

NORTH STAR

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

February 2015

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UCC

February 2015

Gathered Since 1730

Serving, Welcoming, Growing in Christ

COME TO WORSHIP



177 North Main Street

Concord, NH 03301

Phone: 603-225-5491

Email: secretary@concordfirstchurch.org

Website: www.concordfirstchurch.org

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday: 9 am - 1 pm

Sunday Worship 10:00 a.m.

Ministers of the Church

All the People

Senior Minister

Rev. Emilia Halstead

Pastor Emeritus

Rev. Dr. Donald F. Jennings

Director of Music

Mr. William Metevier

Church Secretary

Shelley Westenberg

Treasurer

Linda Baines

Financial Secretary

Carolyn Andrews

Sexton

AJ Adjutant

North Star Editor

Linda Sims

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FROM THE PASTOR

Greetings Beloved in Christ,

Lent is a time to renew wherever we are in that process that I call the divine therapy. It's a time to look what our instinctual needs are, look at what the dynamics of our unconscious are. --Thomas Keating

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asks this question four times in the Gospels; once in Matthew and Luke and twice in Mark. We start to feel like this was an important question to Jesus. We start to feel confusion and then maybe panic as we realize our answer to the question is, "I have no idea." Suddenly the answer about wanting more money, a better job, a better car, a better house, better clothing and a body we can "live" with seem as hollow as a dried out egg shell and just as fragile.

We then turn to the deeper wants in our lives: healing for a loved one, no more war, that all may have enough healthy food to eat, that all may have clean water to drink, that all may have a warm place to live. These answers ring truer in our hearts, and make us feel better about our desires. Yet, as Jesus continues to gaze at us, directly into our eyes with more love and understanding than we've ever experienced, we burst into tears and drop our gaze. In that moment, as the flood gates to our souls open up, we realize that the answer to the question is, "I want to be loved. I want to be loved by you. I want to feel the love in every atom of my being."

For years, I felt that Lent was a time of punishment. My understanding about this time of the church year was that, since I had been "bad" during many times of the year, I needed to ask for God's forgiveness by giving up

chocolate, or soda (pop for the mid-westerners), or television, or coffee, and the list goes on and on. Darkness, sadness, frustration marked my Lenten experience for many years.

I wasn't until my mid-twenties that I realized Lent was more about a time of gazing inward at the mirror of my soul. For now we see God as in a mirror, reflected in our hearts, dimly. When we reach our heavenly home, we will see Jesus face to face. In that moment, Jesus' question, "What do you want me to do for you?" will be asked with a beautiful smile. And we reply by laughing and running into Jesus' arms receiving the one thing we've wanted Jesus to do for us; to hold us so that we can feel it.

Love. It is the greatest of these. Sadly it is always the thing we understand the least. We want it so badly, that we go looking for it in all the wrong places. We seek to fill the "God-sized" hole inside us with everything BUT God and then we wonder why we still feel hollow to our very core. Lent is all about learning how to fill the space inside us reserved for God with God and doing it WITH God. Somehow we imagine that we need to learn to clear that space out inside us and fill it with God's presence without God's help to do it.

All we need to do is turn our gaze inward, and say, "God, please help me." The time of Lent is built so that we can remove all the things that distract us and keep us from being able to look inward. So whether you are considering "giving something up" or "taking a new habit on" for Lent, remember that the point of the season is to find the time and space to focus on our own personal relationships with God and with ourselves. For before we can learn to accept God's love into our life, we have to first be willing to love ourselves in at least a fraction of the way that Jesus loves us. "For God so loved the world..."

Blessings on your Lenten journey,

Pastor Emilia



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FROM THE CABINET

It's hard to believe that Pastor Emilia has been with us almost eight months now – how time flies when we're having fun. It is also hard to believe that Cabinet and the boards have only four more meetings before annual meeting. Pastor Emilia's plan for the first year of her pastorate was just to listen and observe. It is now time to start shaping our vision for the next year (May 2015) and beyond.

There is no better time to start thinking about *who we are* and *why we give* than as we make our commitments to stewardship. The three most important reasons we give are: (1) a belief in our mission, (2) a regard for staff and lay leadership, and (3) fiscal responsibility. Our current pledges received to date are right on pace with what was pledged at the beginning of the fiscal year. With six more months to go until the new fiscal year, let's keep the pace going. To sum it up: We give because of the confidence we have in our Pastor, as well as to make the community and world a better place to live.

Plans are now underway for First Church to participate in Concord's 250th anniversary. I attended the community forum January 15th to request our involvement in the activities and received an enthusiastic "thumbs up" to proceed. The meeting after worship on January 18th regarding our church's involvement was also positive. I will be posting a signup sheet for anyone and everyone to participate in a project of your interest. Some of the projects will include the history of The Rev. Timothy Walker, the history of all the Pastors, the five meeting places, the stained glass windows, the Chapel, the Women's Guild, and the ratification of the US Constitution, among others. I will also be scheduling a few dates throughout the year to host a "Concord Chat" at our church, during which time people in our community can get together and discuss Concord history.

Our next quarterly meeting will be Saturday March 14, 2015, from 9:00 AM to noon. There will be more details forthcoming about the meeting.

Everett Sims, Cabinet President



FROM THE DEACONS

Hard to believe but we are already done with the first month of 2015. That means Advent is over and Lent is fast approaching. We also have some exciting news for February.

First, Lent: Ash Wednesday begins on Wednesday, February 18. We will hold an Ash Wednesday service in the evening in the chapel. All are welcome to attend. Additionally, we will have devotional booklets available for those who want to spend additional time reflecting during this 40-day period.

Second, some exciting news: February 22, at 3PM will be Pastor Emilia's Installation service. We'd like to invite all members to celebrate this joyous occasion with us. The service will be held in the sanctuary and light refreshments will follow.

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FROM THE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Plans are also underway for the start of our First Church Third Sunday Jazz Sanctuary services. The first of these services will be held on March 15th in the Guild Room. It will be an informal worship service with jazz music provided by our own Tim Wildman and local musicians with whom Tim plays. Tell your friends, particularly those who are not accustomed to attending traditional worship, and invite them to this alternative, jazzie worship! (You'll probably even get a chance to hear Pastor Emilia's beautiful voice!)

Being responsible for maintaining the membership list, the deacons are charged with reviewing the list on an annual basis. This provides for a current listing of those who are active in church membership and enables us to give an accurate count to the NH Conference UCC. Because we pay a "per capita" fee for our members, it is important that the number be correct. While we work on the numbers, we also take an opportunity to gather any changes of contact information -- addresses, phone numbers, email addresses-- and correct them for our membership list. If you have any changes in your contact information, please call the church office and inform our church secretary, Shelley.

As we head into Lent, we look forward to sharing this time of reflection with you. We also encourage you to discuss any questions or concerns you might have with us. Our meetings are always open, and we're always happy to talk after church.

See you soon!

Jon Murphy and Linda Sims, *Board of Deacons*

Christmas Fund

Thank you again for all who contributed to the Christmas Fund. The grand total came to \$443. This money will go to the UCC to help retired clergy and clergy in crisis.

Christmas Eve offering

We collected \$172 Christmas Eve in loose offerings. This money was designated to go to the Pastor's discretionary fund to help people in need. Thank you for your donations!

Friends RSVP Program

There is an informational meeting to learn more about the Friends Program, specifically RSVP and their signature programs including Caregivers. The meeting is Wednesday, February 11, 2015 from 10-11 am at 254 North State Street. Call 228-6630 for questions or to register.

Sara Nichols and the Board of Missions

FROM THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

The Annual Financial Statement from the Church is in the process of being sent out to everyone who pledged or made a donation in 2014. Please look over your statement carefully and let me know if I have omitted any contribution you have made. I can be reached at 224-0185 or at ndrws12@yahoo.com.

Thank You!

Carolyn Andrews



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SAVE THE DATES!

The annual **Stewardship Tea** will be held on Saturday, February 28th from 2:30 - 4:00 pm. The Women's Guild will be in charge of the goodies! The celebratory luncheon has been scheduled for April 12th and will be hosted by the Cabinet.

FROM THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Church School

During the Epiphany Season, our children are learning that they are called by God and are "Children of God". They are learning that God's call is not something we hear with our ear but that nudge we feel with our hearts. They are learning the stories of Jesus and to follow the example of Jesus to love and serve others. To be children of God, everyone must be welcomed, accepted and included. It means living a balanced life- in mind, body and spirit and loving God and God's creation. To be children of God, we must love our neighbors and ourselves. It means being eager to give and open to receiving. It means leading and

following and living as Christ has shown us. We welcome our children's eagerness to learn and grow in Christ! (excerpts from Whole People of God curriculum)

Sheila Swenson, Lead teacher

Board of CE

The CE Board is in need of adults to assist Sheila Swenson with the faith formation of our children. We welcome our church family to mentor this small but enthusiastic group of children. Whole People of God lesson plans are available each week, giving a helpful overview of the lectionary scriptures used each week in worship (your own personal mini- bible study!) and an excellent outline of theme introduction, opening and closing children's prayers, scripture lesson/stories and a range of activities to select to accompany the bible lesson. The children are frequently attending in an every-other-Sunday pattern, but a lesson is prepared each week for the possibility of visiting families. The dates that we are requesting coverage are March 1, 15, and 29 and April 12 and 26. These would be Sundays that are not usually attended by our children but would give volunteers an opportunity to become familiar with the church school curriculum. We also invite co-teaching on the other Sundays when children are attending as well as another way to be introduced to the class and our curriculum. Please discuss your interest or direct your questions about church school teaching with Sheila or members of the CE Board. Adult volunteers must be Safer Church trained and our nursery care provider Jenn Strand is our second adult in the church school wing. Sheila is willing to provide another Safer Church training this winter for interested persons. Please give this important ministry for First Church children your prayerful consideration.

Betty Blackey, Shelley Huntoon, Susan Lauze. Sheila Swenson, The Board of CE

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THE BEYER GROUP

Our Valentine's Party with gift exchange will be held Thursday, February 12th at 2:00 pm in the Guild Room. We'll place a \$10 limit on the gifts, please. Devotions will be given by Dot Cassady, and she and Barbara Carlstrand will be our hostesses.

Happy Valentine's Day to all!

Jeanne Cate, Beyer Group Secretary



The Coffee Hour will be provided by the Women's Guild during the month of February



CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Monday, Tuesday & Thursday: | Food Pantry - 9:30-11:30am |
| Every Monday in February: | Counting Committee 9:00 am |
| Every Tuesday: | Choir Rehearsal - 6:30 pm |
| Sunday, February 1: | Communion Sunday |
| Tuesday, February 3 | -Female Charitable 1:00 pm |
| Monday, February 9: | -Women's Guild at Havenwood 7:00pm |
| Wednesday, February 11: | -Pastor Emilia returns from vacation Cabinet 6:30 pm |
| Thursday, February 12: | Beyer Group 2 pm Deacons 6:30 pm |
| Monday, February 16: | -Spiritual Directors 12 pm -Coffee with Pastor Emilia at Gibson's 2-4 pm |
| Tuesday, February 17: | Worship at Havenwood 1:30 pm |
| Wednesday, February 19: | Trustees and All Boards 6:30 pm (Missions at Havenwood) Ash Wednesday Service 7 pm |
| Saturday, February 21: | Prepared to Serve Conference |
| Sunday, February 22: | Pastor Emilia's Installation 3 pm |
| Monday, February 23: | -Faith Formation 6:30 pm |
| Tuesday, February 24: | 4th Tuesday Prayers in Chapel 1:00 pm -March North Star articles due |
| Wednesday, February 25: | Faith Formation 6:30 pm |
| Saturday, February 28: | Stewardship Tea 2:30-4 pm |

PRAYER CONCERNS & PASTORAL CARE

If you or someone you know is in need of prayer and would like their name included in our Sunday prayers or put on the church prayer list, please contact Sally Kelly (salking2@yahoo.com) or Pastor Emilia (pastor@concordfirstchurch.org or (603) 225-5491). If you would like a member of the Pastor's Aid Visitation Team to visit with you, please contact Barbara Carlstrand at (603) 224-9792.

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

Harriet Bailey
David French
Ginny Gove
Elizabeth Hardy
Rose Kachadoorian
Mary Pilsbury
Dot Riley
Nancy Sanborn
Janet Smith
Julia and Milton Tasker
Gertrude Taylor

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Bradley Huntoon, 2/3

Earl Young, 2/3

Christina Pollock, 2/11

Elizabeth Hardy, 2/19

Carol Hovey, 2/20

Karin Swenson Cohen, 2/25

Lucas Bagetis, 2/25

Dorothy Riley, 2/27

Norma Ordway, 2/28

Robert Pollock, 2/28

2015 PREPARED TO SERVE CONFERENCE

Saturday - February 21, 2015

**Location: Pembroke Academy,
Pembroke NH**

This year's theme:

***"Take Pride in how far we've come.
Have Faith in how far we can go!"***

Prepared to Serve is a special training event that welcomes participants with fellowship, inspiring worship, and educational, faith-building workshops on a variety of topics, including stewardship, church leadership, church finances, global missions and Christian education. There will be over 70 workshops on a wide range of topics, and our own Eleanor Kimball and Tim Wildman are leading workshops. The day also includes a delicious catered lunch. Event registration is now open! Go to www.nhucc.org to register at the early rate of \$40. After February 18, the price jumps to \$50. You may also call the conference office at 225-6647 to register by phone.

There are *Prepared to Serve* catalogues in the Assembly Room-grab one after worship!

A Valentine's Message for First Church Members:

February marks my first anniversary as your church secretary. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with such a dynamic and caring congregation. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, for being patient with my year-long learning curve, and for being all-around wonderful examples of Christ's teachings in our everyday world!

-Shelley