

# First Congregational Church

*Gathered in 1723*

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ



**March 23rd, 2025**

**Third Sunday in Lent**

**Rev. Karen Dorshimer-Chaplin**

**Acting Associate Minister**

***Deacon's Quote of the Day***

***"We are indebted to one another and the debt is a kind of faith—a beautiful, difficult, strange faith. We believe each other into being."***

***~Jennifer Michael Hecht***

**WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, DEACON'S GREETING****\*PASSING OF THE PEACE****PASTORAL GREETING****CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: This is the season of waiting, of tipping on the edge of life: a seed planted in furrowed soil, but will it grow? Staring at earth, pondering its riches, nostrils earth scented in morning dew.

Waiting...

**Many: This is the season of risk, watching as the seed turns, shivers, cracks. Praying the precious root will find purchase, and not be found.**

One: This is the season of patience, nourishment, and care. What will follow will be bright colors, flowers, and taste, the marvelous harvest. For now, in quiet, we find peace.

**Many: Now is a season of prayer, of waiting and relying, of knowing the future is in the Creator's hands. Forces beyond our control nurture the seed if we let them. This is when we depend, are taught to depend, and to trust in this season of waiting.**

One: A green tip will push through the earth, and we can say:

**Many: we waited, we took the risk, we were patient, we prayed, we depended.**

**\*HYMN**

**Fairest Lord Jesus** (Pilgrim 227 )

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

Scripture calls us to repent of our sin and to return to God, who offers us mercy and grace. Trusting in God's mercy and grace, let us call upon God as we pray together:

**UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Holy One, we confess that we get stuck on our journeys of faith. We become paralyzed by our fear and are unable to move forward in hopeful and healthy ways. We become like the barren fig tree and our spiritual growth becomes stagnant. Forgive us, replenish us with living water, calm us and quiet our anxious minds. Restore us to right relationship with you, one another, and your creation. Renew us that we may serve you with humility and joy again. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

**ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS**

One: Our God is a loving God full of mercy. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Breathe deeply and be filled with God's overflowing love for we are beloved to God.

**Many: We give thanks to God and seek to share God's love we have so graciously received with others.**

**CHOIR ANTHEM**

**Simple Gifts**, Shaker hymn

arr. John Coates

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE****SCRIPTURE READING**

Luke 13:1-9

**MESSAGE**

Four Dead Sticks and Fig Tree

Rev. Karen Dorshimer- Chaplin

**\*HYMN**

**There's a Wideness in God's Mercy** (NCH 23)

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

### PASTORAL PRAYER

#### LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

#### MISSION MOMENT

Worcester Youth Orchestra

Jonathan Colby

#### CALL TO OFFERING

We often spend our money on that which is not true bread, and labor toward things that do not satisfy. In our offering, we give to things that are of God: bread for the hungry, good news for the oppressed, the ministries of the church that welcome strangers and son and daughters alike. We bring these gifts in grateful response to all that our Creator has bestowed upon us.

#### OFFERTORY

Were You There? Spiritual  
Soloist: Chuck Mayberry

arr. H. T. Burleigh

#### \*DOXOLOGY

Tune: OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low. Praise Holy Spirit, Evermore, One God, Triune, whom we adore. Amen.**

#### \*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God of wilderness and promised land, in days of want and days of plenty you have been with us. By these gifts we now share, may others experience your providence and care. Send us, not only our offering, but our very selves, into the world to console and comfort, to lift up and reach out, to sit beside your children everywhere through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### \*HYMN

Come to Tend God's Garden (NCH 586)

#### BENEDICTION

#### POSTLUDE

Sonata in Ab major, Op. 26, mvt. II

L. V. Beethoven

First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury (FCCS) is a vibrant, inclusive and compassionate community of worship and mission.

We want our faith to transcend the things that separate us, to be tangible to endure tests of life and time and to be environmentally responsible, protecting God's creation. Led by the Holy Spirit, we look to Jesus Christ to guide us toward companionship, justice, and the inspiration to serve God and our community.

*The Senior Minister is Rev. Holly MillerShank  
The Acting Associate Minister is Rev. Karen Dorshimer-Chaplin  
The Visiting Director of Music is Andrew Lefferts  
The Deacon is Maryellen Lane  
The Reader is Mary Innis  
Greeters are Jean Feldkamp and Nancy Colby  
Altar flowers are provided by the Samant family in loving memory of Joanne's parents, Mary Elizabeth and Frank Brown.*

**GIVE HERE:**



*Liturgy is adapted from and reprinted by permission from Feasting on the Word Worship Companion Year C, Volume 1, and from Spring -Liturgical Resources for February, March and April, Ruth Burgess, Wild Goose Publications.*

*The bulletin cover photos, taken by Tom Ashley (Dancing Bear Farm in Leyden, Massachusetts) are used with his gracious permission.*

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

For Susan, Beth Cullen's sister; Jeanine's brother, Douglas Szlompek; Kathy and all the friends and family of Dile Holton; the family of Alan Scott; Christina Hsu and her family; Diane Smith's mother, Anne Thompson, and the Smith family; Jackie P., her daughter Denise, and family; Kim, Sue Phyfe's daughter-in-law; Stanley; Sharon; Gloria Symonds; Leon Bowman; Frank Trippi; Jean Stuart; Sherry Robertson; Erna Lallier and family; Wendy Driscoll; Jennifer and Rebecca MacKenzie; Cathy; Eileen F.; David, brother-in-law of Kathleen & Dave Rocheleau; Marcia Smith; Natalie; Peyton; John Heald; Jean Folsom; Roberta Jelinch's sister, Sandi; Jan Smith; Brenda; Barbara Harlow.

-For those within our church family and all faith communities who are dealing with illness, caregiving, grief, mental health crisis, unemployment, hunger, and homelessness in their daily lives.

-Prayers for all those recovering from natural disasters happening throughout our world.

-For the people of Ukraine, Haiti and the Middle East whose lives continue to be shattered by war, as well as the many landscapes that are currently embroiled in conflicts.

-The mission & works of the First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury.

-Blessings to government officials, first responders, health care workers, military personnel, and all who protect and care for us.

## **THIS WEEK AT FCC**

Every day, 7am: AA, Cushing Hall  
Every Wednesday, 5:30pm: ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), Chapel  
Every Sunday, 7pm: AA, Adkins Room

## **THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR OF EVENTS:**

### **Sunday, 3/23:**

9:30am: Worship & Sunday School, Sanctuary  
11:00am: Earth Stewardship Program, Chapel  
11:00am: Training Choir/Youth Singers, Choir Room  
5:30pm: HS Youth Group, Youth Room

### **Monday, 3/24:**

10:00am: Hands for Hope, Parlor  
7:00pm: Mission & Outreach, Zoom

### **Tuesday, 3/25:**

8:00am: Guided Meditation, Youth Room  
7:00pm: Deacons, Adkins

### **Wednesday, 3/26:**

6:00pm: Lenten Series, Chapel  
6:30pm: Shrewsbury Ringers

### **Thursday, 3/27:**

7:15pm: Senior Choir

### **Friday, 3/28:**

4:15pm: Chimers

### **Sunday, 3/30:**

9:30am: Worship & Sunday School, Sanctuary  
11:00am: "All Church Learning Event" (visitations), Chapel  
11:00am: Training Choir/Youth Singers, Choir Room

## **CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:**

Monday-Thursday 9am-1pm



*Dollars & Sense is a monthly feature, generally the 3rd week of the month, where we share information about different aspects of our financial health as a congregation.*

**Publication Date: March 2025**

If you enter the church through the main office door you will now see a giant calendar with all of our building use for the month. This was Christine Evasius' brilliant idea. You can see a photo of March to the right along with a close up of just March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Our 2025 Budget projects revenue of \$70,000 from building rental (this is down from our 2024 actual building rental income of \$85k because of Aprende Preschool outgrowing our facility and moving to Northborough). We have a Building Use Committee (Dave Smith, Stephanie Ambra, Skip Burnett, Dan McCarthy, April Mullins and Pastor Holly) who set the annual building user fee schedule, negotiate contracts with on-going users, and review special requests.

This past year April Mullins took on an additional approximately 8 hours per week position of Building Use Coordinator. In this role April ensures that we have contracts and insurance for all of the various groups that use our facilities.

We currently have two rooms on the top floor that we would like to rent out for weekday use. They would be ideal for a co-op working space, counseling center, or other small business. Please reach out to [buildinguse@fccsm.org](mailto:buildinguse@fccsm.org) for more details.

In addition to those who rent our space, we have over 30 "Good Neighbor" groups such as AA and Scout Troop 114 who use our building as community partners. Throughout 2025 we will be inviting building users to share Mission Moments once a month in worship. This month we'll hear from Jonathan Colby of Worcester Youth Orchestra.

Our building is integral to our ministry. It where we gather as a worshipping community as well as how others come to experience our extravagant welcome through the multitude of uses our facility provides. It takes significant financial, staff and volunteer efforts to maintain our property but it also brings significant rewards.



### FCC's MONTHLY SNAPSHOT

In FEBRUARY\* we had REVENUE of \$55,400.32 and EXPENSES of \$66,265.71 giving us a monthly net income (negative) of \$10,865.39.33.

*\*Note: two worship services in Feb were on-line only.*

Year-to-date (January 1<sup>st</sup> thru February 28<sup>th</sup> 2025) we have REVENUE of \$133,236.73 and EXPENSES of \$119,463.79 which gives us a YTD net income (positive) of \$13,772.94.

Give at [www.fccsm.org](http://www.fccsm.org)

# Easter Memorial Lilies and Funds Order and Donation Form

**Deadline: March 30, 2025**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Lilies** - Flowers donated to the Care Team to be delivered to people on their care list.

I would like to order \_\_\_\_\_ Lilies.

Total Order: number of plants x \$13.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

For Publication (please print, use second page if needed):

Name of Giver(s): \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

## FUNDS

I would like to make a memorial donation.

Amount = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Select the Fund

Pastor's Discretionary Fund  Memorial Fellowship Fund  King's Daughters Memorial Flower Fund

For Publication (please print, use second page if needed):

Name of Giver(s): \_\_\_\_\_

In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

## PAYMENT

TOTAL ORDER: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed (*www.fccsm.org* click on the "Give" button and scroll to Other and indicate "Lilies" or the name of the appropriate fund)..

I will pay online (*www.fccsm.org* click on the "Give" button and scroll to Other and indicate "Lilies" or the name of the appropriate fund).



If paying by check during the Sunday collection, please give a second check (separate from your weekly offering) and write "Lilies" or the name of the appropriate fund in the memo line.