

STEEPLE VIEWS



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

REVEREND GEORGE HARVEY, PASTOR EMERITUS

JANUARY 2023

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Old Traditions, New Resolutions **A Reflection by Linda Messer**

As 2023 draws closer, I find myself once again folding used gift boxes, cleaning up messes in the kitchen, and putting casserole dishes away in any place I can find room, usually NOT the place they had been previously stored. I have left a trail of oddly clipped, unusable wrapping-paper pieces; unfolded, clean laundry piled on a bedroom chair, including several garments cast aside in favor of the “perfect” holiday sweater I’ve now worn for the past 5 years. It is now officially the ‘traditional’ Christmas Eve sweater. This annual, delicate dance of getting things in order around our house after Christmas day made me think of other holiday ‘traditions’ that have meant so much.

As a child, attending church on Christmas Eve or on Christmas Day was not part of our holiday routine. We always exchanged presents on Christmas Eve because Santa arrived early in the evening while my Dad took my cousins, brothers and me for a ride to see Christmas lights. Christmas Day was quietly observed with a family Christmas brunch. Perhaps that was because my father’s long-observed Scottish tradition of Hogmanay, celebrating the beginning of the New Year, was still yet to come.

Every year Dad would ‘first-foot’ on New Year’s Eve. For some, this often meant loud, raucous parties just before the first-footing ritual. But my father’s custom of the old Scottish tradition was simply to exit our house just before midnight through the back door, wait for the clock to strike 12 then re-enter through the front. In the spirit of Hogmanay, the first person to enter a home in the new year brought good luck, warmth, cheer and prosperity by bearing symbolic gifts, such as whisky, pieces of shortbread and coal. My father would carry the Bible, a loaf of bread and a dollar bill. The original Scottish tradition was far more elaborate than my Dad’s simple routine, but for sure, ringing in the New Year was a very serious display and sharing of love, kindness, and friendship for all Scots. I am not sure why they celebrated the coming of the New Year more intensely than Christmas Day but there seem to be many reasons. You may find reading more about the origin of Hogmanay interesting at this link: [The History of Hogmanay - Historic UK](#)

For several years after my father’s death in 1988, I made the resolution to replicate his New Year’s celebration. But, the older I got, the less likely I was to leave the house at midnight, even for the short walk from the front to the back. Now, remembering his legacy of kindness, generosity and abundant love, I realize it is enough to try to be more like him! Happy New Year!

Linda

Dweezil



Luke 11: 11-13 Is there any among you who, if your child asks for a fish will give a snake instead? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

We didn't want a dog. Our last dog, Vicki, was one of the best dogs ever. She was a husky mix, and supposedly part wolf. She lived half her life in Southeast Alaska and the other half in New Hampshire. Everybody loved Vicki. We went camping and hiking with her. She flew with us from Alaska when we visited family in Vermont. Even folks who weren't necessarily a "dog person" thought Vicki was the exception. We were certain that no other dog could replace her. Our lives were pretty set as far as animals were concerned.

Then one morning we got a call from our son, George III. At 37 years old he finally decided he wanted a better life and admitted he was an alcoholic and needed help. For Georgie to enter rehab he had to figure out something about his dog. So, we drove over 4,000 miles in nine days to Colorado returning with Dweezil. Since that time, he has trained us well.

From the first night he let us know he wasn't going to be happy sleeping in a kennel down in the basement. He now has his own bed at the foot of our bed. Even though he tried, I had to draw the line of having him sleep in the bed with us. We built him a doghouse and a cable system with a long lead so he could move about with a dry place to go when we needed to leave for a couple of hours. Nope, he howled and barked so much that the neighbor came over threatening to call the humane society. The Sunday I left for New York City, George went to church leaving Dweezil at home in the house. He had access to all the comforts of home, but the smell of dog treats on the stairs leading to the basement was too tempting. He opened the door, and yes, I said, "he opened the door" and consumed a mass amount of Milk Bone dog biscuits. This of course led to multiple trips outside, with George sleeping on the kitchen floor beside Dweezil making sure no indoor accidents happened.

As of December 24th, he has now been a part of our home for one month. In that time, he has crept into our hearts. Those big brown hound-dog eyes draw from us hugs, ear rubbings, and words of "who's the good dog?" Dweezil is very smart, protective, and loyal. I have looked online as to what breed he might be, and I have concluded that he is part boarder collie. When we walk, he moves back and forth in front of me as if he is herding. He gets anxious when one of us is not in the same area of the house or property as the other. To keep his humans in sight, he lays on the floor where he can view both of us at the same time. To say we are in love with and very happy to have Dweezil in our lives is an understatement.

This is such a minor example of what a parent would do for their child. We would do whatever is necessary to help our son with this horrible disease. And in our efforts to assist Georgie, God has given us a gift as well.

Thank you, Lord, for your never-ending generosity and love, even in the form of a Dweezil.

Donna V Ackerman

A Community Steps Up!

You, dear Church Friends, likely know there was a devastating house fire in East Wakefield just before Christmas. Four people were displaced (one a child), but thankfully, no injuries. Word went out and this community stepped up and is still stepping up. The family is safely homed in a local apartment and people have gifted beds and much more so they can be comfortable. But we know: there is no place like home. Thanks to the quick work of Kim Mendell of Sharper Image Salon, a fund was established at Profile Bank. Kim and others will help the family move forward. If you would like to donate, the name of the fund is: Bucknan-Robinson Fund – Profile Bank. Blue Bay Seafood Restaurant also put on a pancake breakfast fundraiser 2 days after the fire and raised over \$5,000. Please keep this family in your prayers as they ponder their future. Stay tuned for updates!

Carol Lundgren



FUN-draising Update

It was a very busy year for our FUNdraising activities! We ended the year with our impromptu Christmas Bazaar which was a quick set up of the back classroom with all donated Christmas decorations (and some other odds & ends). An easy, painless fundraiser that made over \$400! We're looking forward to our next event

Souper Bowl Weekend!

Once again we will be offering up pre-ordering of a wide variety of soups, chilis and chowders just in time to be enjoyed over the Super Souper Bowl Weekend. Stay tuned for the selections and details of how to order & pickup.

Julie Kessler

The Parish Helpers

The Parish Helpers had a wonderful Christmas luncheon at the Wakefield Inn. We were totally surprised with a special visit from Santa Claus who gave us chocolate and candy canes. We must have been very good all year!



On January 9 we will resume regular monthly meetings in the Fellowship Hall on the second Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. The hostesses for January are Ginny Schweitzer, Carol Jeffery and Mary Ann Fountain. As our guest speaker, we welcome back the ever-entertaining Jessie Crockett, the *national bestselling author of *Maple Mayhem* and *Drizzled with Death* in the Sugar Grove Mystery series. As a nearly lifelong resident of the Granite State, Jessie naturally adores black flies, 98 percent humidity, killing frosts in August, and snow-banks taller than the average grandmother.” *Google!

All women of the church and community are welcome! Hope to see you there!

Carol Jeffery

Congregational Meeting Call

A Congregational Meeting will be held at 11 a.m. on Sunday, January 8th, 2023 immediately after the close of our worship service. The purpose of this meeting will be to hear and discuss the call of an Interim Minister. The Deacons will be presenting.

As always, we strive for consensus. If needed, we will conduct a vote.

This is GOOD NEWS! Please attend either in person or by Zoom.

Margie Galabrun, co-Moderator

Hazel MacBrien Nursery School News

December was a busy, exciting month for us! The month always goes by so fast and there's always a lot to do. We worked on number 4 and letters Rr and Ss. Our sensory table was filled with red and green items including; magnet blocks, peg letters, jingle bells and pom poms. The kids enjoyed making reindeer bag puppets, stockings and a present for their grownups. Santa stopped by for a visit and we had a holiday celebration with a sweet treat and games. We had a "snowball " fight using white pom poms, used red and green balloons and had to keep them from touching the floor and played pin the heart on the Grinch! A fun time was had by all :).

We hope everyone has a wonderful holiday and a happy healthy 2023! Thanks again for all of your continued support!

From our Church Library

Author Highlight: Joyce Rupp

Joyce Rupp is well known for her work as a writer, spiritual midwife, international retreat leader, conference speaker and the author of numerous bestselling books. Rupp is a member of the Servite (Servants of Mary) community and the codirector of the Boundless Compassion program. She lives in West Des Moines, Iowa.

Our library has these books she has authored:

Boundless Compassion: Creating a Way of Life (J-G)

Boundless Compassion Journal (J-G)

Prayers of Boundless Compassion (S-Pr)

Source: Amazon

Linda Petkunas, Church Librarian

Celebrations!

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

12 Richard & Diana Peckham
16 Jeff & Valerie Ward

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 3 Donald Silcocks | 22 Susan Raban |
| 4 Austin "Max" Gehring | 23 Jill Mullen |
| 4 Caitlin Koukal Howes | 24 Sid Girardin |
| 6 Penny Grover | 25 Aileen Koukal |
| 7 Donna Ackerman | 25 Martha Jo McCarthy |
| 9 Rachel Wilson | 28 Samantha Michalsky |
| 12 Jillian Currier | 28 Erin Seaboyer |
| 15 Lindsay Baldwin | 29 Timothy McCarthy |
| 16 Carole Doughty | 30 John Hebb |
| 18 Eric Boggs | 30 Joanne Dolbear |
| 19 George Szirbik | 30 Janie Silcocks |
| 20 Gail Leyare | |

Thank You!

Christmas Gratitude

Thank you to many of our Church family friends who provided our sanctuary with gorgeous poinsettias. The plants created a festive, colorful and welcoming atmosphere. They are a symbol of good will and community spirit. The beauty and delight of flowers are a gentle reminder of God's Grace and Love.

Blessings, Rachel White

Cards Welcomed!

Patricia Golden's address for the next month is:
Northeast Rehab. Hospital, Rm. 415,
105 Corporate Drive
Portsmouth, NH 03801.

FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN

We believe that prayer is powerful!

During this time of transition in our church, let us pray for our church leaders—the Diaconate who work tirelessly to carry on duties above and beyond and to the Officers, Ministry Coordinators, and Leadership Council for their thoughtful deliberations in guiding our church during this time of uncertainty.

And as always, please keep in your prayers all those who suffer in any way in mind, body and spirit,

We ask also your prayers for peace in our world, for the health and integrity of our democracy, and for the flourishing of the work of our community of faith.

Please pray for:

Patricia G.; Dave and Charlotte L.; Laura F; Sue L; Arlene L; Peter and Linda F; Wendy D & Alberta W; Carol J's Family; Chrissy and Michael; Joan C



FCCW Prayer Chain: Through emails and text messages, we are able to increase our prayer power for "immediate intercessory prayer" for the concerns of our congregation and friends. If you have a prayer request, please email Harriet Wilson (dhwilson39@gmail.com) All prayer requests are kept strictly confidential and will only be shared with the express permission of the people involved.

Rest in Peace



It was recently brought to our attention and is with great sadness we share that our dear friend and member Sharon E. Lafond passed away on October 27, 2022. Sharon was an active member for several years until her health made it necessary for her to move to Laconia.

Please see an excerpt of her obituary (below) and please pray for her family's comfort during this difficult time.

"Sharon Eileen LaFond, 78, passed away on Thursday, October 27, 2022, at Concord Hospital in Laconia. Sharon was born on April 15, 1944, in Laconia, the daughter of David and Dorothy (Mansfield) Schofield.

She enjoyed life to the fullest with many passions like writing, poetry, painting, her grandchildren, as well her love of friends and Maine, to list only a few.. . "

JANUARY 2023

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|---|---|--|-----------|--|
| 1  | 2 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. | 3 Faith Formation Via Zoom or In-person—12 noon Choir 5:30 | 4 Scrabble Group 1–3 p.m. | 5 Chair Yoga 10:30 Parish Helpers Room | 6 | 7 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. |
| 8 Second Sunday after Christmas Worship 10 a.m. Congregational Meeting 11:15 | 9 | 10 Faith Formation Via Zoom or In-person—12 noon Choir 5:30 Ukulele Club 6 p.m. | 11 | 12 EPIPHANY Chair Yoga 10:30 PH Room Parish Helpers 1 p.m. | 13 | 14 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. |
| 15 First Sunday After Epiphany Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 16 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. | 17 Prayer Shawl Ministry 10 a.m. Faith Formation Via Zoom or In-person—12 noon Choir 5:30 | 18 | 19 Chair Yoga 10:30 PH Room | 20 | 21 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. Leadership Council Meeting |
| 22 Second Sunday After Epiphany Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 23 | 24 Faith Formation Via Zoom or In-person—12 noon Choir 5:30 Ukulele Club 6 p.m. | 25 Finance Team Meeting 1 p.m. | 26 Chair Yoga 10:30 PH Room | 27 | 28 Grief Support Group 11 a.m. |
| 29 Third Sunday After Epiphany Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour | 30 | 31 Faith Formation Via Zoom or In-person—12 noon Choir 5:30 | | | | |

Alex ter Weele is a long time friend of the Bozuwa family. His mother, Margery, was a member of our church for many years. When Titia heard that Alex's brother had passed away in November, she sent him a copy of her book Our Tree. He returned the favor by sending his own book. She did not know he had included a vignette about Joan's bell. A check for \$100 fell out of the book, made out to FGCCW in memory of his mother and Joan. The following is copied with permission from the author, Alexander H. ter Weele, from his book titled POEMS from the BLUE.

Titia Bozuwa

The Wakefield Bell

By
Alexander H. ter Weele



We woke this morning in Virginia to the peal of a bell which we had never heard before. Like a sea buoy tolling in a high wind or in a storm, the sound was sometimes faint, sometimes clear, sometimes caught away by the wind - difficult to say which toll one heard and which one imagined, and difficult to say whether the sound came from a material bell or from one fashioned of more spiritual stuff.

The high notes of the bell echoed the laughter of a young girl playing with her brother, spoke of sunshine on her blond hair, or of a kiss at bedtime for her mother, and of her smile as she sat on her father's knee. Happiness, amusement, beauty, curiosity, enthusiasm, love of life - the high notes of the bell spoke of these.

The carrying voice of the bell spoke of day-to-day love for family and friends - setting the breakfast table while half asleep to help mother, remembering to telephone father on his birthday, lending brother a hand with his homework, running an errand for a friend. Day-to-day love, thoughtfulness, kindness - the tolling of the bell spoke of these in certain, measured cadence. The certainty, the sureness, the regularity, the serenity of the love of which the bell tolled is the fabric Joan used to give life its meaning, hour by hour, day by day, and year by year.

The low tones of the bell which we heard spoke of tragedy, of sorrow, of loss. Yes, of tragedy and sorrow and loss, but not of bitterness. The low tones spoke also of acceptance and of giving; acceptance of death, made possible by the tenderness, support and love provided by father, mother, brother and friends; and giving, giving memories, insight, understanding, and, most importantly, giving a love which transcends death and of which the bell we hear will speak throughout the years across

Wakefield, across the waters of Lake Wentworth and Winnepesaukee, through the passes and on the peaks of the White Mountains, along the Appalachias to Virginia, across the ocean to Holland, everywhere Joan has been and where her friends are.

The bell speaks to us of her youth and of mirth, of tragedy and of death. But mostly it speaks to us of life, of love, and of Joan.

Reminder from B and G

Thankfully, there has been lots activity during this Holiday Season and our beautiful church is being visited almost daily! Just a friendly reminder from our B&G Team to please double check the Doors, Lights & Heat on your way out including but not limited to the front door light, the fellowship hall heat and back classroom hallway lights - if you are in that vicinity. Thanks so much for your help in keeping our church safe and bills as low as possible! Happy Holidays!

We Return to Our Regularly Scheduled Programs

Beginning the first week in January, Chair Yoga will resume meeting on Thursdays, but in the Parish Helpers Room. The Adult Faith Formation picks up where they left off in the Advent Devotional on Tuesdays. The Finance Committee will now meet on the 4th Wednesday at 1 p.m. See the monthly calendar for all events!

Winter Weather Cancellations

Cancellations due to bad weather will be posted on: WMUR Channel 9
WCSH Channel 6, and on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalChurchofWakefieldUCC/>

Alternative Giving



Thanks to the generosity of the FCCW church family, the following donations were made through our Alternative Gifts program this Christmas season.

Zimbabwe missions: Sanitary Products \$175; Daisy Dube Food \$250; and Friends of Orphan Trust (note - this includes all FOOT money since Nov 1st) \$3810.

Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund: \$2600 (this includes the Parish Helpers donation of \$2000)

Heifer Project: \$345

New England Women's Celebration



Every four years in the spring, women from congregations across New England come together to learn, share, worship, and connect at the New England Women's Celebration. Organized by women from United Church of Christ congregations across New England, the next celebration – Celebration XI – is March 17-19, 2023 at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel in Manchester, NH.

The weekend will include workshops, speakers, worship, music and more. But most importantly, it will be filled with reconnecting with friends, making new ones, and forming connections with other women of faith.

The purpose of the Celebrations is to reach women in the pews and to involve them in learning and sharing their faith beyond the local church and Conference setting. It is organized by women from United Church of Christ (UCC) congregations across New England, however women from all denominations and religious traditions are welcome to attend.

You can find more information and registration details at this link: <https://www.sneucc.org/eventdetail/16617566> or speak with Elizabeth Fogg.



Parish Helpers



Christmas Pageant

Church Family Photos



Sledding with Zim friends



Caroling



Zim visitor, Trevor, meets Father Christmas!

JANUARY

Food Pantry Collection

- ❖ **Condensed Soups**
(Campbell)
- ❖ **Hearty Soups**
(Chunky/Progresso)

Thank you!!



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