

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
March 2023

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UCC
March 2023

Gathered Since 1730

**Serving, Welcoming, Growing in
Christ**

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From The Pastor

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew, like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth.
(Deuteronomy 32:2)

Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord; his appearance is as sure as the dawn; he will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains that water the earth.
(Hosea 6:3)

Be patient, therefore, siblings in Christ, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. (James 5:7)

Ahhh, March. The month, at least in New England, that so deeply mirrors the mystery of God. Will it roar in like a Lion and leap out like a Lamb? Will it be a consistent, overcast, and gray sky with temperatures between 30-40 degrees? Will it be unseasonably warm? Will we get another foot of snow?

Just like with March, we have seen and heard the various signs and seasons of God over the years. Sometimes God roars into our life, pushing us hard toward change and transformation. Sometimes God invites us to play with the Divine and to leap with Joy. Sometimes we wonder if God is still there...with the ever constant "sameness" of our days. Sometimes we are overwhelmed with the abundance of God's grace in our lives. Sometimes we

are drowning in the seemingly endless presence of things that chill us to the bone.

Add into this mix for March the season and traditions of Lent, which calls us, once again, into that place of unknown with God. Waiting upon the Lord. Waiting in the desert - hoping for God's lessons and guidance to drop like gentle spring rain. Waiting to be refreshed by the arrival of Christ in our hearts.

And all of this unknown - this mystery - moves us in one of two directions. Do we wait with patience, living in the promises that God WILL show up? Or do we decide to move on without God, because we cannot handle the feeling of powerlessness?

As we continue in the season of Lent, I urge you to choose patience. Patience with yourself. Patience with the church. Patience with the situations in your life. Patience with one another. And even - patience with God. What God has planned for us, the promise of New Life, is something that we can only vaguely imagine. God calls us to trust.

Lenten Blessings,

Pastor Emilia

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From the Council

Council voted to name Phil Kimball as Vice Chair of Council

As the replacement for Carol Andrews, Brandie Lyons was chosen as the third member of the team authorized to communicate with UBS- the firm which handles the First Church investments. The other two members are Susan Lauze and Phil Kimball

Songs for Worship, a new CD prepared by our Jazz Sanctuary ministry team, is available for purchase. The price is \$20. The CD consists of eleven songs for worship performed by our Jazz Sanctuary members. Three of the songs were composed by Jazz Sanctuary members. Speak to a Jazz Sanctuary member if you wish to buy a CD.

The New Hampshire Conference, UCC, has issued an appeal for funds to repair the damage caused when part of the sprinkler system at the Conference headquarters burst, causing water damage. The Conference also hopes to increase the funds for continuing education to be utilized by the Conference Minister and Associate Minister. Currently only \$500 is budgeted for their continuing education. Council voted to increase our OCWM payment in the next two quarters by two per cent, and to present the Conference request to our congregation at our Annual Meeting. A separate communication will be sent to FCC members and friends.

The temperature at Sunday worship has been a little low, even when a space heater was brought in. The cause – a faulty valve – has been repaired. The temperature in the Chapel on February 26 was back to normal.

Phil Kimball, Council

Technology Corner

UCC Webinars - A webinar is an online event that takes place at a set time and is broadcast to a specific group of people, sort of like attending a college class on your computer. You can see a list of upcoming United Church of Christ webinars here: <https://www.ucc.org/programming-webinars/> (You can also find and watch videos of past webinars on this page.) Below are descriptions of some of the groups that currently have webinars scheduled. To sign up for a webinar, click on its title (There will be a date and time just below the title) then click on REGISTER.

The Wednesdays with the World webinar series highlights the ways in which the quest for justice is intersectional and global, providing opportunities for increased awareness of global concerns, and highlighting opportunities for advocacy and action.

Thursdays for the Soul is a webinar series to care for the whole church. Topics are wide ranging, and are focused on the spirituality and care of people. Prayer, worship, music, Psalm readings, or compassionate teaching are included.

OWL Taking Flight webinars are monthly explorations of topics that intersect with Our Whole Lives and Sexuality and Our Faith programs. Co-hosted by the UCC and UUA, these webinars are created with Our Whole Lives facilitators and program coordinators in mind, while also open to the public.

The UCC's Creation Justice Webinar series brings leaders in the field of environmental justice into conversation with an interfaith audience seeking to put their values into action as caretakers and protectors of God's creation.

Jock Irvine, Technology

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Ministry of Spiritual Life

Jazz Sanctuary's Mardi Gras Celebration drew a large number of enthusiastic and appreciative members and friends. It was great fun.

So now, we have entered the Season of Lent. In the early church, it was a time to prepare for baptism and membership in the church. It is a time to remember Jesus' ministry, his message, death, and resurrection on Easter Sunday. For many it is a time for introspection; a time to grow closer to God, to Jesus. Some give up something for Lent, a reminder of Christ giving his life.

Pastor Emilia will be offering services and special events to provide opportunities to make this time special and inspirational. We began our Lenten journey with an Ash Wednesday Service.

We gathered in a circle. In a continuation of the creation story, we heard about the 7th day of creation, and were reminded that Sunday is a day of rest. (We were reminded that Sunday is a time of celebration of Jesus' resurrection so that Sundays are not included in the forty days of Lent. For those giving up something, we have the option of making an exception on Sundays.) We sang our communion liturgy and served one another. Pastor Emilia anointed us with ashes, reminding us of our mortality.

The first Sunday of Lent was February 26. You'll notice that the altar cloth is now purple—the color for Lent. The scripture

lessons were from Ecclesiastes and Jesus' temptation by the devil in the wilderness—

familiar lessons to which Pastor Emilia offered a new perspective. Following our worship service we watched our first video in the series of videos being offered during Lent. The theme of the videos is spirituality.

Thanks to all who help make our Feb. 26 Coffee Hour another much appreciated time for delicious food and fellowship.

We will continue through Lent with our Sunday worship services and videos. Holy Week will begin Sunday, March 2—Palm Sunday. There will be a Maundy Thursday Service, and a Good Friday Service. Both services will be at 6:30 pm at Wesley. We will have an opportunity to attend an Easter Sunrise Service at Dimond Hill Farm at 5:45 am where we'll watch the sun rise (weather permitting) along with Bow Mills United Methodist and Wesley United Methodist Members. Our Easter Sunday Service will be at 10:30.

We continue to hold in our prayers those who will not be able to be with us for these services.

Lenten devotional books are available. You can pick one up in the chapel or contact a member of SLMT for delivery.

Pastor Emilia continues to meet with church members and friends at Havenwood once a month.

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Our Discernment Circle is an important and on-going part of our church life. Sharing, brainstorming stimulates our thinking about possibilities for our church's future. What is important to you about being a church member? Come join the circle! We meet at

9:30 the first Sunday of the month for 45 minutes.

Page Turners provides another opportunity to broaden and deepen our perspectives. We read a wide range of books and welcome new members, even if you haven't read the book. Meetings are the last Monday of the month from 2 - 3:00.

The Anti-Racism Study Group is in its third year. We've learned so much—for example, a greater appreciation for different kinds of music—from gospel to RAP! We meet the first and third Tuesdays from 7 - 8:00. We'd love to see you.

Eleanor Kimball for the Spiritual Life Ministry Team



March 5th, 2nd Sunday of Lent

- 9:30 AM Circle Discernment Gathering (in Chapel)
- 10:30 AM Traditional Communion Service (in Chapel)
- 11:30 AM Lenten Video Study and Reflection (in Chapel)

March 12th, 3rd Sunday of Lent

- 10:30 AM Traditional Service (in Chapel)
- 11:30 AM Lenten Video Study and Reflection (in Chapel)

March 19th, 4th Sunday of Lent

- 2:30 PM Jazz Sanctuary Celtic Service (in Hanna Hall)

March 26th, 5th Sunday of Lent

- 10:30 AM Traditional Service (in Chapel)
- 11:15 AM Lenten Video Study and Reflection (in Chapel)
- 11:45 AM First Church Hosts Coffee Hour (in Lobby)

April 2nd, Palm Sunday

- 9:30 AM Circle Discernment Gathering (in Chapel)
- 10:30 AM Traditional Service (in Chapel)
- 11:30 AM Lenten Video Study and Reflection (in Chapel)

April 6th, Maundy Thursday

- 6:30 PM Traditional Communion & Tenebrae Service (in Chapel)

April 7th, Good Friday

- 6:30 PM Jazz Sanctuary Service (in Hanna Hall)

April 9th, Easter Sunday

- 5:45 AM Sunrise Service with Bow Mills UMC (at Dimond Hill Farm)
- 10:30 AM Traditional Service (in Chapel)

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Ministry of Outreach

School Kits and Clean Up Buckets:

We have 10 bags filled with supplies.

We have 7 notebooks; each bag needs 3
70-count or notebooks totaling 200-210
pages)

" " 13 boxes of 24 crayons/pack;
each bag needs 1 box

" " 32 rulers, 30 cm/12"; each bag
needs 1

"" 13 erasers, large, no pencil cap
erasers; each bag needs 1

" " a few sharpeners, hand held and
the ones that collect the shavings are
probably less messy for use; each bag
needs 1

" " 4 scissors, rounded tip only; each
bag needs 1

" " 75 pencils, new unsharpened with
erasers; each bag needs 6

" " zero 12"x14" to 14" x17" finished
size cotton or lightweight canvas bag with
handles (solid color or kid friendly
fabric. No logos, reusable shopping bags or
backpacks. We have NO bags!

The scheduled date for drop off of the
kits at Bow Mills Methodist Church is May
4-5. It Would be nice to drop off more than
10 bags and one bucket. Please take time
to sew a bag and buy items for the cleanup
bucket.

Super Bowl Sunday:

Thank you for taking time from your busy
Super Bowl Sunday to donate to our annual
"Souper Bowl". We raised \$128 which will
go to the Friendly Kitchen to help feed the
hungry. Your money makes it possible for
them to serve nutritious food to people in
need.

Magazines, cards and calendars:

Thank you for your donation of magazines
and all occasion cards for the Merrimack
County Nursing Home. Please continue to
donate current magazines and all occasion
cards throughout the year.

One Great Hour of Sharing:

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of the
Five for Five offerings of the United Church
of Christ. This Lenten offering supports the
disaster, refugee, and development
ministries of the UCC. The theme this year
is "It's time to share". We can make a
difference in the lives of people around the
world. This offering is collected on Easter.

Silk Purses:

Have you taken one of the silk purses? It is
not too late to take a purse and put a coin
in it every time you are moved by God's
Love. Whether it is recovering from an
illness, a hug from a grandchild, or a
beautiful sunset, put a coin in the purse
and say thank you to God. Your
accumulated "thank you" will be added to
the OGHS offering to help ease the
suffering of disaster victims around the
world.

Lent:

What are you giving up for lent? Lent starts
February 22nd. Easter is Sunday April
9th. Silk purses will be available for those
who would like to place a coin in a purse
every time you are so moved by the love of
God. Whether it is a beautiful sunset, a hug
from a grandchild or recovery from
surgery, put a coin in the purse. We will
collect these coins on Easter and add them
to our One Great Hour of Sharing offering.

Sara Nichols, Outreach

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Jazz Sanctuary

“A Different Path - Celtic Music and Spirituality.”

Jazz Sanctuary seems to be in a highly engaged period! For starters, we are currently in the planning stages for our next Jazz Sanctuary on Sunday, March 19 at 2:30 PM, “A Different Path - Celtic Music and Spirituality.” The CCMS Folk and Celtic Ensemble will be our Musical Guests for this one, and Pastor Emilia will draw on her travels in Scotland and her year-long study of Celtic spirituality a few years ago to lead us into a Conversational Time about, among other things, the implications of an “original blessing” instead of an “original sin.” Jazz Sanctuary wants to branch out a bit musically, and the March gathering is an example of that - please come join us!

On Saturday, February 25, Jock, Emilia, Carol Hovey, and I spent the day at our first ever Prepared to Serve display table. Jock prepared two wonderful videos for the day: one a six-minute sampler of the Jazz Sanctuary ministry that we used to introduce the workshop we did entitled, “Promoting Spiritual Community through Contemporary Worship,” and the other an eight-minute sampler of our new Jazz Sanctuary entitled “Jazz Sanctuary Music for Worship” (we sold quite a few copies of the CD at the table!). Phil and Eleanor attended PTS as well, and we all saw many old friends at this annual winter gathering of the NH Conference of the UCC “Tribe,” where The Rev. Sara Marean was Installed as the new Associate Conference Minister - Emilia, Jock, and I performed as part of the Service of Installation.

On Saturday, March 25 at the Smith Memorial Congregational Church in Hillsboro, Emilia and the Jazz Sanctuary House Band will be leading worship at the first of three day-long Saturday workshops by the Conference’s New Thing Task Force entitled, “Reimagining Church Using Lessons from Improv.” The March workshop will be about Jazz Improv - hence our involvement. The next two will focus on Theater Improv and Recovery of Materials respectively.

Looking ahead, you won’t want to miss the April Jazz Sanctuary which will be on Good Friday, March 7 at

7:00 PM. Entitled, “The Jazz of Vigil,” the gathering will focus on the vigil of Mary Magdalen at the tomb of Jesus from Good Friday through Easter Sunday morning using liturgy about her relationship with Jesus and music consisting of classic jazz and blues songs of love and loss. This is the third year we have done this, and it’s an incredibly moving way to reimagine our own Holy Week journeys.

Finally, you perhaps saw above that I mentioned our new CD, “Jazz Sanctuary Music for Worship!” We are pleased with how it turned out and see it as part of our outreach to other churches. The music is all “open sourced” so can be used by churches in their creative liturgical play. This also allows us to sell the CD to benefit the Jazz Sanctuary ministry and possibly to put it up on music streaming services one day. And, oh yeah... you can even buy one yourself - for a mere \$20!! It’s an awesome way to take Pastor Emilia and the Jazz Sanctuary gang home with you!!

Rev. Tim Wildman, Jazz Sanctuary



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Birthdays

- Philip Kimball – 3/5
- Michael Lauze – 3/10
- Terry Blake – 3/26
- Shirley Colby – 3/29



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:

- Elizabeth Hardy – Hope
- Deborah Goodwin - Healing
- Faith Clark - Peace
- Kellie Heath - Healing
- Nancy Sanborn – Healing
- Dot Cassady - Hope
- Doug King – Healing
- Everett Sims – Healing
- Ed Raczka - Healing
- Sara Nichols - grandson baby - Peace
- Marjorie Colby – Healing
- Family of Carolyn Andrews – Peace
- Family of Marjorie Howard – Peace
- Family of Pat Lafontaine – Peace