Our Mardi Gras observance has become one of our most popular Jazz Sanctuary jazz worship experiences of the year, so bring some friends.

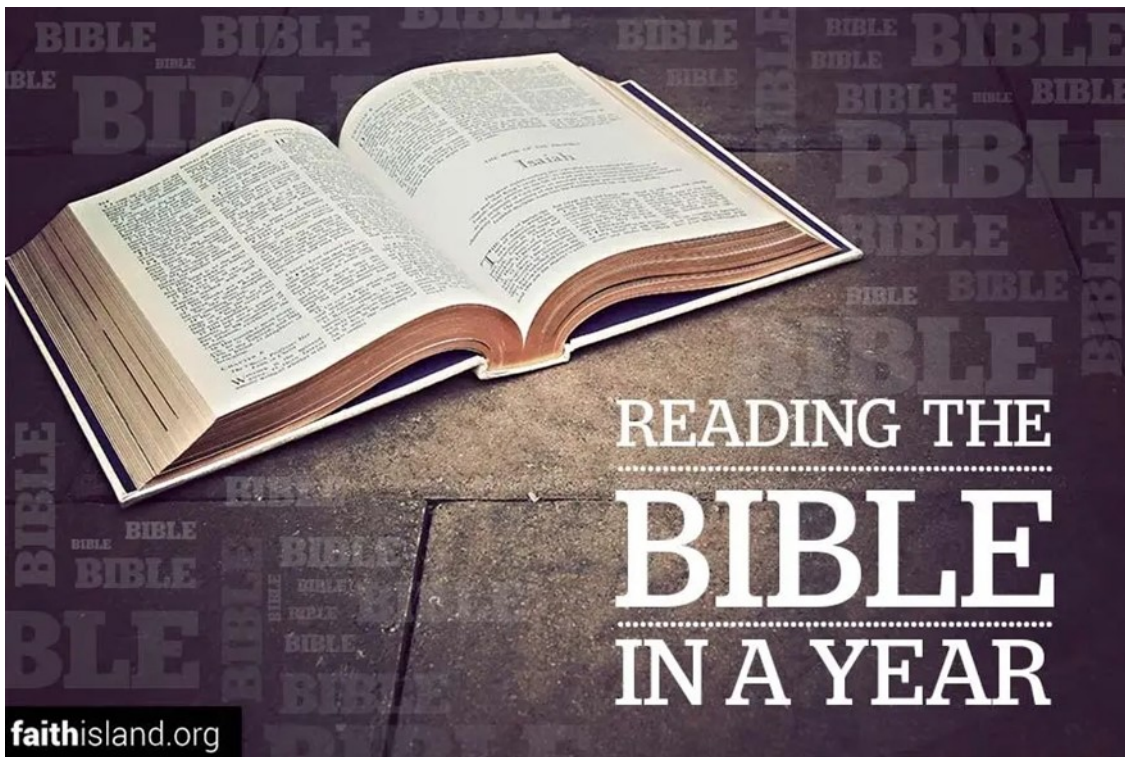
The March Jazz Sanctuary, occurring as it will on the day before St. Patrick's Day, will welcome The Cara Ensemble, a lovely Celtic music group who will put us in the mood for the next day! And finally, the April Jazz Sanctuary will again take place on Good Friday evening in the chapel and be devoted to what has become an annual recognition of the centrality of the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus in creating the faith we now experience.

There's lots here to bring you out to join us - hope to see you!!

Peace,  
The Jazz Sanctuary Ministry Team: Pastor Emilia Halstead, Jock Irvine, Joey Placenti, Ed Raczka, Brenda Placenti, Jean Donahue, Carol Hovey, Carroll Blake, Ron Dieter, & Tim Wildman



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Did you make a new year's resolution to read the entire bible in 2025? Faith Works Centre offers five great reasons to do this here: <https://faithisland.org/faith/5-great-reasons-to-read-the-whole-bible-in-one-year/> (This is also where the image used here came from). If you would like to tackle this project, here are some online resources that can help you.

The Bible Project has a plan that you can download to your computer or tablet. Many of the days include links to videos and/or articles to help you dive deeper into the scriptures. One thing I don't like about this plan is that it numbers the days 1-358 instead of using calendar dates. You can download it here: <https://bibleproject.com/downloads/reading-plan/>

Christianity.com offers "bible in a year" reading plans (Using calendar dates) where you read the daily verses online using your computer, smart phone or tablet. These plans are available in over 50 different translations, and you can choose to read from beginning to end (Genesis to Revelation), chronologically, in the order the books of the Bible were written, New Testament followed by Old Testament, or you can choose to read some Old Testament and some New Testament each day. Choose the plan that best suits you on their website here: <https://www.christianity.com/bible/year/>

Of course, you don't need to use an online resource to tackle this project. One article I read suggests taking the number of pages in your bible and dividing that number by 365. If you read that number of pages every day, you'll finish reading your bible in a year. You can read the article here: <https://equippinggodlywomen.com/faith/read-the-bible-in-a-year-plan/>

Jock Irvine, Technology Integrator



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## Birthdays

Douglas King – 1/8  
Ron Dieter – 1/26  
Susanne Driscoll – 1/28  
Roger Tasker – 1/30

## PRAYER CONCERNS

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

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

Nancy Sanborn - Hope  
Hannah Irving - Healing  
Carol Emery - Healing  
Carol Hovey - Healing  
Matt Wildman - Healing  
Sammy Holland - Healing  
Jim J - Healing  
Paula Kust - Healing  
Family of Mittie Nutter  
(Kathy Lavigne's Mom) - Peace  
Rev. Renee Rouse—Healing

