

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
FEBRUARY 2026

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THE PASTOR'S PAGE

Rev. Dr. James L. Mills,

Greetings Beloveds,

As a predominantly white church, reflecting on Black history invites us to explore the profound contributions and resilience of the Black community, particularly through the lens of faith and worship. The establishment of independent free Black churches during the era of slavery stands as a testament to the strength and determination of freed Black individuals who sought spiritual refuge and communal identity in a world that sought to oppress them. Pioneers like Richard Allen, who founded the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, recognized the inherent power of faith to serve as a source of comfort and a platform for resistance against injustice. These churches emerged as vital hubs for social, political, and spiritual life, allowing enslaved Africans and their descendants to cultivate a sense of belonging and agency in a segregated society.

The influence of Black churches extended far beyond their walls, especially during the Civil Rights Movement, where they served as critical organizing centers for activists fighting for equality and justice. Leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. often turned to the church as a source of inspiration, using its teachings and communal spirit to galvanize movements and foster hope among communities in turmoil. The church provided a sanctuary for those engaged in activism and acted as a beacon of light in times of darkness, nurturing the rich traditions of Black activism rooted in spiritual belief. This historical collaboration between faith and activism challenges us to reflect on our roles within the church in these times and encourages us to actively engage in our communities, embodying the teachings of Christ through acts of justice and mercy.

As we honor these components of Black history, we are invited to expand our understanding of faith, music, and community, recognizing the powerful narratives. Let us embrace this history, learn from it, and be intentional in our continuing work towards ensuring FCCW remains a place of inclusivity, mutual respect, and shared hope for the future.

Outreach Ministry

“As we move through the world, we make a statement, whether we intend to or not. The words we speak and the tone in which we use are the music we choose to play in the world. Some of us fill the space with passionate arias, others with healing hymns. We are all called to contribute.” -The Daily Om

The Outreach Ministry encompasses several impactful programs each dedicated to serve the congregation and strengthen our relationship within the community and beyond. Below is an overview of those program we are currently working on:

Through our work with the Guidance Counselor at the *Paul School, we are requesting donations for the Care Closet that has food packets, hygiene products, snacks, athletic supplies, clothing, and other care items that the kids in the upper grades may need.

Sending letters of love and support for Pastor Ruzana and the Women detainees at Richwood Prison in Louisiana who are so grateful for our love and support. If you would like to send a note of encouragement, love, and caring, below is Pastor Ruzana’s mailing information. **Please be sure to include your return address on the envelope or the letter will not be delivered.**

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

One Great Hour of Sharing will be coming up in March during Lent. A collection will be taken on Sunday, March 15th. This Lenten offering supports disaster recovery refugees and development activities. At this time, Congregation members are asked to reflect on their blessings in life and make donations to support this cause. This year’s theme is “Our Love Offering To the World.”

Members of the Outreach Ministry are Ann Bilodeau, Coordinator, Connie Littlefield, Andrea Costello, Jean Miccolo, and Maxi Schultz.

Jean Miccolo, Member

*Paul School Requests

Food packets, granola bars (Kind brand is preferred); trial size deodorant, ChapStick, and other personal care items.

For older students, Grades 5-8: hygiene (menstrual) products, small, medium, and large athletic T-shirts and shorts. For the younger kids, Grades K-4: Size 6-8 pants; kids small, medium, and large T-shirts. Gently used clothing is welcome.

Excerpts from Letters from Pastor Ruzana

"Thank you for all your prayers for us. The ladies cry daily. Some are saying they are tired, they can't pray anymore. They feel like their prayers are not heard so we continue encouraging each other to be strong.... We all are waiting for the day they will call our names to say we are going home. This week will be tough, no hot meals. We will be given cereal for breakfast and sandwiches in a Ziploc bag (bread, cheese, bologna) for lunch and dinner. Life is not easy here at all. We will share some noodles with those without commissary."

"I appreciate your prayers and thoughts of me every week. If I was not receiving these cards and letters my living here was going to be more breaking. This is a place of sorrow and brokenness not knowing what will happen and when and why in the first place am I here. It breaks my heart but I have to stay strong to the end."

"My beautiful ladies in the Wakefield Church, Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is my joy to write to you after a very tough week.... I was very sick for many days and unable to eat or sleep with crucial pain in my whole body. The pain was unbearable. (Ruzana was finally given Tylenol on the 5th day.) I pray that God will hear our cry and release us. God is the only one with that authority to open or close doors. I really want to be home with my son."

"People are very sick with a cold and everyone is coughing as we are inside with no windows for fresh air. I pray that God will hear the cry of His people and release us from this horrible place. In my years of working in the health field I have never seen the kind of nurses we have here, so coldhearted. No matter how you are sick they are not moved at all."

Connie Littlefield

Banjos, Bones and Ballads



Traditional songs, rich in local history and a sense of place, present the latest news from the distant past. They help us to interpret present-day life with an understanding of the working people who built our country. Tavern songs, banjo tunes, 18th century New England hymns, sailor songs, and humorous stories about traditional singers and their songs highlight this informative program by Jeff Warner.

This program is possible through a grant from the NH Humanities and is open to the public. We will begin as usual at 1 p.m. with refreshments followed by the program. Plan on coming and invite a friend! All are welcome.

Carol Jeffery

The Ministry of Finance and Memorial Gifts in a Nutshell

Our ministry willingly, and most of the time very happily, fulfills the tasks assigned to us in The FCCW Bylaws.



Left to right, Nancy Dee, Janice Brejwo, Harriet Wilson, Julie Kessler and Mary Bernier

The one you probably know best is our overseeing of the Church's finances and investments. Treasurer Nancy takes care of many day-to-day tasks such as bill paying and keeping the accounting activity ledgers complete and up-to-date, as well as monthly and annual summary reports.

Assistant Treasurer Julie makes Profile bank deposits and keeps accurate records of all pledgers and other donors providing many reports to individuals throughout the year.

Harriet is Finance designee for making deposits and withdrawals from our United Church Fund investments. The rest of the team helps in any way needed including coordinating the annual budgeting process with other ministry Coordinators and Leadership Council.

Mary and Nancy act as scribes taking our meeting minutes. It seems Mary always has a financial project going on.

Coordinator Janice's life is easy because we know we can count on each other to make our numerous, often very time-consuming, tasks manageable. We have multiple written procedures covering all FCCW financial activities which assure we complete our duties in an orderly fashion - everything from Sunday collection counting, managing the church credit card, Budgeting and receiving gifts to name just a few. We even have an Annual Checklist to make sure we do not overlook anything!

Finance couldn't do what we do without other valuable Church members who regularly attend our meetings to report on matters that affect church finances, offering valuable wisdom, insight and help with projects. These include Ron Kratt from B&G, Ken Ballinger - a wearer of many hats including Endowment, and of course, our Rev! Our monthly meetings are held on Zoom and YOU are invited.

Janice Brejwo

IT'S BAAACK!!

Flu season is back! And this year we are informed that the vaccine is not totally effective against the most prevalent strain of flu that is infecting people all across the country. Cases are multiplying everywhere. And, of course, this is cold season as well. We have masks and hand sanitizer in the narthex and you are welcome to use them.

While the Passing of the Peace is still an important part of our Sunday worship service, we understand if some folks are uncomfortable hugging each other or even shaking hands right now. That's OK! If you wish to participate by crossing your arms over your chest, or even just smiling and nodding to your neighbor as you wish them the "Peace of Christ", that's fine.

And remember, it's not too late to get a flu shot!

Harriet Wilson, Diaconate

Library News

Author Highlight: Richard Rohr

Richard Rohr (born 1943) is an American Franciscan priest and writer on spirituality based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1970. Franciscan friar and ecumenical teacher, Father Richard Rohr bears witness to the deep wisdom of Christian mysticism and traditions of action and contemplation. Founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, he teaches how God's grace guides us to our birthright as beings made of Divine Love. He founded the New Jerusalem Community in Cincinnati in 1971, and the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque in 1987. In 2011, PBS called him "one of the most popular spiritual authors and speakers in the world". Our church library has two of his books:

"Divine Dance" (R-F) & "The Universal Christ" (B-J)
Source: Wikipedia

Linda Petkunas, Church Librarian

We Need Volunteers!

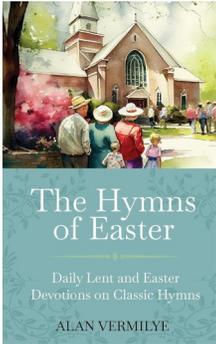
We enjoy this time together, but it doesn't just magically happen! **We need people to step up and help out!**

Our Coffee Hour Fellowship time provides an opportunity to reconnect with each other and create new friendships. The Hospitality Team is in need of **helpers to setup, serve and also clean up**. Please say you'll help out and let Rachel White know.

Also, if you could bring something for the table, it would be gratefully received. We especially like to offer cheese and fruit as healthy choices!

Lenten Faith Formation

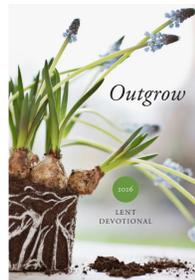
Please consider joining us as we walk through Lent using the devotional: **Hymns of Easter** A description follows:



The "Hymns of Easter" is a heart-warming devotional inspired by some of history's most cherished Easter hymns. Experience a fresh perspective on the hymns you've sung your whole life now set to personal reflections in this 40-day devotional journey.

The hymns include the *Hallelujah Chorus*, *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*, *He Lives*, *The Old Rugged Cross*, *Blessed Assurance*, *How Great Thou Art*, and *Amazing Grace*. You'll also discover intriguing stories and thought-provoking details like who wrote the hymn; what was going on in their life that perhaps inspired it; and how God has used this hymn throughout time to draw people closer to Him.

This study will start on February 17 (the day before Ash Wednesday). We meet every Tuesday at noon as a hybrid class (both in-person and on zoom). We will use the time to discuss the readings for that week, along with listening (and perhaps even singing!) the featured hymn for that week.



Our class will run for an hour (or so) and will be followed by a sharing of thoughts on the Still Speaking Lenten Devotional - Outgrow.

If you're interested in joining us on this Lenten path, please reach out to Julie Kessler at 603-871-8066 or julielouisekessler@gmail.com

Food Pantry Requests

Our church is so generous with all Food Pantry donations! For the month of February, we are requested to focus on the following items. Thank you!

Shelf Stable milk
Cereal (as always) - the fun ones!
Peanut butter
Hot Cocoa
Hearty Soups (we are still very cold)

Meet Our New Organist

I would like to give you all some background information on our new organist Beverly Woods. She agreed to help us out while Cindy had her operation and. It is now agreed that Beverly and Cindy will share the duties as organist.

Beverly has been in love with music since early childhood and has studied piano since the age of five.

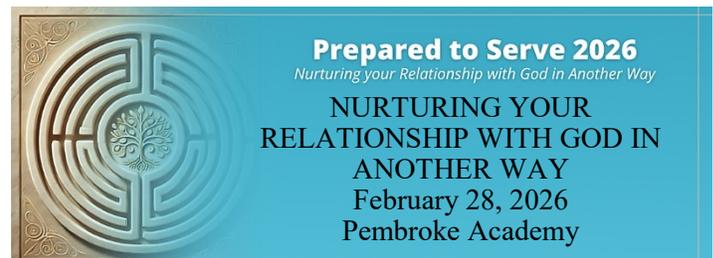
She's been playing professionally since 1972 and plays piano, organ and other keyboards, the hammered dulcimer, accordions, tsimbi, 6 and 7 string guitars, autoharp, mandolin, bouzouki, plus many others.

Beverly is part of String Equinox duo/band with Shana Aisenberg and performs at festivals, events and dances. They have also recently recorded "New Moon" and "House on The Corner".

Beverly became a grandmother for the first time and is overjoyed with her handsome boy. Ask her; she will show you pictures. Welcome Beverly!

Buddy Dee

Prepared to Serve—Registration Open



Prepared to Serve is an annual event hosted by the New Hampshire Conference. It is a day-long series of workshops held at Pembroke Academy. The 2026 Prepared to Serve workshops will follow the theme, "Another Way" by focusing on a new pathway system: The Four Pathways of Care: Self, Church, Local Community and the Wider World. The workshops have been grouped into these four categories. This new system allows you to select workshops based on the Pathways of Care that most interest you.

Some from our church attending. Registration for participants is open and FCCW has funds to offset a few fees, please view event here: <https://www.nhcucc.org/events/pts-2026>, and let CLA/Andrea know by 2/10 if you would like to register and attend!

News of Zimbabwe

George and I are just about packed and ready for our February 4th departure for Zimbabwe. We are deeply grateful to everyone who donated supplies for our bags and for the very generous cash donations that will allow us to respond to needs on the ground. Your support makes all of this possible.

Plans are always shifting. Due to delays in the completion and final evaluations by local officials of the three cottages already built, delivery of the building materials for the fourth cottage was delayed as well. The PKZ team is finally able to begin work, which means we will likely be doing some site work during our stay. I should have known better! Over the years, site work has been part of nearly every trip — from Rufumiso Church in 2005, to the road to Dzika in 2012, the Rufumiso parsonage and Nelly Mundeta's house in 2014 and the Humani Clinic in 2016.

Personally, I can't wait to see the children of Daisy Dube. It has been more than three and a half years and many of them are all grown up! I expect to be a puddle. I look forward to meeting the newer residents, all little ones.

Since the Rufumiso parsonage still needs painting and electricity, George and I, along with Molly and Karen — our two fellow travelers from Minnesota — will also be helping with painting there.



Rufumiso has recently called a new pastor, Rev. Charles Kanda, who began his ministry in January. We will carry with us a message of greeting and partnership from Rev. Mills. Our longtime friend, and Ann's adopted son, Eddie Bread, is undoubtedly already busy planning a lively worship service and celebration during our visit.

George will be teaching a science lesson in at least two schools — one in Chipinge, where Trevor attends, and one in Humani, which is (and was) Vranter's primary school. We also hope to visit as many of our sponsored children as possible. What fun it will be to deliver

photos, messages, and gifts so these young people can see the faces of those who are making their education a reality.

Molly, a retired Fish and Game educator, has made plans to share writing and other educational projects between students in Zimbabwe and Minnesota. Karen, a Rotarian whom I first met in Zimbabwe in 2014, brings with her a strong history of partnership. The Fergus Falls Rotary sponsored a farming project at Mt. Selinda in 2014–2015 and has recently sent substantial donations to upgrade the tractors they provided. This Rotary also awarded PKZ a \$9,000 grant to complete the plumbing and construct a fence at the Humani Clinic. Karen is an avid bird watcher and hopes to explore the Mt. Selinda rainforest and surrounding areas.

While in Humani, the travelers will sleep in a thatched hut, as most rural families do — and as I always did when staying there. Humani is within a natural conservancy area, so a game drive is planned. We hope to see giraffe, zebra, buffalo, rhinos, impala, kudu, eland, and warthogs — and, if we are very lucky, pangolin, leopards, elephants, and lions. I always heard elephants and lions at night and sometimes caught sight of elephants as they moved about in the morning.

And one more thing — the long-awaited shipping container is also due to arrive this week! George and I will have the experience of unloading the boxes we worked so hard to load back in August. Please wish us strong backs and plenty of patience.

I will be posting photos of our adventures on Facebook as internet access allows.

Thank you for your love and unwavering support. **You** are the reason the vital mission work of PKZ continues and why the partnership with Rufumiso UCCZ remains strong and meaningful.

Connie Littlefeld

Home Communion Visitation



Home Communion Visitation

In 2026 Rev and the Deacons will resume Home Communion Visitation. If you know of someone who would like a visit, please let Deacon Ken Ballanger know at kballinger@arkionls.com

Thank you

Celebrations!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Pat Anderson	16 Evy Truhn
2 Marilou MacLean	17 Ryan Dee
3 Kenneth Crew	19 Lisa Robinson
3 Maureen Steer	23 Allisa Eaton
6 Sue Lynn	24 Barry Lockard
10 Peter Foss	25 Kristin Weeks
11 Rob Lundgren	27 Charlie Bilodeau
12 Peter Connell	27 Tom Weeks
12 Ryan McCarthy	28 David Fairchild
14 Ann Gehring	28 Stephen Silcocks

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 10 Joe & Jan Brejwo
14 Lance & Marilou MacLean

Ash Wednesday Service

Wednesday, February 18th
at 6 pm

Evening Bible Study

Evening Bible Study with Rev is meeting on the first and third Thursday of each month. The group will be meeting at the church but may be via Zoom if the weather necessitates. For more information, contact Rev or Andrea at the church office at 603-522-3189.

Music Camp is Back!

Just to let everyone know —Music Camp will be returning to FCCW this summer!

We are in need of one or two people to help with organizing this worthwhile program. Also, it will be a fun time for volunteers to spend some time with the youth of Wakefield. If you would like to help, please send me an email at buddy.dee1023@gmail.com. We will be having planning meetings sometime in February.

Buddy Dee

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:

Sarah M; Brian T; Gerald B; Lois B; Nancy B; Cindy E; Our sister church in Zimbabwe, Rufumiso UCCZ; Pastor Ruzana and the Louisiana detainees.

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.

Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund

Dear Friends and Members of FCCW—In God’s holy name, the Diaconate offers our heartfelt gratitude for your generous donations to the Feddern Diaconate Discretionary Fund (FDDF) throughout this year, and especially for the gifts shared through the Alternative Gifts Outreach Program as we celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus. Your giving is a beautiful reflection of God’s love made visible—reaching out to those in our community who are experiencing hardship, whether through job loss, accidents, illness, or other unforeseen challenges.

Through your compassion, kindness, and faithful generosity, we have received \$4,200 in donations this year. Because of your gifts, we have been able to provide \$2,650 toward essential needs such as warmth, shelter, and healing. These offerings have brought hope and comfort to individuals and families at moments when they needed it most.

May God’s grace continue to shine upon each of you, and upon all who are blessed through this ministry. Your generosity is truly faith in action—bringing light, dignity, and love into difficult places.

With deep gratitude and blessings,

The Diaconate,
First Congregational Church of Wakefield, UCC

FEBRUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>4th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>Worship and Communion 10 a.m.</p> <p>Coffee Hour</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m.</p> <p>Choir 5:30</p> <p>SOUP ORDERS DUE !</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Faith Formation 12 noon</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Chair Yoga 10 a.m.</p> <p>Diaconate Meeting 5 p.m.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m.</p> <p>Parish Helpers Meeting 1 p.m.</p> <p>Evening Bible Study with Rev 5:30</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>SOUPER BOWL SOUP SALE</p> <p>PICK UP 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>5th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>Worship 10 a.m.</p> <p>Coffee Hour</p> <p>(Snow Date for Soup Pickup = 11 to 1 p.m.)</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Faith Formation 12 noon</p> <p>Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Chair Yoga 10 a.m.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m.</p> <p>Parish Helpers Special Performance 1 p.m.</p> <p>BPLOA Meeting p.m.</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>VALENTINE'S DAY</p>
<p>15</p> <p>6th Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>Worship 10 a.m.</p> <p>Coffee Hour</p> <p>Leadership Council Mtg.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>PRESIDENTS' DAY</p> <p>Caregiver's Support Group 9:30–10:30 a.m.</p> <p>Choir 5:30</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Prayer Shawl Ministry 10 a.m.</p> <p>Faith Formation 12 noon</p>	<p>18</p> <p>ASH WEDNESDAY</p> <p>Chair Yoga 10 a.m.</p> <p>Ash Wednesday Service—6 p.m.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m.</p> <p>Evening Bible Study with Rev 5:30</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p> <p>1st Sunday of Lent</p> <p>Worship—10 a.m.</p> <p>Coffee Hour</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Faith Formation 12 noon</p> <p>Ukulele Club 6–7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Chair Yoga 10 a.m.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>End 68 Hours of Hunger Volunteer Meeting 10 a.m.</p> <p>Parish Helpers Meeting 1 p.m.</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>PREPARED TO SERVE</p> <p>Pembroke, NH</p>

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



Souper Bowl Soup FUNdraiser

Time is running out!

**Order by February 2 for
Pick up on Saturday, February 7th.**

**You can find details and soup list [here](https://www.fccwakefieldnh.org/event/souper-sunday-soup-sale-2/).
Or <https://www.fccwakefieldnh.org/event/souper-sunday-soup-sale-2/>**