

STEEPLE VIEWS

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION



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APRIL 2024

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The Pastor's Page

Easter People!

Here we are in April! The time when all will become right with the world. Peace will reign, the earth will be healed, equity and justice will be the rule, and all illness and suffering will be relieved. Okay, April Fools! That won't happen, at least right away. But it is the Easter season, and we are an Easter people! The people of the Way, disciples of Christ, believers in the dream that God birthed unto earth. We are the seed planters, the harvesters and cultivator of the gardens of God's glory, where all are welcome and all find a home in the heart filled with love and compassion.

It is Eastertide, which runs in 2024 from Easter on March 31st to Pentecost on May 19th. It is a fifty day season between the two holy days, where we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Beyond the symbolic notion of the celebration of the resurrection, it is also a time where we celebrate the practical resurrection, that is, a time of rebirth. In this Eastertide, we are called to be born again into a new day and a new way. We are invited to let go of all the baggage, fears and doubts that surface in our lives, and release into a freedom of a life in Christ.

"Sure," you might say, "that sounds nice," but what does it really mean and how do we in fact, live into it." That's a great question, and one simple answer is, one seed and prayer at a time." Here a few ideas you may want to ponder:

- April 21 is Earth Day, and this is a great season to reflect on the intersection of your Christian faith with a passion and commitment to Earth healing. We'll explore that at our April 21 Earth Day service with the wonderful writer Chelsea Steinhauer-Scudder.
- Throughout the season, we explore the ways that Jesus came to his beloveds in the forty days after the resurrection, foreshadowing the ways Jesus continues to show up in our lives today.
- The Faith Formation group will be focusing on a wonderful program called "Anatomy of a Christian," an expansive look at the intersection of Christian faith, racial justice, equity and exploring our place in making the visions of Easter ongoing realities for a world in desperate need of healing.
- It is a time of celebration, including affirming the beautiful blessing of community. Whether it be by worshipping together, celebrating over meals, sharing our creative gifts, drumming, serving the wider community, welcoming new and old alike and/or cultivating the seeds we plant throughout the year, there is a place for all of us in the wonderful journey of Eastertide.

After all, as the song goes: "Every morning is Easter morning from now on." Just as Mary Magdalene and the other beloved disciples were forever changed by the resurrection, may the joy of this Easter season grow in our hearts, every day, every moment, and every blessed encounter. We are an Easter people, and the world will never again be the same.

Happy Easter, dear ones.
Rev. Larry

News of Zimbabwe

Last week the Zim inflation rate hit an all time high with one US dollar going for \$20,000 Zim dollars. Less than two years ago it was \$1 to Zim \$280. The economy, along with a nationwide drought, is creating continued famine and food insecurity. We are asked to continue to pray for our sister church at Rufumiso and for all of our friends in Zimbabwe.

I have much better news closer to home with updates on our Zim Keene students, Samuel Khumbula and Blessing Sithole. Sam has been accepted into a 10 week summer research program at the Perlman School of Medicine at University of Pennsylvania! He will be one of 20 students doing research on radiation oncology with some very high level, widely known professionals (at least highly known by other researchers). We did a quick three day visit to Philly over spring break to familiarize Sam with the area. Not only did he spontaneously meet with the program coordinator, he met with three of the researchers, got a tour of the labs and sat in on a professional presentation. Sam is in heaven and is already planning to take part in a research project that can be published by the completion of his summer program. Sam LOVED all things U Penn and had an opportunity to tour the city.

Sam would have loved to have had an opportunity to do a summer internship focused on aerospace engineering but learned he couldn't get a security clearance because he isn't a US citizen. Sam felt the U Penn program was closer to physics than another offered to him by Dartmouth. Also, 93% of the students in the UPenn summer program go on to elite schools for their PhDs. That's Sam's goal.



Blessing was part of a Keene student leadership trip over spring break that took him on the path of Martin Luther King, Jr. The students stopped in DC and viewed the site of MLK's 'I Have a Dream' speech, visited the Holocaust Museum and the African American Museum, went to Greensboro, on to Selma, on to Atlanta, and then to Memphis. He made it back to Keene

on the Sunday after the big snowstorm. It was a lot for Blessing to process emotionally but he enjoyed every part of the trip. Blessing drove one of the two student vans and is now quite the experienced USA driver.

Blessing has a summer internship lined up in the Keene area. They make us proud, don't they? Your continuing interest and support of these fine, hardworking young men is deeply appreciated.

Connie Littlefield

Horton Center Updates

Please see below updates regarding the Horton Center

1. The Men's Fellowship has donated \$1000 toward our local youth camper registration at the Horton Center again this year. That sum will be divided up equally between all our campers that sign up before July.
2. The Horton Center opening work weekend is scheduled for May 17-19. If you are interested, go to the Horton Center home page for the details and to sign up.
3. They will be offering the Wilderness First Aid course at the Horton Center. This link will give all the information to interested folks:
<https://www.hortoncenter.org/wfa>
4. Tivi Pare, the executive camp director of the Horton Center will join us here at FCCW for our May 12 service.

George Ackerman

****END 68 HOURS OF HUNGER CRAFT FAIR****

**APRIL 13, 2024 —10am – 3pm
PAUL SCHOOL**

FCCW has reserved a table and will have a "SWEET SHOP". We are looking for all of you wonderful cooks out there to create a spectacular array of sweets! It can be candy, fudge, cake pops, anything sweet that you feel like making. The idea of having it limited to cake pops has been dropped, mainly because it is a LOT of work, and rather expensive for a relatively small return. Like the election day bake sale, small packages sell the best, keeping the cost of items affordable for everyone. More info will be forthcoming as we get closer to the fair. And we will be looking for a few folks to man the table. One thing I have tried is chocolate covered Ritz crackers, with peppermint extract. They taste like Thin Mints!! Chocolate Strawberries is another possibility. Use your imagination and as always, thank you in advance for your heartfelt contributions!

*Nancy Dee & Julie Kessler
FCCW FUNdraining Team*

Bake Sale Success!

Thank you to all the bakers for providing a fantastic assortment of cookies, brownies, whoopie pies. We were sold out by 1:30, making a profit of \$371. Thanks also to Jo, Connie and Donna for manning the table and interacting with all the locals who came to vote.

Nancy Dee and Julie Kessler

Holy Week At FCCW



Many thanks to Rachel White who goes above and beyond to make our sanctuary a beautiful and welcoming place.



Gratitude Galore

Blessings to our Church Family who provided us with the riches and beauty of nature for our Easter altar.

*Cheers,
Rachel*



Hazel MacBrien Nursery News

During March we keep track of the weather days. We decide if the weather is a lion day or a lamb day. March started off with several lamb days but then the lion days came, and we had some very windy and even some snowy days too. We're hoping that we have more lamb days to end the month. Both classes made bunnies for our Hopping Into Spring bulletin board!

We worked on letter Kk during the first week of March. The threes did some activities with kites and kangaroos and our sensory table was filled with corn, gold coins, green shamrocks and pots. The fours class made kangaroos and used beads to make simple patterns on kites with pipe cleaners for string.

During the 2nd week we introduced the letter Gg. The kids enjoyed mixing yellow and blue paint to make a green shamrock. The threes class made a green collage and explored with shaving cream and gold coins. The fours class made rainbow number towers with unifix cubes, and we also worked on syllables. Both classes brought in a green snack to share with their class and wore green clothing to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The leprechaun visited our school and left the children a shamrock lollipop and a squishy green clover.

The next week we worked on number three. Our sensory table was filled with beans, eggs, bunnies, carrots and chicks. The threes class used mini erasers to trace paths from bunny to egg and we worked on shapes by matching the bunny shape to the carrot shape. We also rolled a die and played feed the bunny that many mini carrot erasers. The afternoon class worked on rhyming by putting two halves of an egg together and making unifix cube math equations.

For the last week of March, we introduced the letter Ee. The threes opened a plastic egg, and we did some movements like buzz like a bee, flap your wings like a butterfly and hop like a bunny. They also worked on scissor skills by cutting up pieces of construction paper and then glueing them onto an egg shape. The fours class used scissors to cut eggs in half along different lines, sorted eggs from smallest to biggest and worked on 10-frames. Thursday, March 28th was our 100th day of pre-k!! We celebrated with a frosted donut and doing 10 different exercises 10 times to equal 100 total exercises using our projector

We hope everyone enjoyed their Easter even with the snow on the ground!

Denominations

I was raised Southern Baptist. I suppose for those who have some idea as to what that entails, I could end my essay right here. For you unlearned, here is the foundation. The preacher spoke of hell and damnation, fire and brimstone. Repent was a word I heard early in my childhood. Many times, I left church fearful about what I might have done, or what I might do that would cause me to go to hell. That's a lot of weight for a child to carry. There were alter calls that could be conducted multiple times in one's life, kind of like going to confession for the Catholics, but it was a public display. Another public display was the actual baptism. This involved full body water dunking before the whole congregation. I was baptized when I was ten. I did it for my Mama. I was baptized again when I was 15. I did it for myself. I did not know that according to the Baptist doctrine that I was not supposed to dance. Well, that did not set right with me for I love to dance. I'm sure there were other specifics that I was unaware of, but by that time in my life I was moving on.

Later in my teens and early adulthood I began searching for a church or theology that I could relate to. I attended Presbyterian, Methodist, other mainstream Christian denominations. My freshmen year of college found me looking into the Baha'i faith. It was simple and we met in homes or common settings. Mostly I liked the folk style of the music. Most of my twenties were spent unchurched. By my early thirties I found The Way Ministry. It too met in homes. The attraction for me was the research of the Bible. The leaders said, "Don't take my word for any biblical interpretation, learn it for yourself". Yet that is exactly what they ended up doing. They told me that if any family members, including my children, claimed to be gay, then I was to basically disown them. Whoa, stop right there! I still use the research method of learning the Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew translations of the Bible. They could not take that away from me.

Today, George and I are members of the best church ever. The First Congregational Church of Wakefield, UCC is our family. The Open and Affirming component of this church relates to our point of view. The Social Justice doctrine has been a part of my personal beliefs for most of my life. The FCCW church family is one of the most welcoming that I have encountered. We are active in the community without being judgmental towards those who may not follow our beliefs. Even within the members themselves there is no hostility towards different political or social concepts. For the most part, we walk-the-talk of Christ by loving God, our neighbors and ourselves. What more is needed?

Lord, I thank you for giving me a church that I can call home.

Donna V Ackerman

CPR Course Planned at FCCW

The Safe Church Team is pleased to offer a new CPR/AED class in April. The date (a Saturday) has not yet been determined, but NOW is the time to put your name on the list to hold a spot. Please call the church office to let Andrea know of your interest!

Carol Lundgren

Parish Helpers

The **next monthly meeting** will be held on Thursday, April 11, at 1 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We will welcome once again Gafney Library Director, Beryl Donovan. Beryl has addressed our group many times over the years and this will be her last visit as library director. Beryl is retiring this spring after a long and successful career serving the people of the Wakefield area! Please plan to attend as Beryl shares her knowledge and recommendations on current books and to thank her for her years of service to the community. (to read more about Beryl's career, click [here](#).)

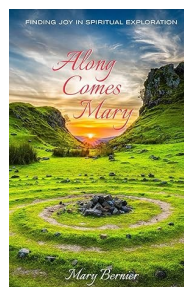
The Parish Helpers offer a \$1,000 scholarship for high school seniors or graduates entering their second semester of post secondary education. Students who are congregants/ participants of FCCW, children of a Parish Helper, and grandchildren of a Parish Helper who live in Wakefield area are eligible to apply. Please contact the church office for applications.

The Parish Helpers welcome all women from the church and the community!

Carol Jeffery

New in Our Church Library

"Along Comes Mary: Finding Joy in Spiritual Exploration" By Mary Bernier.



In this book, Mary (our church member) relives phases of her life, from childhood through early retirement, as her own spiritual journey unfolds along a winding river. Her story guides us through smooth and rough passages that include glimpses into her religious background, her spirituality, touches with the paranormal and travel to wondrous places. Her openness invites you to discover ways to increase your presence and gratitude as you live into your spirituality. Source: Amazon

Linda Petkunas, Church Librarian

Come Join the Prayer Shawl Ministry

If you are a knitter, or if you crochet, the Prayer Shawl group would love to have join one of our gatherings! We meet the third Tuesday of each month in the Parish Helpers Room at Church from 10:00 am to 11:30 am. Our purpose is to provide knitted hugs to our friends who may have suffered a loss, who are ill, or who are celebrating an event in their lives. Past shawls have gone to Rev Mary James and Rev Alberta Wallace as remembrances of their time here. We have given them to our friends who have lost a spouse or other close family member, who have had surgery or a difficult medical diagnosis; for example, shawls have been given to members of both the grief support and caregivers support groups.



We can even provide you with yarn! Generous folks have donated many skeins of suitable yarn which have resulted in some truly lovely shawls. Each shawl is generally 5 feet (60 inches) long and 1 & ½ feet (18 inches) wide (about 63 stitches across) and has a fringe at each end, but we make many other sizes and shapes, including those for children and baptismal blankets for babies. Each shawl is blessed by the group, and the recipient receives a copy of the blessing as well. Come see what we're all about!

*Priscilla Frothingham
Harriet Wilson*

Focus Group for Young Adults & Teens

Your voice is so important, and we'd love to hear from you—the heart and future of this church! We'll explore your hopes, dreams, and concerns about FCCW and how we can be more inclusive, inviting, and essential in the here and now, and into the future. What do you like about FCCW? What can we all do better? What drives you? What would you like to participate in? We will be meeting in a neutral, safe space for open conversation on your thoughts on church, our purpose, and growth.

Interested? Please email or text to let me know! We'll be meeting towards the end of April (date TBD—whatever works for most). So excited to hear you, Chris Feddern cfeddern1@gmail.com 603-973-6178

Chris Feddern

You are invited!

Café Open-Mic Night — April 16, 5:30

We hope you can join us for a night of good food, good fun, good laughs, and Synergy! Come one, come all for some appetizers, potluck dinner, dessert, and entertainment. If you have a favorite dish you'd like to share, all the merrier. Cooking not your thing? No worries, we're sure 'loaves and fishes' will apply!

If you'd like to share some 'talent', this is the place for you! Talent or no, funny or serious, as a group or solo, we promise to be a supportive and inclusive audience. Imagination got your tongue? Here are some ideas—sing a song, play an instrument, say a joke, head up a sing-a-long, read a poem or a section of your favorite book, do a skit, or even juggle!

This night of Synergy will be hosted by Stewardship and Finance. There's a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall, or just let Chris know in person or cfeddern1@gmail.com. We can't wait to see you! *PS. To ease the burden of cleanup, please bring your own place setting and serving utensil if you bring a dish.*

Chris Feddern, Stewardship Ministry

New Faith Formation Study!

Please consider joining us for our next Faith Formation study entitled THE ANATOMY OF A CHRISTIAN: A ZINE ON PRIVILEGE AND SOLIDARITY. This will be a 5 week study and a brief description of the material contents follows:

In the face of racism, inequality, prejudice, and privilege, do you ever wonder what next steps you can take with your family and friends, neighbors and co-workers, for the sake of God's justice and love? ... "The Anatomy of a Christian" takes the ancient image of the Body of Christ as a framework and springboard for exploring the challenges of inequality, privilege, and solidarity in our lives.

"The Anatomy of a Christian" is divided into five sections; Each section includes a theme, scripture passage, reflection, prayer, conversation starters, and some simple, accessible activities to try - all for the sake of building a healthier Body of Christ, and a more vibrant, just, inclusive Beloved Community.

The first class will be Tuesday, April 16 at 12:00. It will be a hybrid style class that will meet in person at the church and on zoom. Please contact Julie Kessler at julielouisekessler@gmail.com or by phone, 603-871-8066 if you are interested.

Julie Kessler

Celebrations!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

1 Rob Nelson	14 Adam Szirbik
4 Karen Hagy	15 Ginny Schweitzer
4 Julia McCarthy	19 Jo Szirbik
10 Kristin Galabrun	24 Ann Eaton
11 Michael Crew	24 Molly James
11 Linda Turner	28 Dawson Cotreau
11 Michael Weeks	28 Madison Cotreau
12 Darlene Clements	30 Linda Messer

APRIL ANNIVERSARIES

5 Rick & Cindy Denver
15 Bill & Susie Goodwin
22 Carol & Rob Lundgren
23 Dana & Julie Margolis
25 Nathan & Deb Fogg

FCCW Tee Shirts

Last call to order your FCCW Tee Shirt! Show your church spirit and get yours before it's too late! Please contact Ginny at 522-9593 by April 8th.



FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN

We believe that prayer is powerful! During this time of transition in our church, let us pray for the Diaconate, the Search Committee, the Officers, Ministry Coordinators, and Leadership Council for their thoughtful deliberations in guiding our church onward.

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:

Patrica Currier family; Laura F and family; Dave S; Connie L; Marie and Jack H; Bob L; Dave and Charlotte L; Sue L; Arlene L; Cindy E; Michael T; Chrissy B

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.

Support Group at FCCW

CareGiver Self-Care Support meets here at FCCW on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month, every month! Some in the group have loved ones living in nursing homes; others are caring for loved ones in their homes. It doesn't matter! When you care about the well-being of another, you use that caring sense to be a helper, a supporter on the journey. Our meetings are from 9:30-10:30 a.m. Whenever possible we invite a professional to present to the group to further our knowledge of being the best we can be. We've had an elder law attorney, a meditation guided experience, social workers, nursing home staff, home care staff and others. If you "fit" as being a caring individual and someone somewhere in your life is receiving care, please consider joining this warm and welcoming group. And please pass along the word about the kind of support people encounter here Conversations and circumstances are confidential. It is an amazing experience! Questions? Call the Church Office and leave word for Carol Lundgren, Caregiver Support Facilitator. She will return your call promptly. Blessings.

Carol Lundgren

APRIL 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 10px;">Rev. Larry Away April 1–14</div>	1 Caregiver Self-Care Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. Choir 5:30	2	3 Scrabble Group 1–3 p.m.	4	5 Al-Anon Family Group – 7 p.m. Fellowship Hall	6 Grief Support Group 11 a.m.
7 2nd Sunday of Easter Worship and Communion 10 a.m. Rev. Mary James , Guest Preacher Coffee Hour	8 Solar Eclipse Choir 5:30	9 Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m.	10	11 Parish Helpers Meeting 1 p.m.	12 Al-Anon Family Group – 7 p.m. Fellowship Hall	13 HMNS Pancake Breakfast 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
14 3rd Sunday of Easter Worship—10 a.m. Donna Ackerman, Guest Preacher Coffee Hour	15 Tax Day! Caregiver Self-Care Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. Choir 5:30	16 Prayer Shawl Ministry—10 a.m. Faith Formation 12 Noon Pot-luck dinner 5:30 p.m.	17	18	19 Al-Anon Family Group – 7 p.m. Fellowship Hall	20 Grief Support Group 11 a.m.
21 4th Sunday of Easter Worship—10 a.m. Earth Day Service Chelsea Steinhauer-Scudder, Preaching Coffee Hour Leadership Council Meeting—11:30	22 EARTH DAY Choir 5:30	23 Faith Formation 12 Noon Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m.	24	25	26 Al-Anon Family Group – 7 p.m. Fellowship Hall	27
28 5th Sunday of Easter Worship—10 a.m. Coffee Hour	29 Choir 5:30	30 Faith Formation 12 Noon	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p>Mark your Calendars!</p> <p>The next PKZ Pancake Breakfast will be held the Saturday before Father's Day, June 15!</p> </div>			



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