

STEEPLE VIEWS

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



REVEREND DR. JAMES L. MILLS, SR., PASTOR
REVEREND GEORGE HARVEY, PASTOR EMERITUS
REVEREND MARY A. JAMES, PASTOR EMERITA
DECEMBER 2025

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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

Rev. Dr. James L. Mills, Sr.

Advent Greetings Beloveds,

The Thanksgiving and Advent seasons are busy times of year for pastors and church leaders. Even if you are not a faith leader or an Advent participant, the demands of this hectic season can be overwhelming. Recently, I have been thinking about the importance of self-care. As the saying goes, you cannot pour from an empty pitcher. The sentiment of caring for ourselves is worth keeping in our hearts year-round. We must first take care of ourselves to effectively care for others. Taking time for self-care allows us to recharge and replenish our physical and mental energy. It also helps us become more in tune with our bodies and emotions, helping us avoid making impulsive decisions based on temporary circumstances. One spiritual practice that is available to us is to consistently check in with ourselves and put the world on pause.

Unless we totally cut ourselves off from life, it's impossible to avoid frustration, anger, and anxious thoughts. All of us need to recognize when those thoughts and feelings begin to materialize. For me, I feel the shift internally, and then it starts to show through my body language. For the past several weeks, the spirit has been reminding me to practice the HALT.

We make impulsive, bad decisions when we are **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired**. The more we learn to check in with our bodies, the better we will be at not making bad, impulsive, permanent decisions based on temporary circumstances.

Hungry

Angry

Lonely

Tired

What Do Deacons Do?

According to our by-laws, the Diaconate “shares with the Pastor the oversight of the spiritual life of the church.” This includes assisting with the Sacraments, weekly worship services, weddings, and memorial services, reaching out to invite and welcome new members, and participating in the “nurture, care, and discipline” of members, and in a program of visitation. We are working to restart a program of taking communion to our members and friends who are unable to attend services in person. The deacons also have a role in finding an interim minister when necessary, calling a Pastoral Search Team when necessary, and arranging coverage in the absence of the settled pastor.

The Diaconate Coordinators administer the Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund, which provides emergency financial assistance to church members and friends in Wakefield and Brookfield.

During worship, deacons arrange for acolytes for candle-lighting, and often serve in that capacity. We are available to any member of the congregation who needs a listening ear or a shoulder to lean on during moments of stress. We are always ready and willing to listen! We administer the prayer chain, a group of 36+ people who provide “immediate intercessory prayers” for individual needs or situations.

Harriet Wilson



Front row from left to right:
Evy Truhn, Jeff Perkins, Anne
Palmariello and Jo Szirbik

Back row from left to right:
Harriet Wilson, Ken Ballinger, Ginny
Schweitzer, Julie Evenson, Donna
Ackerman and Gail Feddern

Outreach Ministry Programs

The Outreach Ministry encompasses several impactful programs, each dedicated to serving both the congregation and the broader community. Below is an overview of the main initiatives currently underway:

5 for 5 UCC Offerings

The Outreach Ministry actively participates in the 5 for 5 United Church of Christ offerings. These include:

- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund
- Our Church's Wider Mission
- Strengthen the Church

Fair Trade Products

Coordinated by Margie Galabrun, Fair Trade products are made available to the congregation. These items are attractively displayed in the beautiful corner cabinet located in the Fellowship Hall, providing an opportunity to support ethical and sustainable trade.

Food Pantry

The Food Pantry, coordinated by Jo Szirbik in consultation with Marylou MacLean, offers essential support to those in need within the community. This program ensures that food assistance is accessible to all who require it.

Pride Day Activities

Pride Day activities are organized by dedicated volunteers with strong support from the congregation. These events demonstrate the ministry's commitment to inclusiveness and community engagement.

Shepherd Program

The Shepherd Program is a collaborative effort coordinated by Rachel White, Margie Galabrun, Harriet Wilson, and Jean Miccolo. This initiative focuses on providing rides to medical appointments for those in our community without transportation.

PKZ – Zimbabwe Team

The PKZ – Zimbabwe Team is coordinated by Connie Littlefield and Ann Bilodeau. This team works to build relationships and provide support for Zimbabwean partners and projects.

Members of the Outreach Ministry are Ann Bilodeau, Coordinator; Andrea Costello; and Maxi Schultz.



Ann Bilodeau, Coordinator

News of Zimbabwe

Thank you for all who have written cards and letters for Pastor Ruzana Nehonde, a Zimbabwean living in Worcester, MA currently being held by ICE at Richwood Correctional Center in Richwood, Louisiana. Pastor Ruzana is deeply appreciative of our outreach and all efforts being made to assist her. Recently when the RCC chaplain wasn't available to lead worship, Pastor Ruzana was called upon and the others being detained felt that *Pastor was meant to lead them*. This brought comfort to all of them. A reporter for The Boston Globe is on the story. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey and Rep Jim McGovern have been contacted for assistance.



Meanwhile Pastor Ruzana operates a non-profit in Zimbabwe for widows and orphans called Blessed Women Ministry and worries how she can take care of the women and children in her program while she is incarcerated. Yet this is who ICE considers a detriment to our society?

Now is the time of the year when **child sponsorships** are renewed. Your support for this program is so deeply appreciated and makes a lasting difference in a person's life. I remember when Sam Khumbula came under PKZ sponsorship. He said for the first time in his life he didn't have to worry about if he was going to eat that day or if he would be sent home for not having paid his school fees. Such is a world most of us can not imagine. Most of the children we sponsor live with a single mother, a mother who often has a chronic illness. Some are teens on their own. The average Zimbabwean household gets by on \$3-4 per day and are without formal employment. Yet Zimbabwean moms are extraordinarily resourceful and are by far the hardest working women I have ever seen doing whatever they can to take care of their children.

Preparations for the PKZ cottage are underway! Our PKZ Director Vrante has ordered the cement and bricks are being molded locally for the foundation. Some 40,000 very particular exterior bricks have been ordered from Harare so they will perfectly match the other three cottages. Vrante will be juggling a few balls in the air because our long delayed container will be making its way to Beira around Christmas time. This is getting exciting! Blessings to all,

Connie Littlefield

It would be awesome if our church would send mail to **Pastor Ruzana Nehonde** while she is held at Richwood Correctional Center in Richwood, Louisiana. The conditions are horrible, her morale is low and if we could send her messages of love, faith and support, it may strengthen her spirit and fill her heart. Special bible verses would be great! letters must include the detainee's name and registration number (or A-number) and the sender's name and address.

Pastor Ruzana Nehonde
A-088742095
180 Pine Bayou Circle
Richwood, LA 71202

Parish Helpers Luncheon

The Annual Christmas Luncheon will be held on Thursday, **December 11, at 12 NOON**) at the Knotty Pine Restaurant on Pine River Pond Road. We will be ordering from a limited menu. Once again, we will hold our Yankee Swap! To participate, just bring a wrapped gift (about \$10 value) and a sense of humor! It's always a lot of fun. If you plan to attend, be sure to let Ginny know—522-9593 — to add you to our reservation!

Carol Jeffery

Giving Stock to FCCW

Did you know that FCCW can now receive donations of stock? It's easy and it could save you time and money. You can arrange to have the shares of stock transferred directly to FCCW as a donation. You may specify how the money will be used by the church. The donation will be full market value of the stock at the time of transfer, and there are various tax benefits associated with this kind of transaction! Since everyone's financial situation is different, you should check with your financial advisor or accountant to understand the benefits of donating stocks directly to the church, and whether this will work for you. Your financial advisor will need a form from us that Janice Brejwo (nutterislander83@gmail.com) can provide to you. Though stock donation can be made anytime during the year, the end of the year is a great time to give a gift of stock. Please consider this option as part of your year-end tax strategy.

The Finance Team

Note from the editor—While editing this issue, I thought I'd check out AI and see how that works. Can you tell which article in this newsletter is AI? I wonder if I can get it to produce the entire newsletter? LOL.

Carol Jeffery, Editor (for now)

Harvest Fair: Wow! Just Wow!

What an awesome Harvest Fair we had - we made over \$4000! There are so many folks to thank -but alas, I won't try to mention names since the likelihood of leaving someone unsung is a huge possibility. In the end, it takes a village and our village at FCCW stepped up big time.

Thank you to all that brought in breakfast and lunch food items for the **Kitchen**, baked those **Cookie Walk** cookies and baked all those fabulous offerings for the **Bake Sale** table. All those foods items combined brought in close to \$1100!

And thank you to all who purchased and/or acquired gift cards for our **Penny Sale**. Always a crowd-pleaser, this fundraising component brought in over \$900!



And that other \$2000 that we made is thanks to our other areas: **Jewelry Table** - thank you to all who donated items and oh my, what a beautiful presentation of that jewelry.

Baskets - another wow! We asked (by way of a bulletin board filled with tags asking for specific items) and you delivered (every tag was taken and fulfilled). Thank you all for allowing us to fill those baskets.

And the **Christmas and Other Cool Stuff Boutique** - again, many thanks for all those lovely (and cool!) donated items.



Yes, it was a day of fundraising - but more important, it was a day of fellowship and fun! Thank you all for making it possible.

Julie Kessler

Scars

We all have scars. Some are visible, some hidden, and some only you know their origin. Tragedy strikes and leaves us in its wake. We struggle to regain our footing. That struggle can take days, months, or even years before we find ourselves somewhat whole again.

Some of you have heard that we had a night raider in our hen house. I had no idea that raccoons could rip and tear into a building trying to get to their prey. I can't begrudge it for doing what comes naturally. We are the intruders. Rural life creates a symbiotic relationship with nature. Yet, for the most part, we have the advantage. We lost three hens out of twelve. We repaired and reinforced the hen house, patching holes that the raccoon created. George's cherished hen, Henrietta, seems to have come through unscathed. I lift the top of the outdoor pen, and she jumps up on the frame and ventures out into the gardens undisturbed by the night's carnage. George discovered another hen deep under the coop. She didn't move and seemed to be struggling. We left her to see if she would recover. The next day George found that she had moved closer to the ramp that leads to the inside room of the hen house. He belly-crawled under the coop and gently talked to her, letting her know she was strong and loved. This morning, he found her huddling inside near the water and food containers. She carries the visible results of the conflict that occurred days before. We believe she will survive, and George has named her Ukraine. War torn and battered, she rests with her sisters as she struggles to regain her strength.



Just as nature challenges each other, we too are faced with conflicts. Like the picture of the eggs, sometimes the manifestation of our challenges can be seen. There are small eggs, medium eggs, and in some

cases very large eggs. Trauma can be held internally or released into the world for all to see. For some, these Holiday times can be difficult. Loved ones lost who are not at the table is a palpable reality. Families that are divided, for whatever reason, brings pain when celebrations should occur. Some don't have a place to be or enough to share. I believe that what is needed for all of us is kindness, understanding, and love. For some a hug is best. For others only a positive word or even a smile.

Even though Henrietta seems fine, we believe that she might have been the one who delivered the extra-large egg. It was her way of healing from the trauma and moving forward as she scratches the gardens. We pray that Ukraine will rebound carrying her scars for all to see, but with time and love will once again join the festivities of life.

Donna V Ackerman

Alternative Gift Giving 2025

Our members and friends have a long history of sharing their resources with others during the Christmas season through the Alternative Gift Giving program. Check out these wonderful programs.

Alternative Gift Giving Opportunities

Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund

The Feddern Fund provides temporary emergency financial assistance to individuals and families in crisis situations within our church and the local community. Most often the essential needs involve oil, gas, propane and electricity.

Heifer International (www.heifer.org)

Heifer International supports small farmers to sustainably address hunger and poverty while generating economic opportunities for rural women, youth and indigenous populations. You can purchase shares of goats, chickens, pigs, rabbits, llamas, heifers and other animals.

PKZ Child Sponsorship

Sponsorship provides school fees, school uniforms, shoes, and school supplies to those children most in need. Sponsorship makes education a reality and changes the trajectory of lives.

If you wish to participate in more than one of the following programs, it is only necessary to write ONE CHECK with your donation allocated according to your wishes. Checks are made out to **First Congregational Church of Wakefield (FCCW)** and accompany this form with a specified amount indicated to the program(s) you choose below. For more information on each of these projects/missions, please see the back of this form.

A lovely card is available if you are giving in the name of a friend or family member

Local Programs:

Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund \$ _____

Global:

Heifer International (www.heifer.org) \$ _____

Zimbabwe Mission Projects (www.projectkz.org)

PKZ Child Sponsorship \$ _____

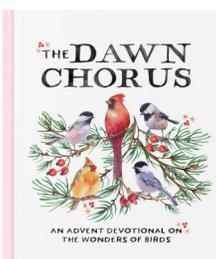
Total \$ _____

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Faith Formation Discussion Group

Please consider joining us starting the first Tuesday of Advent - December 2nd. We will be using both a SALT study ("The Dawn Chorus - An Advent Devotional on the Wonders of Birds") and the Advent devotional from Stillspeaking Writers' Group ("Soon and Very Soon").



A devotional for families of all shapes and sizes, "The Dawn Chorus" will fill your Advent season with joy and astonishment. After all, songbirds know a thing or two about singing into the darkness, and looking to the light.



About "Soon and Very Soon"—
"The theme acknowledges our need for radical hope, and encourages us to prepare for God's best."

Please contact Julie Kessler at julielouisekessler@gmail.com if interested in finding out more or would like a copy of either of the Advent devotional booklets. Visit our website for more details on Faith Formation classes at <https://www.fccwakefieldnh.org/event/adult-faith-formation/>

Library News

Author Highlight: William Barry

William Barry, a distinguished spiritual director and author, was born in Worcester, MA. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1950, studied philosophy in Germany from 1953 until 1956, and was at Weston College for theology studies from 1959 until 1963. Ordained a priest in 1962, Barry went on to earn a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Michigan in 1968. Despite such a busy and committed life, Barry found the time to write more than 15 books. Barry had the rare ability to present complex spiritual issues in clear, well-written prose. He was one of the most significant Ignatian commentators of the early 21st century. He died in December of 2020, leaving a legacy that will long influence spiritual directors and seekers.

We have three of his books in our church library:
"Finding God in All Things" (S-J)
"Paying Attention to God: Discernment in Prayer" (S-Pr)
"Seek My Face: (S-Pr)

*Linda Petkunas,
Church Librarian*

Hazel MacBrien Nursery School News

During the month of November, we worked on letters Oo, Vv and Tt. Our themes were owls, vehicles, and turkeys/Thanksgiving. The sensory table had beans, owls, dragons, unicorns and wooden treasure boxes for Oo week, kinetic sand, vehicles and colored popsicle sticks for Vv week and corn, pilgrim and Native American rubber ducks and turkeys for Tt week.

For our "We love our lil' Turkeys" bulletin board we dot marked coffee filters and then added a body and their picture to make adorable turkeys. We made scarecrows for our fall bulletin board. Some of the activities we did for Oo week included owl shape memory, owl patterns cut and paste, painted an orange letter O, matched colored owls and played feed the owl shapes. For Vv week we moved around the room like different vehicles, painted with cars, used parquetry blocks to make different vehicles and made a volcano erupt with baking soda and vinegar. We did a listen and glue turkey activity, played Thanksgiving Bingo, used unifix cubes to make feathers on a turkey, fed the turkey a certain number of vegetable erasers and did a turkey shape match for letter Tt week.

Both classes celebrated Friendsgiving and brought in a snack item to share with our class. We talked about things we were thankful for and made special keepsakes for our families.

We are so THANKFUL for our beautiful classroom and the support of all of our FCCW friends Wishing everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving and a joyous start to the holiday season!!

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Christmas Caroling

This year the FCCW family is encouraged to join in the festivities of the Greater Wakefield Chamber of Commerce Holiday Stroll on **Friday, December 5th!** All are welcome! We will begin by caroling at 5 p.m. in the front of the Town Hall with members of the community. I heard that Santa will be arriving, followed by a candy cane hunt and the beautiful Christmas Tree Lighting! As if that isn't enough, there will be mulled cider, hot chocolate, gingerbread cookies and other goodies given out by local businesses along with a coloring contest and an opportunity to pat an alpaca! (Oh my!)

We also plan to provide some Christmas cheer to some of our FCCW beloveds. Bring your warm winter apparel and let's add to the holiday spirit! Please see Gloria Ballinger or me if you have any questions.

Celebrations!

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Tom Stanley	13 Carol Jeffery
2 Shannon Mercer	16 Jeff Ballard
2 Lynn Watts	16 Coralena Meroski
3 Robert Gehring Jr.	16 Barry Truhn
3 Marie Hebb	20 Rev. George Harvey
3 Jean Miccolo	22 Jeff Perkins
9 Richard Zacher	26 Jessica St Pierre
10 Gloria Ballinger	30 Skip Theiling

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

10 Eric & Amanda Boggs
27 Peter & Linda Foss

FCCW Tree of Memories

Remember your loved ones with a personalized wooden dove.

We will have a tree in the entry way of the church so that our church family and friends can be part of remembering loved ones.

Doves will be available (free of charge). Any questions, contact Ginny Schweitzer at 522-9593.



Christmas Worship Services

FCCW Candlelight Christmas Eve service will be held on Christmas Eve, December 24th, at **6 p.m.**

A Blue Christmas Service will be held at the Community Church of Milton, 7 Steeple Street, Milton on December 19th at **7 p.m.**

FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN

We believe that prayer is powerful!

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:

Pat A. and family; Brian T; Gerald B; Lois B; Sara M; Nancy B; Cindy E; Our sister church in Zimbabwe, Rufumiso UCCZ

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.

Naps are Healing! And other Truths!

Dear Beloved Friends -- your get-well messages to me, your intentional prayers for my recovery, have been humbly received with deep thanks and love. I know about the power of prayer -- it's in my DNA, but I was

out on a medical limb and could not find my way back without YOU and, the amazing doctors and nursing staff, lovely LNAs, dietician and phlebotomists, housekeepers, meal cookers and bringers of our local Wolfeboro Hospital HUGGINS! EVERY SINGLE PERSON who tended and cared for me ... were AWESOME, professional and caring! There is NO DOUBT in my mind that God was and is in the details of my ongoing recovery. I am feeling blessed and highly recommend NAPS!

Love, Carol Lundgren



I N C L E M E N T

Weather Policy

FCCW Cancellations due to inclement weather will be posted on:

WMUR Channel 9
WCSH Channel 6

FCCW Facebook page at :

<https://www.facebook.com/FirstCongregationalChurchofWakefieldUCC>

DECEMBER 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. Choir 5:30	2 Faith Formation 12 noon	3 Chair Yoga 10 a.m. Diaconate Meeting 5 p.m.	4 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m.	5 Wakefield Chamber of Commerce Holiday Stroll Caroling 5 p.m.–8 p.m.	6
7 2nd Sunday of Advent Worship and Communion 10 a.m. Coffee Hour	8 Choir 5:30	9 Faith Formation 12 noon Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m.	10 Chair Yoga 10 a.m.	11 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m. Parish Helpers Christmas Luncheon 12 noon at Knotty Pine BPLOA Meeting 6 p.m.	12	13
14 3rd Sunday of Advent Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour	15 Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m. Finance Ministry Meeting - 1 p.m. Choir 5:30	16 Prayer Shawl Ministry 10 a.m. Faith Formation 12 noon	17 Chair Yoga 10 a.m.	18 End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m.	19 Blue Christmas Service 7 p.m. Community Church of Milton	20
21 4th Sunday of Advent Worship 10 a.m. Coffee Hour	22 Choir 5:30	23 Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m.	24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service –6 p.m. 	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26	27
28 1st Sunday after Christmas Worship—10 a.m. Coffee Hour	29 Choir 5:30	30	31 Chair Yoga 10 a.m. NEW YEAR'S EVE			

The Greater Wakefield
Chamber of Commerce

Secret Santa



Thank you for your past support of the program.
We will again be distributing gift cards to parents.
Cash and/or checks payable to "Secret Santa Program"

In Person:

Profile Bank
65 Meadow Street
Sanbornville, NH 03872

By Mail:

Wakefield Chamber
PO Box 111
Sanbornville, NH 03872



ALL donations go towards the Secret Santa Program. As a result of your donations, local families will be able to purchase gifts of their choosing for their children.



**Thank you very much
for your support!**

DONATION DEADLINE - NOVEMBER 30

Late Donations Accepted!



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