

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
April 2023

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UCC
April 2023

Gathered Since 1730

**Serving, Welcoming, Growing in
Christ**

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From The Pastor

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

Why do you say, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted, but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:27-31)

God said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

Both of the above scripture passages have brought me great comfort in the last year - God's power is made perfect in our weakness. Only when we are willing to give up control of our lives, and invite God to take the lead, does the magic, wonder, and miracles of life truly start to shine through.

This is exactly what we have done as a congregation this year. We wanted (and tried with all our might) to take a particular path and it wasn't working. Finally, we gave it over to God and God led us to our place of Oasis; rest and renewal.

It's been 4 years since we've done an "official" stewardship campaign, with good and important reasons for that season of letting things "lie." Now - we have entered a season of Hope and of seeing the shining possibilities that God is placing before us for our continued ministry as Concord's First Church.

Do you believe that Concord's First Church makes a difference in our community? Do you testify (tell people) that Concord's First Church has made a difference in YOUR life? Do you believe that God is about to do a NEW thing with and through Concord's First Church? If you answered "Yes!" to any or all of those questions, then I invite you to prayerfully consider making a 2023/24 financial pledge to the First Congregational Church of Concord, so that through our ministry OTHER people will be able to answer "Yes" to any or all of the above questions.

Jesus said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me." (John 14:1) It is through our faith-in-action in God that we are able to bring God's Love to the world. "Because of YOU, our church changes lives."

Blessings,
Emilia

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Stewardship Season

Our stewardship campaign this year will run for the five Sundays in April. Please fill out the stewardship pledge card that was included in the recent mailing and either mail it into the office, or we invite you to join us for worship on Sunday, April 30th and place your pledge card into the offering plate. We also invite you to consider signing up for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFF) so that your pledge is automatically drawn down from your checking account or credit card each month, whether or not you are able to physically be in worship each week/month.

Our stewardship theme this year, "because of you, our church changes lives" is simple. It recognizes that each of us, by our gifts of time and treasure and the decisions we make to employ them, power this sacred work. Our resources make ministry happen. The math is not complex. Our choice to grow in our generosity enables the church to increase the impact of the difference it makes. Thank you, in advance, for your generosity and commitment to the ministry of First Congregational Church of Concord.

April 2th - Palm Sunday - Matthew 21:1-11

Sermon "Who is This?"

April 9th - Easter Sunday - Luke 24:1-35

Sermon "From Tomb to Table"

April 16th - Matthew 13:31-33

Sermon "Growing Open Spaces"

April 23th - Luke 14:16-24

Sermon "The Dinner Party"

April 30th - Luke 15:1-32

Sermon "Being Lost and Being Found"

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Ministry of Spiritual Life

For Christians, Holy Week, culminating in Easter, is the most sacred week of the year. We will have several opportunities to gather for worship, for fellowship, to share our stories and our ideas, to broaden our perspectives and to grow spiritually.

On Palm Sunday, we will remember Jesus' triumphal ride into Jerusalem, his plans to celebrate Passover with his disciples—a meal which will turn out to be his last meal with them. In addition to our worship service on Palm Sunday, Pastor Emilia will be offering one last video on spirituality, followed by reflection. The video and reflection are twenty to thirty minutes long. Attendees have found them to be very inspirational.

Our April Discernment Gathering will be held at 9:30 on Palm Sunday. Our discussions are thoughtful, often inspirational, hopeful, even fun and exciting. Please join us.

On Maundy Thursday, we will remember Jesus' Passover meal with his disciples, his prediction of betrayal, his agony in the Garden, his trial and crucifixion, with a Communion and Tenebrae Service.

On Good Friday, our Jazz Sanctuary musicians will consider the sorrow of Mary Magdalene as she witnessed the downward spiral in which Jesus was caught.

On Easter, we are invited to a Sunrise Service at Dimond Hill Farm at 5:45AM. As the sun rises, Bow United Methodist Church Sacred Dancers will greet the dawn of Easter morning.

Our Easter Sunday Worship Service will be at 10:30 in Hanna Chapel.

Palm Sunday: Circle Gathering at 9:30
Worship Service with Communion at 10:30
Video and reflection following Worship
Maundy Thursday: Communion & Tenebrae
Service at 6:30 in the Chapel

Good Friday Jazz Sanctuary Service: 6:30 in Hanna Hall
Easter Sunrise Service: 5:45 a.m. at Dimond Hill Farm
Easter Worship Service: 10:30 in the Chapel

The only Jazz Sanctuary Service in the month of April will be on Good Friday. There will not be a Jazz Sanctuary Service on the 16th. There will be a regular 10:30 worship service.

The rest of the month may seem rather anti-climactic; however, we will have the promises of new hope and new life from our Easter celebration and the earth's response with warmer, brighter days, flowering trees and bulbs, to brighten our way into another season.

Page Turners will be meeting on April 27 to discuss "Best Barbarian: Poems" by Roger Reeves.

The Anti-Racism Study Group will be meeting May 4 (no April meeting) to discuss the possibility of becoming a Racial Justice Church using a study program provided by the NH U.C.C. Conference. If a decision is made to consider moving ahead, a proposal will be introduced at our Annual Meeting to begin the process in the fall.

It has been a long journey over the last few years. As Pastor Emilia recommended in her sermon on March 9, summer will be a good time to rest at our "oasis".

May you be blessed by this season.

Eleanor Kimball, Spiritual Life Ministry Team



Technology Corner

The Best Online Music Services for Seniors

These days it can seem harder and harder to listen to the music you want to hear. At my house, we don't have a stereo system anymore and I sold all my old vinyl records to free up space. We still have several shelves filled with CDs, but the only place I can play them is on the computer or in the car.

Believe it or not, though, it's actually easier to hear the music you want than it ever was before. The solution is to use an online music streaming service. I'll describe some of the most popular services below.

Apple Music

Apple Music is designed to work seamlessly with iPhones, iPads, Apple watches, Apple TVs, etc. This service has over 100 million songs in its library and plans start as low as \$4.99/month. You can also use Apple Music with Android devices, but plans for those start at \$10.99/month.

Spotify

Spotify is probably the most popular music streaming service. You can listen to it anywhere on just about any device and they have a library of 80 million songs. You can use it for free if you don't mind listening to commercials between the songs. Spotify's premium plans, which are ad-free, start at \$9.99 per month.

Amazon Music

Amazon Music is included for free with every Amazon Prime membership. They have a library of 100 million songs that you can listen to ad-free. If you upgrade to Amazon Music Unlimited (\$8.99/month for Prime members, \$9.99/month for non-Prime customers) you get better audio quality and more songs.

YouTube Music

YouTube Music is another streaming service that boasts having 100 million songs to choose from. A subscription costs \$9.99/month.

Pandora

Pandora has a free version and it's different from the rest of the services in that you can't listen to specific songs. Instead, you enter the name of a song or artist that you like and Pandora will start playing similar music for you. You can give a "thumbs-up" or "thumbs-down" to each song and before long you will be listening to a lot of songs you like and very few that you don't. I've used Pandora a lot when driving in the car and, if you don't mind hearing commercials after every 2nd or 3rd song, it's a good service. Paid versions of Pandora, which don't have ads and allow you to choose specific songs, start at \$4.99/month.

So which service is right for you? If you already have an Apple device, you might want to look into Apple Music first. If you already have an Amazon Prime membership, then Amazon Music is free so you should try that one first. If you've spent a lot of time on YouTube, YouTube

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music may be the easiest for you to use. If you want the experience of listening to a radio station where the music is chosen for you, then Pandora may be the best bet.

No matter which streaming music service you choose, you'll have the ability to listen to much more music than you ever did before (Unless you had the world's largest record collection). You can also use any of the services mentioned here to listen to First Church's new CD: Jazz Sanctuary House Band - Songs for Worship. Our music has been distributed to more than twenty-five streaming services all over the world, so please tell your friends & family that they can find us "Anywhere you listen to your music."



From the Council

Our agreement with Wesley Methodist Church continues to meet our needs, thanks to their helpful support.

April will be Stewardship Month. A stewardship letter will be mailed to Members and Associate Members. In addition, the stewardship letter will be given to attendees at the next Jazz Sanctuary service.

The budget for the coming fiscal year will be prepared in May before our Annual Meeting on June 4.

Twin Bridges, the company that maintains our computer hardware and software, submitted a proposed contract for the year. Council approved the contract.

The Female Charitable Society will hold its annual meeting/dinner at Alan's Restaurant on April 11. Contact Pastor Emilia if you wish to attend or to serve as a delegate from First Church.

Phil Kimball, Council

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Ministry of Outreach

School Kits and Clean Up Buckets:

The drop off date for the kits and bucket is May 4-5. We basically have a month to buy more items for either the school kits or clean up bucket or sew more bags. We currently have 10 filled bags, enough supplies for 2 more bags and only a partially filled bucket. Kits go to disaster victims around the world. The buckets stay in the United States and go to places where there have been floods, tornadoes, fires or other calamities. The kits can go overseas to help Ukrainian refugees in Moldova. Please help support this worthwhile program.

Magazines, cards and calendars:

Please continue to bring in recent magazines and all occasion cards for the Merrimack County Nursing Home. Thank you for your donations.

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". Let's share the riches we have with those who are in need. We will collect this offering on Easter.

Lenten "Silk Purses":

Please continue to put a coin into the silk purse every time you are so moved by God's love. We will collect the accumulated "thank yous" on Easter and the money will be added to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering.

Zimbabwe:

A recent article from the Wall Street Journal (March 24, 2023) titled "If a \$100 Trillion Bill doesn't work; How about some cheese? Zimbabwe has reached a new stage of monetary dysfunction. "Because of a lack of small change, businesses have started printing their own "money" on scraps of paper that the customers can use to pay for future purchases." Inflation hit 230% in January. Please take time to read the article posted on the bulletin board and keep our Zimbabwe friends in your prayers.

Sara Nichols, Outreach



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Jazz Sanctuary

“Remember Me - The Jazz of Vigil.”

Each year Holy Week gives us an opportunity to re-live the central stories of what it means to be Christian, and in recent years the Jazz Sanctuary worship team has found a unique and powerful way to imagine one of these many stories. Among the dizzying multitude of perspectives and beliefs uncovered by the discoveries of the Qumran texts, one figure in particular emerged in a much more powerful and impactful way - Mary Magdalene.

NH’s own novelist, Dan Brown, drew from these so-called “Gnostic Gospels” in a somewhat sensationalistic way for his thriller, “The DaVinci Code.” Nevertheless, serious scholarship and a focus of contemplative life have been brought to the role of Mary as a central figure in the Jesus phenomenon. Our Page Turners First Church Book Club read Cynthia Bourgeault’s “The Meaning of Mary Magdalene” several years ago, and we were challenged and moved by the idea that a woman named Mary Magdalene could have been a co-equal spiritual teacher with Jesus of Nazareth.

Bourgeault’s book contains some scripture-based liturgy that imagines Mary Magdalene’s vigil at the tomb of Jesus from Good Friday until his Easter resurrection, and for the third year in a row, Jazz Sanctuary will present this liturgy along with a selection of jazz standards of love and loss to give a different musical voice to Mary’s vigil. There are suggestions in the Mary tradition that it was her deep connection with Jesus through the hours from Friday evening to Sunday morning that strengthened and enabled him to do God’s redeeming work for humanity, and this contemporary music certainly embodies such an imagined connection beautifully.

So, come join us on Good Friday evening, April 7 at 6:30 PM for “Remember Me - The Jazz of Vigil.” Vocalist and Pastor Emilia Halstead will be joined by the Jazz Sanctuary House Band of Joey Placenti on saxes and flute, Jock Irvine on bass, Ed Raczka on drums, and Tim Wildman on keyboard. We will meet in Hannah Hall in our new home at Wesley Church, 79 Clinton St. in Concord.

In other Jazz Sanctuary news, the team is weighing several requests from churches and an Association for jazz worship and conversation concerning building community through contemporary approaches to worship. In conversation with the Council, we have decided not to do services in other churches on the Sunday mornings when we have Jazz Sanctuary in the afternoon and seek instead to be with other churches on Sunday or weekday evenings. We want to continue to grow our jazz outreach ministry while also caring for those who provide it - seeking balanced self-care in church is always an important pursuit!!

Rev. Tim Wildman, Jazz Sanctuary



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Birthdays

- Heather Clar – 4/17
- Helen Livingston – 4/20
- Richard Clar Jr. – 4/23
- Dianna Huntoon – 4/25



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

