

First Congregational Church

Gathered in 1723

An Open and Affirming & Creation Justice Church of the United Church of Christ



Recovenanting Sunday

September 20th, 2026

Rev. Holly MillerShank

Senior Minister

Deacon's Quote of the Day

*“Grant me strength when I feel small, grant me faith when
I lose sight, grant me hope when all seems lost, grant
me grace in morning's light.”*

~Mary Davis, Every Day Spirit: A Daybook of Wisdom, Joy and Peace

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, DEACON'S GREETING

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Kristin Kilgore

PASTORAL GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Call on God with praise and thanksgiving. Tell of God's wonderful works.

Many: Today we open ourselves to God's presence. Let the hearts of all rejoice.

One: When we eat, we are reminded of God's provision. When we marvel at the beauty of creation, we give thanks.

Many: Surely God has blessed us beyond measure. Daily we are strengthened for the tasks we face.

One: We are guided by God's laws and statutes. Through Christ we experience the embodiment of God's love.

Many: Let all people worship with joy! Let all of creation shout of God's glory!

***HYMN**

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken (Pilgrim 267)

CALL TO CONFESSION

Like our ancestors in the wilderness, we have been heard to complain. God is often blamed for calamities more than praised for the sustaining presence that works for our good. It is easier for us to be jealous of others or to think we can go it alone than to receive God's law with humility and perseverance.

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, we admit our resentment when some people we deem unworthy benefit from your generosity. We confess our lack of attention to your laws, your living Word, your prompting Spirit. You alone are our salvation, our healing, our high opportunity to serve. We choose to belong to you and to recommit to one another.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God offers us light and life, even in the dark and chaotic places of our lives. There is no place that God will not go to meet us. God meets us here and now, offering forgiveness and new opportunities for growth.

ANTHEM

Have You Not Known, Have You Not Heard?

I. Watts & A. Bruhn

LITANY OF COVENANT

Jay Salsgiver, Moderator

One: As people of God, we have come together into this congregation, to see inspiration from the Holy Spirit and to serve our neighbors as Jesus taught us.

All: Together we commit to living our values of Spiritual Discovery, Inclusive Community and Compassionate Service.

One: Bound together through our shared vision we will learn and grow as we seek to fulfill the mission God has placed before us: Let us now share together in the First Congregational Church Mission Statement:

All: 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.

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH YEAR

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Blessing of the Backpacks

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 20:1-16

MESSAGE

Pecking Order

Rev. Holly MillerShank

*HYMN

Renew Your Church (NCH 311)

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.

CALL TO OFFERING

God provided generously for all of us. Our blessings are too numerous to count. We have found community in the fellowship of this congregation and we give of our resources so that others may find the same comfort, support and joy.

OFFERTORY

Garden Pastorale

E. Lorenz

CREATION JUSTICE CHURCH OFFERING THOUGHT

Local Food Systems

Where does your food come from? What native plants/crops grow in your neighborhood? How is your community affected by food insecurity? Consider joining a CSA

*DOXOLOGY

Tune: Old 100th

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

We rejoice O God in your wonderful works. We know that you can transform these resources in real and tangible relationships, into programing and ministries that will serve the greater good. Use us as well in the fulfilment of your mission, in Christ's name. Amen.

*HYMN

All My Hope on God Is Founded (NCH 408)

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

God of Majesty and Hope

B. Miller

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The Senior Minister is Rev. Holly MillerShank

The Acting Associate Minister is Rev. Karen Dorshimer-Chaplin

The Director of Music is Curtis Smith

The Deacon is Laura Kenney

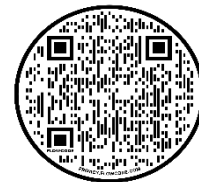
The Reader is Sue Phyfe

Greeters are Cara Molyneaux and Jean Feldkamp

Altar flowers are provided by Sue and Dave Russell in loving gratitude for their grandchildren, Harrison, Ava and Cooper.

Liturgy is adapted from Lavon Baylor, Led By Love

GIVE HERE:



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Prayers for Nancy Colby; Marion Marston; Joanne Warmen; Martha Sederquest; Bretton; Dan; Cindy and Sarah; Bob Podolski; Jim; Mary; Sherry & Scotty Robertson; Susie and Brian Amos; Ruthie, sister-in-law of Dave & Sue; Lt Ethan Connors and all military personnel deployed in the Middle East; James Kelly; Deb Wallace; Anne & Jonathan Phyfe; Stanley; Sharon; Tracey Carner, David, brother-in-law of Kathleen & Dave Rocheleau; Roberta Jelinch's sister, Sandi.

-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 dealing with violence & loss as well as those recovering from natural disasters throughout our country and the 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 Sunday, 7pm: AA, Adkins Room

Every Monday, 7pm: AA,

Rm 213 (week 3) & Youth Room (weeks 1, 2, 4)

Every Wednesday, 5:30pm: ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), Youth Room & Rm 214

Every Thursday, 7PM OA (Overeaters Anonymous), Rm 214

THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Sunday, 9/20:

9:30am: Worship & Sunday School, Sanctuary

11:00am: Training Choir/Youth Singers, Choir Room

11:00am: Breakfast Bag Prep, Chapel

5:30pm: MS Youth Group, Cushing Hall

7:00pm: HS Youth Group, Youth Room

Monday, 9/21:

7:00pm: Leah Circle, Youth Room

7:00pm: Jammers, Chapel

Tuesday, 9/22:

8:00am: Guided Meditation, Parlor

12:00pm: Lectionary @ Lunch, Adkins

7:00pm: Deacons, Adkins

Wednesday, 9/23:

6:30pm: Shrewsbury Ringers, Sanctuary

Thursday, 9/24:

10:00am: CoP Meeting, MS Lounge

12:00pm: Personnel Meeting, 214

3-6pm: CSA Pick-up, FCC parking lot

7:15pm: Senior Choir, Choir Room

Friday, 9/25:

4:00pm: Chimers, Chapel

Saturday, 9/26:

4:00pm: SOS Parade Set-up, Gifford Hall

Sunday, 9/27:

9:30am: Worship & Sunday School, Sanctuary

11:00am: Training Choir/Youth Singers, Choir Room

12:00pm: SOS Parade Line-up, near old Beal School

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Thursday 9am-1pm



A Legacy of Generosity

Long-time members of the FCC, the Gifford Family continues to support the congregation and community through their charitable trust.

The Gifford Family, for whom Gifford Hall is named, made remarkable contributions to FCC during their lifetime. The elevator was made possible through a gift from Barbara (Gifford) Brown. A trust was established in honor of her father, Albert James Gifford. This trust has helped make possible numerous projects that have improved the physical plant of First Congregational Church.

Tracking just the past six years, FCC has been the beneficiary of grants from the Albert J. Gifford Trust totaling \$109,000. Deb DelDotto has been instrumental in fostering a relationship with the Gifford Trust and filing our annual grant applications.

In 2021 the Gifford Trust awarded FCC \$12,500 to install our livestream system. In 2022 the Trust provided FCC \$13,500 to repair the Baldwin Piano and to replace the main church sign along Route 140. In 2023 Gifford Trust provided \$20,000 towards the painting and trim/siding of the church. In 2024 we received \$12,000 to make necessary repairs and servicing of the church's elevator. Continuing the work started in 2023, in 2025, the Trust provided \$26,000 to cover the cost of siding and trim along the Route 140 side of the church. This year, in 2026, we received \$25,000 to cover the expenses related to elevator/elevette servicing and work taking place on the east entrance exterior doors.

Deep appreciation to Skip Burnett for overseeing the contractors related to all of the projects funded by the Gifford Trust.

FCC is one of several organizations within the region to benefit from the generosity of the Gifford Family.

We would be interested in exploring additional grants related to our physical plant, environmental stewardship, or other church ministries. If you have grant writing experience or are familiar with additional grant opportunities, please reach out to Church Moderator Jay Salsgiver.



Images of Albert Gifford's daughters, Lydia Gifford (left) and Barbara (Gifford) Brown, husband Edward



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: September 2026

FCC's MONTHLY SNAPSHOT

In JULY we had REVENUE of \$46,158.60* and EXPENSES of \$68,580.87 giving us a monthly net income (loss) of \$22,422.27

In AUGUST we had REVENUE of \$41,704.98** and EXPENSES of \$54,965.06 giving us a monthly net income (loss) of \$13,260.08

Year-to-date (January 1st thru AUGUST 30th 2026) we had REVENUE of \$493,559.99 and EXPENSES of \$459,514.96 which gives us a YTD net income (positive) of \$34,045.03

*Includes Pride 5K proceeds of approximately \$12,000

**August was our lowest pledge giving for the year. This year it was a 24% decrease from 2025 but only a 2% decrease from August 2024.

We are in our Fall Stewardship Season. To find out more or to make a pledge please visit www.fccsm.org and click on the Give button / [2027 Stewardship](#)