



STEEPLE VIEWS

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

REVEREND MARY A. JAMES, PASTOR

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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

To the Beloved Members and Friends of Our Church:

May the peace of Christ fill your hearts and minds in the holy seasons of
Advent and Christmas.

And . . . here is a nice, mostly **blank** space to remind you to leave plenty of room
this month to experience the true "reason for the season."

Take a quiet moment, right now!

Ahhhh.

In Christ's Love,
Mary

Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people;
for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.
And this will be a sign for you; you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths
and lying in a manger.

Luke 2: 10b-12

Christmas Poinsettias, 2008

Please use this coupon (or get one in Church) to order your Christmas Poinsettia plants. Orders must be placed by December 9. Checks can be made out to First Congregational Church of Wakefield, and given to any member of the Flower Committee, or to Lynn in the church office. Plants may be picked up after the Christmas Eve Service.

Name of donor(s) _____

Dedication - In memory or in honor of: _____

of Red Poinsettia plants @ _____ (\$8.00 each)

of White Poinsettia plants @ _____ (\$8.00 each)



Flower Committee: Janet Carr, Chair (522-8864), Robin Kent (244-0925), Arlene Leyare (522-6774)

VNA HOSPICE TREE OF MEMORIES "Celebration of Life Service"



VNA Hospice of Southern Carroll County is celebrating its 12th annual **Tree of Memories** commemoration during the month of December. The Tree of

Memories provides an opportunity to honor or remember family, friends and neighbors by having an inscribed dove placed on a lighted Christmas tree during a beautiful ceremony. Everyone is welcome to attend the Wakefield ceremony, which will be held on Saturday, December 13 at 1 p.m. at the Wakefield Town Hall. To purchase a dove or for more information, please contact Ginny Schweitzer at 522-9593.

CHRISTMAS WRAP FUNDRAISER

Is wrapping all those Christmas gifts an unwelcome chore? Does the thought of dealing with all that paper, tape, bows, ribbons, and gift tags have you singing the blues? Well consider the Z Team Gift Wrap Team! Teams of two or three Z Team members will gladly come to your home, package, wrap and decorate whatever presents needs wrapping and lend an air of festive good cheer. And, if you act now, we will sing for you, or in some cases bring Christmas CDs, make hot chocolate, and even dress like elves at no extra cost. (Ok, so maybe we won't dress like elves but we will be festive.) What will this cost? Prices are negotiable depending on the number of gifts which need our special touch! We bring all of our own supplies so all you have to do is sit back, relax, and enjoy. We come with rave reviews from

Lilac Mall shoppers where we did this last year. Interested? Call Connie (522-3747), Ann (522-8963) or Chris (522-3019) to book your Christmas wrap session. All donations will go to Z Team Missions.
Connie Littlefield, Z Team

THE ENERGY STAR PROGRAM

ENERGY STAR is a joint effort of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. It was created to help citizens save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices. ENERGY STAR products must meet strict energy efficient criteria while maintaining the features and quality consumers expect. There are more than 50 categories of products which include appliances; heating and cooling systems; home electronics; and home insulation materials. Entire homes and specific automobiles have also been approved. To identify approved products, look for or ask about the ENERGY STAR label or designation. Some of these products also qualify for tax credits. For more information on products and federal tax credits call the ENERGY STAR Hotline (888) STAR-YES / (888-782-7937) or visit their website at <http://www.energystar.gov>. For more information about NH energy initiatives or tax credits visit the following websites: NH Office of Energy & Planning: <http://www.nh.gov/oep> or the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration: <http://www.revenue.nh.gov>.

Linda Petkunas, Stewardship Committee



MEET THE CONFIRMANDS

Shannon Mercer was born Dec. 2, 1995 at Huggins Hospital and is a 7th grader at Alton Central School. She is delighted to be in this year's Confirmation Class and is the daughter of Nikki and Scott Mercer with a younger brother Eric.

She is an avid reader that especially enjoys fantasy and fiction novels; her favorite author is Chris D'Lacey whose most recent novel "A Useful Novel" really enthralled her. Shannon learned to play the guitar two years ago and after lessons is zooming in on improving her musical skills. She has teamed up with her friend Alisa Eaton letting Alisa sing while she accompanies her on the guitar. They performed for us at the Ecumenical Service on Nov. 23 and did a wonderful job!

An extracurricular activity Shannon is involved with says a lot about her humanitarian spirit. She is a member of the Friends of Rachael. Rachael was a young Columbine student dedicated to the need for everyone to have a friend and to non-violence. She lost her life during the Columbine tragedy and the "Friends of Rachael" group is dedicated to her memory and values that Shannon treasures. To relax, Shannon enjoys 'talking' to friends on the internet.

She loves pets. Has two cats named Buddy and Hobbes as well as a year-old English Springer Spaniel bright puppy named Delilah who she worked hard with Miss Erin's to train. She's considering a number of future careers that encompass animals or pet well being. Shannon enjoys 'goofing off' and doesn't really care if she embarrasses herself because she has a good amount of self confidence. Her passion is chocolate and 'couldn't live without it!!!' Her favorite color? Purple of course.

Asked about her feelings about her First Church community, Shannon feels our church is "a really close family that is comfortable with each other and accepting where we can always count on each other during difficult times".

YOUTH GROUP TO GET GOING!!

Rev. Mary is excited to announce that our youth group effort with St. John's is about to get off of the ground! Look for more details in the next SV!!

Seth Fogg is the son of Nate and Deborah Fogg and brother of his younger sister, Kaylee, living in Wakefield. He was born June 30, 1995 at Wentworth Douglas Hospital. Seth is a well-rounded Paul School eighth grader. He is a very good athlete with many friends and with a year round sports schedule that is 'buzzer to buzzer'.

He recently played football for the Rochester based 13—15 age Little Red team that made the playoffs and defeated the previously undefeated top ranked Hampton team in the playoffs - 32 to 0!!! Wow! Winter also finds Seth on his snowboard doing 180's, 360's and other moves to die for on the slopes. In spring, baseball will be the next sport up!

Seth is also academically driven with honor roll goals. He loves listening to rock and hip hop music with a real favorite group being AC/DC (which he says his Dad also likes!) He enjoys sports based video games and has a PS/2 System that he dreams might someday (Christmas?) become a PS/3?!? His family has a great cat named Abe and perhaps may get another pet companion one of these days.

Crime Scene Investigation is a career Seth is quite interested in and watches whatever CSI shows he can find on the TV. He feels the Church community is a very close and caring family. Seth has many friends he enjoys spending time with and looks forward to making a contribution to his church.

Dave Schweitzer is honored to be Seth's mentor in the confirmation program and has learned how much Seth enjoys eating lots of French toast and syrup after sponsoring a breakfast to get to know Seth better!

Dave Schweitzer

BAKERS AND MAKERS NEEDED



The Parish Helpers are looking for people to bake or make candy for the Christmas Boutique on December 6.

Call Elizabeth Heinlein at 522-9501 and help make this a successful event!

LET'S TALK ABOUT BLESSINGS

Did you know that God's Word contains some 516 versions of the word "Bless"? The usage of the word bless occurs 132 times, blessed occurs 285 times, blesses occurs 10, blessing occurs 70, and blessings occurs 19 times. I don't know about you, but I'm thinking there's a message here. Could it be that God wants us to be blessed? And if we are blessed, wouldn't it make sense that we in turn would want to bless others? Webster's Dictionary defines the word Blessing as follows:

1. The act of one who blesses
2. A declaration of divine favor as an invocation or benediction
3. A means of happiness which promotes prosperity and welfare
4. A gift
5. Grateful praise or worship

Have you ever blessed someone or received a blessing? The Outreach Committee is working on the idea of providing an opportunity to be blessed and give blessings. We are responsible to organize great events like; Neighbors in Need, the Christmas Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Blanket/Tool Sunday. Instead of approaching you for a donation during these various events we are looking at establishing a weekly opportunity to share a monetary blessing. A small Blessing Envelope would be in the pew pockets or on the table in the church entrance. We would let you know to which event your blessing would be directed. Each of these events occurs at different times of the year. The opportunity to give a blessing of maybe one, five, ten dollars or more every week will add up to a plethora of blessings heaped back upon yourself. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he says in chapter 1 verse 3; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places". Three times Paul uses a form of the word bless. Before the foundations of the world were even created we were called out to be blessed. We should celebrate our blessings through the act of giving which in turn results in receiving.

Think on these things and let's talk again. And oh yea, God bless you.

Donna V. Ackerman & Outreach Committee

CHRISTMAS BOUTIQUE AND LUNCHEON



On December 6 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. the Parish Helpers will once again hold a Christmas Boutique and Luncheon. Come and browse from **huge selection** of gently used Christmas decorations, modestly priced craft items, a bake sale featuring an assortment of homemade baked goods, and the famous candy shop! This year the Boutique will feature a special children's section where they can do their Christmas shopping. There will be bargains for everyone!

While you're there, plan to stay for lunch. The ladies are making their favorite soup and chowder recipes and will be serving up a hot and flavorful meal starting at noon.. You won't want to miss this - come on down to the best deal in town!

CHRISTMAS FUN WITH CHRISTIAN ED

December is a busy month for the **Christian Ed Committee**. Plans are in place for lots of fun activities. You won't want to miss a thing!

On December 13 at 6 p.m. the Christian Ed committee is hosting the monthly **Church Supper**. What better season to serve "Shepherd's Pie"? Along with that will be salad, rolls, beverage and homemade dessert. All this for only \$8 per person, under 5 yrs. free! A vegetarian option will also be available.

On December 14, the children will be performing the annual **Christmas Pageant** at the Worship Service. Come and see what surprises they'll have this year!

And for one of the most favorite things to do in the Christmas season—**Caroling!** This year, we will go out caroling on Sunday, December 21, after worship and a light lunch. It will be an afternoon event so that more people and families can participate. So come to worship, have a bite to eat, and join in on a fun afternoon of spreading Christmas joy!

May you have a blessed and happy Christmas!

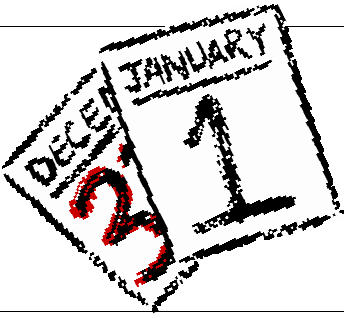

Ginny Schweitzer, Christian Education



December 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 12PM—Bible Study	3 6PM—All Church Meeting Night	4 10AM—Scrabble	5	6 9AM—Parish Helpers Christmas Boutique
	7 10AM Worship 11AM—Confirmation Gathering 4PM—Lessons and Carols at St. John's	8	9 12PM—Bible Study	10 6PM Pairs and Spares 6:30PM— Bible Study	11 12PM Parish Helpers Luncheon 6:30PM— Service of Hope	12
14 10AM Worship—Pageant 11AM Coffee—hosted by Stewardship 11:30AM Church Council	15	16 10AM—Scrabble 12PM—Bible Study	17 Steeple Views Deadline	18	19	20
21 10:00AM Worship Christmas Caroling after Church	22	23 12PM—Bible Study	24 7PM Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day	26 Church offices closed	27
28 10AM—Worship 11AM—Coffee, hosted by Stewardship	29	30 12PM—Bible Study	31			

January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<p>1</p> <p><i>New Year's Day—church offices closed</i></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>4</p> <p><i>10AM Worship and Sacrament— Family Sunday 11AM— Confirmation Gathering</i></p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p> <p><i>Epiphany</i></p> <p><i>12PM—Bible Study</i></p>	<p>7</p> <p><i>6PM—All Church Committee Meeting</i></p>	<p>8</p> <p><i>1PM Parish Helpers 6:30PM— Service of Hope</i></p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <p><i>6PM—Church Supper, hosted by Music Committee</i></p>
<p>11</p> <p><i>10AM Worship— 11AM Coffee— hosted by Diaconate 11:30AM Church Council</i></p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p><i>12PM—Bible Study</i></p>	<p>14</p> <p><i>6PM Pairs and Spares 6:30PM— Bible Study</i></p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>
<p>18</p> <p><i>10:00AM Worship</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p><i>MLK Day— Church Offices closed</i></p>	<p>20</p> <p><i>10AM—Scrabble 12PM—Bible Study</i></p>	<p>21</p> <p><i>Movie Night</i></p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>
<p>25</p> <p><i>10AM—Worship 11AM—Coffee, hosted by Diaconate</i></p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p><i>12PM—Bible Study</i></p>	<p>28</p> <p><i>6:30PM—Bible Study</i></p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p> 

CITY REACH TRIP: ALL ARE INVITED!

After last year's very good and moving experience at City Reach, we are going again! This trip is an opportunity to learn about homelessness in Boston from homeless and formerly homeless people. It is run by a wonderful program of the Episcopal Church called Ecclesia Ministries, and is based at the Episcopal Church of St. Paul on Boston Common. The trip will take place on Friday, March 20, with a return home the next day. We will leave late in the afternoon on Friday. Folks from the age of eighth grade through adult are welcome and invited to join us; eighth graders are asked to come accompanied by a parent or other adult friend. We hope many youth and adult members and friends will join us.

The cost of the trip is \$55 per person; we do have funds to assist young people or folks for whom the fee would be a hardship. We will invite the whole congregation to help us prepare by donating particular clothing and food items. If you are interested in attending, please let Mary know. We are also in need of a food coordinator, a clothing coordinator, and a vehicle coordinator.

All who went last year found it to be a very great learning experience—we decided right on the way home that we'd want to do it again. It does appear that folks from the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist will be joining us. WATCH for more info in the next Steeple Views as we get organized to bring many gifts and warm hearts—and to receive many gifts and encounter many warm hearts! The deadline for registrations will be February 1st.

LESSONS AND CAROLS AT ST. JOHNS



All are welcome to attend this wonderful service at St. John the Baptist Church in Sanbornville Sunday, December 7, at 4 p.m.!

TELL A STORY!

We'd love to have you participate in story telling in Church School, or even to share a children's message in worship. Speak to Rev. Mary or Penny Ellis, Church School Coordinator.

REMEMBER THE FOOD PANTRY!

Bring in your food donations or mail monetary donations to Wakefield Food Pantry, PO Box 426, Sanbornville, NH 03872. Every little bit helps!

Z TEAM/FRIENDS OF ORPHAN TRUST NEWS

The Z Team wishes to thank the many people who have responded to our invitation to sponsorship for the children of Friends of Orphan Trust. I have been moved beyond words for each and every donation. We have received \$400 in anonymous contributions (thank you wonderful unknown sponsors) and contributions ranging from \$5 to \$300. Your donations have enabled complete sponsorship for 8 children and partial sponsorship for at least 4 more. Each donation is special and each donation makes a significant difference in the life of someone who is feeling lonely, helpless, or desperate. As one person wrote, *"I didn't know what I was going to do alone. God listened to my cries and answered my prayers. I always thank God for having you in my life. I won't forget no matter what happens."*

This is a year round project. If you would like to make a difference in the life of a young person, in honor or in memory of a loved one this Christmas season or for a birthday or other special event, please see Cathy, Donna, Jo, Chris, Jane, Ann or me. One time donations or monthly support in any amount is gratefully accepted. We have 70+ children who need sponsors. Recently, when Jo asked for members of the Z Team to stand up in church, I thought the whole congregation should stand. Seven or eight of us may be the visible face of the Z Team but we would accomplish very little without the love and support of all of you. Your compassion and generosity make this all possible.

The Z Team would also like to thank some unsung heroes: Molly James, Jan Stanley, and Cindy E. Molly has her dorm mates at UNH raising money to sponsor a child, Jan has spent countless hours guiding us to make the beautiful cards and putting up with the creative mess we have made, and Cindy... well Cindy... has been with us every step of the way quietly supporting our efforts and helping us find a way to make things happen. We love you all.

Together, we are making a difference once child at a time. Connie Littlefield

ONA CORNER PONDERING MARRIAGE EQUALITY

As many of us are aware, our denomination has declared itself to be “Open and Affirming” in its national setting. An article called “Religious Bodies Issue Legal Challenge to California’s Proposition 8” posted on the UCC website and written by J. Bennett Guess on November 18th points out that “three settings of the United Church of Christ have filed a legal petition before the Supreme Court of California to challenge the validity of the voter-approved Proposition 8 which ended same-gender marriage” in California. The settings of our wider church involved in the petition are the General Synod (the national setting), the Southern California-Nevada Conference and the Northern California-Nevada Conference. Other church or church-related bodies involved include the California Council of Churches, the Episcopal bishops of Los Angeles and California, the Progressive Jewish Alliance, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, and the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry in California. The General Minister and President of our denomination, the Rev. John Thomas, is quoted as saying: “The United Church of Christ is honored to join other religious bodies in this challenge to Proposition 8...We believe our communities are strengthened and our religious freedoms protected by providing equality in marriage, rather than by erecting barriers to marriage.”

As an Open and Affirming congregation, we have taken the position that all human beings are equally loved in the eyes of God. We have acknowledged a conviction that those who happen to be gay or lesbian are entitled to the same rights and privileges as are those who happen to be heterosexual. This includes the right to unite in holy matrimony with one’s chosen beloved. Because the right to marry is considered a civil right, the struggle of gays and lesbians for marriage equality has been considered by many a struggle for basic civil rights. The right to marry can only strengthen families, not weaken them. Comedian Ellen DeGeneres, who recently married her longtime female partner, commented on the oft-mentioned but mistaken idea that homosexual marriage will somehow hurt families or foster more homosexuality. With typical humor, she pointed out that she had been raised by a heterosexual couple

and had been surrounded by heterosexuals all her life, but that it hadn’t changed her one bit.

While not all may agree on the question of marriage equality, we are all invited to consider and pray about the issue, and to express our views in a loving and responsible way. As a pastor, I am heartened and proud to be part of a denomination that is advocating for taking down the legal barriers to fully dimensional family lives for all of God’s people.

YOUR HEART WILL BE GLAD: SERVICE OF HOPE DECEMBER 11 AT 6:30 P.M.

While the seasons of Advent and Christmas have their very special joys, they can also be times of great challenge for those among us who have experienced loss, who struggle with illness, or who perhaps carry other sorrows. At this time of year, it very often seems as though every one around us is rejoicing, while we may be carrying some sadness behind our smiles. This Service of Hope is designed to offer acknowledgment and solace to those for whom the Christmas season is not as easily joyful or as simple as all the lights, bows, cookies, and songs would suggest. Please join your church family for a very comforting -- and ultimately uplifting -- service of worship.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR



We’ve hinted, asked politely, and actually pleaded, but to no avail. What are you waiting for? Our Stewardship Committee Needs You! The ranks of our committee are still not filled. We are starting to think that you just don’t like us—we don’t understand why because we are a great bunch of people. Yes, we do have the task of asking people to pledge in support of the church, but that’s not so scary. We are a wonderfully supportive church!

And the other part of our mission is to promote earth stewardship! Who wouldn’t like to help save our planet? You don’t have to have any special experience or talents, but just be willing to help out! So for any of you who are not yet part of a standing committee, please call John & Carol Reilly at 539-1812 or email to reillyjfr@aol.com. Thanks!

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Tom Stanley
2 Shannon Mercer
2 Lynn Watts
3 Robert Gehring
3 Marie Hebb
7 Blake Toussaint

8 Jodie Long
8 David Silcocks
9 Jeremy Toussaint
11 Dorothy MacKenzie
13 Carol Jeffery
14 Fred Elliott

16 Jay Tamilio
18 Bill Maleham
20 George Harvey
22 Caroline Kinville
26 Jessica St. Pierre
27 Andrew Denley

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

1 Jeff & Kristine Bolstridge
10 Eric & Amanda Boggs
27 Peter & Linda Foss
28 John & Persis Hildebrandt
31 Bill & Pam Judge
31 Del & Connie Littlefield



"Thank you to everyone who sent cards, good wishes and wonderful things to eat."

Florence Morrison

Dear Folks,

Just a little note with a big thank you for all of the many kindnesses everyone has shown me over the past two months. You have all been so thoughtful in many, many ways. I would doubt if there is another household in Wakefield that has had the varied menus, cards, special offers of help, and phone calls that I have had over the past couple of months. Everyone has been so wonderful. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I hope I can help you one of these days! I hope to see you soon, too, in the near future!! Stay well and busy.

Love to all,
Beth MacRury

Please also keep in your prayers -

Our servicemen and women, especially those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan

The Darfur region in Africa and our friends in Rufumiso, Zimbabwe

Residents of the Nursing Homes and Retirement Communities in our area





FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
2718 WAKEFIELD ROAD, PO BOX 809
SANBORNVILLE, NH 03872



DECEMBER EVENTS

CHRISTMAS BOUTIQUE—DEC. 6
LESSONS AND CAROLS—DEC. 7
CHURCH SUPPER—DEC. 13
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT—DEC. 14
CAROLING—DEC. 21
CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
DEC. 24—7 P.M.
SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS!

DECEMBER LECTIONARY

Sunday, December 7 Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11 ~ Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Peter 3:8-15a ~ Mark 1:1-8

Messengers of Hope

Sunday, December 14 Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 ~ **Psalm 126** or Luke 1:47-55
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 ~ John 1:6-8, 19-28

Shouts of Joy

Sunday, December 21 Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 17 ~ Luke 1:47-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Romans 16:25-27 ~ **Luke 1:26-38**

Birthing a Promise

Wednesday December 24 Christmas Eve

Isaiah 52:7-10 ~ Psalm 98
Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12) ~ John 1:1-14

Sunday, December 28 First Sunday after Christmas

Isaiah 61:10-62:3 ~ Psalm 148 ~ Galatians 4:4-7 ~ **Luke 2:22-40** or
Isaiah 60:1-6 ~ Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 ~ Ephesians 3:1-12 ~ Matthew 2:1-12

Long Awaited Gift