

300 years



Church on the Green

A monthly newsletter from

The First Congregational Church of Shrewsbury

An Open and Affirming Congregation

MEETING HOUSE — 1766
View from the South

2024

January-February Combo Issue

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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*



The Pastor's Corner

This morning, a dawn chorus of birds awakened me to the beginning of a new day. The dawn chorus begins a few hours before dawn, a bit early for me; and yet it is a tangible sound and sign of spring, the lengthening of days. On Ash Wednesday, the church began the Lenten journey, a time for soul searching, sorting our priorities, reflection, repentance, and renewal of our spirits. The word "Lent" has its origins in an old English word for "lengthen" referring to the gradual lengthening of the days as we anticipate the arrival of spring.

One of my favorite poets is the late Mary Oliver who for many years lived in Provincetown and was well known for walking the trails of Cape Cod National Seashore. She was a keen observer of nature, and her own spirituality was nourished in God's creation. In these words from her poem Sometimes, Oliver offers us these "instructions for living a life" which are fitting words for reflection during the Lenten season. She writes:

*"Instructions for Living a Life:
Pay Attention,
Be Astonished.
Tell About it."*

PASTORS CORNER

The Pastor's Corner (continued)

This poem and others may be found in Devotions-The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver and includes several poems from Thirst, written after her partner's death. This book also includes two poems that offer reflection on holy week, Gethsemane and The Poet Thinks About The Donkey. Devotions is a rich resource for reflection during Lent or any season on our spiritual journeys.



Some of you have asked about my plans for the future. During the next few months I will be providing pulpit supply in various congregations in the SNEUCC and discerning where else the Spirit may lead me. You may find me walking a trail at Cape Cod National Seashore, visiting a favorite coffee shop, exploring New England farms, or attending a concert at a local church.

I depart with deep gratitude and joy for the three months we have shared together and pray God's deepest blessings upon Pastor Holly, each of you, and this beloved community.

In Christ's peace,

Karen

PRAYER REQUESTS

»Prayers for Matt Lallier, Stan Holden; Marcia Dohner; the Sainsbury family on the recent passing of Paul's dad; the family of Nanci Trippi; Norma Garcia's granddaughter Megan Steele; Christina Hsu; Anna; Art Moore; Sherri Robertson; John Heald; Bev Fletcher's niece; Marie Murphy's brother, John; Julia Dobner-Pereira; Jean Folsom; Julie Ann; Roberta Jelinch's sister, Sandi; Jan Smith; Betsy & Ed Giles; Don Gray; Wendy Ziesemann's sister, Tamara; Rebecca and Jennifer MacKenzie; Barbara Harlow; Wendy and Tom; Lisa DiPilato; and Florence Stowe.

»Prayers for those suffering from the recent snow, floods, and extreme winter weather.

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

»For those grieving or suffering due to the 2,700 gun violence deaths...since the start of 2024.

»For those suffering from the mass destruction after a powerful 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit Japan, and for those who are affected by other natural disasters.

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

»For 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.

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



LENTEN STUDY

2024 Lenten Study: Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

Wednesdays, 5:30pm
February 21 - March 27

We will gather in the Chapel at 5:30 pm for a light meal followed by discussion which will be lead by Pastor Holly. The materials used will be from the Insights Series: *Bible Studies for Growing Faith*. Contact the Church Office for a copy of the materials.
office@fccsm.org 508-845-7286

2024 Lenten Schedule

2/14/24 Ash Wednesday Worship 7pm, Sanctuary
2/21/24 Lenten Study: Sabbath Listening, 5:30pm, Chapel
2/28/24 Lenten Study: Living a Life of Intercession, 5:30pm, Chapel
3/6/24 Lenten Study: Reclaiming the Fast, 5:30pm, Chapel
3/13/24 Lenten Study: Borrowing and Returning What is God's, 5:30pm, Chapel
3/20/24 Lenten Study: Paying Attention to Your God-given Purpose, 5:30pm, Chapel
3/27/24 Lenten Study: Nurturing Practices that Keep Us Faithful, 5:30pm, Chapel
3/28/24 Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service, 7pm, Sanctuary
3/31/24 Easter Sunrise Service, Cemetery; Sanctuary Worship Services, 9:30 & 11am, Sanctuary

LENTEN STUDY 2024

Please plan to join us for our 2024 Lenten study series. The focus will be “**Practicing Spiritual Disciplines**” and will be led by **Pastor Holly**. The series will be held in the chapel and will run for (6) consecutive Wednesdays starting **Wed., February 21, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.**

A light meal will accompany each session. Please call the Church office for a copy of the material. Marie Murphy has once again very graciously offered to coordinate the meals. If you have any questions, you may contact her at 508-845-6948 or email her at: marie31147@gmail.com.

Please click on the sign-up genius below if you can provide either a soup, bread, or dessert for one of the meals.

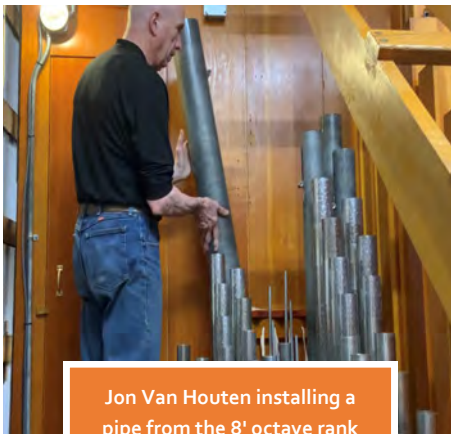
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MUSIC MINISTRY

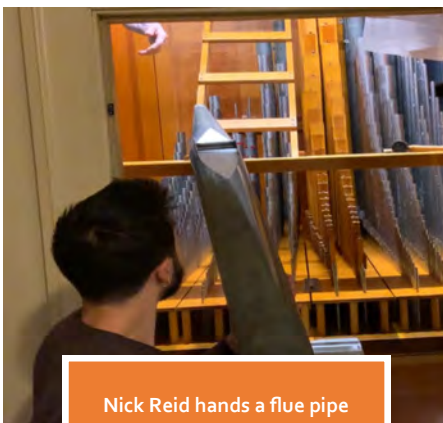
Message from the Director of Music



Nick Reid tuning in the swell division.



Jon Van Houten installing a pipe from the 8' octave rank onto the pedal windchest.



Nick Reid hands a flue pipe from the pedal division

The refurbishment of the Casavant organ is almost complete! As with most large projects, it has taken longer than expected. The finish date has been moved to February 2, 2024.

When my family and I left for vacation on December 26, 2023, the great division of the organ was still mostly void of pipes. Upon our return, I peeked in the pipe chambers and was greeted with rows of shiny pipes. Seeing the windchests full of pipes filled my heart.

As I am writing this in my office, I can hear the organ as the workers from the firm of Czelusniak et Dugal painstakingly voice and tune each pipe. The organ will be in factory-new condition when they are done. I'm waiting patiently to be able to play it again and look forward to our rededication concert on Sunday May 19, 2024 at 2pm. That also happens to be Music Sunday; the day that we celebrate the Music Ministry at First Congregational Church during our Sunday morning service.

On Saturday, January 27, we welcomed pianist Olga Rogach and baritone Ron Williams for a concert of African-American spirituals and piano music by African-American women composers. Crossing Over into Campground was an afternoon of beautiful music and the stories that accompanied these melodies. African-American Spirituals often contained coded messages to help people enslaved in the south escape to the north using the underground railroad. The spiritual Wade in the Water was meant to tell people to use river crossings to throw the dogs off the scent. We also heard the stories of pioneering African-American women composers and Ron Williams' own encounter with Dr. Martin Luther King. The exquisite piano playing of Olga Rogach and the buttery smooth voice of Ron Williams made for an excellent afternoon of music.

If you would like to make music with us, please send a note to: musicdirector@fccsm.org.



Sincerely,
Curtis

MUSIC MINISTRY



The re-dedication of the Casavant
will take place on:
Sunday, May 19, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Thank you to everyone who supported the Youth Group's Super Bowl Sub Fundraiser....the money raised will be used to help offset costs for the June mission trip to Dexter, ME!

February

Feb 18 - NO YG, February vacation

Feb 25 - Youth Group Meeting at 7pm

March

March 3 - No YG, (leaders are away)

March 10 - Youth Group Meeting at 7:00pm

March 16 (Sat) - YG Meeting, Shrewsbury HS play...meet at church @ 6PM, p/u approx...10PM

NO Sunday (17th) YG meeting

March 24 - Youth Group Mission Trip Meeting at 7:00pm ~ \$100 non-refundable deposit due

March 31 - Easter Services; Cinnamon Buns Fundraiser 9am, 11am; No PM YG meeting



COMMON Cathedral CityReach Youth Mission Jan 12-13, 2024



MISSION & OUTREACH



TUB OF TOILETRIES/CONDIMENTS COLLECTION

The Mission and Outreach Ministry will be holding it's annual "Tub of Toiletries/Condiments" collection for St. Anne's Human Services from Monday, February 12 through Friday, March 8, 2024.

This will be the February giving opportunity.

For many years, First Congregational Church, in conjunction with the Scouts of Troop 114, has supported this collection to provide certain items that are in high demand by those in need but are difficult for St. Anne's to obtain. With your help, we hope to continue the tradition this year.

There will be pink St. Anne's Wish Lists in baskets at the usher's table in the sanctuary & on the table in Gifford Hall starting Sunday February 11. Please feel free to take one as a guide to the requested items. These items are also listed below.

You may leave your donations in or by the "tub" that will be on the stage in Gifford Hall through March 8. The scouts will be sorting and delivering the donations to St. Anne's on the morning of March 9 so please do not leave items after March 8.

Please help to stock the shelves at St. Anne's with your donations of these much needed items.

Thank you so much for your support.

The Mission & Outreach Ministry and the Scouts of Troop 114

Mayonnaise, Mustard, Ketchup, Relish, Sugar, Sugar Substitute, Flour, Cooking Oils, Coffee (regular & decaf), Crackers, Dish Soap, Laundry Detergent, Bar Soap, Body Wash, Body Lotion, Shampoo & Conditioner, Baby Shampoo, Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, Dental Floss, Deodorant, Toilet Paper, Tissues, Paper Towels, Paper Napkins, Sanitary Napkins, Shaving Razors, Shaving Cream

MISSION & OUTREACH

2023 GIVING TREE ~ GRATEFUL FOR YOUR DEDICATION

On behalf of the St. Anne's Human Services Giving Tree Committee and the Mission & Outreach Ministry of First Congregational of Shrewsbury, we cannot thank you enough for your most generous gifts of clothing, games, gift cards, and toys for the Shrewsbury children who were part of the 2023 Giving Tree program. Due to your thoughtful gifts of love, families were generously cared for and many smiles were on these children's faces Christmas morning!

Our work begins in August for this program, and many hands make it happen! We could not do it without our community churches, Shrewsbury Police Department, and local business partners.

This year FCC-S had quite a few new Santa's elves assist us with transporting and assembling gift bags, giving us extra "muscle" in early AM hours to move all assembled family bags to the upper level of Father Smith Center in pouring rain on distribution day, and assisting with loading Santa's bags into the family cars! A true team effort that takes 3 full weeks in December to come to fruition after the gifts arrive under the different Giving Trees throughout town!!

This community endeavor could not happen without your tremendous input and support. Your gifts help strengthen our efforts to help local families with food, gifts, and support during the holiday season and throughout the year.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts,

Stephanie Ambra



MISSION & COMMUNITY



St. Anne's Human Services provides holiday cheer, year-round support

The pantry – an offshoot of St. Anne's Human Services – helps fight food insecurity throughout Shrewsbury.

www.communityadvocate.com

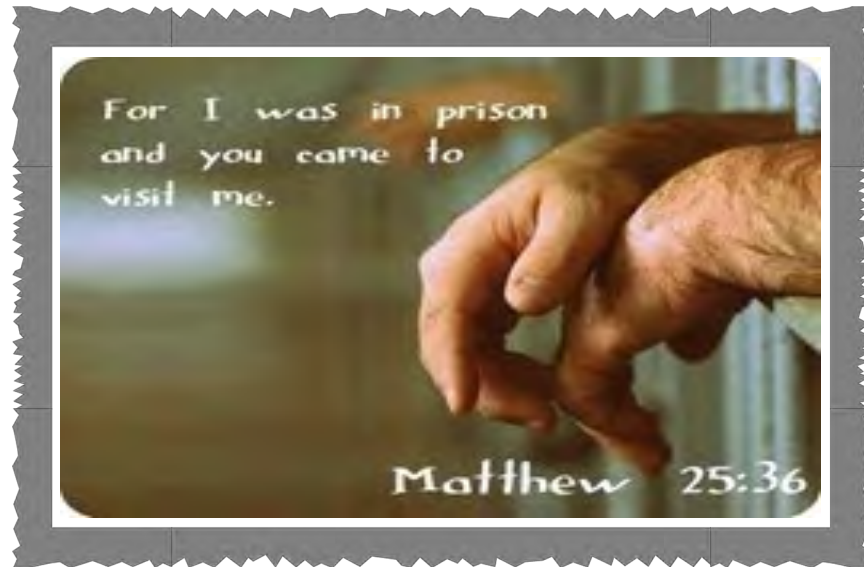
CLICK THE LINK BELOW TO READ THE ARTICLE IN THE COMMUNITY ADVOCATE:

<https://www.communityadvocate.com/2023/12/30/st-annes-human-services-provides-holiday-cheer-year-round-support/>



The volunteers at St. Anne's Human Services Food Pantry.
(Photo/Evan Walsh)

WIDER CHURCH



I am friends with a man whom I have known for 45 plus years and who appears to have been unjustly convicted of a crime and sentenced to 63 years in prison with a minimum of 23 years to serve. Without going into the details, he is incarcerated in Pennsylvania. He has a doctorate in Christian Ethics, is published, and was most recently on the faculty of a major university.

I have been trying to continue to be a supportive friend and correspond with him to keep tabs on how he is doing and lift his spirits. When I asked him if there was something we could do as a church, he shared with me how desperate he is for books, as the prison library has a very limited collection. He asked me if people might send him select books, that once he reads, he would in turn donate the books to the library.

★ I ask that if anyone is interested to being part of this special mission, I will be available after worship to answer any questions and provide a book title with instructions and how to send him one of the requested books.

The books will have to be paperback and shipped directly from Amazon to a very specific mailing address required by the prison.

On his behalf, I want to thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity.

- Rev. Larry Iannetti -

MINISTRY & VOLUNTEERING



MUSTARD SEED

Welcome in a New Year for our congregation to help provide nourishing evening meals to Mustard Seed. Volunteers can sign-up to cook this meal in our church kitchen, bake or buy cookies, or deliver the prepared meal to Mustard Seed, located at 93 Piedmont Street, Worcester. You are welcome to stay and serve, as well, if you would like. Mustard Seed currently feeds approximately 130 individuals of all ages in need. The first week of each month is especially challenging for many

We are scheduled to provide meals on:

April 3, 2024: openings for 2 cooks and 1 driver

May 1, 2024: openings for 4 cooks and 3 bakers

To volunteer for any of the above dates sign-up by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60b0b4faf2c7-mustard1#/>

*“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much”*

–Helen Keller

For more information on Mustard Seed, you can contact Janet Pike (774) 243-4395 or mrsbear8@msn.com Thank you.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped to make the Dec 6 & Jan 3 Mustard Seed dinner a wonderful success:

Debbie Alger, Elizabeth McRae, Cindy Gibson, Karis Ray, Susanna Meyer, Jean Feldkamp, Kathi Buzzell, Deb DelDotto, Kristin Kilgore, Jamie Sampsonis, Sue Bourget, John/Stephanie Ambra, Paul Mullins, Lyn Tozeski, Brian Dingman, Andrea Pereira, Susanna Meyer, Sue Russell, Sally Martin, and to the Leah Circle: for providing the aluminum baking pans.

Please know how very much the people at Mustard Seed appreciate your acts of kindness and generosity!

VOLUNTEER



Volunteers Needed

A group of volunteers is being assembled to help in the church office. Tasks may include making copies, answering phones, customer service and general office work. You may be available occasionally or on a regular basis, either is appreciated.

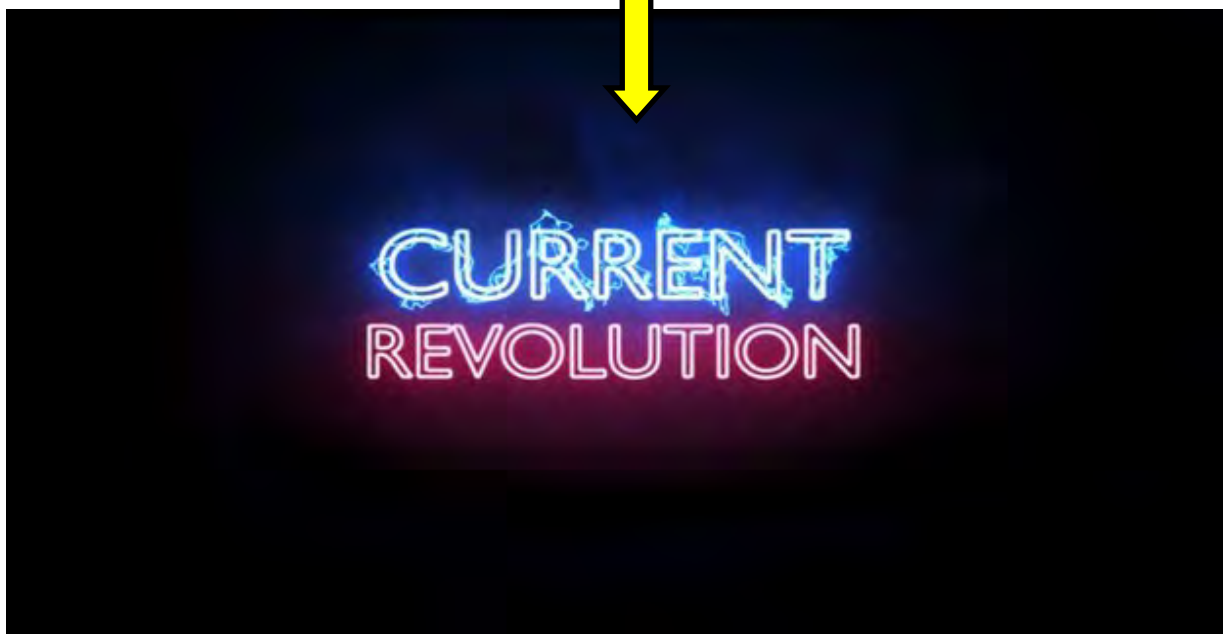
If you would like to add your name to the list, please contact Nancy Burnett by phone 508-845-2047 or email nancyburnett64@gmail.com. Thank You.

EARTH STEWARDSHIP

The Transformation Cannot Be Stopped

If you've ever wondered whether renewable electricity can actually replace oil, gas, or coal generated electricity, has Earth Stewardship got a short film for you [link below]. Part of a series called *Current Revolution*, "*The Transformation Cannot Be Stopped*" uses recent large and small scale projects to illustrate how the energy transformation has and will take place and discusses the various elements that are needed, including power generation, distribution, and use. With a focus on national security, economic prosperity, and environmental justice, the film demonstrates how the nation can embrace smart policies and investments that support grid modernization through distributed renewable energy generation and the development of an electric vehicle infrastructure. This interesting and informative film will give you hope for the future and a roadmap for the present. Thanks for watching.

CLICK IN IMAGE BOX



SOCIAL CIRCLE-EVENTS

Gratitude From Social Circle



A huge thank you goes out to all who participated and attended our Coffee House on February 10th. Due to your incredibly generous donations, we will be able to donate \$250 to Community Harvest Project, Grafton. This donation will be made in memory of Bill Stuart, who was a beloved and very involved volunteer of Community Harvest. The donation will purchase a half row of tomatoes, which will be planted in the upcoming growing season. Last years' crops produced 317,837 pounds of healthy produce given to food insecure families throughout our region. Again, thank you, thank you, thank you!!!!

Sandi Leroux
Chair, Social Circle

Chase away the winter blahs with some mini golf at Trombetta's in Marlboro.

Fun for all ages!



The Social Circle Committee is sponsoring this trip.

When:

Saturday, March 2 ~ 10am-12 noon

Where:

Trombetta's, 655 Farm Road, Marlborough

Cost:

\$8 p.p.

**Donuts and hot cocoa are included in the ticket price.*



Tickets will be on sale during coffee hour or contact Elizabeth McRae at eemcrae@gmail.com

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.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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



FCCShrewsbury



Church on The Green Newsletter January-February 2024 Issue



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