

STEEPLE VIEWS

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION



REVEREND MARY A. JAMES, PASTOR

REVEREND GEORGE HARVEY, PASTOR EMERITUS

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THE PASTOR'S PLACE . . .

ONCE IN A WHILE, LOOK BACK

Happy New Year to all! May 2015 be a year of peace, hope, love, joy and blessing for all.

As we look forward to the new calendar year, we are still in Christmastide, and we are about to celebrate Epiphany and enter its season. It certainly appears to be a universally shared observation that the older we get, the more quickly time seems to move. A new phenomenon in this time seems to be that even children and youth comment that time moves fast; perhaps this is a result of growing up in the hurry-up world of digital media, busy lives, and oh-too-many activities.

In any case, lately, many of us have been commenting that we can't believe that Christmas has come and gone so quickly already. Well, yes, it has--but, on the other hand, the experience of awe and wonder at the manger, gazing at the infant Jesus, need not be a fleeting thing.

Just as our lives seem to move forward quickly, we followers of Jesus seem to move rapidly from celebrating his birth to immersing ourselves in following his adult ministry. The Bible gives us little help in pondering Jesus's younger years, as there are very few references to his childhood and youth. Yet as we enter a new year, what better way to assess and set our priorities than to linger a while at the manger, contemplating the meaning of the infant Jesus in our lives? What does it mean to us that God assumed the human condition, in all its vulnerability and hardship, in order to redeem the whole of human experience?

As we look forward to the New Year, let us linger a while with the baby Jesus. Let us feel the wonder for yet a little longer; let us notice the responses brought forth in our hearts as we regard this infant. The caring, the desire to nurture and protect, the amazement: all of these responses are fruitful reactions to bring along with us as we seek to infuse our new year with meaning, joy, purpose and peace.

Linger a while at the manger. Kiss the cheek of that vulnerable child. And carry that nurture and love you feel into your world, one day at a time, that God may work God's care, joy, peace and love through you.

Blessings and peace,

Mary

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Luke 2: 49

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The first few months of this position have been about learning the ropes. The first priority I was given was to make sure the youngest members of our church have church school on Sunday morning. Thank you so much to Margie Galabrun and Mary Beth Cook for stepping up and helping in the efforts to coordinate the volunteer efforts. As many of you know, I made some phone calls and several members of this church family agreed to be church school teacher. I provided Mary Beth with a list of people that expressed an interest and she began the process of setting up a schedule of teachers. Margie then gave the list of teachers access to the ðWhole People of Godð curriculum resources. I recently put together a book of weekly lessons and the supporting pictures to correct issues with material being available. I will be offering training for our teachers and classroom visitors. I know this process has not been seamless, but together we can resolve any issues that come up

We are also working on keeping the recent Confirmation class active and full members of this church with a loud voice. They planned and hosted an amazing Halloween pot luck dinner and have much more in the works.

I am looking into creating a group that will meet regularly and am researching some options. The question of having it on site or at a local business is open for discussion. I am looking at some books to read, that would give people options without putting a lot of pressure on everyone with already limited time. This group would be to give some of the adults at church some time for fellowship with the members of this church and hopefully, branching out to the members of the community. I am hoping to start this group soon.

Thank you so much for the welcome! I know I am not visible often, my current schedule does not allow me to attend very often on Sunday, but I am hard at work for my 10 hours a week! I am hoping to retire soon and that will help me to be more visible. Any questions, please don't hesitate to email me at maureenfccw@gmail.com. Blessings!

*Maureen Steer
Director of Christian Education*

For more information on articles you read in the Steeple Views, contact the editor at steepleviews@gmail.com or call the church office at 603-522-3915



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Evelyn Truhn, Dalton Ostrye, and Pam Frazier in period costume for the Christmas in Wakefield Corner Historical Tour Event.

STEWARDSHIP NEWS

May 2015 be a year that brings you spiritual fulfillment, peace and joy. Through your hearts and generosity of spirit and self, our Church of God grows ever stronger.

What a wonderful event was held in Wakefield Corner on December 13! Christmas at Wakefield Corner, co-hosted by FCCW and the Heritage Commission, was an abiding experience for so many from near and far. It provided opportunity to learn of the history of this village, providing insight into not only the architectural fascinations but also the fabric of personal lives and stories that helped to shape our community, our neighbors and our Church. The beauty of the street, buildings and homes were a sight to see!

We express special thanks to The Wakefield Inn and homeowners Lauren & Peter Brown and Nancy Spencer-Smith & Jim Theodore for their welcome and hospitality. Thanks to all of the volunteers who worked so hard both behind the scenes and in front, inside & outside, and also to the Wakefield Police Dept. The Christmas Tour as well as the Harvest Fair, the Yard Sale, and other events have truly helped us to meet our fundraising goals for this year.

Finally, as we are well into the winter season please be mindful to turn the heat down in rooms as your meetings conclude, shut lights off behind you and clean your spaces after use. Your diligence and watchfulness is truly appreciated. We are truly blessed to have such wonderful stewards of God, Church and Community!

*Chris Feddern,
Stewardship Ministry*

TREASURER'S REPORT

Operating Budget: July 1, 2014 to November 30, 2014

Income:	\$62,713.77
Expenditures:	<u>\$58,069.43</u>
Net Income/Loss:	\$ 4,644.34

I would like to say Happy New Year to my wonderful Church Family. Your continued prayers, contributions, and love are what keeps this church moving forward. The traditional song that is sung on New Year's Eve is "Auld Lang Syne". This song was written in the 1700's by Robert Burns. The translation is "old long ago" or simply the "good old days". My dear friend, Connie Littlefield, uses the phrase, "back in the day". Since her introduction of that phrase into my world I have heard many others use it, including my students. It is a good phrase. As we close 2014 and place the events of this year into the "back in the day" category, let's look forward to 2015 and imagine what wondrous things we can accomplish through prayers, contributions, and love.

*Respectfully,
Donna V Ackerman, Co-Treasurer*

WAKEFIELD PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

On Thursday, January 22 the Wakefield Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet and celebrate the five-year milestone of regular meetings. We have completed many prayer shawls which have been distributed widely to bring comfort and celebration to their recipients. We also make prayer squares which are included in visitor bags which are given to visitors to our church. We have been given wonderful yarn and we continue to make that available to anyone who can use it for shawls or other projects. Our meetings include times of warm conversation, exchange of prayer requests and blessings of completed shawls. We are always eager to include new members.

Please spread the word and consider joining us at 10:00 am on January 22! Jan Fairchild welcomes questions about the shawl ministry. ***"Shawls ..made for centuries universal and embracing, symbolic of an inclusive, unconditionally loving, God. They wrap, enfold, comfort, cover, give solace, mother, hug, shelter and beautify."*** - Janet Bristow.

Jan Fairchild

THE Z TEAM PANCAKE BREAKFAST IS BACK!

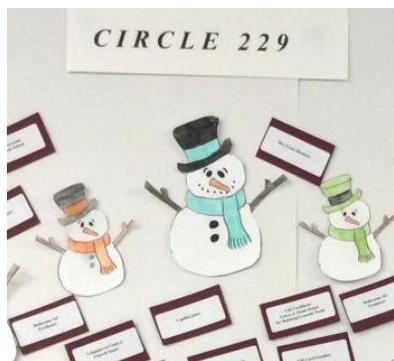
Join the Z Team for yummy pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage, muffins, juice and a variety of hot beverages on Saturday, January 17, 2015 from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the church. Cost is the same as always: \$7.00 for adults, \$5.00 for kids, 2 adults & 2 kids for \$20.00 and kids under 3 eat free! All proceeds benefit the FOOT child sponsorship program. Hope to see you there!

HISTORY MOMENT: PARISH HELPERS

The first organized women's group in our church was the Ladies Sewing Society which was formalized in 1857. Over time the focus of this group shifted back and forth from domestic skills to a benevolent society and it went through several reorganizations before settling into its present form in 1899. The Parish Helpers Articles of Incorporation state that its purpose is "to cultivate the Spirit of Christ in every area of human life, beginning with our own lives and reaching into our homes, communities, and the uttermost parts of the world." This group still holds to its original vision by providing financial support to our church, community and world. In addition it offers fun, fellowship and learning experiences and welcomes all community women. *Source: The Parish Helpers Year-book*

Linda Petkunas/Archivist

CHECK OUT NEW TAGS IN FELLOWSHIP HALL! CIRCLE 229



Begun 4 years ago, this brilliant idea was born to boost our purchasing power for the little things (and not-so-little) needed at church in honor of our 225th year: copy paper, juice, paper towels, Kleenex, crayons, dish detergent, hand soap, sheet music, fluorescent replacement bulbs, vacuum cleaner bags, etc. The list is endless. And this is an important way to help extend our budget. Refreshed seasonally, take a look at the new poster boards in fellowship hall. There may be something there you would like to provide. Just take a tag (or make a tag), do the deed and move the tag from the left "circle" over to the board on the right "heart" (our accomplishments). When we all do a little, A LOT HAPPENS! Bless you!

Carol Lundgren, Stewardship

UPDATE FROM CONNIE—NEWS FROM ZIMBABWE

Thank you all for your warm welcome and support as I transitioned home after 4 ½ months in Zimbabwe. Many have asked, "How has it been?" Christy, Sarah, Maggie, Ann and I did our three weeks of work camps: working on the parsonage at Rufumiso, starting the building process for Nelly Mundeta's home in Rimbi, working on widening the road into Dzika village to get the drilling rigs for the borehole through, seeing our children sponsored under Friends of Orphan Trust, unloading the 2014 shipping container, and doing a "thank you" work camp at the Sibiya home with the FOOT children as a way to thank Joseph and Daisy Sibiya for all that they do without recognition or compensation.

I now see it as a "splash and dash" kind of experience. We arrive, we work hard, we have some kind of warm and fabulous celebration and then we move on to the next project. It is a whirlwind of meeting people, of providing a helping hand, of celebration and of strengthening friendships. It is goodwill, good feelings, and a tremendous sense of accomplishment. Then the team left and I traveled to Mt. Selinda Mission Station to begin my "attachment" at the Daisy Dube Children's Home, a home with 31 residents. Most are under the age of 18 but there is a disabled young man, age 32, and a young lad who has finished a carpentry program but isn't ready to live independently yet. Both have lived at the home since infancy. This became a very different experience as I was totally on my own, living in challenging accommodations, and without any specific directions on what anyone wanted me to do. Everyone wanted me to "make things better" they would say with a huge sigh, as the home had not only fallen into disrepair but also because everyone had an opinion of how they felt the management of the home had changed dramatically over the last 15 years.

So, I jumped into action—or at least what I thought was action. I observed for two weeks and then developed a list of strengths, areas of concern, and a 30 point action plan complete with next steps, people responsible for implementation and a timeframe for completion of action items. I had my proverbial lists, personal money and money from various donors, and I was raring to go!

(I can hear you all laughing as I type this because you know where this is going! .)

Mt. Selinda was the opposite of "splash and dash" and it soon became clear that this would be the hardest thing I have ever done. A few of my learnings and experiences thus far:

- The children at the home have my heart. They are precious, bright, brave, affectionate, funny and very strong. I adore them.
- Some adults don't appreciate change. They smile (or not) and passively resist.
- Everything happens in Zim time. (Now this I SHOULD have known!) Just because they say something will happen in an hour, a day, next week or whenever, doesn't mean it will happen **EVEN WHEN YOU REMOVE EACH AND EVERY OBSTACLE ALONG THE WAY**. Sheesh! So much for my lists and money available to fund new initiatives.

- After two months I recognized that I hit a wall—a HUGE wall. I was in a different culture, could speak only a smattering of Shona, and was without my family, friends, co-workers, pastor and my church community where I could DEBRIEF the daily pain and trauma I witnessed, the poverty, and the frustration as well as the joys and celebrations. I couldn't just muscle through it. What I did do was more intentionally create a network of people (they were all right there) as a support system, picked up a used car (independence!!) AND I GOT MUCH NICER ACCOMMODATIONS. Ah, life became more normal for me.
- I'm proud of what has been accomplished. I do group counseling with the kids three times a week with my awesome side kick, Mrs. Mapfumo, a fabulous teacher at Mt. Selinda High School. (Think The Ackermans.) We cover every topic under the sun, especially life skills and goals for the future, and usually have all kinds of fun.
- I instituted study hours Monday through Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. and met with the primary and secondary school teachers on a regular basis. Almost all of the 20 school age kids (15 in primary and 5 in secondary) showed great academic progress to the amazement of their teachers. The two who have stayed steady are characterized as "very hard workers and doing their best."

There are many stories to share of the unbelievable impact of new school uniforms, the introduction of toys and a bicycle, celebrating birthdays for the first time EVER—and generally seeing kids shine and blossom. You need to know that impact of sending almost 150 pounds of peanut butter from this congregation to the Children's Home has been ENORMOUS! There are also so many sad and unfortunate circumstances in which our Zimbabwe friends show love, warmth, faith and an amazing resiliency of spirit that allows them to get through desperate times.

I'm heading back to Zimbabwe on January 27th until my one year visa expires in August. I am not sure what the future will hold but Mary's sermons have reminded me that all I have to do is say "yes." Keep the prayers coming!

Connie Littlefield



SOUNDS GREAT!

The new audio visual system has been installed at Church! Those of you who have attended the last three Sundays in December and Christmas Eve have heard and possibly seen it in action. We are still learning how to best use this wonderful system to enhance not only our Sunday services but also events like our Annual Meeting, Weddings and Memorial Services. Several members of the congregation with hearing difficulties have commented on how wonderful it is to be able to fully hear and participate more fully in our services.

Next time you are down in Fellowship Hall you will also see the new flat screen down there. It was set up and running on Christmas Eve. It can be used either to help with an overflow crowd from the sanctuary or it can be used by itself for movies, presentations, etc. Look forward to being able to see the budget up on the big screen at this year's Annual Meeting!. If you come to the Team-Z breakfast in January, you just might see some great photos from Connie up on this big screen.

If you would like to learn more about this system or would like to join the Sound Team please see Dalton Ostrye, Nate Fogg, or Frank Frazier. Join the team!

Frank Frazier

THE PARISH HELPERS

The Parish Helpers had a rip-roaring time at the December meeting. It was our annual Christmas Luncheon and Yankee Swap. These ladies may appear to be sweet, polite and mild mannered, but when it comes to the Yankee Swap, it's a whole different scenario! Bottom line: It was a lot of fun, and everyone left with smiles and great memories of a fun time spent with friends!

At our January meeting, we will welcome back our friend, Dave Schweitzer, who will give another presentation from the Hanson Family History of Wakefield. This program was postponed from last winter when we had to cancel because of snow! Let's hope the weather doesn't interfere again this year. But in case we do, we will be making calls.

The meeting will be held on January 8 at 1 p.m. As always, the Parish Helpers welcome all women from the church and community. Hope to see you there!

Carol Jeffery

OUT OF THE DARKNESS AN EVENT FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

On Saturday, January 17th, 2015 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Wakefield Opera House, local electronic music artist Gabe Smith will be performing live the "come out of the darkness" music event, with musical guests St. Theodore and Baby Bean.

Gabe Smith ("Pop Culture Icon"), with the help of his fellow musicians, hopes to reach the young people of the area. Their unique style of electronic music will bring an uplifting experience to all who attend, with music and visuals to inspire and enlighten. The message is to "come out of the darkness and into the light". Gabe Smith and friends will be donating their time and talent for the concert, so admission will be free.

As Gabe says: "My mission statement is to help those who are struggling with various forms of depression, drugs and suicidal tendencies." In the darkest part of the winter months, after all the holidays are over, many people are overwhelmed with seasonal depression and sadness. I believe that through my music I can reach the young people with love and hope".

Gabe Smith reaches out to the electronic music scene with fresh zeal and offers original compositions combined with psychedelic visuals. Incorporating art and music with newer experimental styles and creating intriguing tracks, Gabe's devotion to his art led to this musical hybrid, using beat machines, keyboards, midi sequencers and synthesizers, which developed into digital recording arranged by composing unique electronic instrumental fusion.

He has played at Rock the Block and Reach the Beach in Boston's North Shore, as well as at many summer block parties and summer fests throughout New England. He has opened for The Wrecking and the Not for Sale Campaign, and played six years at The Soulfest at Gunstock Mountain. He has played a few sets at the Middle East downtown stairs, Cambridge, UNH Durham, PSU in Plymouth NH and U-Mass Lowell college radio stations. Gabe Smith spends the majority of his time at his home recording studio in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. You can see these musicians this August 6-8 at Soulfest 2015: thesoulfest.com

Please join in the inspiration on the 17th, and spread the word! We hope that many teens will attend this special event.

Celebrations!

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2 John Tamilio III	18 Eric Boggs
3 Donald Silcocks	19 Bob Crowe
4 Austin oMaxö Gehring	19 George Szirbik
4 Caitlin KoukalHowes	20 Gail Leyare
6 Penny Grover	20 Edward Morrison
7 Donna Ackerman	24 Sid Girardin
8 Jim Pirie	25 Aileen Koukal
9 Jason Denver	25 Martha Jo McCarthy
9 Rachel Wilson	28 Samantha Michalsky
15 Lindsay Baldwin	28 Erin Seaboyer
16 Carole Doughty	29 Timothy McCarthy
16 Robert Chadbourne	30 John Hebb
17 Warren Berg	30 Joanne Dolbear
	30 Janie Silcocks

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

12 Richard & Diana Peckham
16 Jeff & Valerie Ward

FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN

PLEASE PRAY FOR:



We ask your continued prayers and support for those members of our church and wider community who are ill, or who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, and for their families

Dot R.	Marcia
Tom and Barbara T.	Marsha A.
George B.	Jan F.
Art W.	Donald L.
Mackenzie M.	George J.
Beth M.	Ginny S.
Curt C.	John H.

AND FOR:

Our global neighbors in places where there is great strife.

Our servicemen and women

Our friends in Rufumiso, Zimbabwe
Residents of the Nursing Homes and Retirement
Communities in our area

ANGELS AND MORTALS REVEALED

Join us for Worship Service and Coffee Hour on January 11 for the big reveal! Who is your oAngelö?

PROGRESS ON NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Many thanks go to Carol Jeffery, Dave Schweitzer, and Frank Frazier for serving on our Hiring Team to fill our new position. Ads have been out and we are receiving responses. We hope to be conducting interviews this month; thanks also to Penny Grover for being willing to help us with the interviewing phase. Please offer your prayers for a wonderful outcome. We appreciate Penny's continued willingness to work two evenings a week to help keep things afloat in this time of transition.

THANK YOU

Many thanks from the family of Kenny Stanley for your cards, prayers, thoughts, and kind words. I also want to express a personal appreciation for those of you who stepped in and covered my role in the bell choir and the Christmas Pageant while I was away. I heard good things and saw great pictures. With love and gratitude,

Jan Stanley

IN SYMPATHY

We share our deepest condolences with the family of Paul Twombly, who passed away on November 28th. We will share in a memorial service celebrating Paul's life on Saturday, January 24th at 11 a.m.

JANUARY 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2	3
4 Worship and Holy Communion Church School 10 a.m. Bells—6 p.m.	5 Choir Practice 6 p.m.	6 EPIPHANY Bible Study 12 noon	7 Scrabble 10 a.m. Deacons Meeting 4 p.m.	8 Parish Helpers 1 p.m. Community String Band 7 p.m.	9	10
11 Family Worship 10 a.m. Angels and Mortals Revealed Coffee Hour Bells—6 p.m.	12 Choir Practice 6 p.m.	13 Bible Study 12 noon Centering Prayer 4 p.m.	14 Pairs and Spares 6 p.m. Leadership Council 7 p.m.	15 Community String Band 7 p.m.	16	17 Z Team Pancake Breakfast 7:30—10:30 a.m. Event for Youth Empowerment Opera House 6—9 p.m.
18 Worship and Church School 10 a.m. Bells—6 p.m.	19 Choir Practice 6 p.m.	20 Scrabble 10 a.m. Bible Study 12 noon	21	22 Community String Band 7 p.m.	23	24 Paul Twombly Memorial Service 11 a.m.
25 Worship and Church School 10 a.m. Coffee Hour Leadership Council Bells—6 p.m.	26 Choir Practice 6 p.m.	27	28	29 Community String Band 7 p.m.	30	31



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January Events

January 8 ô Parish Helpers

January 11ô Angels and Mortals Reveal

January 14ô Pairs and Spares

January 17ô Z Team Breakfastô 7:30 to 10:30 a.m.

January 17 ô Event for Youth Empowermentô 6 to 9 p.m.
Opera House

SAVE THE DATE
February 23, 2015ô Prepared to Serve