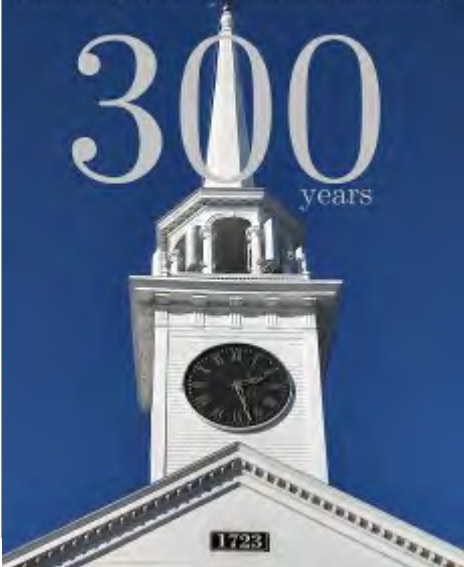


300
years



2023

DECEMBER

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"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."
Isaiah

Church on the Green

A monthly newsletter from

The First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury

An Open and Affirming Congregation

View from the South

The Pastor's Corner

"This is the irrational season

When love blooms bright and wild.

Had Mary been filled with reason

There'd have been no room for the child."

-After Annunciation, Madeline L'Engle

We welcomed the Advent season in a big way last Sunday as we celebrated both the commemorative 300th anniversary and the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is a season of preparation, and a lot of preparation went into last Sunday's service after months planning for this historic worship service. It was a delight for me to witness the congregation's joy as Deb welcomed everyone, as proclamations and citations were presented; as Dave and Sue lit the candle of hope on the Advent wreath; as the choir sang to the glory of God; as the children once again humbled your supply pastor; as William Whitehead read the historic covenant; as Elaine Shaw read the Scripture from Hebrews; as the Rev. Dr. Paul Adkins preached on Faith That Defies Expectations; as overflowing joys and concerns were shared in prayer; as Christ welcomed us to an Advent feast at the Communion table. Behind the scenes were a myriad of others who gave attention to every detail of this joyous occasion.

Advent, which Madeline L'Engle refers to as the irrational season, is my favorite season of the liturgical year. Advent holds space for mystery, wonder, and for our deepest longings. It is often a season of paradox, of angels appearing to those least expected, to Joseph, to Mary, and to shepherds working the night shift watching over their flocks. It is a paradox that there was no extravagant welcome for Mary and Joseph who were told there is no place for you here.

The Pastor's Corner

Advent is a season of paradox as we light the candle of peace and listen to these words from Isaiah “the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6) as we also hear the daily reports of the war in the Middle East, conflict around the globe, and unending gun violence. The paradox of Advent is that we prepare to celebrate our Savior’s birth; while we are still waiting for the fulfillment of God’s vision of wholeness, of peace and justice for all people and places.

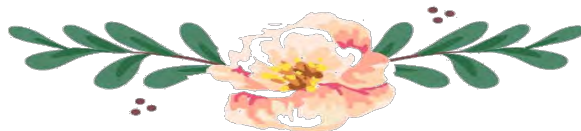
Advent is an irrational season when joy and sorrow; celebration and grieving are intertwined with one another. On Sunday, December 17th, we will have a brief Blue Christmas service at 11 am in the chapel. It is intended as a space for solace and strength for those who are grieving, losses both ancient and new. It is a space for healing and restoration of hope as we hold one another in prayer, light candles to illuminate the darkness, and hear music that is a healing balm to our souls. All are welcome to this service of comfort and consolation.

The Advent season will conclude in a big way, with the Fourth Sunday of Advent observed at our 9:30 am service on December 24th, and three Christmas Eve services. The 5:00 pm service is designed as family friendly service; the 7:00 pm service is designed as a service of lessons and carols, and the 10:00 pm service is designed as a reflective and meditative service. We invite everyone to join us on the pathway through Advent to Christmas Eve.

It is a gift to be with you during this sacred season. May the peace of Christ dwell within you,

Pastor Karen

Supply pastor



JOYS & PRAYERS

JOY



CONRAD MICAH
MillerShank

November 17, 2023
8 pounds 8 ounces • 20 inches long

with love. Pastor Holly, Jonathan and Corrina



PRAYER

-Sherri Robertson, John Heald, the Currier, Sadler, Mullins, and Shaw families; Stan Holden; Bev Fletcher's niece; Marie Murphy's brother, John G; Tracey & Ross; Julia Dobner-Peireira; Jean Folsom; Julie Ann; Rosemary Horesta; Norma Garcia's sister, Patricia; Roberta Jelinch's sisters, Sandi & Dawn; Jan Smith; Betsy & Ed Giles; Don Gray; Wendy Ziesemann's sister, Tamara; Rebecca & Jennifer MacKenzie; Barbara Harlow; Bonnie Gibbs; Wendy & Tom; Lisa DiPilato; Florence Stowe.

-Continued prayers for the victims and their families and the communities involved, following the recent shootings in Maine and Vermont.

-We pray for the end of gun violence after more than 500 mass shootings have taken place since January of this year.

-The people of Israel & Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, Haiti and other countries in our world dealing with war and unrest.

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

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

-Members of First Congregational Church in Gardner and Spencer

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

300TH ANNIVERSARY

WE'RE IN THE NEWS !!!

Worcester Telegram & Gazette Article Dec 3, 2023:

Share the link below!

[Hope for future: First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury celebrates 300th anniversary \(newsbreak.com\)](https://www.worcester-tg.com/news/local/hope-for-future-first-congregational-church-of-shrewsbury-celebrates-300th-anniversary/newsbreak.com)

† Worcester Telegram & Gazette

Hope for future: First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury celebrates 300th anniversary

By Craig S. Semon, Worcester Telegram & Gazette, 1 day ago



300TH ANNIVERSARY



COMMEMORATIVE 300TH ANNIVERSARY WORSHIP SERVICE

December 3, 2023

First Sunday of Advent

The Rev. Dr. Paul Adkins, Guest Preacher

Rev. Karen Dorshimer-Chaplin, Supply Minister



300TH ANNIVERSARY



300TH ANNIVERSARY



300TH ANNIVERSARY



CHRISTMAS

Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, December 17, 2023

11:00 AM in the Chapel

All are welcome!

Join us for Advent



Sundays, 9:30am & online

December 3 - 300th Anniversary Service,
Rev. Dr. Paul Adkins preaching

December 10 - Worship Service & Advent Crafts

December 17 - Worship Service &
Blessing of 300th Anniversary Time Capsule

December 23 - Caroling on the Common 7pm
Rain location Gifford Hall

December 24 - Worship Service 9:30am

Christmas Eve Services:

5:00pm Family Service

7:00pm Choral Service & Candles

10:00pm Bells & Candles

First Congregational Church
19 Church Road, Shrewsbury
online at www.fcsm.org



ARTS ON THE GREEN PRESENTS

Caroling on the Common

Dec. 23, 7pm
Town Common
Shrewsbury

Photo © Jeamine Vihale

Featuring
The
Worcester
Brass
Consort



CHRISTMAS



Santa is coming to the Sumner House!

Once again Chiampa Funeral Home is hosting a visit with Santa Claus on **Sunday, December 10 from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM** Please visit the funeral home at 5 Church Road to have a picture taken with Santa. Light refreshments will be served. Children are also welcome to mail letters to Santa in the red mailbox in the front of the funeral home any time prior to Christmas.



**THANK YOU, THANK YOU,
THANK YOU**



A very special thank you to the congregation from Mission & Outreach for your heartwarming and most generous gifts that were given to the deserving children and seniors of Shrewsbury through the Giving Tree program of St. Anne's Human Services. Our gifts, along with those from St. Mary's, St. Anne's Southgate Retirement Community, Spring Street School, Flaherty Physical Therapy, and TJX in Natick will bring countless smiles to many on Christmas Day.

Tomorrow, Saturday 12/9 from 9-12 noon, the Shrewsbury Police Department will conduct their annual "Fill the Wagon" toy drive at the new police station and accept donations from the community. Santa will then be police escorted to St. Anne's and make his special delivery!!

The many elves on the Giving Tree team then match these donations by age on Saturday & Sunday, and place them with the family bags that have been organized this week with the above gifts! Monday is distribution day to the families and we cannot wait!!

We are blessed to live in such a caring and generous community!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



Join us for the Annual Advent Workshop

Gifford Hall immediately following the December 10 service

Everyone is invited to participate!

**Create Your Own Christmas Nativity Trail Mix
Keep it for yourself or give it away to someone as a gift!**

**First Come First Serve
We have 50 available for assembling.**

-Sponsored by the Christian Education Committee-



DONATIONS NEEDED: The Youth Group is collecting men's cold weather clothing for CityReach. Larger sizes are in highest demand as well as men and women's winter footwear, hats, socks, & mittens/gloves. Tote bags, small backpacks & duffel bags are also needed. Please put gently used or new donations in collection box located in Gifford Hall by Sunday, January 21, 2024. Thank you.

December



Dec 10 – Youth Group Meeting at 7:00PM, cookie baking for coffee hour on 12/17

Dec 17 – Youth Group hosts “Coffee Hour” following service and Youth Group at 7PM

Dec 24 – No YG, Merry Christmas!!!

Dec 31 – No YG, Happy New Year!!!

MUSIC MINISTRY

A Message from the Director of Music

Part of our yearlong celebration of FCC's 300th anniversary included a Gala Dinner and concert on November 4, 2023. Many thanks to the many volunteers who made the evening a great success. The evening's concert began with the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue by J. S. Bach. This is a piece that I began learning in 2020 because I wanted to play it for the 300th celebration. It is a wonderful metaphor for the church. The music of Bach is very technical, and it is easy to get lost in the details. Similarly, the church has many details that keep the building and the community together. The 300th year is a great time to take a step back from the details and enjoy the big picture.



Malcolm Halliday & Curtis Smith rehearse the details of the concert finale: I've Got Rhythm by George & Ira Gershwin.
Photo Credit: Jeanine Vitale, Prism Point Photography.

J. S. Bach was ahead of his time. His music was sometimes too complex for his era. He was only offered his church position in Leipzig after Telemann turned it down. In 1723, Telemann's list of 3,000 compositions were better known and more celebrated than those of Bach. I would say the opposite is true today. I still encounter the occasional person who dislikes the music of Bach, but Bach's music is much more celebrated and well known today than the music of Telemann.

FCC has thrived over the past 300 years not because our forebears took the quick and easy route or searched for the temporary spotlight. Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue is my tribute to all the volunteers who over the years took care of the details and made this institution thrive. As we close out this 300th year, remember to take a step back from the details, take in the big picture of FCC and see, just like God does in the book of Genesis, that it is good. ~ SINCERELY, CURTIS

MINISTRIES

OUR CONTINUED SHARING

1723 - 2023

DECEMBER 2023

During the month of December, we will be collecting

Cans of Soup
All varieties



Worcester County Food Bank

Worcester County Food Bank is dedicated to **engaging, educating, and leading Worcester County, Massachusetts, in creating a hunger-free community.** Solving hunger involves many different people and groups, working together to **help neighbors find the food they need now.** It also involves increasing support **for policies and programs** that improve access to healthy food to keep people from experiencing hunger in the first place.

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."
2 Corinthians 9:6

Clothes Donation



CLOTHING DONATIONS HAS MOVED

This week the Mission and Outreach clothing donation site was relocated by the

"Keepers of the House" and we are now very excited to have our own closet! Our new home can be found in Cushing Hall to the right of the East entrance stairwell going up to the sanctuary and is labelled FCC-S. Inside you will find specific shelving for the women's clothing that goes to Abby's House in Worcester, and the men's donations which we take to Veteran's Inc., can be placed on the floor area.

Please remember as you go through your "seasonal" gently used clothing for either Abby's House and Veteran's Inc., that your generous donations speak volumes to those in need of adequate clothing. Kindly bag your clothing separately for women vs men's.

In late January, the Sr. youth group will attend City Reach in Boston again, and there is always a demand for winter coats, boots, jackets, sweatshirts and sweat-pants. They send a special thank you in advance, for any donated items you might share after the holidays in January 2024. Your donations can be placed on the stage in Gifford Hall for City Reach.

Please contact Stephanie Ambra at sambra3@hotmail.com with any questions. Thank you.

MINISTRIES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10

We will be offering our last opportunities to purchase 300th anniversary memorabilia on Sunday, December 10 during coffee hour. These items will include the Church ornament, note cards, replica of the Church, Church trivets and the Church mirror. In addition to this, we will be offering a blanket of the Church that was donated by Chiampa Funeral Home.

Copies of this blanket can be ordered on the above two Sundays. The total cost of the blanket, including shipping is \$70. This is the actual cost with no mark-up. Thank you for your support.



For two Sundays:

December 10th and **December 17th**, individual ornaments from the 300th Anniversary Christmas Tree will be on sale before and after the church service.

Stop by the 'Tree Table' to purchase a memento of our 300th celebration or a special reminder of the way you are serving the First Congregational Church. (All proceeds will go to the church's General Fund.)



MINISTRIES

Martha Circle



Please join Martha Circle
for this Important Presentation

Wednesday, January 17
11:30 AM in the Chapel

When your loved one has asked you to be the executor of their will, do you realize the responsibility? As the executor you will spend many hours and months of work filling out tedious paperwork, closing accounts, paying taxes, and distributing assets in addition to other challenging duties. The executor's fiduciary duties can become very complicated, depending on the wishes of the deceased, and the heirs who are involved. Dr. Harvey Clermont will cover all these details and more. Please come to the Martha Circle to hear his talk, it should be very interesting and informative.

SERRV

INTERNATIONAL

The Mission and Outreach Ministry will be holding its annual SERRV sale for the remaining Sundays after the worship service: December 10 & December 17, 2023.

The beautiful and unique hand-crafted items available for sale come from artisans around the world who are supported by SERRV International, a fair-trade organization, whose mission statement is: "To empower small-scale global artisans and farmers through long-term trading partnerships, helping them build **sustainable employment, resources, rights, and a vision of hope** in their communities".

SERRV items make perfect gifts for all occasions and your purchases help to alleviate poverty in 25 countries worldwide. Additional proceeds from this sale also benefit other programs determined by the Mission and Outreach Ministry.

We hope you will come and join us at the SERRV table in Gifford Hall after the service, to help make the world a better place.

~ Your Mission & Outreach Ministry ~

MINISTRIES

**Social Circles aka
“The Fun Committee” is
looking to expand!**



We can't offer you a gym membership, employee discounts, free haircuts, or stock options, but we *can* offer you the opportunity to work with a fun group of people who enjoy creating opportunities for fellowship.

We sponsor things such as Soup Sunday, coffee houses, the church picnic, Coffee Hour, Suppers with Seven, wine tastings, Appetizer Sunday, summer gatherings, and theater trips.

If you're ready to join the fun, please talk to any of our group at church

[David or Elizabeth McRae, Marie Murphy,
Tom Porter]

or contact:

Kathleen Rocheleau
kathleen.rocheleau@gmail.com

Sandi Tripp-Leroux
sanditl@icloud.com

CHRISTMAS FUND COLLECTION



for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

The annual UCC special collection for the Christmas Fund will take place on **Sunday, December 17, 2023**.

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

The theme of this year's offering is “Grace upon grace” from John 1:16: “From Christ's fullness we have all received grace upon grace”.

There will be Christmas Fund envelopes available at the usher's table on Sunday, December 10 and Sunday, December 17 which you may use for placing your donation in the offering plate on December 17. Please indicate Christmas Fund in the memo section if making your donation by check.

You may also send a check to the church office with “Christmas Fund” in the memo section or donate online through our church's website by clicking the GIVE button at the top of the home page, choosing the “Other Box” & indicating Christmas Fund in the designation. If possible, please have your mailed or online donations into the church by December 20.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generous giving for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need.

Thank you for your continued generosity throughout the year.

The Mission and Outreach Ministry

CHURCH INFORMATION



A presentation and listening session was held on Oct. 29, on the new **FCC Shrewsbury draft Mission Statement, Core Values and attendant Financial Sustainability recommendations.**

Please take a moment to share your feedback [HERE](#) by **December 15, 2023.**

*You can view the Oct. 29 presentation [HERE](#).



Annual Meeting Reports due by Friday, December 15

Please email your annual report to the church office at office@fccsm.org anytime on or before December 15th. Your timeliness is most appreciated!

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

**Make
your church
the safest
place in town.**

**To all our
outside
groups,
committees,
and
ministries:**

Churches are meant to be sanctuaries with open doors and safe spaces where people can enter and meet in peace and harmony.

Church building security is a topic that has become critical in the last ten years as problems such as intruders and property damage have been increasing. With the right protocols and systems in place, a church can better protect its community from unauthorized access, theft or violence.

First Congregational Church Shrewsbury, is home to both internal committees and community groups such as the Scouts, Twelve Step groups, preschools, and more. The presence of young children has increased the need for safety.

Our church has implemented a variety of safety measures including key cards, which allow doors to the main exterior doors to remain locked.

Unfortunately, we have noticed that there are a variety of doors and windows that have been left open and/or unlocked, creating safety hazards for all.

We would appreciate if everyone using the building could follow these simple guidelines:

1. Enter through the main entrance only, using the key card.
2. Do not prop the entrance doors open or the door by the kitchen (unless carrying items in the building for limited amounts of time while an individual remains at the door).
3. Please be attentive to all posted signs regarding building use.
4. Open only essential windows and doors while in immediate use, close and lock promptly after use.
5. Exit the building through the main door, making sure all the doors and windows are locked and all lights are turned off.

A complete set of building use guidelines is available by contacting the office at office@fccsm.org.

We appreciate your help keeping our church and people safe.



Please join us
on Sunday
mornings at
9:30am

Our mission:

The purpose of this Church is to come together as Christians to serve God by studying and listening to the Word, and living by Christ's teachings. We are committed to reaching our through prayers, caring, sharing, serving and fellowship.

Senior Minister: Rev. Holly MillerShank
pastor@fccsm.org

Director of Music: Curtis Smith
musicdirector@fccsm.org

Financial Administrator: Lauren Morse
finance@fccsm.org

Christian Education Director: April Mullins
cedirector@fccsm.org

Building Superintendent: Daniel McCarthy
building@fccsm.org

Administrative Assistant: Colleen King
office@fccsm.org

Sexton: Benjamin Weiss
ben@fccsm.org

Nursery Care Provider: Katie Salsgiver

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH**

19 Church Road
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
508-845-7286
www.fccsm.org



FCCShrewsbury



**Church on The Green Newsletter
December 2023 Issue**
