

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
April 2024

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UCC
April 2024

Gathered Since 1730

**Serving, Welcoming, Growing in
Christ**

79 Clinton Street

Concord, NH 03301

Phone: 603-225-5491

Emergency Phone: 857-231-2430

Email:

secretary@concordfirstchurch.org

Website:

www.concordfirstchurch.org

Office Hours: Monday-Thurs 9am-1pm

Senior Minister
Rev. Emilia Halstead

Interim Musician
Annelise Papinsick

Church Secretary
Kathleen Akerman

Historian
Kenneth Kalloch

Financial Secretary
Brandie Lyons

Council Chair
Susan Lauze

Council Vice Chair
Phil Kimball

Council Recorder
Sara Nichols

Technology Integrator
Jock Irvine

North Star Editor
Linda Sims

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From The Pastor

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

I sit at the foot of a bluff which has slowly been eroded by glacier, wind, and water. I think of the erosion inside of me - the places God is trying to wear smooth. I read a friend's poem, "Offering of Tears," written at the conclusion of a day of fasting. He writes of offering God his tears, and ends by saying, "I have nothing else to offer you."

I think about that. I have bought so many gifts this summer: wedding, birthday, hostess, and thank you gifts. What do I give to *you*, God? What would please you that I have?

A flock of gulls flies overhead. They are so beautiful, their black wings against the morning's blue sky. Last night I watched that same sky, covered with stars. I feel the ocean water lap at my toe. I walk among the rocks, picking up quartz and crystal. What do I have to give *you*, O God?

I close my eyes and listen. You say to me, "Love the beauty of my creation." I wait. There must be more. But there is no more. And I am left hearing the words again. Love the beauty of my creation.'

- written by Paula D'arcy in *The Gift of the Red Bird*

Eastertide, the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost was a time of profound richness and depth for the disciples and followers of Jesus. For 40 of those days, Jesus was with them. "Acts 1:1-3 tells us that from

the time that Jesus rose again from the grave to the time that He ascended into heaven, it was a period of 40 days. And while we do not have a detailed account of everything that Jesus did with his disciples over the course of those 40 days, we do know this time was significant. It would be Jesus' last moments with his disciples before he ascended into heaven. It would also be a time of preparation for a great transition that would come through Pentecost - when the Church would be birthed and the lives of the disciples would never be the same again." (Jeff Hyun)

So, what did Jesus do in those 40 days with the disciples that prepared them for the great transition that was to come? And, how does this inform us as followers of Christ today? Jesus met with them, broke bread and fish with them, taught them, and tried to prepare them for their multi-lingual send-off at Pentecost from the Holy Spirit.

This year, I feel like Easter is the kick-off to a journey into the wilderness. Normally we reflect on Jesus being 40 days and nights in the wilderness during Lent. However, this year... April 1st is the start of an internal wilderness journey for me. God is calling me back into the Wild of myself, which is to say that God is calling me back into the Divine Wild that lives within all beings.

Through our early journey with Beauty, in dialogue with Truth, I am learning (or relearning as the case may be) that God is Wild. God has not, nor will ever be, "tame." Out of a need for control, we humans continue to try and put God in a

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box, neatly labeled, and set on a shelf (which we try to remember to dust at least once a year).

We don't want to hear about the fact that sometimes God comes to us in a LITERAL storm, loud and chaotic, and that sometimes God comes in the silence. Our brains don't know how to put "storm" and "silence" in the same box - it literally makes our skin crawl. So we shout to God - "WHO ARE YOU?"

God replies, "I AM."

"No, God," we whimper, "That's too much, it's too big. We can't control or label that. We want bite-sized, soft, sweet pieces to chew on that are easy to digest."

What's ironic, is that our multi-denominational, multi-religious boxing and labeling system for "God" is so complicated, so overwhelming, so confusing, so time consuming - leading to war after war about whose labeling system is the "right" one - that we have zero time and space for the Divine.

"Love the beauty of my creation." It's that simple and that hard to do.

This Eastertide, for the sake of my health, God is demanding that I come to the Divine relationship in the silence. I am profoundly grateful to all of you for the space of April to tend to my health and to my connection with creation. I pray that you also are able to journey these next 40 days in intimacy with Jesus, who simply wants to be with us, eat with us, and teach us.

Blessings of Eastertide,
Pastor Emilia

Ministry of Spiritual Life

Our Lent through Easter worship services have surely been a blessing. Pastor Emilia's liturgy and sermons about beauty have been inspirational. She has been inviting the congregation to share the beauty they have seen and the offerings have been everything from successfully baked rolls, to ice covered trees sparkling in the sunlight, to a grandchild's face in greeting Micky Mouse! Such delight! We need beauty to counteract troubling news. Beauty surrounds us when we are open to it.

Holy Week's Maundy Thursday Service and Good Friday's Jazz Sanctuary's "The Vigil of Mary Magdalene" were beautiful and powerful. Our chapel was beautiful. Many thanks to Kellie Heath for the flowers, and to Brenda Placenti for the banner and wreaths.

The African American spirituals, with an introduction by one of the Racial Justice Steering Team members, have been interesting and inspirational; and Inez McDermott's contributions of African American art for our bulletin covers have brought beauty and inspiration to us.

Our pastor will not be with us during April, but we will carry on! Tim Wildman will be leading our worship service on April 7. Since it is the first Sunday of the month, the service will include Communion.

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April 14 is going to be a special Sunday at South Church. It will be The Rev. Jared Rardin's last Sunday as he will be retiring. Our history with South Church goes back to our beginning when First Church was the only church. Concord continued to grow and by 1835, the "south-enders" decided to form a church in that part of town. South Church has often been referred to as a "sister church", and we have enjoyed shared events over the years. It is probably more appropriate to consider South Church our progeny. April 14 marks a significant event in their life as they bid farewell to their beloved pastor. We decided that some of our members would like to attend this special service at South Church which will begin at 9:00 a.m. Of course, you will also be welcome to attend Wesley United Methodists' service that morning at 10:30, or perhaps you have another faith community service you'd like to attend.

April 21 we'll have Jazz Sanctuary. Horton Center will be the topic. Come gather 'round the campfire!!

April 28, The Rev. Gayle Murphy will be with us.

Page Turners will be reading "The Covenant of Water" for the next two months. It is a beautiful novel. Since it is a long book, the plan is to read the first 348 pages, which

will bring us to Chapter 45 for our April 22 discussion.

The Covenantal Restoration videos have been well received. It seems all were worth viewing at least once, and many more than once as the speakers who were interviewed were insightful, articulate and inspirational. It was good to have so many people staying to view them after our Sunday morning worship services, and also after Jazz Sanctuary services.

The Racial Justice Steering Committee's Holy Saturday Concert was a wonderful event. The combination of African American music and art were beautiful to hear and see. We had 84 attendees, much enthusiasm for the program, and great fellowship afterwards. It seems that this might well be an annual event!

We are in the Season of Easter until Pentecost Sunday on May 19. In the meantime, we'll be preparing for Annual Meeting on June 9.

May your Easter Season continue to inspire you, to bring you hope, joy and much beauty!

Eleanor Kimball, Spiritual Life Ministry Team
Susanne Driscoll
Kellie Heath
Brenda Placenti
Sheila Swenson

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Technology Corner

JUST IN: After staying w/ Mary, Martha & Lazarus (whom Jesus rose from the dead yesterday), Jesus is seen walking from Bethany to Jerusalem.

This text message arrived at 7:00 AM on Palm Sunday, marking the beginning of the “Holy Week Text Experience.” People who signed up for this received text messages at various times throughout the week that were configured as news flashes about Jesus.

I decided to participate in this unorthodox approach to experiencing Holy Week, as did Suzanne Driscoll and Kathy Akerman. When I asked Suzanne what she like most about it, she said “The sense that I am a part of it and that I was personally involved. I can’t explain why it works that way, but it does.”

Kathy reported that “when things were happening they instantly sent out the message. It could be in the night, it could be daytime, you would hear the message come in and go look at your phone and it would bring you back to Holy Week. This is what really happened to Jesus.”

When I asked about any particularly meaningful experiences, Suzanne said “Every snippet, and they were all just so small, was so much a part of my memory that it just all came alive together.”

When I asked Kathy the same question, she told me about an experience she had when she was preparing for our Holy Week Services: “When I was working on the bulletins and He was trying to tell the disciples what was happening... They weren't really understanding. In three days the

temple would be restored and nobody believed that.”

The most meaningful moment for me came unexpectedly. I had just walked into the grocery store on Friday morning when this text message came in:

UPDATE: Jesus just arrived before the Roman governor Pilate for sentencing. The crowd is starting to whisper what others have started to yell: “Crucify Him!”

I’ve heard this story many times before but, suddenly, it seemed to be happening in the moment. I was overwhelmed at the thought that people, right as I was reading this message, were calling for Jesus to be crucified and I had to stop for a minute before I could continue grocery shopping.

This idea of texting reports about Holy Week in real-time was conceived by the TryTank Research Institute (trytank.org), which is a project of the Virginia Theological Seminary. They had 2,360 people sign up for it in 2023 (The first year) and there were 3,401 subscribers this year. They’re hoping to reach 5,000 participants for Holy Week in 2025. You can see from our accounts that all three of us who participated think this was a powerful way to experience Holy Week and we’re glad that we signed up for it. We hope that some of you will join us as we do it again next year!

Jock Irvine, Technology Integrator

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Ministry of Outreach

School Kits and Clean Up Buckets:



Please take time to sew bags for the school kits. We have complete sets of items to fill bags but need bags in which to place them. Bow Mills Methodist Church

will be hosting the annual kit depot May 3-May 4 from 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM. It would be nice to have a lot to contribute.

Please continue to purchase items for the clean-up buckets. The item for March was a scrub brush. The item which we need more of is large sponges. Watch for April's item to purchase.

Earth Day:

Earth Day is April 22 this year. The hope is to end plastics for the sake of human and planetary health. There are simple things we can do like bringing reusable bags when shopping. Clean up plastic and other trash in your neighborhood. Look for "If you care" products in your grocery store the next time you shop. Plant a tree, wildflowers and native plants. Buy in bulk when you can. Reuse, recycle or return old plastic pots and trays. Stop pesticide and chemical use in the garden. Conserve water. Every little bit helps.

Zimbabwe:

Nolian Mapfumo says " kindly send Harare church's gratitude for the \$85 that we received through our UCCZ Zimbabwe Head Office."

Crop Walk:

The final total of the 2023 crop walk was \$11,613.30. CWS returned 25% of that (\$2903.30) to the Interfaith Council in January. The Council added \$596.70 to that and checks for \$250 were sent to 14 local programs in February.

One Great Hour of Sharing:

Thank you for your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing. A total of the amount received will be in the next North Star. This money goes to support disaster relief efforts, refugees, and development ministries of the UCC.

Sara Nichols, Outreach



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From the Council

Development of the new FCC Website is moving along. It will be accessible for people who have never used one before. The calendar will provide links to each event.

Because they are not always available, we will rent a storage unit as soon as a suitable one becomes available. We hope to consolidate all materials in one unit. To accomplish this, we will be reviewing what materials continue to be needed. We may be able to donate or discard some things.

In a discussion of FCC's participation in various town events it was decided that renting a booth at Concord's Market days was beyond our means, both financially and in terms of people to man the booth. Our Jazz Sanctuary Band might sign up for a performance at Market Days. We will consider being part of "National Night Out, held at Rollins Park. A Sunday afternoon concert at Eagle Square is also under consideration. Jazz Sanctuary Band plans to play at Friendly Kitchen. Pastor Emilia and Tim Wildman hope

to provide music at the Havenwood Hiking/Biking celebration at Sugar Ball on May 14.

The first meeting of the Budget- 2024/2025 - is set for April 8 at 6:30 pm. A Zoom link will be provided. The Second meeting will be on May 7 at 6:00 pm. Council will finalize the Budget at its May 15 meeting.

Phil Kimball, Council

Jazz Sanctuary

"The Jazz of the Earth & Outdoor Ministries"

After finishing March with a flourish, Jazz Sanctuary pushes ahead into the Easter season with a renewed sense of the new life that Resurrection brings when placed in the context of genuine spiritual community! A huge THANK YOU to all the coming together in community that led to so much music, art, and liturgy during Lent and

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March and to all of you who came out in person or online to join in the observances.

Our Jazz Sanctuary on April 21 at 2:30 will be really fun! Ever wish you could sit around a campfire singing your favorite camp songs but without the mosquitos, smoke in your face, and tree trunk seats with no backs? If so, here's your chance!!! The NH Conference's Outdoor Ministries will be featured in this one with TIVVI PARE, Executive Direction of Horton Center and Christian Education Specialist for the NH Conference joining Pastor Emilia and the Jazz Sanctuary House Band for fun renditions of camp songs and conversation about the splendors of God's creation and the call of Christian community to be in its midst. First Church's own CARROLL BLAKE will bring his guitar as a Musical Guest to make things even more festive! Might there even be an "indoor version" of s'mores??? Come and find out!!

May promises a special Jazz Sanctuary gathering, as Pentecost falls on the third Sunday - get ready for songs of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church - knowing

Emilia, there will at least a couple of "fire songs!!" Our First Church journey continues to be so blessed by the presence of God's Holy Spirit - the least we can do is come out and celebrate that PRESENCE lustily!!

As our congregation prepares for Pastor Emilia's sabbatical in July, August, and September, Jazz Sanctuary will also be considering ways for this time to be a soul-searchingly rich time for reflecting on our vision and mission for this ministry - stay tuned! Happy Easter - Hallelujah, He Is Risen!

Peace
Tim Wildman, Jazz Sanctuary



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First Church and Wesley – Two Centuries of Connections

By Ken Kalloch

The connection of the First Congregational Church of Concord, NH and the Methodists of Concord goes back to 1847 when the North Congregational society having built a new and more modern church nearer to Concord's population center wished to preserve in some useful way its earlier home, offered its second meeting house, the old North Church as a home for a Methodist theological school called the Methodist General Biblical Institute.

One of the original faculty of the Methodist General Biblical Institute of Concord was the Rev. Dr. Osmon C. Baker. In 1852, Rev. Baker left the school when he was elected Bishop, and the school continued to flourish in his absence. Rev. Baker is the namesake of the Baker Memorial Church in Concord, which was formed in 1874. In 1957, the Baker Memorial Church and the First Methodist Church of Concord merged to become the Wesley Methodist Church.

After twenty years at the old North Church, in 1867 the Methodist theological school bought land in Boston and became the Boston Theological Institute, then in 1869 they received a university charter and became Boston University. The current pastor of Wesley United Methodist in Concord, Rev. Lourey Savick, earned her Master of Divinity degree from the School of Theology there.

On Sunday, November 3, 1935, the fourth meeting-house of the First Congregational Church was destroyed by fire as its predecessor on the same site had been destroyed on another Sunday morning, June 29, 1873.

At a meeting of the First Congregational Society held in the Walker School Auditorium on November 22, it was resolved that they should rebuild North Church, God willing, and a moderator and committee were formed to secure plans regarding the cost of rebuilding.

The Committee obtained preliminary sketches of Cram and Ferguson, ecclesiastical architects of Boston, for a building of Gothic design, but the cost estimates of the design seemed to be more than the Church's financial abilities, so the Committee went on with their explorations for a more affordable plan.

On April 8, 1936, the Committee recommended construction in accordance with the plans of a young architect named Arland A. Dirlam, then only a few years out of Tufts and Harvard. On Sunday, September 27, 1936, the new building-stone was laid with appropriate ceremonies, and the Dedicatory Service for the fifth meeting-house was held on Sunday, June 6, 1937.

By 1966 the church school enrollment had reached approximately 300 according to the then superintendent, Edward B. Riley,

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and more classroom space was needed. It was decided to construct a new educational wing west of the parish on the site of the former Gardner House, which was torn down in the Spring of 1966.

The architect chosen for the project of designing the new educational wing was Arland A. Dirlam, the same architect who had guided the Church through its reconstruction 30 years earlier. The original plans for the educational wing were for it to have two floors. Nine church school classrooms on the second floor and a new fellowship hall on the ground floor. During the planning the plans were scaled back to only have a ground floor. The educational wing was consecrated at services on Sunday, September 24, 1967.

Wesley Methodist was formed in 1957 when the Baker Memorial Church and the First Methodist Church of Concord merged. The First Methodist Church on the corner of Chapel and State streets was then sold to the Greek Orthodox Church.

In 1958, Wesley purchased a four-acre plot on Clinton Street for a new church building. The architect chosen for designing the new building was Arland A. Dirlam. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on Sunday, August 7, 1960, and the first church service was held on September 24, 1961.

Prior to the first service a caravan of nearly 500 parishioners took part in a motor caravan that left the old Baker Memorial Church building on North State Street and

traveled by police escort to the new building.

On June 26, 2022, the final worship service of the First Congregational Church at the fifth meeting-house on North Main Street was held. This location was the home of the First Congregational Church for 180 years, since the third meeting-house was constructed in 1842.

Now, the First Congregational Church is in their sixth meeting-house sharing the space in partnership with the Westley Methodist United Church in another Arland A. Dirlam designed building, and with a connection with the Methodists of Concord that goes back 177 years to First Congregational's second meeting house, constructed in 1751, back in the days of its first settled pastor, the Reverend Timothy Walker.



April

Birthdays

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

You are invited to an
Open House Celebration
Of Phil Kimball's 90th Birthday
April 27 & 28 1:00 - 4:00
Come by 65 Ray Road,
Dunbarton NH
For food, drink, birthday cake
and conversation.
He'd love to see you!

Remember: Your presence is his
present!



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
- Nancy Sanborn - Hope
- Dot Cassady - Hope
- Hannah Irving - Healing
- Carol Emery - Healing
- Carol Hovey - Healing
- Matt Wildman - Healing
- Family of Jon Huntington - Peace
- Phil Kimball - Healing
- Sammy Holland - Healing
- Family of Linda Strand - Peace