

First Congregational Church

Gathered in 1723

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



April 19th, 2026

Rev. Holly MillerShank

Senior Minister

Deacon's Quote of the Day

“To harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator.”

~Often attributed to Chief Seattle

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.

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PRELUDE

Kingsfold

D. Paxton

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, DEACON'S GREETING

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

PASTORAL GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP *Honor Creator and Creation by Rev. Jeff Ramsland, Mohawk*

One: Creator made all that is, and proclaimed that 'it is good.' Creator, help us to discover in all You have made in Nature, the good wisdom about the interconnectedness of all things, about balance and about living in harmony.

Many: *We are not above nature, we are part of Creation; we live by the same laws as all of nature, and need to learn from what God has made.*

One: Creator, help us discover the power that lies in the wisdom and understanding of our role in the Great Mystery, and in honoring every living thing as a teacher.

Many: *Creator God, may our spirits be in harmony with Yours as we gather in Your worship!*

*HYMN

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens (NCH 556)

TIME OF CONFESSION *by Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes*

One: God of love, we are a broken people. The fabric of life is tattered in our hands; the web is torn. Even as we wound the earth we dream of its wholeness. Even as we deplete Creation we marvel at its abundance. Even as we separate ourselves from the natural world we long to rejoin it, to reclaim our sacred belonging in the Body of Christ:

Many: *We have starved ourselves of your grace, O God. Though we have turned away, forgive us. Heal us and renew us. Deepen our hunger for unity. Renew in us the gift of your Spirit that we may truly be branches of one vine, all Creation, bearing the fruit of your love. Amen.*

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

People of God, children of the earth, know that the God of Life forgives all our sin, and heals our brokenness. As the earth receives us at our death, God receives us and includes us. As spring renews the face of the earth, God renews the Holy Spirit in us, that we may have life, and have it abundantly, in the great ecology of grace. By the grace of God, in the name of Christ, the oneness and the blessing and the beauty of all Creation are yours, now and forever. Amen

ANTHEM

Keep Me Goin' Lord

D. & N. Allen

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

PRESENTATION OF CREATION JUSTICE BANNER

OUR CREATION JUSTICE COVENANT

One: Creation is a gift from God that promises to sustain life on earth now and into the future. It is in us and we are in it, intertwined.

Library Side: Creation is not something separate from us, but the very ground of our existence, to be shared by all. We understand that Creation Justice means that all people are part of the created order that must be protected, sustained and shared in all its diversity.

Fire Station Side: Our congregation has beautifully come together in numerous efforts to work toward helping to sustain the natural world, and have been honored three times by our UCC Conference for our efforts.

One: We are committed to preserving and caring for God's Creation and wish to codify our passion and commitment in this Creation Justice Covenant, a sacred promise to God and each other.

All: This Congregation pledges to work together to heal and restore Creation and protect our planet, its people, and all the abundant life and resources within it from exploitation and degradation, recognizing the value of all that God created and entrusted to our care.

SCRIPTURE READING

Nehemiah 2:11-20

MESSAGE

Joy Amid the Ruins

Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt

***HYMN**

O How Glorious, Full of Wonder (NCH 558)

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 *Rev. Hannah K. Sotak, adapted*

Giver of life and all that sustains us; we offer back to you now gifts of time, talent, and treasure. May they become manna for the hungry, enable comfort for the lonely, provide strength for the weary, and germinate hope in the midst of despair.

OFFERTORY

Higher Ground

C. Gabriel arr. J. Sciveyner

CREATION JUSTICE CHURCH OFFERING THOUGHT

Write to your elected officials

Write to your members of congress or local elected officials, asking them to support an environmental issue that you care about.

***DOXOLOGY**

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia!

Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!

Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** *Susan Evans, a laity of St. Matthew UMC, adapted*

Dear Lord, it is with ultimate gratitude that we contribute our offering so that you can educate us, inspire us and motivate us to be the very best stewards of our beautiful Earth. With these gifts please show us how to nurture and care for our Earth like it is a child of our own. May our offerings insure that future generations have fresh water, clean air, and safe and abundant food, forever and ever.

Amen.

***HYMN**

All Creatures of Our God and King (Pilgrim 64)

BENEDICTION

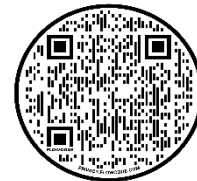
POSTLUDE

There Is Power in the Blood

L. Jones arr. V. Labenske

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 Beth Hansen
The Reader is Bill Whitehead
Greeters are Kevin Gabbett and Jean Feldkamp
Altar flowers are provided by the Daniels family in loving memory of David Wayne Daniels.
Liturgy adapted from the Green Church Network, New England Conference UMC

GIVE HERE:



PRAYER REQUESTS

- Prayers for Norma & Bill Garcia; Michael, Raquel, Talita and Mateo Binder; Mary; Sherry & Scotty Robertson; Carole Fontaine; Susie and Brian Amos; Ruthie, sister-in-law of Dave & Sue; Aaron; Lt Ethan Connors, deployed in the Middle East; Joshua S.; Bob Podolski; Stan Holden; Timmy; Jay Scott; James Kelly; Bernice Forrister; Ronniy Reis; Deb Wallace; Anne & Jonathan Phyfe; Jeanine's brother, Douglas Szlompek; Stanley; Sharon; 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 in cities in the United States 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.

Our guest preacher today is Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt, Minister for Environmental Justice for the United Church of Christ. Immediately after worship we will be taking a congregational photo. During Coffee Hour everyone is invited to pick up an FCC t-shirt. Rev. Berndt will offer a talk back session in the Adkins room at 11am.

THIS WEEK AT FCC

Every day, 7am: AA, Cushing Hall
Every Wednesday, 5:30pm: ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics), Youth Room & 214
Every Sunday, 7pm: AA, Adkins Room
Every Thursday, 7PM OA (Overeaters Anonymous), Rm 214

THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Sunday, 4/19:

9:30am: Worship & Sunday School, Sanctuary
11:00am: Training Choir/Youth Singers, Choir Room
11:00am: Rev. Dr. Berndt presentation, Adkins
11:00am: Breakfast Bag Prep, Chapel

Monday, 4/20:

7:00pm: Leah Circle, Youth Room
7:00pm: Jammers, Chapel

Tuesday, 4/21:

8:00am: Guided Meditation, Youth Room
9:30am: Grief Group, Adkins
12:00pm Lectionary @ Lunch, Adkins
6:30pm: Theology on Tap, "The Cellar" in Northborough

Wednesday, 4/22:

6:30pm: Shrewsbury Ringers, Sanctuary

Thursday, 4/23:

8:30am: M&O Thursday Café, Kitchen
11:00am: Ministry Meeting, CE Library
7:15pm: Senior Choir, Choir Room

Friday, 4/24:

NO Chimers

Sunday, 4/26:

9:30am: Worship & Sunday School, Sanctuary
11:00am: Training Choir/Youth Singers, Choir Room
1:00pm: Rail Trail walk, Mass. Central Rail Trail parking lot
2:00pm: Kids Zentangle, Adkins

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Thursday 9am-1pm

