

Give Thanks to the Lord

Of the holidays on the calendar, my favorite has always been Thanksgiving. I love the food; I love that I have time to prepare and cook (the day before and the morning of) and that people come together to give thanks to God for all their blessings. I also like that it brings about a spirit of sharing with those who are in need. But, as the psalmist reminds us today, it is not meant to be just for the fourth Thursday in November.

As I am getting ready to move on from Southwick Congregational Church, I realize that I am thankful for so many things.

I am thankful for:

- Having a supportive spouse in Mark Jacobson; the poor man gets left home alone and to his own devices more often than he should, especially in his retirement. He does this without complaint, even though he asks each day, “when are you coming home?” In the modern-day era of clergy spouses, he worked as a church musician up to 6 months ago but managed to come to this church on a “command performance.”

- Joseph Stiefel! I am not sure if I ever told the story of how we “got” Joseph to come to work with us. As I was loading my car at Wilbraham United to come to Southwick, Joseph’s wife, Connie, passed through the parking lot on her way home from Wilbraham Monson Academy. As we exchanged pleasantries, I told her, “Oh, tell Joseph that the office job at Southwick Congregational is opening.” Connie said, “He will never do it. He doesn’t even like to drive to Southwick to go to the Doctor.” So, when he applied for the job and was selected, I had to do some fancy back pedaling so it didn’t look like I had “poached” Joseph from WUC. He has been a true blessing to this church and I hope he can continue to work remotely for you.
- Roberta Kowal has been a joy to partner with as we plan our church services. Her many years of service to this church is evident in her planning of music to go with what I have planned for the service. There are times when it seems as though we surely sat down and mapped things out, step-by-step. However, what she does is read what I gave her, and plan from there. Roberta knows that we will follow the Lectionary and can plan out anthems in advance. I am always amazed at the power of the Holy Spirit through her often times the anthems are a direct support to the sermon or a prayer. Thank you, Roberta!! I am also grateful for the voice choir or the Kowal Sextet or Quintet, depending on who is around. Also, Jennifer Hall-Coto is great with our handbell choir and coordinating schedules to make sure our members from the other churches can be present.
- Chris Roberts is the silent partner of the staff in our church. He quietly and unassumingly makes sure that everything is clean and ready to go here at 488 College Highway. Chris is proud of the church and always wants it to be clean and ready for whatever may come. He may be one of our best representatives to the community as he always “talks up” Southwick Congregational

Church wherever he goes. He is here at all hours of the day to ensure that we're ready for whatever comes.

- Jim Putnam was chair of the Search Committee and gave me my first tour of Southwick Congregational Church. I have to tell you, Jim, that I was smitten with the building on that very first tour and felt very much at home. Terry Putnam was and is the Moderator and was a force to be reckoned with in the deliberations with First Congregational Church. I have seen a lot of folks involved in church, but Terry and Jim truly love this place. They don't participate for their greater glory but because of the love they have for the members of Southwick Congregational Church. While we didn't agree on everything, their intentions were, are now, and will be for the betterment of this church. And they will always have your back!
- Deacons!! Patty Banasik, Flo Pitoniak, and Dawn Turgeon have been a pleasure to work with in that capacity. Martha Roman wears the crown now and is equally a pleasure. They take care of our Communion each month and ensure that our church is properly decorated for each liturgical season. Patty is one of the chefs in our kitchen and makes sure that we have our turkey dinner, Holly Café, and roast pork dinner for the historical society. Also, Robin Sklarski has done great work as an usher. It helps that she knows just about everyone in town, too!
- The church leadership team includes Melanie and Eric Nitsch, Bob Franzen, Kristy Johnson, Tina _____ with Terry, Jim, Patty and Jenn. Melanie works tirelessly as the chair of finance and the "HR" person for the staff. Eric and Bob, besides being great choir members, have worked with Mike Pitoniak and others to keep our church building "up to snuff."

- The membership and friends of Southwick Congregational! I give thanks to God for all of you who have contributed to the church and will continue to do so. God has blessed this church for over 250 years; may there be another 250 years